

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK
May 2019



And the winner is...

Our Founder's Day Awards



Inside:

Working age
members
Call up for
HMS Sultan



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

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On the cover
Our Founder's Day Awards in full swing at our Llandudno Centre on 26 March. Find out more inside starting on page 19.



Editorial welcome

In my career to date, I've had to attend a fair amount of awards ceremonies – for a variety of reasons. The subjects ranged from hi-fi, to the railway industry, and, even more unusually, the world of parking. So, as a seasoned attendee, I thought I was more than prepared for the Founder's Day Awards, which were held at our Llandudno Centre on 26 March.

I couldn't have been more wrong. From the moment I walked into the centre, you could feel the atmosphere and the incredible feeling of both expectation and comradeship. At the drinks reception, everywhere you looked were smiles – there wasn't a frown in sight. Putting my cynical journalist's hat on, I recalled that pre-award drinks are normally jolly occasions, so I wasn't too surprised, but, even so the warmth in the room was something else.

Eventually the time came for the main ceremony, and we went into the beautifully panelled hall where the awards began, and from then onwards the true spirit of Blind Veterans UK was on display. It was a moving and emotional occasion, and often during the citations that prefaced the awards, there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

Listening to the stories that accompanied each award, and the deeds and achievements behind them, made me realise just what a very special family this is. There was a palpable sense of pride and shared enjoyment in the room, as each awardee stepped forward and offered a few words after their presentation. Everyone was part of the special moments the day offered, and that sense of togetherness carried over to the excellent lunch that followed.

You can read more about Founder's Day in the bumper feature inside, but, for me, it was an epiphany that all award ceremonies are not the same and don't consist of people picking up meaningless 'gongs'. This was a truly magical day all round, and I can't wait for the next one.

As always, enjoy your magazine and see you next month.

Chris Gilson
 Editor



Learning something new

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

When I was learning to fly, an older and much wiser pilot told me that one learns something new every day. It was pretty difficult to believe that this

old hand had anything more that he could learn, but, since then, experience has shown me that he was absolutely right. If anything, I now have much



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Caption: RAF Chinook

more reason to question what I have previously taken for granted.

Take for example how my life has changed since I retired from full-time work. I now do a little more about the house, and specifically have taken on much more of the cooking. The current Mrs Luker and I are great fans of the plethora of cookery programmes on the telly, and I like to think that I not only learn from them but also – in the language of these so-called reality shows – ‘take recipes to the next level’.

The nature of the symbiotic relationship that Mrs Luker calls ‘our marriage’ is that, while I get great pleasure from culinary experimentation, she gets even greater pleasure from critiquing the product. Who knew that when making a lemon and ginger chicken stir fry (with no fresh ginger, lemon or miso sauce in the house), acceptable alternative ingredients did not include ginger beer, lemon curd and Marmite? I now do – one learns something new every day.

Train of thought

You may well ask what has got me onto this train of thought. Well, last month I wrote about how research, technology and innovation change our lives and drew comparisons with my time running a tactics and trials unit. In doing so I concentrated on

the kit and the trials, but neglected to say much about the tactics. There’s nothing magic about tactics, they are essentially about adopting new behaviours to cope with changing circumstances. Once developed, tactics need to be introduced so that the users have a shared understanding of the rationale behind them, so that everybody is able to work together. This calls for a degree of training.

Nick Caplin and I have frequent discussions about this sort of thing. Not my cooking or my flying. No, we spend hours chatting about what makes Blind Veterans UK what it is. I am convinced that it is that we have stayed true to Sir Arthur Pearson’s belief in concentrating on rehabilitation. No matter what else we do – and I think we do lots – the cornerstone of our work is that which helps Members to rebuild their lives after sight loss. That sounds a little glib, but it would be very easy to be deflected from this purpose – for example by the lure of new technology – and forget that Gucci kit alone doesn’t cut the mustard. The adoption of new technology, techniques or behaviours still needs to be explained and their uses taught. Simplistically, for me, this form of continuing rehabilitation is the equivalent of developing the tactics and then teaching them. →

Perhaps the most important element of rehabilitation is the early assessment of each Member's individual needs: what they want to achieve and how this fits into their circumstances (for example, how it impacts on family, friends and carers).

Fundamentally, everyone is different and hence this early scoping will inevitably lead to a wide range of possible outcomes for each member. When new technology



Caption: Paul Luker

and opportunities come along - or circumstances change - it is also important routinely to revisit that initial assessment. Put in the context of a Member who joins us in his or her twenties and remains with us into their nineties or beyond, I almost shouldn't need to point this out. But, the truth is that we are always at risk of being complacent, and therefore need constantly to remind ourselves that rehabilitation is a whole of life activity, bespoke for each Member.

Immensely proud

I have been immensely proud of the way that the Blind Veterans UK team has reinvigorated this work in the past couple of years. As trustees we are routinely briefed by the senior team on the process; the amount of effort they have put into detailing the what, why and how of this "whole team" approach is truly impressive. In the military we would probably describe this as our doctrine - the commonly understood ways of working, the shared belief in what we do. But as trustees we also

"When you read this, we will be into the round of this year's reunion lunches, many of which are presided over by trustees"

need to be reassured that we practise what we preach.

When you read this, we will be into the round of this year's Reunion lunches, many of which are presided over by trustees. Please use this opportunity to let us know how the application of the process is working in real life - and I extend this invitation not just to Members but also to family, friends, carers, volunteers and staff who attend the lunches.

I make the request, not just because trustees value the feedback on what we are striving to do today but also because one of our duties is to think about the longer term. Experience teaches us that we are too often fixed in the here and now and come very late to the idea that things need to evolve. I am not talking here about change for change's sake. I am much more concerned that we remain agile in our evolution: that we have the appetite to take on new ideas and the wherewithal to introduce the best of them. And, inevitably, I worry that we can still raise the funds to keep us afloat and moving forward.

Which takes me back to tactics. In 1984 I was tasked to establish a new course to teach tactics instructors. The course would develop tactical theory in the classroom and then put

the ideas into practice in the air. One early idea was that we should make better use of natural ground cover by leap-frogging aircraft forward (one moving while the other stayed in cover observing for enemy activity). Come the day of the practical exercise, two pairs of helicopters were to fly against each other, each trying to progress undetected in opposite directions along a 20-mile-long corridor in rural Hampshire. Crews briefed, and aircraft launched, I toddled off to the ops room to monitor progress. Thirty minutes into the sortie, the duty controller took a call from a rather agitated lady, which he put on the speaker. "I've got a big helicopter hovering in my garden and I don't like it".

Convinced the pilot couldn't be that thoughtless, the controller explained that we had not long had the Chinook in service and they were considerably larger than the helicopters they replaced. Their size probably meant she imagined this one was closer than it actually was. She was not mollified. So, to prove his point, the controller asked her if she could read anything written on the aircraft (certain that she wouldn't even be able to read the foot-high 'Royal Air Force' lettering emblazoned on the fuselage). The reply: "Yes, I can. It says 'No Push Here'". You do learn something new every day!

Deep bonds

Your message from your Chief Executive, **Major General (rtd) Nick Caplin CB**

Spring is here with all that it brings, including lambs, warmth and the prospect of a bright year ahead. As I pondered this, I thought it a good time to reflect on the joys of friendship, fellowship and partnership.

Recently I have had the pleasure

of attending a number of our early Reunion lunches, including Northern Ireland where our veterans and their partners and supporters met together in a Belfast hotel to enjoy each other's company. As you might imagine, the room was full of 'craic' - the Irish version of banter and bonhomie.



Caption: Dancing has always been a popular activity with our veterans.

Laughter abounded, and it was clear from the conversations that occasions such as these for the charity family to meet are vital. Our Reunions provide a wonderful opportunity to share, compare and to reassure. I was particularly struck by the importance of the Reunions to the spouses and partners, whose lives are invariably defined by providing loving support to our Members. Knowing that they are not alone on this path, and in helping our veterans overcome the daily challenge of sight loss, is very important.

A delightful pair

At our Hook, Hampshire Reunion I met a delightful pair of Members who have formed a close bond since meeting through us, and who speak to each other daily by telephone. Their joy of being together at the lunch was clear to everyone, and brought smiles to every face.

They have the deepest of bonds - a bond that sustains them, and this is a picture that repeats itself frequently. As I write, the national papers, TV and social media have been awash with the story of Peter and Nancy, two of our Brighton residents who met in the charity and who, each at the tender age of 97, have found love together - you can read more about

them in our news section on page 10.

They have recently taken a Love Blessing with Chaplain Clare Callanan in St Dunstan's Chapel at our Brighton Centre where they pledged to spend the rest of their lives together. Having both served during the Second World War and experienced the pain of losing their spouses in recent years, they have now found deep contentment together. Fantastic!

Dancing is another topic that regularly comes up at Reunions, and that speaks to the joys of company. For so many of our Members, dancing has been an important feature of their lives. Where today the young might use social media to meet and form relationships (a concept that I struggle to understand, displaying my age I fear), it was the local dance that often provided that function and opportunity. Therefore it's no surprise that dancing remains an activity loved by so many.

There is a great opportunity for the charity here. As our communities grow and develop, and as we find new activities for Members to enjoy and new ways to bring them together, I suspect that dancing might be a common theme. For those who are able it is, after all, a fabulous way to share the joys of friendship.

News



Caption: Peter and Nancy

Peter and Nancy find love again at 97

Two of our blind veterans, Peter Van Zeller and Nancy Bowstead, who are both 97 years-old, have found love again, and celebrated a Love Blessing of their commitment and love for one another at Blind Veterans UK's chapel in Brighton on Wednesday 10 April.

Peter and Nancy met at our Brighton centre in May last year when Peter was

a resident and Nancy was visiting on holiday.

Peter recalls, "This lady came and sat next to me in the lounge after dinner. She definitely had a spark about her and we hit it off immediately."

However, Nancy recollects that it wasn't quite as instant: "I went over to speak to him, as I am always fascinated in people who have interesting lives, and he was a little grumpy with me at first. We got chatting though and it was just like an electric shock!"

After meeting in May, and keeping in regular contact over the phone, Nancy got the news she had been waiting for and discovered that she too would be moving to live at the Blind Veterans UK centre in October last year. Peter proposed just six months after meeting in November.

She says: "It was the best news I could have received, and we now live just four doors down from each other so I can go and visit him whenever I wish."

"Peter proposed to me in November. We both agreed that a Blessing was more appropriate than a formal

wedding and we were both so happy to celebrate with our friends and family."

The pair both served in the Second World War with Peter serving in both the Royal Air Force and the Army and Nancy in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).

They both lost their sight much later in life, Nancy through glaucoma and after suffering two strokes and Peter through glaucoma and macular degeneration. Nancy started receiving support from Blind Veterans UK in 2011 and Peter in 2016.

For Peter, it was humbling to discover he could love again and also that someone could love him. He says:



Caption: The Blessing Ceremony

"Until I met Nancy, I hadn't realised how lonely I'd really been since my wife died. We just want to live and be happy together for a very long time."

Nancy says: "It is a dream come true, to know that I could be treasured and feel loved by someone as wonderful as Peter after many years alone. It really has been a miracle and we love each other to bits."

Blind Veterans UK Member shortlisted for prestigious Ex-Forces award

Working Age Member Co-ordinator and Member of Blind Veterans UK, Kevin Alderton, has been nominated and shortlisted as a Finalist in the 'Innovator of the Year' category at the Ex-Forces in Business Awards 2019.

The annual awards celebrate the achievements of ex-military personnel making names for themselves in new vocations. Kevin will be representing the Charity alongside fellow Member and celebrity chef, Penny Melville-Brown.

■ **The awards will be held on Wednesday, 8 May.**

Summer at Sultan - your calling notice

This year's summer camp at HMS *Sultan* will take place from 2pm 2 August-10am 10 August. Once again there are a limited number of places for Blind Veterans UK Members due to service accommodation constraints, but please don't let that put you off applying.

Background

For many years the veterans of Blind Veterans UK have assembled at Lee on the Solent, Hampshire for the annual Summer Camp sponsored by the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm. From the late 1940s this was held at HMS *Daedalus* until the Establishment's closure in 1996, when we transferred to our present location, HMS *Sultan*, the home of Air and Marine Engineering Training.

Applications

We have endeavoured for many years to create a summer camp 'family' and to maintain that ethos and atmosphere we do have Members who regularly participate. That said, I am very careful to ensure that places are offered to new applicants each year. There are no boundaries with regard to age or physical ability but we do check with the Community Support Workers to ensure suitability.

Finance

The camp is funded through donations, fundraising by the Fleet Air Arm Field Gun Crew Association and our local community. The campers are charged a nominal fee that goes towards insurance, transportation (visits during camp), catering and licences to use Service facilities.

The committee has two Blind Veterans UK Member representatives who are encouraged to voice the opinions and wishes of the campers in the planning of the event.

Please forward your application to Andy Salter either by telephone on: (Home) **01329 283 928**, (Mobile) **0793 2267 782** or by email at: **A.Salter639@Virginmedia.com**

In your community



Caption: Storytelling with Extant

Extant project

Sonia Griffiths-Jones, Rob Eaglestone, Fred Platt and Roy Spencer, who are all Members in Community Four, participated in a storytelling project with the visually impaired performing arts company, Extant, on 9 April.

The 12-week project was held at the Theatr Clwyd near Llandudno. The theme was 'Home, and what it means to me', and each Member brought a story from their own experiences into the group which they then developed into a performance piece.

The Members worked together using music, theatre, storytelling and poetry and explored what 'home' meant to them. Their final performance was performed to a small audience of family, friends and fellow blind veterans. The group have been asked back to perform as part of the Theatr Clwyd festival in May.

Colchester walk

Twelve of our veterans walked one mile down Colchester High Street as part of our "March for Veterans" awareness month, raising a total of £640.

They completed the walk hand-to-shoulder - a method used during the First World War to evacuate those blinded during combat. This was recently immortalised in our bronze Victory Over Blindness sculpture located outside Manchester Piccadilly station.

Along the route, they were supported by serving soldiers from the Army's 16 Medical Regiment, Blind Veterans UK volunteers, Colchester Pipes and Drums, Essex Police and St John Ambulance. →



Caption: On the ball at Sale Sharks

Sale Sharks

Some of our Members along with a few our staff, had the opportunity of spending the day at the professional rugby union club, Sale Sharks.

The club, which is based in Manchester, invited our Veterans for a friendly but competitive game of touch rugby.

Kick starting the National Trust tour

A group of our Members in Community 19 visited the Nymans National Trust property to kick start their tour of all the National Trust properties in the Sussex area.

There were smiles all around as they explored the spectacular grounds. New friendships were made, old stories were told, and luckily the rain held off too, allowing everyone to fully appreciate the beauty of the gardens.

D-Day fighter boys - we need you

Were you part of Fighter Command and took part in the D-Day landings?

If so, then the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire would like to hear from you.

The Flight is also holding a Bomber Command Veteran Day on 14 June. It's guaranteed to be full of laughter, memories, banter and cake.

■ **If you are interested in either of these, then please contact Diane Law-Crookes at RAF Coningsby by email. She can be reached at diane.law-crookes691@mod.gov.uk**



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Caption: Birmingham New Street after bombing, Second World War

Heading north

In the concluding part of her story, **Margaret Wilson** recalls barrage balloon units, cold water and streakers.

“When I first joined, the wireless operator’s course started every six months, and they said [that if you missed it] you can either go back home and rejoin six months later, but you weren’t really promised that you’d get in or not.”

Former Bletchley Park codebreaker, and Blind Veterans UK Member, Margaret Wilson is at her home in Shirebrook, Nottinghamshire recalling her initial days after basic training – a period that saw her arrive at a very unexpected destination. →

“Margaret soon found out that life on the barrage balloon site as not what she was expecting”

“So I said ‘what’s the other option then?’ and they said you can help out on the barrage balloons, help out on the medical, or help out on the cooking and cleaning. And I’d never heard of or seen a barrage balloon so I went for that.”

From there Margaret was posted to the West Midlands, where all was not quiet – Birmingham, with its metal working industry, was a prime target for the Luftwaffe.

“We had our initial training and then the Duke of Gloucester came down for a visit, and he spoke to all of us. After that I went straight off to a place called Willenhall near Birmingham, to continue training, but when I got there you got bombed left, right and centre. Coventry got it just before we arrived, and we got the aftermath of it. You could hear the shells dropping on your tin huts.

“You had to get out to get to the air raid shelters, and, if you couldn’t get out, then you had to get back in and

get underneath your bed. Bear in mind, you’ve got your pyjamas on, your big thick greatcoat on, you’ve got your tin helmet and gasmask on and you’ve got to go under this little narrow bed. You were lifting your bed up on your back to get under it.

And all the time we could hear this noise. So the next night we asked what had happened, and they said, ‘That was the shells from the guns shooting – you were lucky nothing came through.’”

Willing to have a go

After completing her training at Willenhall, Margaret continued her travels north to find herself in Barrow in Furness, Lancashire – another industrial hotspot that hosted a wide range of engineering, including the famous Vickers works. To protect the far-flung town, barrage balloon units had been stationed there, including one next to the wire-making factory. Margaret remembers:

“From there we were sent off to Barrow in Furness. I didn’t know it, and had never even heard of it. So, we set off, and when we finally got there, we were met by a Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) officer.

“Well, I’d never seen a bunk bed in my life, and the first thing she did was take us into this Nissen hut with the bunk

beds. There was only nine of us, and a sergeant. When we got there we were told we were the first WAAFs to take over the barrage balloons from the men.

“So, I picked a bottom bunk, and I’m glad I did because I was frightened of dropping off the top – nobody wanted top, everybody wanted bottom. Then she took us into the next hut.”

Margaret soon found out that life on the barrage balloon site was not what she was expecting.

“The WAAF officer said, ‘This is the



Caption: WAAF Barrage Balloon crews at RAF Cardington.

mess hut, but do you realise you have to cook your own meals?

“Everybody else, the balloon operators and so on, had it all done for them, but not those on our site – which was called the Wire works site – it was more or less a great big field.”

Things didn’t improve at the next hut either.

“Then she took us outside and we went to this other hut, which had a roof that had been fixed on but was open all round. When it rained, snowed or anything like that, it would come through. There was only a concrete sink with four taps and no plugs – you had to use your handkerchief. And, guess what? No hot water. All you got was icy cold water. No showers and no baths.”

Digging a hole

To compound Margaret’s woes, the harsh Lancashire weather on the exposed coastline wasn’t helping matters either.

“Then you had the toilets – there was a tin bucket underneath a wooden shelf with a hole in it, and that had to be emptied every day at five o’ clock in the morning, so whoever was on night shift, had to do them. Every day they had to be washed out and →

disinfected, and the seat had got to be scrubbed.

"You had to take the bucket, go right up into the field as far away as possible from where you were, and then dig a hole and bury it. You try digging your own hole when it's been freezing or snowing, or had rained, and believe me it did rain there."

However, help was at hand from an unlikely source.

"After we had been there about three



Caption: WAAF recruitment poster

months, one morning, quite early in the morning, we heard a man's voice shout down to us 'eh m'gals, leave that ah'll do that for you'."

"Then down this man comes with a 'slag bag' stuffed with bits from the wireworks, and one week in three he was on that shift, and he always used to shout 'leave it there', and he used to come and dig the best holes you've ever had. He did it for a week, and then before he went off on his final night, he dug us another hole for the next day to help us."

Occasionally, there were other moments of relief too.

"One day I went down to Barrow in Furness with my friend Betty, and when we got back someone said 'Oh Betty and Margaret, you've missed the best laugh in your life'."

"And I said 'why, what's gone on?', and they said 'we've had a streaker outside the gates'."

Anyway, the next day he was there again - and the next minute there was pandemonium. We had the RAF police coming down one way, and the ordinary police from Barrow in Furness coming down the other way, so they both got him. They wouldn't even let him pull his trousers up!



Caption: Addressing the guests at Founder's Day

A perfect day

Our Founder's Day Awards recognise veterans who have beaten the odds to achieve something special. **Chris Gilson** was there to report.

It was an incredibly special day at our Llandudno centre on 26 March, when we hosted our annual Founder's Day Awards. From the very start there was an excited atmosphere, as the invited

guests gathered for drinks beforehand, and wondered who would receive one of the categories on offer.

The awards are always held on →

this date, and celebrate Blind Veterans UK's founder, Sir Arthur Pearson, and his determination, help others rebuild their lives after sight loss. The date of the awards is significant, because on 26 March 1915, 16 war-blinded soldiers entered our training facility at Regent's Park in London.

Two new award categories – the Carers Recognition Award and the Inspiring Community Award – have been added to include non-Members who have made a difference. Blind

“Two new award categories have been added to include non-members who have made a difference”

Veterans UK Director of Operations Nicky Shaw said:

“There are widows, carers, spouses, family members and supporters, and it felt appropriate to extend the awards



Caption: Vivian Yates before the ceremony began

to include those very, very special people.”

Member Mark Pile won the Creative Award. Mark is widely known across the charity for his outstanding photography work. After the announcement, he said:

“My thanks goes to everyone who has helped me from Blind Veterans UK. They’ve supported me and given me the confidence to be the photographer I am today. Thank you, it’s an honour to

be part of such a great charity.”

Rob Long, who was blinded in 2010 while on active service, won the Sporting Achievement Award. His injuries caused him to suffer serious skull and brain injuries, and lose both eyes as a result. He now competes in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and in the last year has been the number one ranked Para BJJ athlete in the UK and Europe following winning the World Championships in Abu Dhabi. He is the Army’s BJJ Heavyweight gold →

The winners and categories this year were:

Inspiring Community Award	Clive Jones
Inspiring Community Award (Local – Special Recognition)	William Skinner
Life beyond Sight Loss Award (Discovering a New Skill)	Viv Yates
Life beyond Sight Loss Award (Rediscovering a skill)	Andy Bache
Creative Award	Mark Pile
Sporting Achievement Award	Rob Long
Vocational Award (Education, training and employment)	Steven Evans
Vocational Award (Education)	Geoff Haywood
Outstanding Achievement Award (New recruit)	Thomas Appleby
Outstanding Achievement Award (Long Service)	Steve Sparkes
Outstanding Achievement Award (Special Recognition)	Alan Lock
Inspiring Community Award (Blind Veterans UK family)	Brenda Hardie
Inspiring Community Award (Blind Veterans UK family – Special Recognition)	Sonia Griffiths-Jones
Carers Recognition Award	Linda Best
Ted Higgs Prize	Shaun Stocker

medallist, has a long list of medals to his name, and is always striving to be the best in his chosen sport.

In his citation, we said,

"Rob has talked in interviews about feeling broken when he first was injured, but through the training he received, and now having found a sport he can excel in and feel like himself again, he feels like he is on top of the world."

Receiving his award, Rob added, "I'd like to say a massive, massive

thank you to Blind Veterans UK because I'm sure all of you know how much they've done for us. If they hadn't been there at the beginning, when I went through my rehabilitation, none of my achievements would have been possible at all."

Vivian Yates, who received the Life Beyond Sight Loss award for Discovering a New Skill said, "I feel utterly shocked. I never thought, at the age of 86, that I would ever receive such an award."



Caption: Nicky Shaw and Vivian



Caption: The harpist in action

She has been awarded for her commitment to the charity and, in particular, the help and support she has given its Ferry Hill Community IT training group, mentoring beginners on their IT skills.

As well as supporting the IT training group, Vivian has also helped in the arts and crafts department, worked on a Christmas social media campaign and gave an uplifting speech at one of the charity's Reunions.

Following the emotive ceremony –

"I feel utterly shocked. I never thought at the age of 86 that I would ever receive such an award"

– Vivian Yates

during which there was often hardly a dry eye in the house – there was a lively reception, hosted and catered by the centre, which also provided the musical entertainment in the form of a harpist and pianist.



Caption: Socialising at the reception

Rehabilitation

In the latest part of our Rehabilitation series, we meet Equipment, Delivery & Installation Technician **Aaron Munshi**



I joined Blind Veterans UK in October 2018 after leaving my previous role for a completely new challenge. My background is from the banking sector where I spent over five years as a mortgage adviser.

My primary role at Blind Veterans UK is to collect and deliver equipment to our Members in their homes, which I then set up and demonstrate how to use.

The role is very varied but rewarding, as I also help with other queries our

veterans may have. This can be anything from moving furniture, delivering post, popping to the shops and assisting with other technical queries.

I really enjoy being out and about, travelling over the country, seeing different places, and speaking to many different people about their lives. The job I do is very satisfying in that I see, first-hand, how much of a life changing impact the service we provide can have on a Member's life.

The people I work with are really supportive and helpful - it's like one big family. Everyone I have met who works for us has the same goal and that's to put our Members at the heart of everything we do.

Aaron's tip

There is no such thing as a silly or stupid question, so if you have any queries then please ask, and we will help you the best we can.

Make room for the mushrooms

In her latest recipe for Review, **Penny Melville-Brown** extols the joys of mushroom soup

My friend Wendy showed me this excellent recipe for mushroom soup, with inspiration from the Avoca restaurant at Powerscourt in her native Ireland.

It is a firm favourite with her husband, retired Royal Navy Captain, Stuart. They both worked at the NATO headquarters in Virginia Beach (USA). You can see us make this heart-warming dish on my YouTube page at bit.ly/2FWfMXQ



Caption: Penny and Wendy

Ingredients

25g	butter
2 onions	peeled and finely chopped
1kg	mixed mushrooms, chopped
75g	plain flour
1 litre	vegetable stock
600 mls	full cream milk
1 teaspoon	chopped fresh thyme
Glass of sherry	
Whipped cream to serve	
Chopped fresh parsley to serve	

- Gently heat the butter and then add the onions to cook for 10 minutes.
- Increase the heat as the mushrooms and seasonings to taste are added and cook until the juices start to run.
- Add some flour and stir continuously over reduced heat for about five minutes.
- Add remaining flour and stock while continuing to stir and bring to a gentle simmer for 10 minutes.
- Place in liquidiser with thyme and sherry to blend before pouring in to serving bowls and topping with a teaspoonful of whipped cream and sprinkle of parsley.



The essence of resilience

Your column from Blind Veterans UK Chaplain, **Clare Callanan**

It seems to me that there is not much that Members, staff and volunteers cannot do at Blind Veterans UK. Everyone demonstrates the wonderful 'can do' attitude that is second nature to all those I meet and hear about.

I have had reason on a couple of occasions to make my way to the Art and Craft Department in Brighton, cradling broken china or pottery. Once it was my own beautiful pottery bowl from Tabgtha by the Sea of Galilee which I use at communion... there was a piece chipped off the edge. On a more recent occasion it was the head knocked off a resident's special Lladro

porcelain figurine. Knowing that each piece could be fixed with the correct adhesive and care was reassuring.

Kintsugi is the traditional Japanese art of using precious metals to mend broken pottery, meaning 'golden repair' or 'scars'. In this method, not only is there no attempt to hide the damage, but the repair is literally illuminated. It is the scars that become something to see, as if they were wounds that leave their different marks on us. The cracks and repairs are seen as an event in the life of an object, rather than allowing its service to end at the time of its damage or breakage. The glue that is traditionally used is a sticky sap from a plant. The resin is then mixed with powdered gold. It may take many days to repair a large bowl, building up the layers of resin and gold.

This makes me wonder, maybe we should not throw away broken objects? Just because it is broken does not mean that it is useful no more. Those very breakages can become valuable. By repairing things we can sometimes end up with an even more valuable object.

Surely this is the essence of resilience? By looking for a way to cope with difficult times in a positive way, by learning from negative experiences, taking the best from them and accepting that these breaks, these flaws and these repairs are what makes us unique.



Going places

Now that winter is behind us and the days are getting longer and warmer, **Noreen Dean** shares information about some discounted travel schemes as part of our Benefits series

SEBASTIAN HARRIS / ISTOCK

Rail travel

There are a number of concessions across the UK rail networks that are available to people who are registered as blind (severely sight impaired) or partially sighted (sight impaired).

Did you know you can get up to 50 per cent off rail travel in England and Wales if you are registered as blind or partially sighted? The discount you qualify for will depend on the type of rail ticket you buy – generally this is a third →



BIKEWORLDTRAVEL / ISTOCK

Caption: Veterans can apply for a concessionary travel pass

off anytime single or return tickets and 50 per cent off anytime day return tickets. All you have to do is travel with a companion and provide proof of your sight loss when you buy the tickets. For further details, visit the National Rail website at nationalrail.co.uk or call them on **03457 48 49 50**.

The National Entitlement Card issued to visually impaired people in Scotland

allows free travel on some rail services within Scotland.

If you are likely to travel by rail frequently or you intend to make multiple journeys, you should consider getting a Disabled Persons Railcard. This will give you at least one-third off some advance, off peak and anytime tickets in England, Scotland and Wales. The card costs £20 for one

year or £54 for three years. To find out more, visit the Disabled Person's Railcard website at disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk or call **0345 605 0525** (**0345 601 0132** if you have hearing loss). Unfortunately, the Disabled Persons Railcard can't be used in Northern Ireland, but you may be able to get discounted or free travel using a SmartPass which you can obtain from NI Direct. For further details visit nidirect.gov.uk/articles/blind-smartpass

There are additional concessionary railcards available so it is worth checking to see which one best suits your needs to ensure you get the most out of it.

Bus travel

- If you live in England, you can get an annual bus pass for free off-peak travel in your local area. You may also be able to travel for free during peak hours in some areas. Contact your local council for further information. If you live in London, you may be

“If you live in London, TfL and your local authority jointly fund the Taxicard Scheme which provides considerably reduced taxi fares”

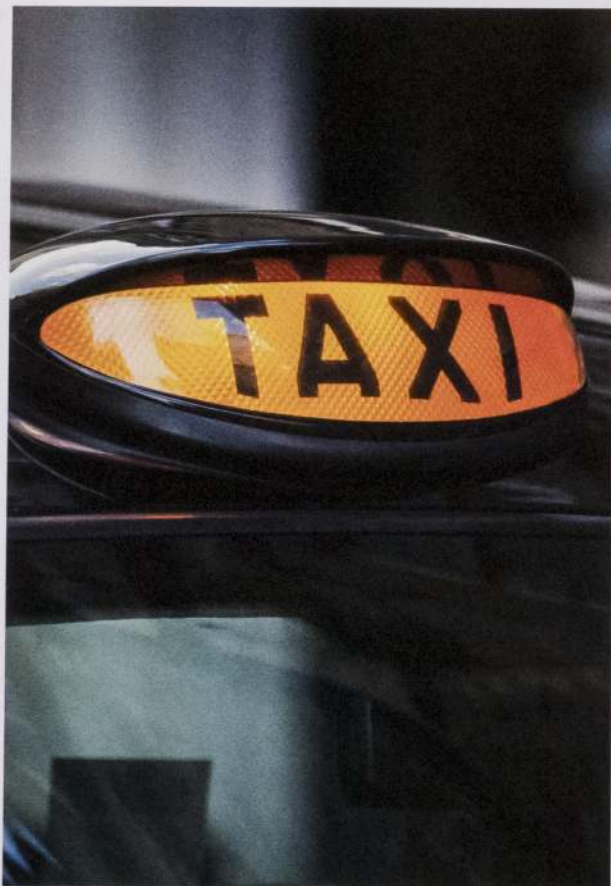
eligible for a Freedom Pass on which you can travel for free at any time.

- If you live in Scotland, you and a companion can travel for free on local and national bus services with the National Entitlement Card. Find out more from www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel
- If you live in Wales, you can travel for free at any time of the day on local and national bus services. Contact your council for more details.
- If you live in Northern Ireland, you may be able to get discounted or free travel using a SmartPass. Find out more at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/blind-smartpass

Taxi travel

Most local authorities have discounted taxi services for people who are unable or find it difficult to use public transport. Contact your council to find out what is available in your area.

If you live in London, TfL and your local authority jointly fund the Taxicard Scheme which provides considerably reduced taxi fares. The discount you receive is set by the London Borough that you live in so contact your council for more information. Alternatively visit the Taxicard Scheme's website at londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/taxicard



SHAITH / ISTOCK

Veterans Concessionary Travel Pass (VCTP)

A travel pass from the Veterans Concessionary Travel Scheme is available to anyone in receipt of an on-going payment from either the War Pensions Scheme or the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. Widows/widowers as well as dependents may also qualify for a travel pass under this scheme.

In London, the Veterans Concessionary Travel Pass is issued as a photo Oyster card and is valid on the London Underground, the

London Overground, TfL Rail, the Docklands Light Railway, London Trams, participating rail operators and most Greater London bus services. It's important to note that pass holders can generally travel at any time unless travelling by rail in which case travel may be restricted to off-peak hours only. There are no time restrictions during the weekends and on public holidays.

■ For further information visit tfl.gov.uk/fares/free-and-discounted-travel

Community transport and voluntary transport services

Most local authorities across the UK have a variety of community transport schemes run by staff as well as volunteers. These are door-to-door services that enable people to maintain their independence, access other services, participate in their communities and prevent isolation.

Contact your local authority to find out what community transport and voluntary transport services you have in your area.

Finally, your Blind Veterans Community Support Worker will be happy to help you look into and apply for any of the concessions mentioned above so please do not hesitate to contact them.

Tuning in

Our Brighton centre hosts its own Radio Play Society. **Chris Kirk** explains what happens when you place Members in front of a microphone

The Brighton Radio Play Society has been running as a club for four years now, and has a Member-led committee which is helped and facilitated by staff members Chris Kirk, Paul Twilley, Lou Kirk-Partridge and Sue Kaulsi, along with some dedicated volunteers.

It all started with a conversation between Chris and Lou and Member John Taylor. He told us that he was missing acting on stage, as he had to stop when he became blind. John is "black blind" and it happened quite suddenly. Apart from the



Caption: The Radio Play Society rests between takes



Caption: In front of the microphone

expected distress, this immediately stopped John in his tracks when it came to his hobby which was acting in musicals for the Worthing Musical Comedy Society.

Ironically, I used to film their shows for them when I was working as a freelance cameraman for the BBC, and knew John when he was sighted. Having a camera and editing background, I suggested to John that we could try radio to keep his hobby going. Lou had a theatre management background, and immediately we started planning a small test session.

“The club at present has eight regular Members, and approximately 70 visiting Members that come during their holidays”

Lou had the idea from the book *Beyond the Mind's Eye*, which mentioned a live radio play society that used to run at our Church Stretton centre many years ago. John was writing a very ambitious musical, and we laugh now at how we had to scale it down as it would have had a cast of over 50 people. John was meant to arrive at our test session on his own, but instead arrived with a few more Members who were also interested. It organically took shape from there, starting as an activity and growing into a club with help from people like Glynis Gillam and Mark Wheeler along the way.

A little shaky

The early shows were a little shaky, and certainly not ideal broadcast candidates, but, in terms of achievement, they represented incredible amounts of hard work by our Members. In some cases, they overcame real adversity such as memory problems, speech problems and general stage fright. Now that

we have developed the club and its methods, the shows are closer to broadcast quality and continue to improve.

The club at present has eight regular Members, and approximately 70 visiting Members that come during their holidays. Some we see only once, and others attend on a regular basis. Some even make a special journey to record with the group.

The Radio Play Society has a high public profile too, and has featured on live radio and television. Most recently



Caption: Sound effects time

there was a section on Forces TV. The club has hosted shows, and has been interviewed on local stations more than four times in the last year. There have also been two videos made, both of which can be found on our channel on YouTube and our website.

While the core membership is small, the ideas we have are big. We convinced *Review* to allow the club to put its plays out on the audio version, and the dream would be to get a whole production signed up to a national radio station so that the Members can see their talents properly recognised.

We would like to develop things next year into a specific package week, that we could run at either centre, to encourage Members from afar who do not get a chance to attend otherwise.

It's nice to note that our latest regular joining Member is the British Empire Medal awardee Joan Osborne, who has a long history with the charity and is enjoying being part of the club. It is currently recording a play which demands a Yorkshire accent and the Members take it very seriously. Maureen Atkinson has been watching *Emmerdale* to try and pick up the accent, and some even got a private lesson from Angela Higham who works in London and happened to be visiting Brighton that day!



OP Banner 50 Commemorative Event

14 August 2019, 2pm

National Memorial Arboretum

The Royal British Legion invites veterans awarded with the General Service Medal to mark the 50th anniversary of the UK Armed Forces' deployment in Northern Ireland, the longest continuous operation in British military history.

Attendees must be accredited. Please register your interest with Abby Tarrant by Friday 31 May 2019.



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

For more information:

email abby.tarrant@blindveterans.org.uk

Call **0207 616 8372**

or visit blindveterans.org.uk



Family news

Birthdays

Ian Corsie who celebrates his 101st on 6th May.

Rosemary Lang who celebrates her 100th on 1st May.

Henry Hogg who celebrates his 100th on 17th May.

Robert Field who celebrates his 101st on 18th May.

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.

Madge Bracewell who died on 17th February 2019. She was the wife of Noel Bracewell.

Joyce Daphne Brimblecombe who died on 23rd March 2019. She was

the wife of the late Ronald Edwin Brimblecombe.

Maureen Patricia Burridge who died on 3rd April 2019. She was the wife of John Alexander Burridge.

Ann Helen Doughty who died on 14th March 2019. She was the wife of the late John Michael Doughty.

Greta Hodgetts who died on 1st March 2019. She was the wife of the late Geoffrey Ernest Hodgetts.

Doreen King who died on 8th March 2019. She was the wife of Michael King.

Rose Mellor who died on 18th March 2019. She was the wife of Geoffrey Mellor.

Audrey Miles who died on 1st April 2019. She was the wife of Raymond Miles. David Miles.



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

Ernest Edward Sutcliffe of Stockport, Cheshire died on 30th October 2018 aged 92. He served from 1944 to 1948 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

Frederick George Templeton of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 25th December 2018 aged 94. He served from 1944 to 1948 in the Army as a Corporal.

Jeremy St Maur Thorp of Plymouth, died on 6th January 2019 aged 85. He served from 1952 to 1955 in the Royal Air Force as a S.A.C.

William Tristram of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire died on 3rd November 2018 aged 96. He served from 1940 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.

Francis Charles Unwin of Orpington,

Kent died on 5th December 2018 aged 98. He served from 1939 to 1959 in the Army as a Sergeant Gunner.

Arthur William Vine of Tenterden, Kent died on 1st September 2018 aged 96. He served from 1941 to 1987 in the Royal Air Force as a Flight Lieutenant.

Terence Alan Walker of Brighton, East Sussex died on 5th December 2018 aged 86. He served from 1948 to 1953 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

James Edward Walters of Worthing, West Sussex died on 24th November 2018 aged 101. He served from 1940 to 1959 in the Army as a Captain.

Philip Ware of Blackpool, died on 31st October 2018 aged 84. He served from 1955 to 1957 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.

Elizabeth Webb of Leominster, Herefordshire died on 22nd November 2018 aged 91. She served from 1944 to 1947 in the Royal Navy as a Wren.

Brian Whiston of Inverness, died on 16th October 2018 aged 83. He served from 1970 to 1982 in the Royal Air Force as a S.A.C.

Alfred James White of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 30th December 2018 aged 99. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Army as a Warrant Officer.

David Roger Williams of Marlborough, Wiltshire died on 23rd November 2018 aged 71. He served from 1965 to 1971 in the Royal Air Force as a S.A.C.

George Frederick Wilson of Scarborough, North Yorkshire died on 2nd December 2018 aged 98. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Army as a Private.

Sidney James Frederick Wilson of Westerham, Kent died on 14th December 2018 aged 100. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

Joseph Clive Aitken of Millom, Cumbria died on 26th February 2019 aged 84. He served from 1952 to 1972 in the Army and Royal Air Force as a Craftsman and Junior Technician.

Bryan Alexander of North Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 1st March 2019 aged 80. He served from 1959 to 1962 in the Army as a Private.

William Allott of Burnley, Lancashire died on 11th March 2019 aged 87. He served from 1950 to 1952 in the Army as a Private.

Stuart Macdonald Artley of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 20th February 2019 aged 72. He served from 1964 to 1971 in the Royal Navy as a Motor Electrical Mechanic 1st Class.

Timothy Baker of Barnet, Hertfordshire died on 21st March 2019 aged 80. He served from 1954 to 1958 in the Royal Navy as an Able Seaman.

David Beling of Paignton, Devon died on 21st March 2019 aged 88. He served from 1949 to 1950 in the Army as a Sergeant.

Alan Benyon of Wigan died on 31st March 2019 aged 83. He served from 1953 to 1959 in the Army as a Sapper.

Margaret Blaber of Lewes, East Sussex died on 4th March 2019 aged 95. She served from 1942 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.W.

Ronald Percy Blaber of Hove, East Sussex died on 24th February →

2019 aged 92. He served from 1944 to 1947 in the Royal Navy as a Signalman.

Albert William Bleach of Liss, Hampshire died on 19th December 2018 aged 99. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Army as a Corporal.

Norman Brancham of Retford, Nottinghamshire died on 30th March 2019 aged 95. He served from 1943 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as an Aircraftman 2nd Class.

William Charles Brant of Stoke-on-Trent died on 25th January 2019 aged 98. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a Leading Aircraftman.

George Brewis of Wooler, Northumberland died on 26th March 2019 aged 84. He served from 1953 to 1958 in the Royal Air Force as a S.A.C.

Vera Audrey Brooks of Brighton, died on 15th March 2019 aged 95. She served from 1943 to 1945 in the Royal Navy as a WREN.

Dennis Brown of Bangor, Gwynedd died on 8th March 2019 aged 89. He served from 1947 to 1949 in the Army as a Private.

John Bunn of Hebburn, Tyne and Wear died on 12th February 2019 aged 93. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Army as a Corporal.

Eric Carter of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire died on 15th January 2019 aged 98. He served from 1939 to 1943 in the Army as a Major.

Marjorie Charnley of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire died on 6th December 2018 aged 93. She served from 1944 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

Henry James Colebourne of Bootle, Merseyside died on 1st February 2019 aged 96. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Stoker 1st Class.

Leonard Coleman of Wirral, Merseyside died on 17th March 2019 aged 97. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.

Frank Cooke of Wirral, Merseyside died on 24th January 2019 aged 94. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

Elizabeth Mary Cory of Westbury, Wiltshire died on 9th December 2018 aged 95. She served from 1942 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.W.

Graeme Cubbin of Wirral, Merseyside died on 2nd February 2019 aged 95. He served from 1940 to 1986 in the Merchant Navy as a Master.

Jeanne Elise Cunliffe of Clitheroe, Lancashire died on 16th March 2019 aged 91. She served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.W.

Horace D'arcy of Bournemouth, Dorset died on 1st February 2019 aged 108. He served from 1939 to 1945 in the Army as a Captain.

Catherine Mary Dawes of Hitchin, Hertfordshire died on 12th March 2019 aged 95. She served from 1942 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force as an ACW1.

John Deane of Preston, Lancashire died on 8th December 2018 aged 85. He served from 1952 to 1954 in the Army as a Corporal.

Bernard Deller of Basildon, Essex died on 6th December 2018 aged 89. He served from 1948 to 1959 in the Army as a Private.

Andrew Devenish of Bournemouth, Dorset died on 17th March 2019 aged 89. He served from 1955 to 1956 in the Army as a Bombardier.

David Dix of Manchester died on 1st December 2018 aged 63. He served

from 1981 to 1984 in the Army as a Private.

James Dunn of Preston, Lancashire died on 1st March 2019 aged 87. He served from 1950 to 1964 in the Army as a Signalman.

Eric Philip Edmond of Cwmbran, Gwent died on 18th February 2019 aged 84. He served from 1952 to 1964 in the Army as a Gunner.

Kenneth John Farnham of Exeter, Devon died on 10th March 2019 aged 91. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force as a A.C.2.

Noel Francis Fitzgerald of Sutton On Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire died on 12th March 2019 aged 85. He served from 1950 to 1973 in the Army as a Lance Bombardier.

Eric Charles Flowers of Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire died on 3rd April 2019 aged 94. He served from 1943 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Temporary Acting Leading Air Mechanic.

Edward Trevor France of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire died on 11th February 2019 aged 96. He served from 1942 to 1947 in the Army as a Captain.

Stanislaw Galasinski of Staines-Upon-Thames, Middlesex died on →

19th February 2019 aged 97. He served from 1942 to 1948 in the Polish Navy.

Gerald Gibson of Harwich, Essex died on 30th March 2019 aged 93. He served from 1944 to 1948 in the Army as a Corporal.

William George Giddings of St. Agnes, Cornwall died on 1st December 2018 aged 94. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Army as a Lance Bombardier.

William Raymond Gilson of Bristol died on 8th April 2019 aged 89. He served from 1947 to 1959 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

James Glendenning of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 22nd February 2019 aged 89. He served from 1948 to 1950 in the Army as a Sapper.

Ronald Glossop of Southampton, Hampshire died on 1st February 2019 aged 91. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Army as a Private.

Norman Jack Goodall of Chichester, West Sussex died on 5th April 2019 aged 95. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Telegraphist.

John Goodyear of Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire died on 23rd February 2019 aged 95. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Army as a Private.

Jack Miles Hall of Bridgwater, Somerset died on 21st January 2019 aged 86. He served from 1953 to 1955 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

John Sydney Harris of Reading, Berkshire died on 5th April 2019 aged 94. He served from 1944 to 1945 in the Army as a Private.

Leslie Healey of Bilston, West Midlands died on 14th February 2019 aged 91. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 1.

John Francis Heasman of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 6th March 2019 aged 86. He served from 1953 to 1955 in the Army.

Raymond Higson of Accrington, Lancashire died on 1st November 2018 aged 90. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Army as a Craftsman.

Robert Thomas William Hills of Chelmsford, Essex died on 13th March 2019 aged 84. He served from 1953 to 1955 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 1.

Doris Caroline Hitchmough of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 3rd January 2019 aged 94. She served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a Leading Aircraftswoman.

Ronald Hopkins of Bristol died on 12th March 2019 aged 91. He served from 1946 to 1958 in the Army as a Corporal.

Gerald Edward Hotston-Moore of Cheddar, Somerset died on 17th March 2019 aged 83. He served from 1953 to 1957 in the Army as a Private.

Eryl Owen Hughes of Abergele, Clwyd died on 28th January 2019 aged 95. He served from 1942 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force as a Leading Aircraftman.

John Rankin Hume of Conwy, Gwynedd died on 25th December 2018 aged 92. He served from 1943 to 1968 in the Royal Navy as a Chief Petty Officer.

Robert Christopher James of Tamworth, Staffordshire died on 25th March 2019 aged 84. He served from 1952 to 1957 in the Royal Air Force as a S.A.C.

Colin Frank Jasper of Tipton, West Midlands died on 1st April 2019 aged 90. He served from 1947 to 1949 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C.1.

William Morlais Jones of Royston, Hertfordshire died on 6th February 2019 aged 88. He served from 1948 to 1959 in the Army as a Private.

John Kenwright of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 12th February 2019 aged 88. He served from 1948 to 1950 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 1.

Norman Arthur Kinvig of Wigan, Lancashire died on 1st December 2018 aged 87. He served from 1951 to 1953 in the Army as a Signalman.

Frederick Knight of Gloucester, Gloucestershire died on 20th March 2019 aged 95. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force as a Leading Aircraftman.

Gomer Latham of Pontyclun, Mid Glamorgan died on 23rd January 2019 aged 100. He served in the Army as a Sergeant.

Muriel Hilda Mary Leaver of Pevensey, East Sussex died on 1st April 2019 aged 96. She served from 1942 to 1945 in the Army as a Firewoman.

John Kendrick Lewis of Haywards Heath, West Sussex died on 17th March 2019 aged 89. He served from 1951 to 1956 in the Army as a Private.

Jack Read Lomax of Llangollen, Clwyd died on 28th March 2019 aged 87. He served from 1950 to 1952 in the Royal Air Force as an Acting Corporal.



Ronald Sylvester Ludford of Halesworth, Suffolk died on 3rd March 2019 aged 90. He served from 1947 to 1949 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 2.

Joyce Macdonald of Balerno, Midlothian died on 3rd March 2019 aged 97. She served from 1940 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Petty Officer Wren.

William Norman Maitland of Beaumaris, Gwynedd died on 23rd January 2019 aged 97. He served from 1942 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force as a Flying Officer.

John William Marshall of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 14th February 2019 aged 99. He served from 1940 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

Lloyd Mathers of Ascot, Berkshire died on 25th February 2019 aged 96. He served from 1943 to 1952 in the Army as a Sergeant.

Ernest John Matthews of Lymington, Hampshire died on 4th March 2019 aged 88. He served from 1949 to 1950 in the Royal Navy as an Able Seaman.

Robert Edward Matthews of Harlow, Essex died on 10th March 2019 aged 90. He served from 1946 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 2.

Owen Miller of Lincolnshire died on 26th March 2019 aged 90. He served from 1947 to 1949 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 1.

Deryk Moore of Keighley, West Yorkshire died on 24th February 2019 aged 88. He served from 1948 to 1959 in the Army as a Sergeant.

Tony John Munn of Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset died on 25th February 2019 aged 88. He served from 1954 to 1967 in the Army as a Captain.

Clive Donald Bernard Olley of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 23rd March 2019 aged 94. He served from 1942 to 1947 in the Army as a Trooper.

James Petre of Billingham, Cleveland died on 26th March 2019 aged 98. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a Warrant Officer.

Colin Pickvance of Colwyn Bay, Clwyd died on 19th March 2019 aged 87. He served during 1953 in the Royal Air Force as a Aircraftman 2nd Class.

Michael Gerrit De'ath Pirrie of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 4th March 2019 aged 79. He served from 1959 to 1963 in the Army as a Lieutenant.

Joan Probart of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire died on 1st April 2019 aged 98. She served from 1943 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Leading Wren.

Geoffrey Render of Leeds, West Yorkshire died on 21st March 2019 aged 91. He served from 1945 to 1947 in the Royal Navy as a Cook.

James Rennison of Billingham, Cleveland died on 31st March 2019 aged 83. He served from 1953 to 1955 in the Army.

John Edward Richardson of Crawley, West Sussex died on 15th March 2019 aged 87. He served from 1949 to 1954 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

Dennis James Robson of Radstock, Somerset died on 1st March 2019 aged 83. He served from 1954 to 1956 in the Royal Air Force as a Junior Technician.

Norman Roden of Chorley, Lancashire died on 3rd March 2019 aged 99. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Army as a Gunner.

Donald Rose of Watford, Hertfordshire died on 4th March 2019 aged 92. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Royal Navy as an Able Seaman.

Terry Roskilly of Gloucester died on 24th February 2019 aged 97. He served

from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

Denise Audrey Rosser of Waterlooville, Hampshire died on 13th February 2019 aged 93. She served from 1951 to 1957 in the Royal Air Force as a Flying Officer.

Sydney William Savage of Brighton, East Sussex died on 15th February 2019 aged 94. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Temporary Acting Leading Stoker.

Charles Thomas Shepherd of Mold, Clwyd died on 8th March 2019 aged 91. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Army as a Corporal.

Thomas Shreeve of Macclesfield, Cheshire died on 2nd January 2019 aged 99. He served from 1940 to 1946 in the Army as a Major.

Donald Solway of Derby, Derbyshire died on 16th March 2019 aged 85. He served from 1951 to 1957 in the Army as a Private.

Peter Reginald Source of Banbury, Oxfordshire died on 13th March 2019 aged 86. He served from 1950 to 1952 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.

Frederick Arthur Stallard of Horsham, West Sussex died on 2nd April 2019 aged 91. He served →

from 1945 to 1948 in the Army as a Sergeant.

John Wallace Noel Stephenson of Alnwick, Northumberland died on 19th December 2018 aged 82. He served from 1959 to 1991 in the Royal Air Force as a Flight Lieutenant.

Donald Harle Stonehouse of Gosforth, Tyne and Wear died on 28th March 2019 aged 92. He served from 1944 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force as a Leading Aircraftman.

Fred Burton Stones of Holyhead, Gwynedd died on 25th February 2019 aged 83. He served from 1956 to 1962 in the Army as a Corporal.

Maurice William Sutcliffe of Axminster, Devon died on 8th April 2019 aged 96. He served from 1942 to 1977 in the Army as a Brigadier.

James Alexander Swift of Warrington, Lancashire died on 14th February 2019 aged 94. He served from 1943 to 1959 in the Royal Air Force as a Flying Officer.

Dennis Taylor of Caton, Lancaster died on 1st February 2019 aged 89. He served from 1948 to 1950 in the Army as a Gunner.

Kenneth Teasdale of Sunderland died on 13th March 2019 aged 79. He

served from 1960 to 1961 in the Army as a Private.

Frederick George Templeton of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 25th December 2018 aged 94. He served from 1944 to 1948 in the Army as a Corporal.

Geoffrey Harvey Thomas of Southampton, Hampshire died on 4th March 2019 aged 89. He served from 1947 to 1969 in the Army as a Gunner.

Peter Charles Thomas of Hayling Island, Hampshire died on 25th February 2019 aged 86. He served from 1951 to 1954 in the Royal Air Force as a Leading Aircraftman.

Jeremy St Maur Thorp of Plymouth, Devon died on 6th January 2019 aged 85. He served from 1952 to 1955 in the Royal Air Force as a S.A.C.

Geoffrey Towers of Pontefract, West Yorkshire died on 21st February 2019 aged 94. He served from 1943 to 1973 in the Royal Air Force as a Warrant Officer.

Earl Charles Tuckey of Brighton, East Sussex died on 8th February 2019 aged 84. He served from 1952 to 1954 in the Army as a Corporal.

Brian Turner of Goole, East Riding of Yorkshire died on 11th March 2019 aged 88. He served from 1949 to 1958 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

Cecil Stuart Turner of Wrexham, Clwyd died on 21st March 2019 aged 95. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a Warrant Officer.

Francis Charles Unwin of Orpington, Kent died on 5th December 2018 aged 98. He served from 1939 to 1959 in the Army as a Gunner.

Stanley Frederick Waddingham of Cambridge died on 7th April 2019 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as an Acting Engine Room Mechanic 4th Class.

Terence Alan Walker of Brighton, East Sussex died on 5th December 2018 aged 87. He served from 1948 to 1953 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

Kenneth William Ward of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire died on 1st December 2018 aged 95. He served from 1942 to 1954 in the Army as a Trooper.

Margaret Brenda Ward of Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex died on 18th February 2019 aged 95. She served until 1945 in the Army as a Cadet Ensign.

Bertram Harry Watterson of Walsall died on 14th February 2019 aged 100. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Army as a Sergeant.

Kenneth Webb of Winsford, Cheshire died on 16th February 2019 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Army as a Corporal.

Reginald Webb of Guildford, Surrey died on 4th April 2019 aged 93. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Army as a Signaller.

Alfred James White of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 30th December 2018 aged 99. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Army as a Warrant Officer.

Sidney William White of Neath, West Glamorgan died on 5th March 2019 aged 96. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Petty Officer Radio Mechanic.

Alfred Whitley of Staines-upon-Thames, Middlesex died on 15th February 2019 aged 97. He served in the Army as a Guardsman.

Brian Harold Wilkinson of Keswick, Cumbria died on 5th April 2019 aged 87. He served from 1950 to 1952 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.

A splendid start

Nicky Clarke reports on the first Reunion dates of the season

This season, 38 Blind Veterans UK Reunions will take place across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. From Edinburgh to Plymouth and Northern Ireland to Kent; every community served by Blind Veterans UK will host at least one Reunion.

Edinburgh

Our first event of the season was held in Edinburgh in March. The attendees included 37 Members, their guests and representatives from partner organisations such as Scottish War Blinded, Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, RNIB and Forth Valley Sensory Centre. Kenneth Simpson attended with his wife,



Caption: Chatting at Edinburgh

June. He explained how they both held little hope for the future after he lost his sight, but that changed once he became a Member. Social opportunities like the Reunions have brought them a new-found lease of life.

The rehabilitation table was a star attraction. Several veterans, including Ann McLean and Barry Poll stopped by to let us know what a difference the IT training and equipment provided by Blind Veterans UK has made to their lives.

Middlesbrough

The Middlesbrough Reunion was held at the end of March. In total, 62 guests attended of whom 26 were Members and four were widows. Lots of old friends relished the chance to meet up and share memories and common experiences. A warm welcome was given to our new trustee, Tim Seal, who met with local Members and the community team.

Central London

April saw our London area Members gathered together for their Reunion at the very well-appointed Victory



Caption: The Hook Reunion

Services Club. After an initial welcome from our Chief Executive, in which the Royal Armoured Corps' 80th anniversary received a special mention, Grace was delivered by Member Michael Callaghan and, following a delicious lunch, the role of responder expertly performed by Bryan Naylor.

Hook

Our first Reunion for the south-west region was held, as in recent years, at the grand venue of Tylney Hall in Hook, Hampshire.

The chatter of friendship, and the occasional inter-Services ribbings, could be heard as our Members reacquainted themselves with old friends and discovered new ones.

For the first time, we welcomed formal photography to our reunions. Member Mark Pile brought his photography

skills to the event and took portrait photos of veterans and their guests.

Mark said: "This is the first time I have done such an event and I didn't know how it would go. However, the Members loved having their photos taken, which was great! I think the photos do show a bit of the atmosphere."

Even Echo, Mark's guide dog, got in on the action.

The photographs are being made available for the guests who opted to have their pictures taken. Contact your Community Support Worker, or Mark directly, if you would like yours.

Belfast

The Belfast Reunion was a smaller but equally celebrated affair with 39 guests in attendance including our Chief Executive Nick Caplin, and Head of Research and Innovations Renata Gomes. It's not the size of the event but the impact that we have on Members' lives that we value the most.

■ **We do hope you can make it to a Reunion near you this season. For information about forthcoming Reunions near you, please contact your local community team or our member engagement team on 020 7616 7998.**

Remembering the Fallen of recent conflicts

In the second part of our short series, our President, **Colin Williamson**, continues to remember those who fell in the other conflicts our Armed Forces have taken part in



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Caption: The Troubles, Shankill

We continue to remember those who gave their lives in recent conflicts, around the globe, in service of their country. Many of these wars are remembered only by those that fought in them, and by their families. We have a duty, as a nation, to never forget the sacrifices made on our behalf by British servicemen and women the world over.

Northern Ireland. 1969-2007.

Op Banner was the longest continuous campaign in the history of Britain's Armed Forces. The conflict lasted for 38 years and involved over 300,000 members of the British Army along with service personnel from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and the Royal Air Force.

'The Troubles', as they came to be known, was a territorial conflict involving the Protestant (Unionist) majority who wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom and the Catholic (Nationalist) minority who favoured being part of the Republic of Ireland. The Troubles were never about religion; they were about national identity and territory.

The main belligerents were the Irish Republican Army (IRA) on the Nationalist side and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) on the Unionist side.

“There are too many stories of courage and self-sacrifice to fit into these pages and to list them all would fill this magazine”

The roots of the IRA go back to 1916 and the Easter Rising in Dublin, which subsequently led to the war of independence and the eventual partition of Ireland. The military wing of the IRA were known as the Provisionals, and they carried out the majority of murders and bombings throughout the campaign of violence.

The UVF was formed in 1966 in response to a rise in Irish nationalism, but can trace their roots back to the movement founded in 1912 which was set up to oppose home rule. They too contributed to the cycle of violence and death which tainted that particular period of history in Northern Ireland.

Other groups took part in the violence, including the unionist Ulster Defence Association and the nationalist Irish National Liberation Army.

This period of civil unrest saw unprecedented levels of violence never seen before in the United



Kingdom. Atrocities included the killing of innocent civilians, members of the security forces, police and prison officers, the judiciary, MPs and a prominent member of the Royal Family - Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Queen's second cousin and uncle of Prince Phillip, was murdered by an IRA bomb in 1979.

Thousands of people were seriously injured and maimed for life. British servicemen and women accounted for the majority of casualties.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement brought an end to the majority of the

violence, but pockets of resistance still exist and British service personnel still have a presence in Northern Ireland. Official records show 763 members of the British armed forces lost their lives in the conflict.

The Falklands War. 1982.

To begin to understand the cause of the Falklands War, you first have to know a little of Argentina's volatile past.

In the years leading up to 1982 Argentina was a very fragmented country. After deposing the President, Isobel Peron, in 1976, the military

junta launched a campaign of state terrorism which saw the disappearance of over 30,000 of its citizens. These 'Disappeared' were kidnapped, tortured and murdered by orders of the junta, having been perceived as a threat to the military government, either politically or ideologically.

This was a dirty war, the military junta were determined to eradicate anyone that disagreed with their social and economic reforms. The unfortunate victims were systematically rounded up and brutally murdered in an attempt to silence political and social opposition.

Coupled with that, the country was in dire straits economically, with chronic inflation, high unemployment and crippling foreign debt.

To appease its increasingly vocal and hostile population, and in order to restore support for the military government the junta decided to reassert its claims over sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, which they called Las Malvinas.

On 19 March 1982, Argentinian scrap metal workers landed illegally on South Georgia, an island in the South Atlantic Ocean which is a British Overseas Territory. Two days later HMS **Endurance**, a Royal Navy ice

“There are too many stories of courage and self-sacrifice to fit into these pages and to list them all would fill this magazine”

patrol vessel, left its port in Stanley, with a contingent of Royal Marines and two helicopters, en-route to South Georgia. They landed on the rocky outcrop on 24 March to monitor the situation and the following day a party of Argentinian Marines landed at Leith Harbour on the island.

On 29 March, a Royal Marine detachment arrived at Stanley to take over from Naval Party 8901 (Royal Marines) whose tour of duty on the island had come to an end. On Thursday, 1 April, Royal Marine Commandoes took up defensive positions around Port Stanley. The Special Boat Service was given orders to mobilise.

The Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands began the following day.

There are too many stories of courage and self-sacrifice to fit into these pages, and to list them all would →



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Caption: Argentinian soldiers, Port Stanley

fill this magazine. Suffice to say, two Victoria Crosses were awarded posthumously after the campaign and 150 gallantry medals awarded, fifteen of those posthumously.

Key events during the campaign were;

- The sailing of the Task Force from Southampton on 5 April, 1982.
- The bombing of Port Stanley airfield by RAF Vulcan bombers on 1 May.
- The sinking of the Argentinian cruiser *General Belgrano* by a British



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Caption: Leopoldo Galtieri with General Menendez during the Falklands War.

- submarine on 2 May.
- The sinking of HMS **Sheffield** on 4 May with the death of 20 men.
- 21 May British forces land at San Carlos and HMS **Ardent** sunk with the loss of 22 men.
- 25 May saw the sinking of HMS **Coventry** and SS **Atlantic Conveyor** with the loss of 31 men.
- Darwin Hill and Goose Green taken on 28 May with the loss of 17 British servicemen.
- 8 June witnessed the sinking of the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries **Sir Galahad** and **Sir Tristram** with the loss of 51 men.
- 11 and 12 June, British forces took Mount Longdon, Two Sisters and Mount Harriet losing 22 men and HMS **Glamorgan** was sunk by an Exocet missile which killed 14 men.
- British forces take Wireless Ridge, Mount William and Mount Tumbledown on the approach to Port Stanley on the 13 and 14 June.
- Argentine General Menendez surrenders to Major General Jeremy Moore RM on 14 June, signaling a cessation of hostilities and the end of the Falklands War.

The war cost the lives of 255 British military personnel. Argentina still disputes the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, and Britain's Armed Forces still have a presence on this bleak outpost in the South Atlantic.



Caption: Members enjoying a spot of go-karting

Introducing Robert

Member Robert Graham attended a Special Introduction Week for working age blind veterans and tells his story to **Lynette Denzey**

Robert Graham, 40 from Alloa and ex-Scots Guards, began losing his sight six years ago due to macular degeneration. With his partner Anne

he recently attended an introduction week at our Brighton Centre that was specifically aimed at working age blind veterans. →

He admitted that, after being registered vision impaired two years ago, he found it difficult to leave his home. He had totally lost his confidence and was depressed. A breakthrough came when he was introduced to playing bowls, which gave him not just an interest and activity, but also meant he started travelling to matches all over Scotland.

Robert heard about Blind Veterans UK from Scottish War Blinded, and joined us last July. The introduction week in Brighton was the first time he had been to a rehabilitation centre. Says Robert, "Everyone was very welcoming and I soon felt at home there".

Always welcome

Partners are always welcome to come to the centres and Robert's partner, Anne, joined him for the week which they both enjoyed, not least as it was their first time away together without their two sons aged 15 and nine.

She avoided joining Robert in the gym, and instead went with another partner on trips out visiting Brighton's Lanes district and the Pier. One of the activities she did join in with was the cake decorating competition, not realising the sighted competitors were going to be wearing semi-specs which replicate different sorts of sight loss.

As she said, "A real eye opener. All I could see was a blur of yellow and I made a real mess of the cake. It brought home just how difficult even simple tasks are with sight loss".

A big part of the introduction week is the camaraderie – being back amongst other ex-service personnel makes for great banter in the bar at the end of each day. New friendships are made and past experiences shared. The connection of military and sight loss being a very strong bond. Robert said that meeting other blind veterans, some with far more disabilities than he has, was an amazing experience. He appreciated too that the charity does not "mollycoddle – just provides firm encouragement and support".

Robert left the centre with new determination to pursue his dream of becoming a physical training instructor. He already has a home gym and is now going to work on his fitness before returning to our Brighton centre in April for a full-on fitness week as part of his training towards a qualification. We have no doubt he will succeed.

Anne says she too is looking forward to returning to our Brighton centre later this year for a holiday break with Robert.

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 (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: 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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14 September 2019

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