

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

October 2019

A photograph of two elderly men in suits and ties, engaged in conversation. The man on the left has several medals on his lapel. The man on the right is gesturing with his hand. The background shows a red carpet and stanchions, suggesting a formal event.

Getting together

Reunion coverage inside

Inside:

Robert Eddison - A world in one line

Rules of engagement -

Simon Mahoney's sight loss strategy

Straight and true - Archery
awards at Brighton



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

Part of the scenery

Anniversaries are funny things aren't they? The married have a nasty habit of forgetting the important ones (while remembering such trivialities as the cat's birthday and such like), while others have the ability to recall every birthday within their circles of friends.

In this case it's nice to be able to write that our Victory Over Blindness statue outside Manchester Piccadilly station is celebrating its first year.

It's safe to say that that statue has come to symbolise everything that Blind Veterans UK represents – rehabilitation and help for those who have served their country and suffered sight loss, whether in battle or later in life. The City of Manchester has taken it to heart as well, and it's good to report that it has not been vandalised or damaged by graffiti in the time it has stood there, and remains in perfect condition.

You can read more about the anniversary of the sculpture on page 10, but from my perspective, I fervently

hope that it stands for time immemorial to commemorate those who we have looked after, those who are currently in our care, and those who are yet to come to us. If just one person a day stops to look at our statue and recommends a friend or family member to come and join us, then it is serving us well.

On a different tack, you'll notice something new at the bottom of this column. Author, and Member Robert Eddison has kindly agreed to let us publish one of his many aphorisms each month. Robert is a keen creator of aphorisms and is well on the way to having a second volume published. Read about him in our exclusive interview inside.

I hope you enjoy the end of summer as it becomes the beginning of autumn, for many – including myself – it is the most lovely time of the year. Until next month, enjoy your issue. 🍷

Chris Gilson
Editor



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The idea of quality

Your message from your Chairman, Air Vice-Marshal
Paul Luker CB OBE AFC DL

In this edition we are going to learn a little about aphorisms. "Good enough for Government work". Well, if that's an aphorism, it is one that haunts me.

My dad used it a lot, usually as a derogatory term to describe shoddy work that could be done a lot better. It was most often in the context of something that directly affected us. When I was a kid my family was shunted around the globe to wherever my father was posted. This meant frequent changes of married quarters and that's where my father's use of the phrase would often be vented. The target was frequently an organisation known variously as the Ministry of Works, the Ministry of Public Building and Works and - latterly until the 1990s - as the Public Services Agency. As far as dad was concerned, they were wholly responsible for ensuring that our married quarters and his workplace were maintained to a standard one step removed from derelict.

The inference of dad's observation was that, if a job could be done badly, it would be - and that organisation had

turned it into an art form. He saw them as a body that would always take the cheapest option, compromise on quality to cut costs, let questionable contracts, accept a product that was invariably well under specification, and never challenge the contractor. But this didn't matter because it was government money and we - the occupants of said property - didn't get a say in the matter.

He may have had a point. In the 1980s evidence of wide-spread corruption in PSA started to emerge publicly - something long suspected in the



Caption: Paul Luker

Services - which led to its then Chief Executive being removed and the organisation being broken up and commercialised. But, just in case I have any of this wrong, I would be grateful if anyone taking umbrage from these comments and considering legal action would first note that that I have attributed them to my dad. And he's dead.

Fast and loose

The term "Good enough for Government work" has come back into my mind for two different reasons recently. The first is connected with the shenanigans going on in Whitehall over the last few months. I can't help but feel that, whichever side one sits on, too many politicians are playing fast and loose in their arguments using this sort of philosophy. What is more worrying is that, whichever way the argument goes, there might well be officials who think it acceptable to implement policy on that basis as well. And that's all I'm going to say on the subject.

The second occasion occurred to me when the trustees held a brain-storming session at the end of July this year, to consider the long-term future of our charity. The striking thing for me was that collectively we would never dream of using a phrase like "good enough". The stark contrast is that we are all fundamentally wedded to the idea of

"The term "Good enough for Government work" has come back into my mind for two different reasons recently"

quality. We all have opinions on how we might have to evolve but we are nevertheless uncompromising on the view that we need to deliver a standard of support which should not diminish.

This presents an obvious challenge when we are trying to juggle resources, especially when introducing a new strategy which seeks to support a greater number of beneficiaries. The "Good enough for Government work" solution would be to use inferior jam and spread it wider but thinner - and not worry too much if we missed a bit. Our challenge to the charity's management has been to keep the jam as thick and good quality as before by bringing in more jam. That's the easy part of being a trustee: think the big thoughts and then pass the problem on to others to deliver.

It's not that simple of course. You will all have noticed that the way we operate has changed and a key element of that is to ensure that the services we offer are far more bespoke than previously. We still aim to hold to the quality →

line, but make sure that services are applied effectively and appropriately: high quality jam spread at the right thickness for the circumstances, not just loaded on regardless.

Are we unique?

As part of our thinking we challenged ourselves on what we mean by 'quality'. What is it that we do well? Do we actually know that what we think we do well is as good as we think it is? That's a difficult one. In many respects we are very different from other charities, so we rely heavily on subjective judgements rather than comparative measurement. We think we are particularly good at rehabilitation and individual case work. Are we? We want to believe that because, in the world of veterans and visual impairment, it is what should mark us out as unique.

As I often use this letter to make a request of you, perhaps I can add this to the list. Are we as good as we think we are? Where are we hitting the quality line? Where are we undershooting? If you have strong thoughts on this perhaps you can feed them back to our Supporter Services team on **0300 111 2233**.

I do need to add a caveat though. It might well be another aphorism. Perfection is the enemy of pragmatism.

In many fields of endeavour getting to within 90-95 per cent of the target can be reasonably manageable. Completing the last 5-10 per cent can often be unreasonably difficult. By which I mean there comes a point where the amount of effort and resource to get the perfect solution cannot justify the human or material expense. I don't think that this compromises on our trustees ideals of maintaining quality but it does mean that we should give the leadership team a little leeway in how they interpret and deliver it.

Years ago, I ran the outer office of a very senior officer. One day I was reviewing a piece of staff work before it went to him. Talking it through with the junior staff officer doing the work I found myself stupidly saying "Yep, I think that's good enough for government work". My mistake was not just in acting in that way. It was also in unwittingly making the comment within earshot of the 'big man'. Over my shoulder I heard the dread words, "Paul, a word please". Fortunately, he was and is a nice man. But I left his office in no doubt that the work of government is important. So important, in fact, that work on its behalf is never good enough; it can always be improved.

I sense that the trustees of Blind Veterans UK feel the same way about our work. 🍷

In fine hands

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

At the end of August I had the great pleasure of joining our Blind Bowmen Archery Club for their annual dinner at the Brighton Centre. It was a warm and lively affair, and a great celebration of a fine week of shooting. It is wonderful to see our tradition of archery living on in fine hands and so well supported by both Members and volunteers alike.



Caption: Nick Caplin

Our involvement with archery dates from 1976 when we ran an experimental archery course, based in the rifle range at Ovingdean and undertaken in collaboration with Newhaven Archery Club. Although we were not the first organisation for the blind to be involved with archery, it was not a widespread activity at this time. The experiment included making special aids to assist with safety, including boards for stance with foot-guides and T-pieces on a stand which could be raised or lowered to suit the height of the archer and also enable fine adjustment of direction. This proved successful and we went on to hold our first archery championships in the grounds of the centre in 1977. We also competed in the British Sports Association for the Disabled Championship, our blind veteran Norman Perry winning there in 1976 and on later occasions.

Competing overseas

Our archery activities continued successfully thereafter, with



Members taking part in competitions at the Centre and throughout the country and overseas. An Archery Club was formed in 1981. This was helped by support from celebrities including Dame Vera Lynn, who presented trophies, and the late actor Robert Hardy, himself a keen archer and expert on the longbow, who gave a talk, presented trophies and shot together with our blind veterans.

Members taking part have included the late Tommy Gaygan, who was handless. He had artificial arm fitments

and released the arrow by brushing a trigger release against his chin.

Norman Perry went on to become the oldest competing archer, sighted or blind, in the country, and after his death in 2018 a new barn to be used by the Archery Club was opened in his honour in the grounds of the Brighton Centre. Notable archers of today include Vice President Paul Palmer, and the incomparable Clive Jones - fingers crossed for Clive as he competes with his bow to join the Invictus Games team.



Caption: The first experimental archery training at our Brighton Centre in 1976. Pictured are veteran Peter McCormack and instructor Laurie Austin

Serial achiever

Elsewhere in this issue, you will see the interview with Robert Eddison. Robert is a character and serial achiever. One of the founding members of the Macular Society, he continues to be an ambassador for it to this day. Robert is also active in his local community, especially the Rotary Club of London which he has successfully encouraged to donate to Blind Veterans UK not once but twice in the last two years.

Following a successful career in



Caption: The first experimental archery training at our Brighton Centre in 1976. Pictured are veteran Peter McCormack and instructor Laurie Austin

“Following a successful career in journalism, and capitalising on his love of aphorism, Robert has published *Wisdom and Wordplay*”

journalism, and capitalising on his love of aphorisms (pithy one-liners that are either witty, profound or both), Robert has published *Wisdom & Wordplay* which is one of the finest collections of witticisms and observations on life that you will find, and a great thought for Christmas if you are needing inspiration for presents.

And on the subject of Christmas, I'm pleased to add that blind veteran Alan Lock is now working with us on merchandising - bringing his impressive commercial experience to the benefit of us all.

This year he is taking the lead on our Victory Over Blindness Christmas Card project and is aiming to help us sell as many as we can both to spread awareness of the charity and to help with funds.

It would be fabulous if you could encourage family and friends to get their cards from Alan this year and help him on his mission. 🍀



Caption: It's one year on for our Victory Over Blindness statue

News

Twelve months on - our statue turns one

There will be celebrations ahead as our Victory Over Blindness statue marks its first year after being unveiled outside Manchester Piccadilly station.

Since its dedication ceremony on

16 October 2018, it has been a focal point of the station entrance, being seen by many thousands of travellers a day. Happily, it is regularly looked after by a team of our veterans and volunteers and has been taken to the hearts of the Mancunians who pass it each day.

The bronze statue was sculpted by

Johanna Domke-Guyot who also created 'The Lads' statue that is resident in our Llandudno Centre.

It was unveiled by our Patron, HRH The Countess of Wessex, who said at the time: "This statue commemorates not only the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, but also the life-changing support Blind Veterans UK offers to vision-impaired ex-Service men and women since that conflict through to the present day."

Our chief executive Nick Caplin commented on the anniversary, saying, "It's pleasing to see that Victory Over Blindness continues to advertise the good work we do to the people both of Manchester, and those who are using the station. I am confident it will be with us for many, many years to come, and remain to be held in such high acclaim."

INSIGHT - The Health Data Research UK Hub for Eye Health

It was announced this month that Action Against Age-related Macular Degeneration (AAAMD), the research organisation of which Blind Veterans UK is a founder member, will partner

"The hub, called INSIGHT, is focused on eye disease such as AMD and glaucoma, and its application to wider health, including diabetes and dementia"

with leading organisations and the UK Government to establish a Health Data Research Hub for Health.

The hub, called INSIGHT, is focused on eye disease such as AMD and glaucoma, and its application to wider health, including diabetes and dementia. It will use anonymised large-scale data and advanced analytics to bring new clinical insights: from detection, diagnosis and referral, to new treatments and personalised healthcare.

At the announcement, our Chief Executive Nick Caplin said: "The majority of the blind veterans we support have lost their sight due to age-related conditions such as macular degeneration. Blind Veterans UK is proud to be part of the INSIGHT partnership, a project that harnesses the power of health data to improve quicker diagnosis and future treatments." 🇬🇧

In Your Community

Zippering along...

Bathgate, Scotland-based Blind Veterans UK Member Ann McLean had a flying start to her day recently when she zipped across the River Clyde in Glasgow.

Ann, 81, took part in the challenge in memory of her husband, Henry, who suffered from cancer and dementia and



Caption: Ann (left) has raised £1,700 so far together with her daughter Dorothy (right).

died in April this year. Ann decided she wanted to raise money for Alzheimers UK and together with her daughter, Dorothy, she has raised £1,700 so far and they are still collecting money.

Ann described the day, saying: "I loved it. The zipline was between two bridges in Glasgow – the Clyde Arc, known locally as 'the squinty bridge' and the Millennium Bridge. We had to get harnessed, and then you go up in a cage with nine other people and the instructor. My daughter Dorothy completed the jump too but I went first. The instructor was very patient and told me to step off when I was ready. It was like stepping off a pavement. It felt amazing."

Ann, a former Lance Corporal in the Women's Royal Army Corps, has an interesting bucket list. She would like to go on a sea plane and have a helicopter ride. So far Ann has tried rock climbing at Ratho centre and gliding over the Pentland Hills which she very much enjoyed.

We wish Ann every success and look forward to hearing about her next aerial adventure.

Frank and his textiles

One of our Members, Ellesmere Port-based Frank Byrne, visited our Llandudno Centre as part of his rehabilitation programme to get back into his hobby of working with textiles.

He has made cushions and bags, and was sent home with the task of creating an apron. He returned to Llandudno with not just one apron but five. His next challenge is to make lunch bags for the nurses at Llandudno hospital – one he has responded to with a will.



Caption: Frank with staff at our Llandudno Centre wearing his aprons

Demonstrating reality

Our Brighton Centre held a Virtual Reality (VR) equipment demonstration at the Coach House inn in nearby Rottingdean on 12 September, to showcase how recent developments in technology can be beneficial to those living with sight loss.

This was to say thanks to the proprietors and patrons of the Coach House who raised over £1,500 towards the purchase of the equipment used in the demonstration.



Hayley Kember, of the Coach House Rottingdean, says of their relationship with us, "We have long been supporters of our local Blind Veterans UK Centre in Ovingdean - the facilities and support they provide for both their Members and their Members' families is fantastic."



Caption: Member Lesley Hall with one of the Virtual Reality headsets

"As we have grown close to both staff and Members we wanted everyone to benefit from the money we had raised. We have heard lots of great things about the new VR equipment and are very keen to see it in action. The equipment demo will also give us an opportunity to involve our local community and show them how the money they have helped to raise has been put to use."

Sam does it again!

Following the huge success of his Newbiggin-by-the-Sea charity swim this summer, Blind Veterans UK Member Sam Harris' latest fundraiser swept everyone away, but this time on lovely sound waves created by the famous Silverwood Band.

The band played a delightful matinee performance at the Doorman's Club in Middlesbrough. All proceeds were donated to help rebuild the lives of our blind veterans in the North East and Midlands.

Fundraising for Blind Veterans UK has provided Sam with great experiences. If you're based in the North East and Midlands and are thinking about organising your own event; why not get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

■ Please contact **Barry Hartevelde**, Community Events and Fundraising Manager on **07731 323 242** or email **barry.hartevelde@blindveterans.org.uk**

Its's 104 not out for Ernest

Member Ernest Foard, who lives in Liss, Hampshire (Community 9), celebrated his 104th Birthday on 5 September.

Ernest, who describes himself as "a bit old", was joined by Community Team Leader David Light as well as our Chief of Staff, Andy Cash to help him celebrate his special day.

March for Veterans

The biggest event in our calendar is back for March 2020. We have walks taking place nationwide, with two new ones announced for both Harrogate and the Peak District on 28 March.

We'd be delighted to hear about any walking that you like to do, especially with loved ones, so we can share your stories to let everyone know what a fantastic event this is going to be!



Caption: Ernest enjoying his special day

■ If you, or a close one, love to walk and would like to get involved in walking in the North East and Midlands next March please do get in touch. Call **Nicky Clarke**, Regional Marketing Executive on **07711 781 846** or email **nicky.clarke@blindveterans.org.uk**. You can also visit **www.blindveterans.org.uk/marchisforveterans**.

Comrades in arms

Our popular Reunion season is ongoing and **Abby Tarrant** provides an overview of some of the latest events

Portsmouth Reunion

A great turnout of 88 guests attended the Portsmouth Reunion, including 37 Members. Community Team Leader David Light noted that it was the first time that we were joined by members from the Isle of Wight and that a hovercraft flight is an exciting way to start the journey to a reunion.

Aberdeen Reunion

Blind Veterans UK hosted the first

Aberdeen Reunion lunch at the end of August which was really well received. A total of 18 guests attended, and are already looking forward to next year.

North London Reunion

A brilliant event was had by all who attended the North London Reunion when just over 80 people attended - including 36 of our Members.

Following the speeches, our veterans



Caption: Portsmouth reunion



Caption: Sheffield reunion

used the opportunity to say goodbye and thank you to staff members Josie Standbrook and Samantha Packer who have supported them in their communities, but have now moved on to pastures new.

Newcastle Reunion

Community Team Leader Jill James said "Our community has held its third



Caption: Portsmouth reunion



Caption: Sheffield reunion

and final 2019 Reunion Lunch at the Newcastle Crowne Plaza. With over 105 in attendance, it was a fabulous day and it was great to have our chief executive Nick Caplin and his wife Isobel, our president Colin Williamson and Kevin Alderton in attendance.

It's always lovely to see our Members sharing happy times with friends old and new. Well done to everyone involved, and back to the diets today."

Sheffield Reunion

A lovely day was had by all at the Sheffield Reunion. Community Team Leader Mary James said, "Guests enjoyed meeting Members both new and old, eating great food and being entertained by world famous cornet player Richard Marshall (son of one of our members) and the local Blind Society choir." 🍷



Caption: Ron Jury receives a handmade prize arrow from the Chairman of the Fletchers Trust and the Master of the Fletchers Company

Straight and true

Blind Veterans UK and Blind Bowmen member **Ron Jury** won a prestigious award at our Brighton Centre

August 29 proved to be a special day for Member Ron Jury, when he received an award from the Worshipful Company of Fletchers for best archer during Archery Week at our Brighton Centre. The award was presented to Bracknell-based Ron by our Vice-President Paul Palmer, who is also deputy chairman of our Blind Bowmen archery club.

Blind Bowmen chairman Jo Long, said afterwards, "This was a well-deserved award for Ron. He has made special progress over the last couple of years as a regular member of Blind Bowmen and is a more than competent archer. He has even competed against sighted archers – with excellent results."

Ron himself is thrilled by his award. "I'm amazed and very humbled – it took me completely by surprise. I feel that I accepted it on behalf of all our archers though, not just me. They all deserve this equally.

"I joined the Blind Bowman three years ago. I'd already done a little archery years ago, which I greatly enjoyed. When I went to my Blind Veterans UK induction week, I tried it again and it brought back memories. I thought, this is something I could enjoy again."

A worshipful company

We were also delighted to welcome members of the Worshipful Company of Fletchers to our Brighton Centre for the award ceremony.

The Fletchers, who have kindly supported the provision of equipment for our Archery Club for many years and generously supplied the award, were given a tour of the Centre and enjoyed a light lunch before getting a chance to meet with some of the club's members and observe our blind archers in action.

It is one of the earliest livery companies, and was first mentioned in 1371, when it presented a petition to the Lord Mayor of London agreeing that the two trades of fletcher (maker of arrows), and bowyer (make of

longbows) should be seen separately for the common good.

It also has strong military affiliations with all branches of the Armed Forces, including several cadet associations.

Apart from his archery activity at our Brighton Centre, Ron has also been shooting a little closer to home.

"Blind Veterans UK also got me involved with Warfield Bowmen who are local to me in Bracknell. They took three of us blind archers on. They're also a great bunch of people, and very easy to get along with." 🏹

The next Brighton archery event is indoor-based and takes place on 21 February. Those who are interested in attending should register interest early to avoid disappointment, as places will go fast.

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.**

Free, easy and important

With Blind Veterans UK here to help, making your Will has never been easier.

As you are part of our family, we are pleased to announce that we will cover the costs of a simple Will for any Member who needs one. To do so, we've teamed up with the Free Wills Network to launch a simple referral scheme. If you want the peace of mind and legal security a Will provides, then to get started all you'll need to do is provide us with your name and address.

Simon Brown was one of the first of our Members to sign up, and his experience is a testament to how easy it is to do. After making contact, the Free Wills Network put him in touch

“During October, we will be launching a Free Wills leaflet around our Brighton and Llandudno Centre”

with a local solicitor, who walked him through the process step by step.

Simon told us, “The whole process was very painless. The solicitor talked me through it, explained any problems and I felt at ease. I wasn't forced into making any decisions I wasn't sure about making, and everything was explained in full so I understood what the nuances of it meant.”

As well as being delighted with the ease of making a Will, Simon is keen to emphasise the importance.

“I think making a Will is an incredibly important thing, at all ages” he said. “I've known situations where, without a Will it's difficult to sort things out, and I wanted to make sure my assets go where I want them to go.

“Dealing with bereavement is difficult

enough without legal proceedings pinned on top. But if you've got a Will in place, you have that peace of mind that should anything go wrong, your loved ones are looked after”.

With the Free Wills Network, achieving peace of mind couldn't be easier. To start the process please talk to your community team or directly to the legacy team. You can also do it online via our website at blindveterans.org.uk.



Caption: Simon Brown

During October, we will be placing Free Wills leaflets around our Brighton and Llandudno Centres and in our welcome packs, to make sure we get the message out as widely as possible. Please do look out for them, and share the information contained.

For all ages

This service is for Members of all ages, and we would encourage people to start thinking about their Will early. Simon sums it up,

“If you're even contemplating making a Will, then it's definitely time to make one. All it means is that you've got important people in your life that you want to make sure are taken care of”.

Our offer also extends to our Members' friends and family who are age 55 or above, and it covers all simple Wills, including mirror Wills.

Any last advice Simon?

“You've got an opportunity here to have a Will done by a respectable organisation. Someone you can trust, where it's done in a very dignified, honest integral way. So yes, I would always advise people, get your Will sorted out”. 🍷

■ To get in touch with us, just call 020 7616 7953 or email legacies@blindveterans.org.uk.

One line wonder

Well-known author and Member, Robert Eddison, is set to publish his second book of aphorisms – witty one-line gems of wisdom. **Review** interviewed him to find out more

The art of writing aphorisms is a noble one, having been pioneered by such luminaries as Voltaire, Oscar Wilde and Benjamin Franklin, to name but a few. It's the creation of a pithy one-line observation that contains a general truth and, to Member Robert Eddison, it's not only second nature, but a way of life.



Caption: Robert Eddison

Since we last spoke to Robert, his first book of aphorisms, *Wisdom & Wordplay*, has become a firm coffee table favourite. With whispers of a new book in the pipeline, I visited Robert to find out what was afoot and what his next steps were.

"Following the publication of my first book, I got several radio interviews – some over here, one in Northern Ireland and a few in America. *Wisdom & Wordplay* has opened a few doors for me in the publishing field and I found it most encouraging to have achieved something solid to which I can refer."

Yet, Robert felt the format needed changing – especially in one aspect.

"Those who've read the book will recall that it only contains six cartoons and these front the six thematic sections – humorous, off-centre, dark etc.

"I recently visited the basement of Hatchards bookshop. Books like mine come under the term 'reference books',

so, knowing the jargon, I asked to see them. The helpful lady assistant duly pointed me to a now smallish bookcase of "slow-selling" reference books.



"Then she raised my heart from its boots by saying: 'If they're *illustrated*, they sell much better.'" So that was partly why I decided to illustrate all 80 of my aphorisms in my next book."

Robert has been particularly careful to create appropriate cartoons to match his words.

"The illustrations are designed to be minimalist because I don't want them to swamp the words. Initially, I was going to match photographs to my words, but I decided against this because you'll never have a photograph that's directly customised to the words in the way that commissioned illustrations are."

Robert also gave much thought to making all books in the series similar, yet distinct.

"In the end, I decided to give every book in the series a different – and, hopefully, arresting – title and simply have: Award-winning author of *Wisdom & Wordplay* as the strapline on the front cover of each book.

"That way, I can have my cake and eat it. I can have my original title: *Wisdom & Wordplay* run through the series like a golden thread while, at the same time, giving each book a compelling title that punches above its weight. Every book cover will also be formatted and coloured very differently while, at the same time, being instantly recognisable as my unique brand."

I ask Robert how he originates his aphorisms, which must be a time-consuming task. His answer intrigues me.

"That's a fascinating question. Sometimes an aphorism will pop spontaneously out of my head, without the need of forceps. An example might be: *No ageing actress wants to be seen in a good light*.

"Others need five minutes' thought as my pen stays poised over the back of an envelope on the tube between Oxford Circus and Marble Arch. →

An example in this category might be: *Death is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.*

"Some maxims take longer, with the core words or phrases overheard on a bus or over the radio.

"Once something "clicks" like that, I hear the music in the line and know it's as good as I can get it. Condensing an often complex thought into a single line gives me a huge buzz, a *Eureka* moment, as a wave of satisfaction sweeps over me."

I then ask Robert how he targets his readers.

"That's a tricky one. I've discovered that my taste in aphorisms isn't universally shared. It's therefore important to get pre-publication feedback on my work from all age groups and educational backgrounds. I have to bear in mind that what engages a 20-year old is not always what a 70-year old likes. To maximise my readership, I have to cater for all who share my love of language.

"To achieve this for book two, we devised a scheme, whereby five members of my publishing team each selects 10 of my aphorisms a week that they rated eight or above out of ten. From those 50, I select the ones that I think meet the high bar and qualify for inclusion in book two. This means that

the quality of book two should be even higher than that of book one.

This was no mean feat for Robert, even with the help of his loyal team.

"In doing this, I approached quality control in much the same way that I'd done so successfully with *Wisdom & Wordplay* as that had given me proof of concept. If it works, why fix it?

"For *Wisdom & Wordplay*, my team had given me 600 of their favourite aphorisms of mine under 150 different subjects. To these, I applied my quality control filter and rejected half of them.

A coffee table staple?

I tell Robert that I see he keeps his *Wisdom & Wordplay* on his coffee table.

"Well I do and I've noticed to my delight that those who buy my book are also putting it on their coffee tables! The more guests who see it, the more they discuss it with their friends.

"Some also pop it into their briefcase or handbag, and take it out with them to read on the bus or tube. In this respect, my book is different from other books, where the travelling reader is constantly losing their place and having to find it again. With a book of aphorisms, there is no place to lose as you can re-open it anywhere and simply enjoy whichever aphorism comes up!



"I always appreciate people telling me it gives them food for thought. It only takes them a nano-second to read a single line, and they can spend the next five minutes, between bus or tube stops, to reflect on it and relate it to their everyday lives."

In creating his aphorisms over such a long period, I assumed that Robert has an excellent memory for his own work.

"In fact, I have a rubbish memory for lines and can't hold more than two or three in my head at the same time. I can only remember a new joke by substituting it for one of the two earlier ones already lodged in my head – and I wouldn't want it any other way as this works to my advantage.

"I'll tell you why. When I dip into *Wisdom & Wordplay*, half the lines

come across to me as completely fresh. Whenever I dip into my stock of 35,000 aphorisms, most come to me as if they had been written by someone else. Indeed, I hardly remember any of my early ones and it's wonderful."

I ask Robert whether his aphorisms came more easily to him now than before.

"They do – as they should after spending twenty years honing my craft. I can pretty much date them by their quality. The earlier ones, written in the late 1990s, need much more work than, say, those I coined earlier this year."

As a final question, I ask Robert if writing an aphorism is easier than creating a piece of prose, for example.

"Writing good one-liners poses a huge challenge to writers. Condensing a complex thought into a single line calls for great mental agility and rigorous economy. A single surplus or gratuitous word can kill an aphorism stone-dead, just as a single wrong note can spoil a concert or a single miscalculation can cause a bridge to collapse."

As I once wrote, "*Simplicity, looks simple. It's the getting there that's complicated.*" 🍓

Next month, Robert offers advice to those wishing to advance further down the writing path

Sultan sojourn

A team of our veterans made their way to HMS Sultan for its annual award-winning camp. Organiser **Andy Salter** relates the story of a good week.

What a year it's been for the HMS Sultan team. We were honoured to be nominated by Blind Veterans UK for an award in this year's Soldiering-On Awards. Because the camp has been running since 1944, we were competing in the Lifetime Achievement category, sponsored by Greenwich Hospital.

A reception event was held at the House of Lords, giving everyone an opportunity to meet the nominees prior to the actual award evening held at the Westminster Plaza Hotel. Regrettably, we didn't win in our category but we were told by our host and compere Carol Vorderman that "We are all winners". Thank you to Blind Veterans UK for nominating us and for your hospitality on the award night.

On 2 August, with both veterans and helpers arriving safely, the camp convened ready to enjoy a full week of activities, socialising, friendship and camaraderie back in a military setting.

Due to health issues our numbers decreased in the final two weeks prior to it starting but this year saw four new 'campers' give it a go.

Morning on the water

Our programme started on the Saturday morning, when after a short road trip we arrived at Gosport Cruising Club for a "morning on the water" in and around Portsmouth Harbour. This was to be the first of three trips on the sea.

After a day of rest on Sunday, Monday saw an early trip to the sports centre where after a formal welcome by the Commanding Officer of HMS Sultan, Captain John Voyce RN, we enjoyed a sports morning, displaying skills long forgotten. The event attracted media cover from Forces TV and the Portsmouth News.

We returned to the water on Tuesday when, after a ferry trip across the Solent, we enjoyed a day on the Isle of

Wight, visiting the rum and gin distillery and the charming village of Godshell.

Hosted by the Army

On Wednesday, we were excellently hosted by the Army at Thorney Island. This was a totally new event for the camp, and one which proved very popular – it's definitely one to try and incorporate next year.

With the party split into two groups, we again went on the water from the Army Sailing Centre, where we witnessed a family of seals basking on the mud banks. The Royal Artillery Equestrian Centre provided a first-time experience for many, getting everyone on horseback in their covered riding arena.

Without accident or incident, we enjoyed our exhilarating ride being close to these lovely horses. For many it proved to be the highlight of the week.

In no particular order we also enjoyed hospitality and a quiz at Court Barn Conservative Club, archery under the guidance of the Havant and Hayling Bowmen, lawn bowling at Rowner Bowling Club, an outing on the Sultan Sentinel - a vintage steam wagon, a dinner and quiz in HMS Sultan's wardroom, a round of crazy golf and finally an evening with the Rose and Thistle Pipe and Drum Band - as I

previously mentioned, it was quite a full week.

Providing an enjoyable time for the campers, and for some a week's respite for the family, the camp was popular with all involved. One new camper commented, "This week has brought me back into the living world and kept me away from being a recluse". Could it be for you? If so, the calling notice together with my contact details will be in a Review early in the New Year. 🍷



Caption: Portsmouth Harbour

ALEXEY FEDORENKO / ADOBE STOCK

Old Software

Our Member Support Hub's **Craig Vaughton** talks about why software updates can prove to be a headache

"The software I had on my old PC won't work on my new Windows 10 PC."

"My Apple Mac says I've got software that won't work the next time there's an update."

I've heard this so many times, but it's still something that people get annoyed about - they've paid not inconsiderable sums for certain software and expect to keep using it as long as they like. To a large extent I can see why people get annoyed, but it's definitely worth bearing in mind, that despite feeling like it was only the other year, Windows 98 was released 21 years ago, while Windows 7 is a decade old.

Time and computing move on - both seemingly at an increasingly rapid rate - and computers possibly more than any other technological device, definitely have a huge element of built-in obsolescence, as technological improvements and new thinking steers

the manufacturers in new directions.

The old adage that if car manufacturers had kept up with the technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving £25 vehicles that do a 1,000 miles to the gallon isn't that far from the truth.

Obviously there's also an element of companies wanting to make more money by selling you their latest and greatest, or as is becoming more common, moving you from what was a simple 'buy a CD for £x amount, load it and use it, then do it again when the next version arrives 2-3 years later' process; to a 'pay us a much smaller £x amount per month for as long as you want to use the software, with every update we do included free', subscription model.

With no discs involved and everything downloaded, it's cheaper for the companies involved, you're permanently up to date, plus you



DAVILES / ADOBE STOCK

benefit from support or new features along the way and crucially, it's also harder for people to pirate the software.

Good and bad points

There's good and bad points with both systems. Some software is actually very good value as a subscription compared to the price that used to be charged for the full retail version - in some cases you can save about £120 over three years at the cheapest rate.

However, most of the reasons software used to work but no longer will are 1) down to technical changes made in hardware and software over a period of

years. For Windows users, the change to the underpinnings of the operating system that's stopping old software running has been introduced gradually, probably since around 2005 when Windows XP was in use. Apple, too, has been warning its developers that they need to change their programs for about 3-4 years.

Without getting all technical, these changes are all about trying to get more performance from computers and this is all related to how much data or information the computer can push around its circuits at once. These circuits are actually called a "bus" and the width of the bus is measured →

in bits, with a bigger one meaning you can cram more bits through at once. The most recent computers are all generally using a 64-bit bus, whilst the original home computers of the 80's, your Spectrums and BBC Micros used an 8-bit bus; So in terms of data bus sizes, think cat flap instead of key hole!

To fully use the new faster, wider bus means programmers have to write or re-write their code to utilise all the features, this applies to both those writing the programs you use and those developing Windows or MacOS themselves. Sadly this isn't as straight forward as you might think, there's some odd quirks in numerous



Caption: Craig Vaughton

parts of programming a computer and the change to 64-bit is one of them, apparently all down to memory addressing boundaries...but don't worry, I'm not even going to attempt to explain what that means.

Technical tomfoolery?

Across at Apple, they simply decreed to all developers that as of October 2019, if they haven't moved their product(s) to use 64-bit, it won't work, end of story. Which, when you own and control the hardware and software platform in the way Apple does, everyone plays to your rules or they don't play at all.

For the Windows camp, it's meant that support for everything written for Windows 98, Windows XP and even some Windows 7 applications, has been dropped from Windows 10. There are ways and means of running some applications, but you really, really must like jumping through lots of hoops to do so and even then, there's a good chance the program still won't work as it should; here speaks the frustrated voice of experience...

Updating your software can be frustrating, but it's a necessary evil to get the best out of your equipment - from your phone to your computer. If you need any advice then please contact us at the Member Support Hub on **01273 391 447**. 🍷



Caption: Esmond being taught Braille by Lady Buckmaster, 1941

Dark clouds and white

Actor Esmond Knight was also one of our Members. **Robert Baker** continues the story of a remarkable man

In addition to his busy acting career and his family life, Esmond also enjoyed writing and painting. He had written an account of his wartime experience, *Enemy in Sight*, while at Church Stretton with us and this was later published in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Although he did not follow up *Seeking the Bubble* with more volumes of autobiography, Esmond continued to write for magazines, including the *Review* and in 1986, writing under the nom-de-plume of Nicholas Lackland, he was the joint-winner →

of our short story competition. Esmond also wrote and performed a solo play on a subject of great interest to him, *Agincourt*.

Esmond took up painting in 1948, and went on to become distinguished in this field. Many of his paintings, which were predominantly in oils but included some watercolours, were publicly exhibited, including at a posthumous retrospective of his work held in Chelsea in 1988. He described for the *Review* how he relied on his memory: 'I am remembering, if you are looking out at a harbour or over fields, how the light changes as the

distance goes away. If it is a landscape I always start with the sky, whether it is a storm or a clear pale blue with dark clouds and white. You decide how high up on the canvas your actual eye line is going to be. It might be a picture in which the horizon is very, very low. This gives a wonderful feeling of space. Then, if you want to show more, you simply put the horizon up. Then, of course, the stuff in the foreground comes right up to you in perspective.' Esmond also sent some of his small paintings as Christmas cards to friends. We are very fortunate to have those he sent to our former Chairman Lord (Ian)



Caption: Esmond and Lady Buckmaster performing on stage

Fraser and his wife Irene, and some of these works are reproduced here.

Esmond's acting career, on stage, radio, television and film continued for the rest of his life. Perhaps one of his best-known television roles is, ironically, one which is in the main now missing and cannot be seen! He appeared in a Doctor Who story, *The Space Pirates*, in 1969 but unfortunately this is one of those which were later wiped by the BBC and has not been found elsewhere. Only one complete episode (of six) is known to survive, although there is an audio track of the whole.



Caption: Esmond's art

In 1987 Esmond, then aged 80, had been in Egypt filming for the BBC series *Fortunes of War*. He had returned to London but was due to fly out again shortly to complete filming when he suffered a heart attack and died. Esmond's remarkable career, together with other information about his life, is covered comprehensively in a website, <http://www.esmondknight.org.uk/>, produced by John Hughes, an admirer of Esmond and his work. This article draws upon some information from the website.

Annabella Cloudsley, who had worked with Esmond on his book *Seeking the Bubble*, worked afterwards for the actor Sir Lewis Casson, in a role at the Arts Council, before training as a RAF Wireless Mechanic and serving in the war. Afterwards, she studied at Girton College, Cambridge then worked as in lecturing and as a writer. She married and had two sons. As Annabella Kitson, she joined Blind Veterans UK in 2006 and a few years later very kindly wrote and gave to us a brief but vivid account of her experiences working with Esmond. She was told by St James' Secretarial College that '...it's efficiency, not sympathy he [Esmond] needs...' and then her first impressions on meeting him are of '...a great deal of energy, strictly controlled.' However, it appears that Lady Buckmaster's efforts training him in Braille were →

not entirely successful! – ‘After a while he spoke of St Dunstan’s, their kindness and practicality. “But they couldn’t make me learn Braille!”’ Annabella also remembers meeting Esmond’s daughter Rosalind on occasions when she stayed for afternoon tea. There is also a fascinating account of visits out to film studios: ‘Sometimes, too, we made a day’s expedition to the Denham Film Studios where Deborah Kerr was making ‘The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp’ and Laurence Olivier was sometimes about.

At that time a very unbecoming orangy-brown make up was used for actors on film. I saw them having tea in a break in filming. John Huston, the film director, was sitting in a kind of deck chair – Esmond needed me to tell him who was about. Perhaps it was in this setting that he was most tense – so much depended on his making a good impression as an actor who was fit, not as a blinded man who would be difficult to work with. Perhaps other actors had guilt feelings, knowing what he had sacrificed in the navy, while they worked in comparative safety at home.’

Esmond’s family have continued his involvement with acting. Both his first wife Frances and second wife Nora had long and distinguished careers; Esmond acted with both of them both before

and after losing his sight. Rosalind’s hugely successful and diverse career has included work with the Royal Shakespeare Company and at the Old Vic and in popular television roles including in *Only Fools and Horses* and *Gimme Gimme Gimme*. Rosalind’s late husband Michael Elliott was a theatre director and their daughter Marianne has followed him into this career, become one of the country’s most well-known and eminent practitioners; their daughter Su is also a successful actor, appearing in numerous films and TV series. Our grateful thanks go to Rosalind for assistance with this article.

Esmond’s legacy, beyond his family, rests of course with his body of work, including the extraordinary quantity and range of performances he gave after losing his sight, with much of his film and television work happily being now readily available to us today. As with many blind veterans working in other fields, he broke new ground in forging a successful career in a profession which many people would previously have assumed would be closed to the blind and visually impaired. No greater tribute to his talent and application can be paid than by noting that people today watching Esmond’s performances without knowing his personal story will automatically assume they are watching a sighted actor. 🗣️

Rules of engagement - prop or weapon?

Member **Simon Mahoney** offers advice on how to tackle your sight loss through structure



Caption: Simon Mahoney

Life-changing events involving loss and change occur for everyone. These moments are often accompanied by a period of intense emotions, irrationality and mental chaos, and sometimes the individual involved feels as though they are losing their mind.

The turmoil is not a comfortable experience – and medication, talking therapies or a combination of both may be used to help people find their way, while clearly talking about feelings and accepting help to make sense of the new situation is also valuable. There is, however, an internal resource which helps restore some order to a chaotic situation - this is the formulation of, and adherence to a set of rules of engagement.

These rules can be anything you like, provided they are

- relevant
- have meaning for you



- are achievable
- are clear
- are few enough to remember and act upon

In my own case when my sight started to go, almost the first thing I did was to formulate such a set of rules. I knew that I would need them in the emotional and functional chaos that accompanies sight loss.

I chose ten rules, some of which were conceptual while others were behavioural. They were,

Accept your situation. Acceptance means recognising that sight loss is actually happening, that you are not ignoring it in the hope it will go away. Acceptance does not have to involve being manically cheerful, and giving way to self-indulgent misery is not the answer either. Full acceptance may be a work in progress throughout life. Without this, nothing else can happen with respect to regaining a normal existence.

Treat obstacles as an opportunity to improvise, adapt and overcome. This is an unashamed steal of the idea of the power of positive thinking. Regarding problems as opportunities is a good way to boost yourself and reduce the obstacle.

Learn or improve a skill every day.

This acts as a reminder that the battle to live with sight loss is a marathon and not a sprint. It is vital that some momentum is maintained, and this includes every aspect of life. When you feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task, looking at what you can do in comparison with a few weeks in the past will restore your motivation to keep improving.

Listen carefully, judge slowly.

With the inability to read non-verbal communication our communication skills are altered drastically. We have to listen harder, carefully assess what is being said, and be cautious about the conclusions we draw. We must take a more considered and thoughtful approach to our interactions with others.

Your impairment is nothing to be ashamed of. Do not be embarrassed about being visually impaired, and do not feel it is due to some failing in yourself. If you think you are being judged, remember people are too busy with their own affairs to be watching us, and if we suspect they are then consider how well they would cope with sight loss.

Get organised and have a place for everything. With loss of sight there is so much we have to remember, that any trick or strategy to make life easier should be used. Make sure that you know exactly where everything is,

and others know that items have to stay in a certain place, as their removal or relocating can cause our world to become even more chaotic.

“Broken glass” principle. This stems from the action you would take if you saw a broken bottle on a beach - you would pick it up immediately to prevent injury. I try to use this principle in the sense that if I come across something that needs doing - like putting a pair of shoes safely to one side - then I will do it.

Ask for help. We are the one with the problem - we can be fiercely independent and insist on doing everything without help, (in which case good luck), or we can be sensible and negotiate the use of someone else's eyes when we need sight to do something. I feel this is important as a recurring, daily theme.

Check everything and go at your own pace. Rushing equals chaos. We must check and check again whenever we do anything. And as a quick visual once-

“There is, however, an internal resource which helps restore some order to a chaotic situation”

over is no longer possible, we have to be meticulous in physically checking our immediate environment with our hands. To begin with, you will be very slow at tasks, but under no circumstances should you allow others to rush you, as there lies disaster, which will provide an excuse for others to deny you the opportunity to do anything for yourself.

Do not be offended by references to sight. Phrases such as, 'look at the colour of that sky' or 'Do you see what I mean?' are an integral part of language, and people cannot help using them. People do become dreadfully embarrassed and it is down to us to reassure them. The bottom line is very simple: we cannot expect people to change the linguistic habits of a lifetime.

Trying to create order

These rules were formulated to deal with my condition of sight loss and are a fit for how things are now for me.

When things change in the future, including my own abilities, it may be necessary to review the rules to see if they are still fit for purpose.

Remember that they are for your guidance and not your domination. They are there to help you find your way, not to tell you what to do. To quote an old adage, 'they are for the direction of fools and the guidance of the wise'. 🍷

Family News

Birthdays

Grace Elliot who celebrates her 100th birthday 17th October.

Harold Bird who celebrates his 100th birthday on 24th October.

Elizabeth Forster who celebrates her 101st birthday on 24th October.

Daphne Hinton who celebrates her 101st birthday on 31st October.

Norman Boughton-Smith who celebrates his 103rd birthday 13th October.

Enid Gray who celebrates her 100th birthday on 10th October.

John Yates-earl who celebrates his 100th birthday on 31st October.

Leonard Meredith who celebrates his 100th birthday on 24th October.

Charles Warman who celebrates his 101st birthday on 8th October.

Helen Crosby who celebrates her 100th birthday on 27th October.

Royal Freer who celebrates his 104th birthday on 21st October.

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.

Anne Maureen Sparling who died on 1st September 2019. She was the wife of Philip Henry Sparling.

Edna Plater who died on 4th September 2019. She was the wife of the late James Henry Plater.

Janet Georgina Tavener who died on 18th July 2019. She was the wife of the late Richard Charles Tavener.

Margaret Wade who died on 4th August 2019. She was the wife of Bryan Wade.

Mollie Irene Belfield who died on 24th August 2019. She was the wife of John William Belfield.

Olive Agnes McConnell who died on 1st August 2019. She was the wife of the late Robert Dodd McConnell.

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

George Victor Barlow of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk died on 24th August 2019 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

John Batty Leyland of Lancashire died on 7th September 2019 aged 89. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Anthony Blakeborough of Darlington, County Durham died on 9th September 2019 aged 89. He served as a Leading Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Thomas Boxall of Seaford, East Sussex died on 4th September 2019 aged 86. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Alan Carroll of Colwyn Bay, Clwyd died on 16th August 2019 aged 85. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Alan Clark of Wigan, Lancashire died on 10th September 2019 aged 84. He served as a Leading Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

John Colburn of Brighton died on 1st August 2019 aged 92. He served as an Ordinary Seaman in the Merchant Navy.

Anthony Constable of Kettering, Northamptonshire died on 2nd September 2019 aged 94. He served as a Private in the General Service Corps

William Armstrong Cooper of Glasgow, Lanarkshire died on 4th August 2019 aged 80. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Phyllis Daphne Cousins of Thetford, Norfolk died on 6th September 2019 aged 88. She served as a Leading Aircraftswomen in the Women's Royal Air Force.



George Brian Craddock of Northallerton, North Yorkshire died on 10th July 2019 aged 84. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

Eric David Lyndon Davies of Reigate, Surrey died on 21st August 2019 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

Horace Henry Dearlove of Brighton, East Sussex died on 30th August 2019 aged 95. He served as a Leading Air Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

Joyce Dobson of Exmouth, Devon died on 3rd September 2019 aged 83. She served as a Private in Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

Donald Alexander Donaldson of Boston, Lincolnshire died on 7th September 2019 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

John Duff of Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear died on 11th August 2019 aged 102. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Gerald Richard Dunford of Weymouth, Dorset died on 9th September 2019 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Home Guard.

Peter John Edwick of Manningtree, Essex died on 29th August 2019 aged 94. He served as a Flying Officer in the Royal Air Force.

Frederick Evans of Redruth, Cornwall died on 6th September 2019 aged 95. He served as a Private in the General Service Corps.

William John Gasson of Burgess Hill, West Sussex died on 9th September 2019 aged 93. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Henry Robin George of Oxford, Oxfordshire died on 13th August 2019 aged 96. He served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

John Edward Sampson Glover of Littlehampton, West Sussex died on 23rd August, 2019 aged 97. He served as a Temporary Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

Raymond Arthur Greenway of Aldershot, Hampshire died on 21st August 2019 aged 87. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

Stephen Hanlon of Sunderland, Tyne and Wear died on 30th August 2019 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

John Everatt Harrison of Scunthorpe, South Humberside died on 19th August 2019 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Artillery.

Thomas Hurley of Wickford, Essex died on 14th September 2019 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Norman Jolliff of Durham, County Durham died on 4th September 2019 aged 98. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Ronald Pryce Jones of Nuneaton, Warwickshire died on 21st August 2019 aged 89. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Peter Kilshaw of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 10th September 2019 aged 91. He served as a Craftsman in the General Service Corps.

Peter Laing of Hereford died on 9th September 2019 aged 92. He served in the Royal Engineers.

John Lambert of Luton died on 12th September 2019 aged 91. He served as an Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Terence Lawler of Tavistock, Devon died on 6th September 2019 aged 80.

He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

George Barry Leddington of Shrewsbury died on 13th September 2019 aged 90. He served as a Leading Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Frederic Gilson Morton of Kilgetty, Dyfed died on 5th September 2019 aged 98. He served as a Gunner in the Border Regiment.

Ronald Paterson of Penicuik, Midlothian died on 3rd September 2019 aged 60. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Robert James Philpott of Sutton, Surrey died on 17th August 2019 aged 93. He served in the General Service Corps.

Alan Wilfred Ray of Sunderland died on 21st August 2019 aged 88. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Cyril Reeves of Birmingham died on 21st August 2019 aged 89. He served as a Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Kenneth Rhodes of Immingham, Lincolnshire died on 21st August 2019 aged 81. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.



Norman George Richards of Camborne, Cornwall died on 16th September 2019 aged 92. He served as an Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Reginald Scott of Ormskirk, Lancashire died on 1st September 2019 aged 99. He served as a Private in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's).

Norman Patrick Scully of Stanley, County Durham died on 16th September 2019 aged 84. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

Jack Shelley of Bristol died on 14th September 2019 aged 99. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

Leslie Gilbert Simpson of Brighton, East Sussex died on 12th August 2019 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Royal East Kent Yeomanry.

John Stacey of Maidstone, Kent died on 11th September 2019 aged 101. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Gordon Stratton of Southampton died on 30th August 2019 aged 94. He served as a Leading Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

William Tait of Bellshill Close, Tyne and Wear died on 27th August 2019 aged

81. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Peter Meredith Terry of Cirencester, Gloucestershire died on 21st August 2019 aged 81. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Peter Aubrey James Terry of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 25th July 2019 aged 94. He served as a Rifleman in the General Service Corps.

Francis Stephen Titt of New Milton, Hampshire died on 1st September 2019 aged 92. He served as a Lance Sergeant in the East Surrey Regiment.

Joyce Esther Elizabeth Walker of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 16th July 2019 aged 96. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Brian Wallace of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 21st August 2019 aged 82. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Joseph Wise of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 29th August 2019 aged 91. He served as a Petty Officer Electrician in the Royal Navy.

James Arthur Wyatt of Truro, Cornwall died on 1st July 2019 aged 74. He served as a Bandsman in the Prince of Wales Division.



JOAQUIN CORBALAN / ISTOCK

Are you connected?

Connections aren't always about technology in this day and age as our Chaplain, **Clare Callanan** explains

Today the word 'connected' seems to be all about getting a '4G' signal on your mobile phone, and the Internet. And whether or not you have a 'good' connection. We appear to have lost the sense that the best part of being human is being able to interact with other people on a personal level, not a technological level. The drive to connect is in all of us, whether we acknowledge it or not.

Very recently, an Army chaplain colleague of mine was killed in a car accident. Heart attack. Car came off the road. Sudden. Immediate. Such news is always a great shock. This was a man who was physically big, and who just generally filled a lot of space. Garry's voice was loud, his laugh was deep, his humour rough. His theological viewpoints came from →

a very different place from mine and potentially that could have been very dis-connecting. And yet the shared experience of six months in Afghanistan brought each of us to a place of vulnerability and connection.

I believe vulnerability is the driving force of connection. It requires courage. It is tender. It is not possible to connect without it and yet we've made ourselves 'strong'. In the military especially we've been toughened up, hardened up and protected ourselves from being hurt. Absolutely no surrender. But there is a cost to all this 'stiff upper lip' way of being. When we close down our vulnerability we potentially close down from love, closeness, gratitude, relationships and connection. Relationships on all levels struggle.

We seem to have turned vulnerability into a weakness and guardedness into a strength. Of course there are times to be guarded, but there are also times to be vulnerable. We're protected, but we're disconnected.

The greatest of courage

Life happens – really happens – in the middle of our vulnerability. It's here, in strength and with the greatest of courage, that we ask for help, say the first 'I love you', reach out for friendship, tell someone we miss them, ask where

we stand, feel. When we shut down our vulnerability, we shut down the possibility.

That place of vulnerability for Garry and I came at the end of a long day, spent with our own soldiers, each tired and burdened. But in the courageous step to reach out, the ensuing three hours of quiet talk, silences and reflection, in a sandy tent in the middle of Helmand, meant that a friendship developed that supported us through another seven years of being posted to completely different locations and seeing each other very rarely. That is vulnerability. That is connectedness. That is relationship. And for that I will be always grateful. Thank you, Garry. 🍷



Caption: Clare Callanan



Walter Smith

Caption: Walter Smith enjoying a quiet spot of fishing

The complete angler

When Walter Smith lost his sight, he also lost his ability to fish. Now, fifteen years later, we've helped him get his hobby back, as **Laura Weir** reports

New Blind Veterans UK Member, 87-year old Walter Smith, has rediscovered his love of angling after attending the Fishing Week held by our Llandudno

Centre during September. Before Walter lost his sight, he was a keen fisherman but had to give it up 15 years ago, as his sight began to fail. →

Living in both the UK and Spain, Lincoln-born Walter would go fishing twice a week. The fishing week was the first opportunity that he had to pick up the rod again and get back the confidence that he can still go fishing even after sight loss.

Speaking of his time at Llandudno, Walter said, "Being able to fish again certainly brought back one or two

"I gave a family member all my equipment 15 years ago – I've had to ask them for it back"



Caption: From the large...

memories, and I definitely want to continue doing it now. I never thought that I would be able to fish again so I gave a family member all my equipment 15 years ago – I've had to ask them for it back."

Our helpers and volunteers during the Fishing Week supported Walter throughout and he is very grateful of their words of encouragement.

He added: "Everyone was really helpful. [Trustee and familiar face at Llandudno] Billy Baxter said to me 'You can do it. You can still do these things even though you have lost your sight'". 🍷



Caption: ...to the small

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.

Member Support Hub: 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**.

We value your feedback and use it to improve and develop the services we provide. If you would like to make a complement or a complaint then please contact us. Email feedback@blindveterans.org.uk, write to us at Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London, W1H 4HD, call **0207 7235 021** or ask a member of staff to help.

A different format?

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





Limited edition

'Victory over Blindness' prints – a truly unique gift

On 16 October, 2018, Blind Veterans UK erected its Victory over Blindness statue at Manchester Piccadilly station as a permanent commemoration of our work. Now, Johanna Domke-Guyot, its creator, has produced a highly limited run of prints.

Strictly limited to 100, measuring 35.5 x 44.5 cm and individually signed by the artist, these prints commemorate the inspiration behind 'Victory over Blindness'.

For a suggested donation of £95, this is the perfect gift for Christmas. With all proceeds going to Blind Veterans UK, it helps us continue to rebuild lives after sight loss.

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