

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK  
November 2019



## Turning heads

Victory over Blindness  
celebrates its first year

### Inside:

Highly strung - a musical  
Members Day in London  
GOAL goes to Manchester  
Meet Alexa - how a virtual  
assistant can help you



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss

# Bowing our heads

Being an avid reader I always have more than three books on the go at any one time, mainly to break up the daily commute into the office. One of my most recent tomes was a history of the ill-fated battlecruiser HMS Invincible, which was sunk at the Battle of Jutland in May 1916.

When the mighty ship – weighing 17,250 tons – exploded in just 90 seconds, she took 1,026 souls with her, the majority of whom have no grave, while the wreck itself, what remains of her, is slowly settling into the seabed. In perhaps 20 years time, the broken remains will have nearly vanished in full, and there will be little physical presence left.

Reading the sad story of HMS Invincible once again brought home why Remembrance must remain such an important part of our lives for all time. Today's generation is as dislocated from the nuts and bolts conflict of Jutland as those that fought in the

battle would be when faced with the latest iPhone, or some other piece of equivalent technology.

This is not to suggest that today's younger folk don't care however – they do, and Paul Luker's insightful article on page four acknowledges this. Yet, they still need to know – as do we all – that their freedom and ours came at a price and that the ultimate sacrifice paid by so many must be commemorated.

I hope that when the hour sounds on 11 November this year, many of them will put down their mobile phones, or tablets or other devices and stop for those two minutes to commemorate our dead. I have that faith.

As always, I look forward to seeing some of you in London for Remembrance Sunday and wish you the very best for November.

Until next month, enjoy your magazine. 🍷

**Chris Gilson**  
Editor



## Robert's aphorism

In old age, we lose height but gain authority

**On the cover**  
**Our Victory over**  
**Blindness statue at one**



# Coming of age

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

**PALE GAS.** Do you recognise the acronym? I recall as a first former at grammar school being told by the padre that it would help me remember the seven deadly sins. I confess that I have suffered most of them to some degree but the one that continues to challenge me most is the 'P for pride'.

Far from seeing pride as a sin, I tend to see it almost as a virtue, especially in the context of how I regard other people and their actions. Now, to explain how this comes to the fore for me at the moment, I probably should mention that we have just spent a weekend looking after two of our grandchildren. My daughter and her husband were packed off to celebrate a joint significant birthday and, as well as giving them a long weekend break, we volunteered to babysit for 48 hours. Those of you who have also made this gallant sacrifice will readily understand the significance of counting the time in hours, not days.

The two boys are quite different. One, just turning five, is a little serious, initially slightly reserved and just a touch

judgemental. Before we picked them up his mother asked him if he would be OK looking after us. He replied, "We need to make sure they don't do naughty things ... especially grandpa". The other, just turned three, is the personification of mischief in a cherubic face. The two of them are great fun: exhausting but a joy to be with. Cut through all the high jinks, minor naughtiness, occasional tears and ceaseless clamour and they are thoroughly rejuvenating. More importantly they remind me of how magical it is to see two inquisitive little



**Caption: Paul Luker**

people evolving and growing. How could I not be proud of that?

## A strange environment

On the Saturday we took them to see our local heritage railway, the Mid-Hants Watercress Line, where we met up with my youngest daughter and her two nippers – very much in the same mould. All four were completely absorbed in this strange environment and asking endless questions. They seemed instantly to get the same elation that I still get peering out of a steamy carriage window at passing countryside framed in engine smoke, to a rhythmic soundtrack of clanking wheels and rails. And when we stood on the platform, fascinated watching the noisy business of uncoupling and recoupling the engine, the otherwise highly independent three-year-old stood with his little hand firmly gripping mine. So, I do have a purpose after all.

Youngsters are featuring prominently in my life this week. Having trained and worked as a pharmacist for ten years, my youngest daughter has just retrained as a teacher and has started at her first school teaching her own class of six and seven-year-olds. One of the subjects they are covering – I presume as a vehicle to get to grips with the basics of English – is heroes and superheroes. She has press-ganged me into helping by talking about my life

“My daughter is trying to get the message across that heroism takes many forms and is often shown by very ordinary people doing extraordinary things”

in the Armed Forces. And before you ask, no, this is not a pride thing about me: I am not promoting myself as a super-hero. My daughter is trying to get the message across that heroism takes many forms and is often shown by very ordinary people doing extraordinary things. To make the point she is also co-opting other friends to talk about their experiences of heroism in their respective walks of life.

That is very much my message. As well as talking about what I have seen others do in the Forces, I am also talking about the sorts of things I see you, the Members of Blind Veterans UK, cope with. And I see absolutely nothing wrong with being proud of what you achieve.

## A vast majority

I think youngsters get a generally bad press at the moment. Possibly it has always been like that but in my experience the vast majority are →



CHRIS NYBORG / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

**Caption: The Cenotaph, London**

good kids with a strong moral compass, whose reputation gets dragged down by a relatively small minority of bad eggs. Maybe I am overly influenced by my good fortune over the past dozen years in working with some of the best of them – the cadet forces – but I don't think so. To call these particular youngsters the 'snowflake generation' is just plain wrong and unfair: they would run rings around the very journalists who make that claim (if ever the journalists deigned to venture out into the cold, wet, challenging outdoors that the cadets inhabit so frequently). So, yes, I am naturally proud of them as well.

And now I come to the most difficult part of my flirtation with pride. This November I will be at the Cenotaph, marching among our Members to commemorate sailors, soldiers, airmen, the emergency services and the civilians who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country. All of us will have our own reasons to be there. Each of us will have our own, different, memories of fallen comrades.

Among the memories, the sadness, the sense of loss, I will also be feeling a sense of pride. I feel proud and privileged to have served alongside such men and women.

I feel proud that we still have Armed Forces that are able to stand up for what is right and, when called to do so, to be prepared to put their lives on the line. I know we aren't perfect but I also know that we endlessly try to be. I would feel a deal prouder if our political representatives could show similar backbone in supporting our veterans – but Remembrance Day is not about politicians, so I won't be dwelling on that.

And, although my pride is almost entirely centred on what others have done and continue to do, there will be a little self-indulgent part that will be proud of me. I think I make a pretty good Grandpa. 🍷

# The magnificent seven

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

Last month we celebrated the first birthday of our fabulous Victory over Blindness (VOB) statue at Manchester Piccadilly. Members, staff and volunteers met at the station and had a full day of rattling buckets, talking to

**Caption: Nick Caplin**

the public and spreading awareness of the charity, our roots and our activities today.

In addition, our seven magnificent First World War actors provided a living statue of blind veterans that paraded through the centre of the city, pausing to pose in numerous spots with passers-by.

The reception was remarkably warm and it's clear that our purpose resonates strongly today. The image of this statue stays strong and thought-provoking and I regularly see photographs of 'the Lads' (as it is affectionately known) being shared by commuters on social media, with messages of support and appreciation.

We are keen to find ways to make the most of that iconic image, and have a number of ideas that are being developed. For example, last



month I mentioned that our Christmas cards are now available, and Member Alan Lock is currently working on a number of exciting VOB-themed products that will be available for purchase in time for the festive season. If you would like to know more, then contact him at [Alan.Lock@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:Alan.Lock@blindveterans.org.uk).

### Helping each other

Part of the power of the VOB statue is the thought of the seven blinded servicemen returning home and helping each other as they started their journey of rehabilitation. This was the key activity for us during the war - helping blinded veterans to adapt to their sight loss and find a way forward.

It remains key to us today. Our service delivery model is focused on helping our veterans to lead the life they choose, whether they be 26 or 106 years old. The model is built on six broad areas where interventions and support can make a real difference, and this helps to focus and shape our minds and activities. Charting the progress made by our Members and seeing the improvements and advances that can be made provides powerful evidence of the value of rehabilitation today. Let me explain a bit further.

We take the view that sight loss impacts on almost every aspect of life, and therefore it is important to take a holistic view. We wrap this up



**Caption: Myself at our Victory Over Blindness anniversary in Manchester**

as wellbeing - if we can improve the general outlook of our Members then we are helping them to adjust to sight loss and allow them to continue living fulfilling lives.

Some of our activities are very clearly related to sight loss - white cane training, safety in the kitchen and IT training (which has largely replaced braille for our membership) are good examples. Other activities are less obvious. Help into employment remains important and we run regular courses with partner organisations such as Royal British Legion Industries and X-Forces to help our veterans work through options and find their way into meaningful employment.

Arts and crafts, such as painting, woodturning and mosaics provide a fabulous way to explore new ways in overcoming sight loss and keeping busy and productive.

### Gaining confidence

Physical activities are also an excellent way to gain confidence and feed the soul, whether it be hill-walking in Wales, abseiling off a London sky scraper or attending a tea dance with fellow blind veterans.

Social events have a value all of their own, allowing those we look after to meet, share, enjoy and support each

other. It is today's example of Members helping Members, much as our seven 'Lads' did on their return from the First World War.

Rehabilitation for us today is a very broad business, and is focused on helping blind veterans get the most out of life, despite their sight loss. You can find out more about our approach in the latest Impact Report which can be found at [bit.ly/31coolH](https://bit.ly/31coolH)

Finally, we have launched an exciting new volunteer role for our Members who would like to support our fundraising and community engagement efforts in their own communities.

Our Member Engagement Volunteers will work with our community fundraising teams to provide vital support for their activities, such as helping at fundraising events and collections and assisting with fundraising pitches to local businesses and community groups such as golf Ccubs and Rotary clubs. Activities will be varied and relevant training will be provided as required. 🍎

■ **If you would like to find out more about this exciting opportunity, please contact Supporter Care on 0300 111 22 33 and your local fundraising manager will be in touch within five working days to tell you more.**



**Caption: Our volunteers, actors and Victory Over Blindness statue**

# News

## Celebrations as Victory Over Blindness celebrates its first year

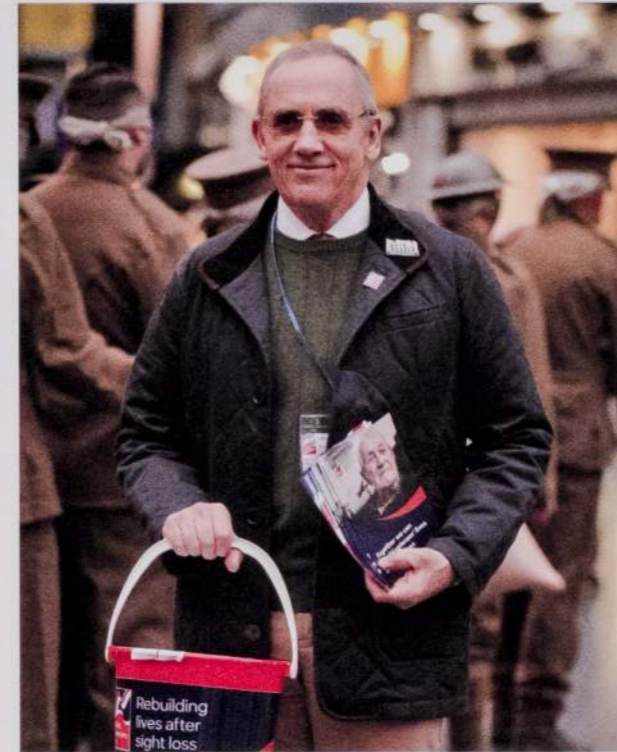
On 16 October at Manchester Piccadilly station, we celebrated the one year anniversary of the unveiling of Blind Veterans UK's poignant Victory over Blindness statue.

To mark the occasion we organised

some incredible street theatre courtesy of the Llandudno Lads and brought the statue to life.

The display turned plenty of heads as the group marched out of the station and down onto Market Street and into St Anne's Square, while crowds gathered in awe and paid their respects to those who have fallen in battle.

With the help of Network Rail, the 'Lads' had the opportunity to take centre stage inside the station, allowing commuters to witness first-hand a glimpse into what it may have looked like for those returning from war over 100 years ago.



**Caption: Nick Caplin lends a hand**

Our volunteers – including our Chief Executive, Nick Caplin - gave up their time generously and helped throughout the day with donations bringing in excess of £2,700.

## Major works planned for our Brighton Centre

It's all change at the Brighton Centre as major fire safety improvement works take place to improve conditions for our Members.

The work to the 81-year old building



**Caption: Johanna Domke-Guyot**

will last over a year and will see different areas of the building closed off as necessary. This will include the accommodation areas, which means that respite and holiday capacity will change depending on how many rooms are available.

Our permanent Members will also be moved to different rooms depending on which areas are closed off, but the Centre will be delivering services as best it can – it's still business as usual there. 🇬🇧

**For further information, please contact your case support worker or the Centre on 01273 307 811.**

# In Your Community

## Kurling competition in Swindon

Some of our Members from Community 8 in the South-West took part in a Kurling competition in Swindon on Monday, 14 October. Despite the terrible weather conditions, it was held with both our veterans and some from Swindon Bats (a local visual impairment activity group) and the turnout was fantastic.

Everyone bonded over tea and cake and the next competition has been confirmed for in the New Year - well done team.

## Masonic Group - Cymru/Wales

The Blind Veterans UK Masonic group will be meeting in the Llandudno centre for the annual week of fun, laughter and Freemasonry.



**Caption: Our Members relaxing after the Kurling competition**



**Caption: Our diaries for 2020**

The group will visit a local lodge and in return will host its members at a group dinner at the end of the week. There will also be other activities put on during the stay.

■ **If you are a Mason and would like to join with us at the Llandudno centre during 11-17 February, 2020, then please contact me on the by no later than 12 December, 2019.**

■ **Clive Jones 07854 800256 or e-mail at [Dragoneye67@sky.com](mailto:Dragoneye67@sky.com)**

## Diaries for 2020 available to order

As we approach 2020 you can now place your orders for VIP calendars and diaries.

A4 Diary 2020 - £9.95

A5 Midi Diary 2020 - £7.95

A6 Pocket Diary 2020 - £5.95

A3 Calendar - £5.95

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

## The Last Three's final walk

"The Last Three" walking group embarked on their last walk of the year on 10 October.

The group, which has eight regular members, has completed 12 walks, with each one covering a distance of about three miles. It's a great way for Members to keep fit both mentally and physically. The group walked around Whitely Bay on their final outing after many weeks of exploring the North East coastline. →



**Caption: The Last Three pause at Whitely Bay**



**Caption: Member Jim Stribe makes a cheese straw during the Bake Off competition**



**Caption: Sampling the wares at the Langham Brewery**

## Vision in Song care home visit

On 10 October, our Vision in Song choir visited a local residential care home in Frinton and performed in front of its 30 residents.

There was a lovely rendition of familiar songs and the choir members chatted to the residents about wartime memories. Within the resident's group there were four people who were over 100 years old. Many good stories were shared and a great time was had.

## Food and drink week

Food and drink week at the Brighton centre began on 13 October, and involved a variety of different activities and trips.

Highlights included visits to Bluebell Vineyard, Langham Brewery and the ever-popular cheese tasting.

They also took part in their own version of Great British Bake Off and made trail mix bars, scones, cheese straws and pizzas.

Other activities included creating cards with fruit and vegetables and finding out how an Amazon Dot can help in the kitchen. 🍷

# Stocking fillers

If you're searching for something special for a loved one this year then why not have a look at our range of seasonal gifts

## Christmas cards

Why not consider a pack of Blind Veterans UK Christmas cards this year? The cards come in packs of 10, and show our 'Victory over Blindness' statue at Manchester Piccadilly station. There is a suggested donation of £4.99 per pack, plus postage and packing.

dedication to a soldier, sailor or airman blinded in the First World War, and helped by us. The coins are limited to just 3,017 pieces and are priced at £75 excluding postage and packing.

To purchase any of these items, then please contact our Customer Services team on **0300 111 22 33**.

## Victory over Blindness prints

These prints commemorate the inspiration behind our 'Victory over Blindness' statue, and are individually signed by the artist, Johanna Domke-Guyot. Limited to just 100, each print is available for a suggested donation of £95, with all proceeds going to Blind Veterans UK.

## Making Amazon Smile for us

Did you know that when you shop on Amazon and buying your Christmas presents they'll donate 0.5% back to Blind Veterans UK?

It's easy and all you have to do is:

- Use [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) instead of your normal [amazon.co.uk](https://amazon.co.uk)
- Select Blind Veterans UK as your chosen charity
- Start shopping and we will receive donations directly

## Commemorative coin

We have struck a special, limited edition coin to commemorate our first blind veterans. Minted in hallmarked sterling silver, each coin features a

Amazon doesn't charge any fees on these donations, so change your settings now. 🍷



# Share it about

Our chaplain **Clare Callanan** talks about the importance of passing your skills on

Without going into too much personal detail, I can say with absolute certainty that I have moved into a new phase of my life. I have been led to the point of recognition that I have passed through the 'maid' and 'mothering' stages and I am now at the 'crone' stage. What a difficult word that is! So I have decided to settle for the 'wise woman' phase as an acceptable alternative to 'crone'. I do know that the 'wise woman' was often feared and sent to live on the outskirts of the village hundreds of years ago because she was not understood. Now don't go getting ideas...

I believe that many of us are at that 'growing older, getting wiser' stage. We have learned a lot of stuff. So share what you know with people. Try not to hold onto information for the sake of it. Try not to hold onto your time for the sake of it. Be honest...what else would you be doing with it?

We all have a talent or skill or experience of some kind, so pass it on. That does not necessarily mean you have to go teaching at your local youth group or day club every week. But if the opportunity arises then go for it. It is easy to say no when asked to give a talk or a demonstration or to tell your story of events. But if you do that each time you will never know what you might inspire in others, what seed you may plant, what spark you might ignite, what encouragement you might give without even knowing.

## Knowledge is power

If you are not passing on your talents and skills, what are you doing with them? In this month of Remembrance we are reminded again and again about the handing on of skills, knowledge, memories and honour. We know to hand on the stories, the silences, and hopefully the peace. 🍌



**Caption: Clare Callanan**



PHOTO BY WHITNEY WRIGHT ON UNSPLASH

# Banana bread

Our resident cook **Penny Melville-Brown** gives you another delicious cake recipe for the winter season

This is one of the best and simplest cakes to bake, but with the twist of a crunchy pecan topping, and is the perfect way to use up bananas that are getting a bit old.

## Method -

■ Preheat oven to 350F, 180C, Gas 4.

- Sift flour, baking soda and salt into a bowl and set aside.
- Whisk eggs and vanilla together and set aside.
- In a mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Then gradually add the eggs and vanilla mix until all is incorporated. →

- Add the mashed banana - don't worry if the mixture seems a little curdled.
- Remove bowl from mixer and, with a spatula, fold in the flour mixture until incorporated.
- Spray loaf pan/s with non-stick cooking spray (or a little spray oil or butter).

### Ingredients

**1 ¼ cups unbleached all-purpose (plain) flour (about 6 ounces)**

**1 tsp baking soda powder**

**½ tsp salt**

**2 large eggs (at room temperature)**

**1 tsp vanilla extract**

**½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter (at room temperature) (about 3 ¾ ounces)**

**¾ cup sugar (use 1 cup sugar if you omit the crumb topping)**

**3 very ripe bananas, peeled and mashed with a fork (about 1 cup)**

#### Crumb topping:

**½ stick cold butter (about 2 ounces)**

**½ cup pecans, chopped**

**1/3 cup dark brown sugar (about 2 tbsps)**

**1 tbsp flour**

- Pour the mixture into the pans.
- Cut the cold butter in to a bowl and rub in the pecans, brown sugar and flour. You want a crumbly consistency. Divide the topping mixture among the loaves of uncooked banana bread.
- Bake for about 22-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. If using one large loaf, then pan bake for about 55 minutes. 🍌



PHOTO BY WHITNEY WRIGHT ON UNSPLASH

### My tips:

**I use small individual pans because I think they bake better. But you could use a larger pan. Just adjust the baking time. Remember, these taste the best when still warm.**

# 'Til we meet again

The weather may be cooling down; but it's been heart-warming to witness the friendships that have blossomed at our annual community reunions

## Birmingham

This year the Birmingham Reunion was hosted in Wolverhampton.

The lovely singer Stacey Lynn Crowe opened the day in elegant 1940s style. Old and new friends greeted each other and enjoyed having a good catch up. We were also delighted to be joined by Nicky Shaw who is our Director of Operations (West) and enjoyed hearing her talk about the charity and its future.



**Caption: Our Chief Executive Nick Caplin with Member Olive Patten at our Worcester Reunion**

Member Brian Scott also delivered a moving talk about how our charity helped him break his cycle of isolation and depression.

We'd like to send a big 'thank you' to Jo Lewis and the volunteers who attended. It was lovely for everyone to spend such a delightful day together.

The last words on everyone's lips as hugs, laughs and farewells were exchanged was, of course, "See you at the next one! 'Til we meet again."

## Worcester

In September, we hosted the Community Six Reunion at the Whitehouse Hotel in central Worcester. As always, it was a delightful occasion, where groups of people came together to meet up as old friends and new.

We celebrated the 100th birthday of Olive Patten, a Member who still lives independently in her own home. Olive received a bunch of flowers from our Chief Executive Nick Caplin, and →

a warm round of applause from her fellow veterans and guests.

Due to an unexpected absence, Mike Stone stepped in to make the Members' Response, telling us a little about himself and being a part of the charity. He is a D-Day Royal Artillery veteran and has lived in Worcester since 1922.

He said: "I've found Blind Veterans UK a wonderfully helpful organisation to be a part of. I've received technology, attended lots of events, and now I'm standing in to talk to you all."

One of the highlights was the acknowledgement of our wonderful volunteers; nearly half of whom regularly visit veterans. Volunteers make supporting our members a thoughtful priority in their lives, and also attend many events across the



**Caption: Talking together at our Cornish Reunion**



**Caption: The Cornwall Reunion in full swing**

region as a part of their kindness.

### Cornwall

In October, we hosted the final Reunion of the year in Cornwall. The Cornwall and Plymouth Reunion was held at the Lanhydrock Hotel and Golf Club in Bodmin.

For the final time, we welcomed the opportunity of formal portraits. Member Mark Pile has kindly provided us with his photography skills across many of these events in the South West. He took portrait photos of veterans and their guests as they arrived as well as photographs during the lunches and various proceedings.

The atmosphere of the Cornish Reunion was described as "great" and the food "lovely". All in all, a joyful occasion with which to bring the Reunion season to a close. 🍎

## Quiz time

**Ron Russell** tests your general knowledge

- 1 Which of these organisations is Malta not a member of? The Commonwealth, the European Union or NATO?
- 2 Which of these is a triangular number? 27, 28 or 29?
- 3 Which of these cities was also the name of the Duke of Wellington's horse? Rome, Lisbon or Copenhagen?
- 4 Which year did Red Rum win the Grand National? 1974, 1975 or 1976?
- 5 Which country did England defeat at the Battle of Agincourt?
- 6 Which family of birds does the house sparrow belong to? Crow, raptor or finch?
- 7 Which continent has the shortest name?
- 8 Which of these is classed as a boat? Frigate, cruiser or submarine?
- 9 Which of these is not found in a trifle? Biscuits, cream cheese or jelly?
- 10 Which of these singers wrote the song 'Crazy'? Dolly Parton, Patsy Cline or Willie Nelson?
- 11 Which of these is a position in the royal household? Page of the back stairs, page of the back alley or page of the back room?
- 12 Which of these is not found at Buckingham Palace? A cinema, yew tree or tennis court?
- 13 Which of these birds is the largest? Blackbird, starling or robin?
- 14 Which nursery rhyme contains the line 'Up in the sky so high'?
- 15 Amman is the capital of which country?
- 16 In which century did France give the United States of America the Statue of Liberty? 17th, 18th or 19th?
- 17 Which colour is a giant panda when it's born? Brown, black and white or pink?
- 18 Which former Mayor of London was born in New York?
- 19 Which of these was the penultimate state to join the USA? Alaska, Nebraska or Texas?
- 20 Which king was on the throne in 1200? Henry II, Stephen or John?

**The answers are posted on page 49**

# Meet your ROVI

This month, Review talks to community-based Rehabilitation Officer for Visual Impairment (ROVI) **Bryan Kilburn**



**Caption: Bryan Kilburn**

My journey with Blind Veterans UK started in January 2005. I'd just left the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) where I was a Mobility Instructor at the RNIB College in Redhill.

My first impressions of the wonderful [Centre] building at Brighton was that seemed such a positive and happy place. It was clear to me straight away why we had the reputation for the best ROVIs in the country. I felt like a square peg in a square hole, and have often commented to people that if you cut me in half 'Blind Veterans UK ROVI' would be written through the middle.

I started working as a ROVI at Ovingdean and progressed steadily to the senior role. In 2017 I changed again, leaving the centre to become a Community ROVI.

I'm registered blind myself after losing my sight at the age of 18 due to a brain tumour. This has given me valuable insight and a passion for finding ways to solve problems that we all face.

I love my technology, but also the simple ideas too. I'm known for my use of Alexa, an iPhone and probably most of all the Milestone, which is a multi-purpose digital device. Equipment is great if it's working for you but often the best solution is the simple elastic band, bit of string or piece of wood with notches cut in. 🎧

## **Bryan's Top Tip:**

**My theory is that there is generally a way - it will just take longer and need thinking about**



**Caption: Discovering the sitar**

# A musical education

During a recent Activity day, several of our Members discovered some unusual musical instruments. **Laura Weir** explains

On 15 October, we welcomed some of our Members to attend a musical activity day at our London site.

The Members enjoyed a performance from the Inner Vision Orchestra, a band which is formed of two blind musicians. These are Baluji Shrivastav, who plays the sitar and Ziad Sinno who plays the oud – a lute-like instrument with 13 strings.

Baluji is an Indian multi-instrumentalist who has been blind since he was eight months old. He is one of the world's leading composers and sitar players and has performed with a variety of artists including Stevie Wonder, Madness and Boy George.

Ziad is a musician and singer from Lebanon who lost his sight due to glaucoma. He not only plays



the oud but also the violin, guitar and keyboard, and has many years' experience in the music industry.

**Traditional songs**

The Members – Charlie Carley, Ted Taylor, Tommy Bird, John Marsh, Den Dyer, and Leslie Gay - were treated to a number of traditional Indian and Arabic songs and even got the opportunity to play with the band using lots of different instruments. Baluji and Ziad were fantastic at describing the instruments to our veterans, while everyone got to touch them and learn about how they are made.

Two new Members joined us for the day, and it was their first visit to our Harcourt Street buildings. Speaking of his first activity day, Charlie said, "I was a bit apprehensive about meeting



**Caption: Ziad (left) and Baluji**



**Caption: A new musical experience**

people but I really enjoyed it. Everyone was in the same boat as me and you feel like you're part of the gang".

The band was enjoyed by all. Member Leslie added, "The band was fascinating. It was wonderful to handle the instruments because not many people let you".

Following the band, there was also time to have a chinwag over tea and cake, as well as a lunch. Dennis says: "I am proficient now with the jiggle things! Days like today are amazing because you get to meet new people and just get their outlook on life. We've already been talking about making Christmas cakes and Christmas pudding." 🍪

# All the way down

The idea of abseiling down a 504ft tower might not appeal to many, but to one of our veterans it was a challenge worth taking on. Member **Garry Cowan** was there and raring to go



**Caption: The view from the tower**

It started when I rang my friend Sue to see if she had arrived safely home from RAF Aldergrove and asked her to travel down to London by train the following morning as I was nervous about going to the big smoke from Leuchars in Scotland, on my own.

All was good and she was laughing when I said I knew where I was going. She replied, "So I'm letting a blind guy book our travel for London, and now I am nervous too. I have not been to London in years and I am trusting a totally blind man to get me there and direct me around." I laughed and said that we would be fine.

We set off early and had a comfortable journey down to King's Cross →

chatting about the abseil [down the Broadgate Tower] and Sue asked if I was nervous. I replied, "I am fine, it's just like old times - doing crazy adventures." We both laughed and she said "True, you have done crazier".

Early on Saturday morning we walked down to a greasy spoon café about half a mile from King's Cross station for a nice cooked breakfast. It was a stunning sunny morning and we chatted about our day ahead. I said I was excited about going off the building and was going to ask if I could do it a few times. Sue replied I was 'off my nut'. I laughed and said it was an opportunity I am

not going to miss. After breakfast we decided to walk to Broadgate Tower under the direction of the GPS which we both trusted for around an hour until we realised the tall buildings around us interfered with it.

### Guided around the city

It was the first time Sue had guided me in the city and this led to laughs on the way as we got lost a few times, went around in circles and up and down roads twice. The walk was supposed to take about an hour and 40mins and it took a lot longer, but we got some sunshine and visited parts of London we were not expecting to visit.



**Caption: 'V' and Garry celebrate after reaching the bottom**

When we finally reached Broadgate Tower we were greeted by the amazing Blind Veterans UK staff and I finally got to meet some of the London volunteers and staff. They were all fantastic and friendly as always and commented that I looked very chilled out and relaxed. I said that as long as I get a cup of tea I am happy. Thankfully, I got a brew and was guided over to meet the instructors and abseil team staff.

I met Varishka (V) who was the most senior instructor for the abseil team and she was so knowledgeable and really nice. I got kitted out with my leg and chest harness and had another cuppa while we waited for a group to complete their abseil, then I got my body camera fitted and was ready to go.

We entered the building, and after some stairs we were led into a padded lift. There were a few jokes on the way to the top floor asking why it was padded and Sue said it was because they knew I was coming. After the lift there was another four flights of stairs, to the roof access which included going through the plant room stepping over cables and conduit electrical boxes to the roof access door. The instant we walked onto the roof, the sunshine hit my face which was a great feeling.

V went on ahead to inform the roof staff that I was totally blind and going

**“The roof staff complimented me, asking why I was so calm and I told them I went off the Forth Bridge last June in seven seconds”**

to be descending with her. Sue took some photos of us, and guided me along the walkway which had metal rails on either side. At the end were a few steep steps over to the edge of the building where I was met by another instructor called Graham, who checked all of my safety gear twice before walking me over the two foot gaps at the edge of the roof platform to where I met up again with V. I was then attached to her and was ready to step off the roof.

### Ready to go

We had a photo taken, and my camera was switched on ready for filming the descent. The roof staff complimented me, asking why I was so calm and I told them I went off the Forth Bridge last June in seven seconds. We set off and V and myself were chatting and enjoying the view, with her describing what was going on as we descended.

We were both nice and relaxed as I asked her what other buildings she had abseiled off, and we had a steady →

descent to the tenth floor where we heard the people on the ground banging drums to the music and shouting. There was also whistling and a few screams. We locked off and spun around to wave and shout hello back and get a few shots on the camera and photos from the ground.

We then set off for the remaining 100ft and were down on solid ground in seconds. I thanked V for the abseil and we walked over to the staff banging



**Caption: Garry and 'V' in mid-air**

the drums. I had a lovely surprise as volunteer Lynette [Denzey – Review writer and talking edition reader] was there to greet me. I had spoken to Lynette multiple times since my first climbing competition, and it was great to finally meet her in person. We stood for photos and then had a chat with V about going back up again. I stayed in my harness and had a short break in the sunshine chatting to the staff about how much fun it was, but that I wanted to go faster to which V said maybe.

### Gloves back on

After some rest I put my gloves back on and Sue headed back up in the padded lift for my second abseil. I suggested to V that attaching the camera to her helmet would be better, as I had no clue where to face for good filming and she could take in the sights for us all to view. When we got to the roof door, Sue said she was going to go down and for us to wait until she had reached the ground. I set off following V's voice to the walkway and felt comfortable once I had the rails in my hands. I casually chatted to the roof staff as we waited.

I was asked by the staff how much sight I had and told them I had no retinas left so all I see is black. They were stunned that I had the courage to do what I had just done, and we chatted about sight loss with them until the two-way radio said that Sue was on the ground.

I smiled, and said I didn't even see her leave, which got a few laughs. I then repeated the journey along the walkway to the platform and was told that the gaps were two feet across, and it was straight down and to be careful. I said someone would catch me and they laughed, again praising my cheekiness.

### Down again

Once I was attached to V again I was ready to go, and we sat down and stepped off the roof surface to the utility gap for our first two large step-offs which were about two metres each. Then it was onto the smooth glass, and while taking in the view and sunshine we descended a little faster than previously, which felt amazing. I asked V to lock off and get some good footage around us, and we had a giggle at my singing on the way down and when I knocked on floor 27 asking for a cuppa.

Going down was so much fun and smoother using my gloves and they fed the rope without heating up my palms which was great. We stopped on the tenth floor again and V told me that Sue was shooting video on the ground looking up. We then landed and got detached from the ropes, while I gave V a massive cuddle and thanked her for everything.

We stayed and had a really good chat with the charity's staff about the day, and



**Caption: Nearly at the ground**

how much we enjoyed it, and I thanked them for the opportunity to be part of it and help fundraise for the charity. It was good to talk about the last few years, and about how far I have come since the charity re-introduced me to climbing. It's nice to say as well that Saint Andrew's University has supported me since the start. They not only supply me with free kit but also let me use their climbing wall and sports facilities.

We finally left after a few cuppas, and grabbed a McDonalds for our trip back to our hotel for a nap prior to heading out to Belgravia for a well-deserved cider. 🍷

# In the area

The Get Out and Live group (GOAL) has been on its travels again - this time to Manchester. **John Brice** reports

On Monday, 9 September, Members Billy Aspinall, John Cantwell, Jim Green, Dave Hazelgrove, Chris Humphrey, Bryan Jones, Nik Murray and John Brice arrived at the Premier Inn on Portland Street, Manchester.

Tuesday morning, and we caught the Metro to Media City, Salford, for a tour of the BBC studios.

Our guides, Lindsey and Sarah, led us from one building to another; visiting a studio identical to BBC Breakfast and another where Match of the Day was hosted, and which was being readied for another programme. We moved to where studios were being assembled, an outside broadcast area being prepared, and the Blue Peter history was displayed. Then to the BBC Tours



**Caption: Exploring the Museum of Transport's bus collection**

studio, where we were shown how things work. Daleks, costumes worn by Strictly Come Dancing contestants and an opportunity to sit on the red settee.

After lunch we met Adele Bamford at the Imperial War Museum (North). A Blind Veterans UK volunteer in the Greater Manchester (GM) area, who guided us around the museum as the IWM(N) was unable to provide one.

Adele did a brilliant job of guiding us from one exhibition area to the next, explaining and answering questions from all. Every so often the lights were dimmed to almost nothing and videos, with a narrative, were displayed on the walls, depicting wartime events. Although they did not last that long, it was not safe for us to move around unaided. At these times Adele was even more invaluable, ensuring we did not get lost or come to any harm, for which we are grateful.

There was an exhibition on the situation in the Yemen (many will remember it as Aden), which we would have missed but for Adele's sharp eyes, as it was in an obscure area. Thanks Adele.

## **Helmets and truncheons**

On Wednesday, we went to the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) Museum in Newton Street. Our guide



**Caption: A beautiful Bedford bus on display at the museum**

was Mike Hayes, an ex GMP Inspector, having served 30 years in the force. Starting with the history of police boxes, Mike recounted the history of the exhibits; a large display of helmets and truncheons, plus some uniforms of the past and, after a dressing up session, visits to the Inspector's office, custody office, courtroom and cells of the 1800's. There were also displays on the Strangeways Riots and the Kingsway Murder of 1970 that Mike recounted numerous stories and facts about.

From the police museum to the Museum of Transport at Boyle Street, Cheetham, and lunch. The Tea Room did us proud, with soup, fresh sandwiches and cakes, washed down with tea and coffee. All was served to us by the volunteers. →





**Caption: The GOAL Group outside the Comedy Store**

Paul Wilkinson was the guide for our tour of 100 years of transport. From a horse drawn 'bus' to the modern day, with everything in between. Paul knew the bus and coach companies, the regulations, who were the opportunists, the role of women during the war, the changing face of transport, even what is in the pipeline. He skilfully guided us through the ages, going from one bus to another describing their story in detail.

Like many, I thought Paul had been in the industry before retiring, but no, he was an inspector in the police. Amazing - Paul, I don't know how you do it!

### Beloved bangers

Thursday saw us visit the Air and Space Hall at the Industry and Science Museum where we met our guide John, who has more than 20 years volunteer experience. While Bryan, Jim and Nik did the Tim Peake Experience,

John took us round his beloved old car collection, regaling us with stories from his many years of volunteering. Your secrets are safe, John. A lot of exhibits are partially covered due to a leaking roof, but renovations are in progress.

That evening, we were at the Comedy Store on Deansgate for a meal and comedy show. The food was hot and tasty, and we were escorted to our reserved seats to enjoy the show. It was smoothly organised and a good evening.

We finished our time in Manchester on Friday by visiting Piccadilly Station for photos with our Victory Over Blindness statue and to meet Jason Scott from the Regional Office in Liverpool. After our photo opportunity, it was time to have a snack and collect our luggage while Jason kindly assisted in getting people to their trains. 🍷

**To obtain further information about the GOAL Group, please email or telephone either of the Members below, who will be pleased to help:**

**John Brice** [john.brice.goal@gmail.com](mailto:john.brice.goal@gmail.com) **Tel: 01934 260899**

**Chris Humphrey** [chrisandhazel3@gmail.com](mailto:chrisandhazel3@gmail.com) **Tel: 01603 701402**

# When the guns fell silent on the Western Front

At the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the nation stands together to pay homage to those that made the supreme sacrifice in the First World War. Our President **Colin Williamson** explains



UNKNOWN / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

**Caption: Lieutenant General von Lettow-Vorbeck**

When the guns fell silent on the Western Front at 11am on the eleventh of November 1918, the world breathed a collective sigh of relief. The conflict that had lasted for four years and had claimed the lives of over 40,000,000 military personnel and civilians, including 888,246 British and Commonwealth servicemen, had finally ended.

But the silence that prevailed over the battlefields of Europe did not stretch to the far reaches of the world where the war was still being fought. On that very day, nearly 11,000 servicemen were either killed, injured or listed as missing. →

**“In total, four armistices were signed with Germany until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919”**

The news of the Armistice - which literally means a truce or a ceasefire - did not reach East Africa, where British, Portuguese and Belgian troops had been fighting a guerilla-type war with German troops under the command of Major General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, nicknamed “The Lion of Africa”, for four years. This was despite the Congo Act of 1885, which stipulated that European colonies would remain neutral - a matter that Lettow-Vorbeck chose to ignore.

**A white flag**

On 14 November 1918 forward elements of the now Lieutenant General Lettow-Vorbeck’s army spotted a white flag approaching their column. At the head of the small flag-carrying party was the British Magistrate for Rhodesia, Hector Croad, who handed over a letter from British General Jacob van Deventer, informing Lettow-Vorbeck that the Armistice had been signed, signaling the cessation of hostilities and with it, Germany’s defeat. Being the officer and gentleman that he was, the Lieutenant General marched his

column north to the British outpost of Abercorn where he duly surrendered.

Another far-flung outpost where the war was still being fought after 11 November was Northern Russia, around the strategically important port of Murmansk and the city of Archangel. Russia had been engaged in a civil war since 1917, and allied troops were sent to the region in 1918 mainly to guard supply depots and keep open the Trans-Siberian Railway. Both British and American soldiers were still being killed in action a year after the Armistice with Germany was signed - 174 American soldiers alone were killed between 1918 and 1919.

In total, four Armistices were signed with Germany until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919, and which came into effect on the 10 January, 1920. Other Armistices had previously been agreed with the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria and Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In November 1918, the British Army had numbered over 3,800,000 men. The vast majority of these had to be demobilised and returned home to Britain and the Commonwealth. This process began in January 1919 by the newly installed War Secretary, Winston Churchill, and lasted until 1922.



UNKNOWN / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

**Caption: Signing the Armistice on 11 November, 1918**

**Fit for heroes**

Many British servicemen were promised a return to a ‘land fit for heroes’ by the Lloyd George government when they were eventually demobbed, but suffered when unemployment rose rapidly after the 1921 economic slump. Other nationalities suffered too; Canadian and Australian servicemen were stuck in camps in Britain, unable to return home as transport ships were in limited supply.

Race riots took place in Liverpool and Cardiff as ex-servicemen clashed with

foreign workers and seamen who had been left unemployed at the end of the war, forcing the government to repatriate hundreds of foreign nationals back to their countries much to the annoyance and despair of the thousands of Commonwealth and British soldiers waiting their turn to return home.

So when we stand with bowed heads on Armistice Day, and commemorate the end of the First World War, think also about the many hundreds of lives that were lost after the guns fell silent on the Western Front. 🇬🇧

# New voice in the room

You may have heard of Alexa – the virtual assistant created by Amazon, but how much do you know about it? **Chris Gilson** finds out more

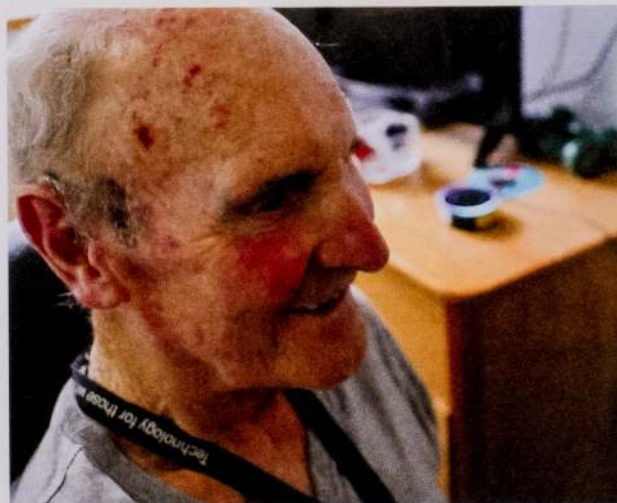
Two years ago a new voice appeared in the homes of some of our Members, and its name was Alexa. Since then it has become a large part of our rehabilitation programme, and in some cases is indispensable.

For those of you who've never encountered Alexa, it's a cylindrical device with a speaker that's voice activated. To wake it up, you need a word – most people just say 'Alexa' – and then it is able to perform a whole host of different functions.

"Our Members use Alexa for everything ranging from learning about the weather that day, to listening to Rod Stewart," says Natalie O'Rourke, our Rehabilitation Lead (Technology), who is based at our Brighton Centre. "It's just a medium to help, but it lends itself well to our Members' needs especially

in terms of voice skills, and our veterans have really taken it to their hearts."

As well as answering questions, and helping with day to day issues, Alexa is also capable of making calls, allowing our Members to easily stay in touch with the outside world and combat the isolation that many of them feel. In many ways it has replaced the



**Caption: Bill enjoying his Alexa**

traditional handset, and its presence in more than one room (if you have more than one) makes talking to people simple.

"I think technology is such a marvellous thing. She's very good. She'll tell me the time. I ask what the weather is going to be like, whether I should take a raincoat or not, and that's very useful," says Member Win Amos.

## Sharpening skills

One way in which Alexa has proved particularly popular is in its skills. Each function on an Alexa is called a 'skill' and as of April this year, there were 90,000 skills available for download on an Alexa-enabled device – including one fitted with the Synaptic App. Naturally that's far too many for us to use and so instead our Members have access to a suite of skills, some of which can be personalised.

As Natalie explains, "We've created blueprints for different skills for our Members. For example, one of these features a Rehabilitation Officer for Visual Impairment (ROVI) talking through a recipe."

Despite the many facets of the device, it remains most popular with Members for its music playing abilities.

"I can ask it (Alexa) for a selection of



**Caption: One of our Alexa Echo's**

music from the fifties or sixties and rock and roll. Yeah, it's brilliant." laughs William Burrage (Bill). Like many, he has got to grips with his device, giving it a female persona based on the voice it uses to respond. A range of different voices of both sexes are available.

"She (Alexa) is amazing actually. I asked her once, I said, 'Are you married?'" he adds.

If all this sounds complex then you can have the chance to get to grips with an Alexa if you visit our Brighton Centre as all the centre rooms are equipped with one. Our Llandudno Centre will be following suit in the near future. You can also find out more in our in-centre Technology Weeks, which are part of the activities programme.

If you want to find out more then talk to your Case Support Worker, who will be able to help you further. 🍎



# Family News

## Birthdays

**George Hardwick** who celebrates his 101st birthday.

**Norman Edwards** who celebrates his 100th birthday.

**Keith Plummer** who celebrates his 100th birthday.

**Leonard Wright** who celebrates his 102nd birthday.

**Phillip Dickinson** who celebrates his 100th birthday.

## 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.

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

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

**Daisy Higgins** who died on 18th September 2019. She was the wife of the late William Alec Higgins.

**Kathleen Crossley** who died on 11th October 2019. She was the wife of Frederick John Crossley.

**Vera Walker** who died on 4th October 2019. She was the wife of the late James Alfred Walker.

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

**Roma Ling** who died on 1st October 2019. She was the wife of Richard Albert Ling.

**Zoe Stewart** who died on 9th August 2019. She was the wife of the late Alan Carnegie Stewart.

**Beryl Whiteway** who died on 1st August 2019. She was the wife of the late Lionel Turnbull Whiteway.

**Hilda Bailey** who died on 1st August 2019. She was the wife of George Thomas Bailey.

**Daphne Frost** who died on 17th September 2019. She was the wife of David Frost.

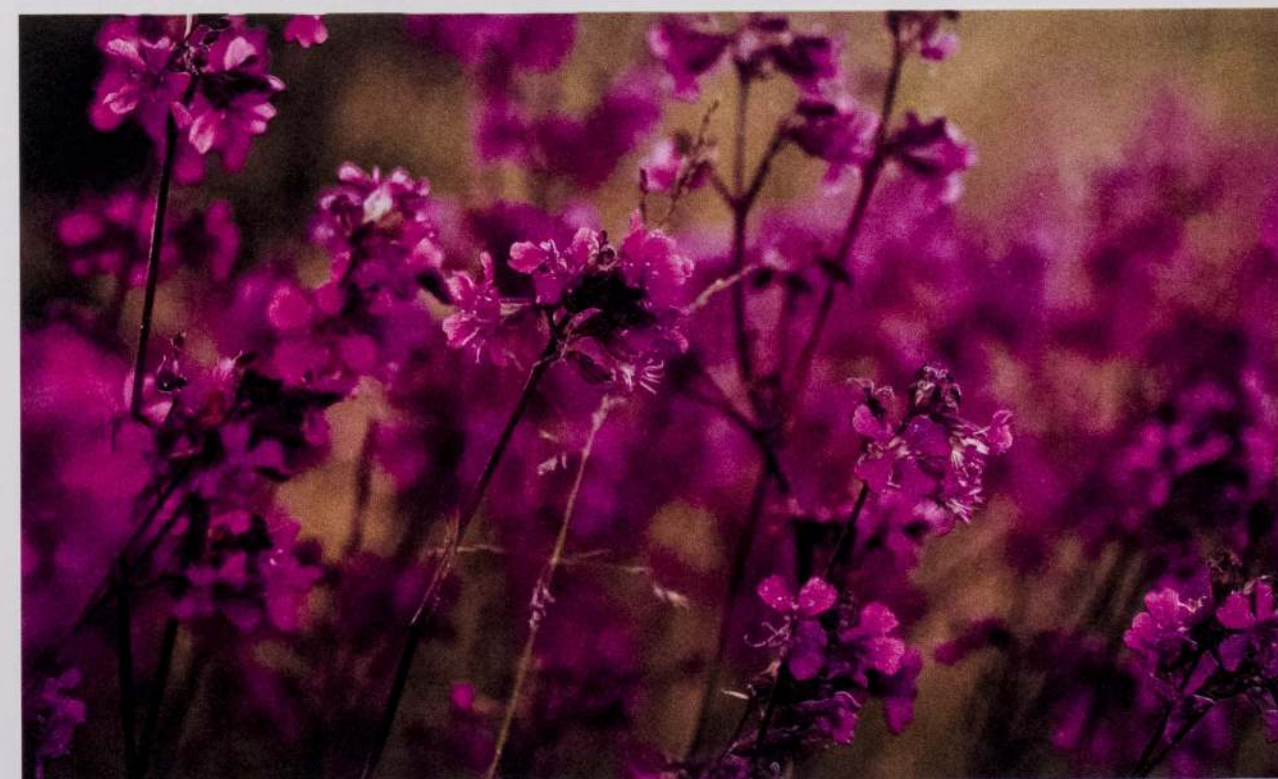
**Margaret Wade** who died on 4th August 2019. She was the wife of Bryan Wade.

**Linda Holt** who died on 1st October 2019. She was the wife of Eric William Holt.

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

**Christina Brooks** who died on 1st August 2019. She was the wife of the late Bernard Brooks.

**Margaret Mallabone** who died on 5th October 2019. She was the wife of Joseph Reginald Mallabone. →



DANIEL SPASE / UNSPLASH

# In memory

It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of the following members and we offer our heartfelt condolences to their widows, widowers, families and friends

**Gilbert Archer** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 10th October 2019 aged 99. He served as a Lance Sergeant in the Royal Engineers.

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

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

**Thomas Boxall** of Seaford, East Sussex died on 4th September 2019 aged 87. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Ellis Brears** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 2nd October 2019

aged 98. He served in the Royal Air Force.

**Brian William Brooks** of Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire died on 11th October 2019 aged 82. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**George Howard Burgess** of Macclesfield, Cheshire died on 21st September 2019 aged 96. He served as a Leading Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

**Arthur Buttle** of Norwich died on 20th August 2019 aged 87. He served as a Cook in the Royal Navy.

**David Cameron** of Leven, Fife died on 1st September 2019 aged 86. He served as a Leading Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

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

**Stefan Ciesla** of Surbiton, Surrey died on 7th October 2019 aged 107. He served as a Sergeant in the Polish 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.

**Dennis Clements** of Wigan, Lancashire died on 29th September 2019 aged 94. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**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 95. 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 Aircraftswoman in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Henry Alexander Crane** of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 28th September aged 99. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**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, Yorkshire died on 30th August 2019 aged 95. He served as a Leading Air Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

**Eleanor Rita Dewhirst** of Barnsley died on 7th October 2019 aged 99. She served as an Aircraftswoman in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

**Joyce Dobson** of Exmouth, Devon died on 3rd September 2019 aged 93. 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.

**Daniel Patrick Donegan** died on 7th October 2019 aged 96. He served as a Warrant Officer in the General Service Corps.

**John S 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.

**Albert John Edwards** of Swansea, West Glamorgan died on 18th September 2019 aged 87. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

**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.

**Hilary Francis Farrow** of Macclesfield, Cheshire died on 12th September 2019 aged 90. He served as Acting Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**Raymond Howard Feakes** of Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland died on 22nd August 2019 aged 83. He served as Acting Lance Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**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 97. He served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

**Dorothy McCombie Gilbertson** of Burnley, Lancashire died on 3rd September 2019 aged 94. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

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

**Anthony Alan Golding** of Faversham, Kent died on 12th October 2019 aged 88. He served as an Able Seaman 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, Lincolnshire died on 19th August 2019 aged 88. He served as Lance Corporal in the Royal Artillery.

**Dennis William Hatch** of Broadway, Worcestershire died on 7th October 2019 aged 94. He served as a Leading Stoker in the Royal Navy.

**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.

**Stanley Jones** of Willenhall, West Midlands died on 25th September 2019 aged 90. He served as an Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

**Peter Kilshaw** of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 10th September 2019 aged 92. He served as a Craftsman in the General Service Corps.

**James Benzie Kirkwood** of Wareham, Dorset died on 11th October 2019 aged 96. He served as a Surgeon Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

**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 a Leading 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.

**Kenneth Laws** of Southampton, Hampshire died on 16th September 2019 aged 99. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

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

**Gladys Yvonne Lees** of Norwich, Norfolk died on 26th September 2019 aged 99. She served as a Nursing Sister in Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service.

**Frederick Lunn** of Stafford died on 4th October 2019 aged 93. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**Frank Lunn** of Prudhoe, Northumberland died on 5th September 2019 aged 84.



He served in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers.

**George Reuben Mays** of Guisborough, Cleveland died on 27th September 2019 aged 93. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Robert Mills** of London died on 22nd August 2019 aged 91. He served as a Private in the General Service Corps.

**Leonard Cecil Milton** of Penzance, Cornwall died on 19th September 2019 aged 94. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

**Frank Roy Morris** of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 8th October 2019 aged 94. He served as an Air Mechanic in the Fleet Air Arm.

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

**James Welsh Myles** of Dundee, Angus died on 9th October 2019 aged 75. He served as a Trooper in the Special Air Service Regiment.

**John Newby** of Newtown, Powys died on 17th September 2019 aged 87. He served as a Leading Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**Charles Harold Nicholas** of Ferndown, Dorset died on 19th September 2019 aged 96. He served as a Flying Officer in the Royal Air Force.

**Henry Oldbury** of Swansea died on 9th September 2019 aged 96. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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

**Desmond Peck** of Alresford, Hampshire died on 24th September 2019 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Artillery.

**Agnes Ogilvie Peter** of Dundee, Angus died on 10th September 2019, aged 96. He served as a Private in the Army Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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

**Ronald Ernest Pluck** of Rainham, Essex died on 28th August 2019 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Eileen Prince** of Chesterfield, Derbyshire died on 18th September 2019 aged 93. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Peter Roy Raithby** of Lincoln died on 3rd October 2019 aged 92. He served as an Engineer in the Royal Air Force.

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

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

**Alfred William Rix** of Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear died on 1st October 2019 aged 83. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**David Keith Roberts** of Llandudno, Gwynedd died on 29th September 2019 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

**Ieuan Rowlands** of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 27th September 2019 aged 84. He served as a

Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**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.

**David Willie Simms** of Keighley, West Yorkshire died on 7th October 2019 aged 81. He served as a Private in the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment).

**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 Smith** of Rainhill died on 3rd October 2019 aged 85. He served as a Seaman in the Merchant Navy.

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

**William Stiven** of Kirkcaldy, Fife died on 1st October 2019 aged 91. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

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

**Donald James Stubbing** of Waterlooville, Hampshire died on 17th August 2019 aged 95. He serves as a Shipwright in the Royal Navy.

**Victor Swain** of Whitby, North Yorkshire died on 1st September 2019 aged 97. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

**William Tait** of Bellshill Close, Tyne and Wear died on 27th August 2019 aged 81. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**Percy Taylor** of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 13th August 2019 aged 92. He served as a Private in the King's Regiment (Liverpool).

**Eric Douglas Taylor** of Wirral, Merseyside died on 8th October 2019 aged 84. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Peter Meredith Terry** of Cirencester, Gloucestershire died on 21st August

2019 aged 82. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

**Gordon Thomas Timmins** of Colwyn Bay, Clwyd died on 1st October 2019 aged 81. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Francis Stephen Titt** of New Milton, Hampshire died on 1st September 2019 aged 93. He served as a Lance Sergeant in the East Surrey Regiment.

**Donald Turner** of Radstock, Somerset died on 26th September 2019 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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

**George Arthur Walter** of Boston, Lincolnshire died on 4th October 2019 aged 102. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment.

**Michael Wilkinson** of North Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 11th October 2019 aged 79. He served as a Clerk in the Royal Air Force.

**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.

# Carry on camping: the story of HMS Sultan and its predecessors

**Rob Baker** takes a look at our involvement with military camps throughout the years



**Caption: Harry Wheeler presents a glass bowl to Diana Hoare in 1989**

As reported in the October Review, the HMS Sultan team was nominated by Blind Veterans UK in this year's Soldiering On Awards. This was in the Lifetime Achievement category, since this camp has been running since the 1940s, initially as HMS Daedalus.

The history of Blind Veterans UK's involvement with recreational camps in fact goes back even beyond this, and to one of several remarkable women who were key in developing, popularising and supporting them. They were originated by Avis Hodgson (later Avis Spurway) who had served as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse in her home town of Stratford-upon-Avon during the First World War and in 1920 was invited to visit Blind Veterans UK, then St →



Dunstan's, at our then headquarters in Regent's Park. This was the beginning of a close connection that would last the rest of her life. Avis became a voluntary helper with us, and was soon what we termed a 'Sports Sister', playing a lead role in organising our sporting activities including rowing and walking races. She organised a regional sports and social club in Birmingham in 1921, from which other regional clubs followed, and then started a recreational camp, taking place for a week each year, beginning in Stratford in 1924. Activities at the camp included boating, dancing and picnics and there were trips to Worcester for a regatta.

A year after the Stratford camp was established another was started, in Little Gaddesden in Hertfordshire, at the home of Avis' cousin, Bridget Talbot.



**Caption: Our 1987 team with helpers**

This was also the beginning for us of a long association with Bridget, who had received the OBE for her war work with the Red Cross, and whose later life included assisting Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald with his election campaign and then herself standing, unsuccessfully, for Parliament.

These early camps, of which others held in different areas of the country followed, were halted by the Second World War but Avis - now Avis Spurway, having married the Reverend Frank Spurway after meeting him at a camp - restarted them in 1945, with the aim in particular of bringing together the longstanding members of the charity who had been blinded in the First World War with the new arrivals from the Second. She had approached HMS Daedalus, the Fleet Air Arm base



**Caption: Avis Spurway coxing in the 1920s**

at Lee-on-Solent, Hampshire, for some limited assistance, and was somewhat taken aback when its Commodore volunteered their full support! The first two of the new camps were held at Seafeld Park, a Navy establishment near to HMS Daedalus, and they moved to Daedalus itself in 1947. This established the link with the Fleet Air Arm which continues to this day, specifically with its field gun crew members who act as guides and helpers for our members.

Activities at the first of the post-Second World War camps included watching a cricket match, walks, singing and dancing and spending time cruising on the Solent. Over the following years many other activities were added, with sport being particularly popular. Fishing, swimming and trips in small boats, ships and hovercraft were all enjoyed. Before long helpers became known as 'guide dogs', which was then, perhaps somewhat unflattering, reduced simply to 'dogs'!

### Vivid memories

In 1978 Avis wrote reminiscences of her involvement with us, which we are fortunate to have preserved in our archives. These included what were clearly still vivid memories of the first of the new camps, including the difficulties in physically getting the members to it: '...we managed to get hold of an

ancient coach, you couldn't have them at that time. Very late it bowled up to Seafeld Park and I shall never forget the excitement, in it were all the old campers, many of them we had not met since 1939...everyone shouting at once, that is the moment above all others I remember most. The Navy sent trucks to collect parties from Southampton, Gosport and Fareham. No private cars because of petrol ration...it was fun, it was hectic and as with the first-pre-war camps it needed a lot more organising. Now in 1978 it's near-perfect, but that could not be without the members of Fleet Air Arm Field Guns' Crew.'

In addition to HMS Daedalus, there was a re-invigoration of another camp at Warminster, Wiltshire, which had initially been established in 1938. It began again in the late 1940s, through the efforts of a former member of our staff, Jean Oliphant. The Warminster Rotary Club took over the running of the camp in the 1960s and, with additional support from the Warminster School of Infantry, it was still going strong in the late 1990s.

HMS Daedalus closed in 1995 and it was decided that our camp would continue at HMS Sultan in Gosport, Hampshire. The first camp held there included sports activities including archery and lots of games including badminton, skittles, darts and



dominoes. There were helicopter flights and trips by sea to Whale Island, home of HMS Excellent, and to the Isle of Wight. Later activities at HMS Sultan camps have included athletics, swimming, gliding, golf, quiz nights, dancing and much, much more.

Since the late 1960s the camp at HMS Daedalus and then HMS Sultan had been organised by Elspeth Grant, another cousin of Avis Spurway. Elspeth devoted much time and energy to its success, undertaking this role for over 35 years.

### A wonderful opportunity

The camps have always been a wonderful opportunity for members not only to enjoy time away from home and undertake many interesting activities, but to enjoy the company of other blind veterans, our volunteer helpers and of course those from the Fleet Air Arm. The testimony of members themselves shows how much the camps have been valued. Harry Wheeler, who had attended the Daedalus camps



**Caption: A trip to the Isle of Wight**

from the start, summed them up in 1967 in saying that 'You can't beat the comradeship, the friendship and the good fun that we get here. Everything is fine.'

Avis Spurway was awarded the MBE in 1961 for her services to the charity. She died in 1988 at the age of 90, having been actively assisting and supporting us for almost all of her adult life. Our ongoing association with HMS Sultan serves as both a reminder to what we owe to her and as a wonderful legacy of her work. 🍷

## Quiz answers (from page 18)

1 NATO. 2 28. 3 COPENHAGEN. 4 1974. 5 FRANCE. 6 FINCH. 7 ASIA. 8 SUBMARINE. 9 CREAM CHEESE. 10 WILLIE NELSON. 11 PAGE OF THE BACK STAIRS. 12 YEW TREE. 13 BLACKBIRD. 14 TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR. 15 JORDAN. 16 19th. 17 PINK. 18 BORIS JOHNSON. 19 ALASKA. 20 JOHN

## Contact details

**Contact address** Blind Veterans UK,  
12-14 Harcourt Street, London, W1H  
4HD, **0300 111 22 33**

**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**

**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** or email him at [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk)



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