

Review



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The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

March 2025

V
VE Day
80

After the Darkness

Your chance to get involved
in our special campaign

Inside:

Llandudno proposal FAQs

Ukraine's vision rehabilitation

Why Bernie is giving back



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss



VE Day 80 celebrations at Petwood Hotel

This special event, marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, offers a unique chance to share memories, celebrate together, enjoy a delicious buffet and explore the Second World War vehicles and equipment on display, courtesy of The Military Vehicle Trust.

We'll also have a 1940s DJ and singer providing entertainment throughout.

Mark your calendars and get ready for a military event to remember. Don't

miss out on this unique opportunity to savour our military traditions.

Please note: this event is free to registered Members.

Venue

Stixwould Road, Woodhall Spa
LN10 6QG

Ballot tickets

Due to the expected high level of interest, Members expressing their interest to attend will be chosen via a random ballot.

Deadline

The deadline to register interest is 7 March 2025. We will let you know if you've been successful via email, letter or phone call by Wednesday, 19 March. (Please note, letters may take slightly longer.)

■ You can find out more and register your interest by visiting blindveterans.org.uk/events/ve-day-80-celebrations-petwood-hotel/ or by calling us on 0300 111 2233.



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On the cover

A portrait photograph of Member Derek Grub by photographer Richard Cannon to mark VE Day 80.



A difficult proposal

A message from your Chair, **Barry Coupe**

By the time you read this you will hopefully have received a letter from me explaining the difficult proposal that the Board has made to end our activity at our Llandudno Centre.

As explained in my letter, this has not been an easy proposal to make. Unfortunately, in terms of the charity's finances, the risk of doing nothing is simply no longer viable. In fact, if we were to do nothing and carry on



Barry Coupe

spending more than £10 million per year than we bring in then it would not be long before we'd have to start the process to fold Blind Veterans UK.

I believe it has been right for our charity to have a period of drawing down on our reserves in the past as this has enabled us to support as many blind veterans as possible. As the National Service generation reached an age where sight loss was more likely, we needed to be there for them. However, most important now is to ensure that this wonderful charity is still here to support all of you who need us today, as well as those who need us in the future.

Of course, I'm aware that many of you will find the news unsettling, and will have many questions about the proposal. For this reason, we have put together a comprehensive Q&A, which you can find on page 18 of this issue of Review. As it says in my letter, if you have any further questions or concerns, please do email us at memberinfo@blindveterans.org.uk or call **0300 111 2233** in the first instance.

SEEASIGN / ADOBE STOCK



The changing face of modern warfare means we must be prepared

Your case worker is also ready to support you as needed, and as more information becomes available, both myself and Adrian - when he returns - will be sure to share this with you as quickly as possible.

On page 15, you can read an article that clearly demonstrates just how important it is for us to make sure we are here for the future, about our fully-funded work with the World

“As more information become available, both myself and Adrian will be sure to share this with you as quickly as possible ”

Health Organisation, passing on our expertise to Ukrainian health professionals. The changing nature of modern warfare means that, right now, it's expected that any future British Servicemen and women engaged in combat would, sadly, be far more likely to suffer from ocular injuries than in previous conflicts. This has played out in Ukraine, likely due to drone attacks, so we need to be prepared.

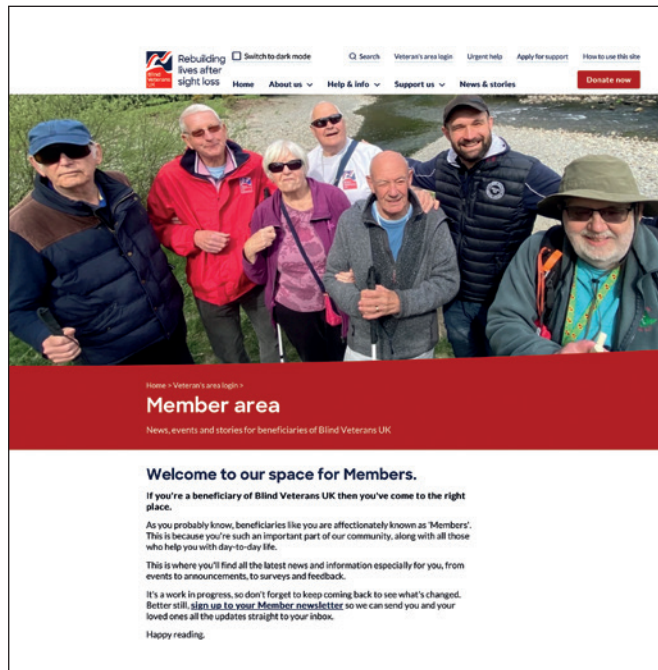
I would like to end by assuring you all of my commitment to this charity - the charity that enabled my war-blinded father to live the most fulfilling and successful life. I can assure you that your Board of Trustees will do all we can to ensure Blind Veterans UK will transform many more lives into the future. 🇬🇧

News

Sign up to our monthly e-newsletter

Did you know, you can receive all the latest Member news, announcements and opportunities for you and your family in your e-mail inbox every month?

- **Whether you're a Member, a family member or a carer, all you need to do is visit the Member area on our website at blindveterans.org.uk/member-updates and sign up. Simple.**



Sign up online and receive all the latest member news

Annual Member Conference 2025

We are pleased to invite you to the Blind Veterans UK Member Conference 2025 on 22nd and 23rd May.

The conference, led by our Chief Executive Adrian Bell, will give you the chance to share your thoughts, feedback and ideas on important decisions regarding our future strategy. At the same time, you will be able to get together with your fellow Members and meet senior staff from across the charity. Accommodation will be provided on 22 May. Due to expected high levels of interest, Members expressing their interest to attend this event will be chosen via a random ballot.

Venue
Aston Conference Centre
Aston University
Birmingham
B4 7ET

- **You can register your interest, at blindveterans.org.uk/events/annual-member-conference-2025/ or by calling us on 0300 111 2233.**

Birmingham Military Tattoo

The 2025 Birmingham Military Tattoo was a spectacular celebration of military pageantry, featuring massed marching bands, pipes and drums, thrilling displays, and an impressive Field Gun competition. Over 1,200 performers took part, culminating in the stunning Grand Finale.

Among those proudly representing their organisations, Member Wayne Perry served as a standard bearer in this prestigious event. Also, a small group of blind veterans and their guests attended and had a fantastic time, enjoying the music, displays and the camaraderie of this unforgettable occasion. 🇬🇧



Birmingham Military Tattoo
(pictured on the back cover)



Revision to last month's edition – Jamie Weller

In our previous edition, we incorrectly stated the date of passing of blind veteran Jamie Weller. We sincerely regret this error and appreciate the opportunity to correct the record. Jamie Weller passed away in the year 2024, not in 2023 as was stated in the title of his obituary piece in the February Review.

We apologise for any distress this may have caused and will take extra care to ensure such errors do not happen again in the future. We extend our deepest condolences to Jamie's family and friends. Thank you for your understanding.

In your community

Just some of the social gatherings that have taken place across the country over the past month, bringing together Members in their local areas

In Sutton

The Sutton social group celebrated Member Den's 99th birthday. He turned 99 on 12 January. Den has

been described by his peers in the social group as "inspiring", "enduring", "independent", "enigmatic" and "indefatigable". Den and the rest of



Den (4th from left) celebrates his 99th birthday with friends

the gang celebrated with cake, gifts and a good laugh with friends.

We hope Den had a wonderful day shared with his blind veterans peers, volunteers and staff.

In Ferryhill

Our fabulous Ferryhill group met up for a packed day of activities. They played a game of 'Guess the phrase', tried a few chair exercises, enjoyed a game of axe/dart throwing and ended with a hearty meal to send them all on their way home happy!

In Lanarkshire

Community One were delighted to be invited to the Burns Lunch at the Veterans Community Lanarkshire hub today. Delayed a week due the red alert weather warning from Storm Éowyn, it was well worth the wait! We had poems, a piper and, of course, the haggis, served with Irn Bru! The hub provides support for all veterans and helps signpost to organisations who can provide support for our Members.

Do you want to know what's going on in your local area? Contact your local community team who can tell you everything you need to know.



The Middlesborough social group

In Middlesborough

The Middlesborough Social Group came together for a delightful gathering filled with laughter, camaraderie, and a touch of friendly competition. The highlight of the event was an engaging round of the classic "Guess the phrase" game – an activity that, while seemingly simple on paper, proved to be an entertaining challenge for all involved.

This was an opportunity for Members to reconnect, share stories and enjoy each others company in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. 🍷



SGT. JAMES A. SPENCE / WIKIPEDIA

Crowds gather to celebrate VE Day at Piccadilly Circus, London, 1945

A tapestry of emotions

We gear up for the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May with the vivid memories and reflections of four of our ex-Servicewomen who lived through the war

After almost six years of brutal war, Germany finally surrendered to the Allies, and Europe erupted into jubilant celebrations. But for many women, the day was a tapestry of emotions,

blending relief and joy with reflection on the profound changes the war had wrought in their lives. As we mark International Women's Day this month, four Members remember the day...

Janet's childhood recollections



Janet, who was seven years old on VE Day, recalls the duality of excitement and fear during the war years in London. The frequent bombings meant nights in garden shelters, which she found adventurous, though she acknowledges how terrifying it must have been for her parents.

On VE Day, Janet remembers being woken up by her mother. She says: "I got woken up and my mum put a scarf over my head as I had curlers in. We marched round the street... there was singing but mostly I remember I was so embarrassed that I had curlers in my hair and that people would see them!"

A subsequent street party saw neighbours pooling their rations to create a festive atmosphere, complete with homemade hats and shared treats. The sense of community and collective relief was palpable.

"There was singing but mostly I remember I was so embarrassed that I had curlers in my hair!"

"No drinking and laughter but instead planning in my head and trying to work out what to do next"

Nancy's mixed emotions



At 103, Nancy reflects on her time in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, where she served from 1942 and was later

commissioned as an Officer. Stationed at a gun site in Swansea, her VE Day was devoid of the typical celebrations.

"I don't remember much more about VE day itself; we were told of celebrations in London and that people were drinking, dancing and singing. But for us on the gun site, we knew it meant no more work. VE Day was a day of mixed emotions for me. No drinking and laughter but instead planning in my head and trying to work out what to do next."

For Nancy and many women, the war had provided a newfound sense of purpose and independence. Its end brought uncertainty about the future and a contemplation of the roles they would assume in peacetime. →



“Yes, the war is over but the agony has been so prolonged that it’s rather an anti-climax”

Peggy’s quiet contemplation



Peggy, then 23, worked as a linguist for the Women’s Royal Naval Service, intercepting German radio traffic. For her, VE Day was marked by introspection rather than festivity. She spent the day with a friend, reflecting on the years lost and the uncertain path ahead.

In her diary, she noted: “Yes, the war is over but the agony has been so prolonged that it’s rather an anti-climax.”

Evelyn’s unbridled joy



Conversely, Evelyn, who joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service seeking adventure, described VE Day as “one of the finest days of my life”. For her, the day was a culmination of years

of service and sacrifice, celebrated with unrestrained joy. She vividly remembers: “We danced, cheered, waved, laughed, cried, and sang our hearts out, between Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square – hugging and being hugged, kissing and being kissed, over and over again.”

A complex tapestry of emotions

VE Day elicited a spectrum of responses from women across the nation. While some revelled in the hard-won victory, others faced it with contemplation, aware of the personal and societal transformations that lay ahead. Their experiences underscore the multifaceted impact of the war and the resilience of the women who lived through it.

As we commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day, it’s essential to honour these diverse narratives, recognising the profound contributions and sacrifices of women during the war and the complex emotions that accompanied its end. 🌍

“We danced, cheered, waved, laughed, cried, and sang our hearts out between Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square”

Your VE Day 80

On 8 May 1945, revellers filled the pubs and danced in the streets rejoicing at the news they had long been waiting and hoping for... Victory in Europe. And now it’s YOUR turn!

Over the coming weeks, as we mark 80 years since this historic event, we’ll be running our special campaign, After the Darkness, featuring some of our remarkable Second World War veterans. From the overwhelming relief to the highs and lows that unfolded, each one has a powerful story to tell.

Take D-Day veteran Thomas, for example. On leave in England when peace was declared, he remembers the street party with cakes and lemonade for the children. What’s more, he still has the photograph to prove it.

Then there’s Alice, who worked at Bletchley Park on the famous code-breaking machines. Thrilled to finally see the back of those dreaded night shifts, she and her friends danced along the corridor with joy.

Meanwhile, Derrick, our cover star, was taken as a prisoner of war after being shot down in Italy. Liberated just before VE Day, after being forced to



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss



march across Europe in deep snow, he remembers finally arriving home to his ecstatic and relieved mother.

Get involved

Could you hang the bunting in their honour and recreate the VE Day atmosphere in your local school or social club? We’re calling on everyone to take inspiration from these stories and find creative, fun ways to raise vital funds to make sure all our Members get the support they so deserve.

■ Visit blindveterans.org.uk/vedaygetinvolved to sign up for more information. Alternatively, you can contact our community partnerships team by emailing fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk or requesting a call back via our on 0300 1111 22 33. 🌍



Members Simon and Kevin with Representative of the Office of the Authorized Advisor to the President of Ukraine Yulia Sherstneva

Our role in Ukraine's vision rehabilitation

In response to increasing eye injuries on the battlefield, Blind Veterans UK is leading an initiative to impart specialist expertise to Ukrainian rehabilitation professionals

In response to the escalating number of traumatic eye injuries resulting from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Blind Veterans UK has spearheaded a collaborative initiative to share the UK's extensive expertise in vision rehabilitation with Ukrainian health and

education professionals. This effort, fully funded by the World Health Organisation (WHO) with support from the British Government, aims to enhance Ukraine's capacity to address the surge in vision impairments caused by the war.

“War often causes complex injuries, which can result in partial or total vision loss”

Over a two-week period, Blind Veterans UK, in partnership with 17 organisations including RNIB, Guide Dogs, and the Royal National College for the Blind, organised a comprehensive showcase of sight loss services. The Ukrainian delegation was introduced to various aspects of vision rehabilitation, encompassing independent living training, employment support, and the intricacies of service funding and charity collaborations.

Dr Jarno Habicht, WHO Ukraine Country Office Representative, emphasised the critical need for such initiatives, saying:

“War often causes complex injuries which can result in partial or total vision loss. Ukraine rehabilitation professionals must have the skills and competencies to address these injuries as part of comprehensive rehabilitation services, across the continuum of care.”

The delegation also had the opportunity to hear from one of our Members, Simon, who lost his sight

during the Iraq war. Reflecting on his journey, Simon shared: “When I found out that I’d lost my sight, my world fell apart. I’d lost my career, my job, and my future. The most important thing for me at that time was to be convinced to keep moving forward. Otherwise, I would have struggled to engage with my rehabilitation journey. That’s the main thing that I wanted to communicate to the Ukrainian delegation.”

Phillipa, National Rehabilitation Services Lead at Blind Veterans UK and coordinator of the project, highlighted the broader implications of this collaboration, saying:

“The complexity and nature of injuries incurred through modern warfare are different from those we have seen in recent years. This project is providing us with valuable insights into the effects of modern weaponry on individuals. Lessons learned from this process will ensure that we are ready to support the needs of British Armed Forces as and when needed in the future.”

This initiative not only strengthens Ukraine's rehabilitation capabilities but also enriches Blind Veterans UK's understanding and preparedness to support vision-impaired veterans in the future. 🇺🇰

Giving back: Bernie's story

Member and former standard bearer, **Bernie Meehan**, shares his experience and explains why it has led him to leave a gift in his Will to Blind Veterans UK

I joined the Army Foundation College at Harrogate in 1968, then completed my colour service in 1992, serving in West Germany, Northern Ireland, Belize, Denmark, and Scotland.

After 24 years of service, adapting to civilian life was tough for both my wife and me. She was used to a mapped-out life and, suddenly, everything was uncertain. I was frustrated with the work attitude in civilian life; it was so different from the military. In uniform, we all pitched in and got things done, but in my new job, people often said tasks weren't their job or took breaks instead of helping.

Looking for a better fit, I joined the Officer Training Corps (now the Army Reserve) and served for five years. A new opportunity in Manchester led me to the non-regular permanent staff

of the 40 single squad, where I served for 13 years and achieved the rank of Staff Sergeant. In total, I dedicated 43 years to service. Sadly, I was medically discharged in 2009 after a stroke left me blind.

The stroke caused a 92% blockage in the main artery at the base of my brain, leading to a clot that cut off blood flow to my occipital lobe. The hospital didn't think I'd survive. I went blind overnight. My wife Wendy and I were in shock, knowing it was permanent. It was a huge adjustment.

“We wanted to give something back, but we didn't know how, until we read about leaving a gift in your Will”

At the eye clinic in St Helens, I was introduced to Blind Veterans UK. That was a turning point; it made me realise I wasn't alone and that we had a future. Wendy and I felt like we were still part of a military family. Even after a second stroke at the Llandudno Centre in 2015, we knew we could manage.

We wanted to give something back, but we didn't know how, until we read about leaving a gift in your Will in the Review magazine. We realised that this is how we can leave something to make a difference. So now we're doing

the same thing by writing here, in the hope that you'll also consider leaving a gift!

The reason we've left a gift in our Will is because we hope that future veterans can have their lives changed just like us veterans today.

■ **If you would like to find out how to join Bernie and Wendy in leaving a gift, or use our free Will-writing service, call Alice on 020 7616 7923 or email giftsinwills@blindveterans.org.uk.**

SPANIC / ADOBE STOCK



Our free will writing service is available to all Members



The Blind Veterans UK flag

A proposal to end our activity at Llandudno

We answer your important questions...

We know that many of you will have strong feelings and many questions about the reasons for the recent proposal made by our Board of Trustees.

To help provide some clarity, we have pulled together a number of answers to questions you might have about the proposal to close the Llandudno Centre for our Members' use.

Why are Blind Veterans UK proposing a change?

We must transform how we work to make us sustainable and make sure we're here to support current and future blind veterans for as long as needed.

If we do not drastically reduce the charity's annual expenditure to match our annual income in the coming years, the charity will cease to exist.

This is why we are proposing ending our charitable activity at our Llandudno Centre.

This will start to get the charity back on a sustainable financial footing. It will also allow us to reshape how we work to provide the support that our blind veterans need.

This proposed option is based on two facts. Firstly, we will not be

“The proposal reflects a long-term trend of falling demand from Members to use our centres”

able to reach financial sustainability by continuing to run two centres. And, secondly, there is no longer the demand from our Members to justify maintaining two centres.

What is the proposal?

A recommendation has been made by our Board of Trustees that supports a proposal to repurpose the Llandudno Centre and move delivery of all centre-based Member services to the Rustington Centre.

The proposal reflects a long-term trend of falling demand from Members to use our centres, which means that we no longer need two centres. In real terms, our review shows that even if we saw an increase in centre demand from Members, we would still be able to accommodate this through a single centre.

From asking our blind veterans in regular surveys we also know that the vast majority prefer the option of having our services delivered at home or remotely. Operating from a single centre will significantly reduce →

the charity's operational expenditure, which is an important first step in getting us back to a sustainable financial footing.

What does repurposing mean for the Llandudno Centre?

If a decision is made to take this proposal forward, the likely outcome will see an immediate cease in delivery of all current services to Members visiting the Llandudno Centre, likely to be in April 2025.

Whilst a longer-term decision is taken on what Blind Veterans UK would do with the vacant building, the charity have begun exploring potential opportunities to sell, lease or use the building for commercial purposes. No recommendations or decisions have been taken on this yet.

What does this mean for staff based in the Llandudno Centre?

All employees who work within the Llandudno Centre will be taken through a collective consultation process and placed at risk of redundancy.

What do I do if I have a booking to stay at Llandudno?

It would not be fair on our staff team at Llandudno to go through the consultation process while running a business-as-usual service.

Because of this, while we consider this proposal, we will not be able to accommodate any Member stays at Llandudno during this time.

All Members who are due to stay at Llandudno throughout this time will be contacted to arrange alternative options including transferring their stay to Rustington.

Why the Llandudno Centre and not Rustington?

The Board of Trustees are proposing ceasing our centre activity at Llandudno rather than Rustington because our analysis has shown that Rustington is more suited to support Member needs moving forward.

It has been recently built as a bespoke centre for blind veterans of varying needs, for example having ground floor rooms and greater accessibility.

Who can I talk to if I have further questions?

We recognise that this may be an unsettling time for our Members. If you have any questions that are not answered here then please email memberinfo@blindveterans.org.uk or call **0300 111 2233**. Your case worker is always here to support you as needed too and, as more information becomes available, we will be sure to share this with you. 🌐

ADOBE STOCK / JONCERASMUS



Many Members use digital technology including smartphones and iPads

Digital Inclusion at your service

Our Digital Inclusion team outlines the process they have put in place to make sure you get all the support you need, and have a chance to practise and work at your own pace

Included in the recently published Annual Report was an update about the range of services provided which made note of the Digital Inclusion. We explained that Members are

supported by the Digital Inclusion team "to overcome the barriers they face in accessing digital technologies and the Internet, so they can independently manage their needs in the areas →

of daily living skills, emotional well-being, orientation and mobility, leisure and recreation and, connecting and communicating.” But how do we go about delivering this? And what does the support entail?

Firstly, who's in the team?

The Digital Inclusion team is currently made up of eight staff. There are seven technology practitioners - Amandine, Dave, David, Hugh, Nicky, Paul and Scott - and team leader, Andrew. We work in coordination with the wider Blind Veterans UK team to support you, the Members.

What type of services does Digital Inclusion provide?

- We identify devices (such as smart phones), accessibility features and software that can help you access the digital world to support your individual goals.
- We help configure your devices so they work effectively.
- We provide rehabilitation training and teach you techniques to input, navigate and access information on smart devices and computers.
- We provide opportunities for you to practise and reinforce your skills with support on hand.



Our CSW Rachel shows Member Frank how to use his CCTV magnifier

- And we also forward details of ongoing and ad-hoc support, such as Blind Veterans UK Member Support Hub, local services, websites and technology helplines.

How do you access the Digital Inclusion team for support?

You can contact the Member Support Hub, speak to a member of staff or volunteer or discuss your goals during an assessment.

Your details are then passed to us which begins the process of an intervention. We discuss each new intervention and problem solving potential solutions that may be effective for you, and then allocate you to the most appropriate team member.

The team member will then contact you to begin the support.

How do we deliver this work?

We do this by utilising a rehabilitation model. Here's a general overview of how rehabilitation works:

All interventions start with an initial discussion between you and the team member and includes the areas outlined below. Of course, all our work is individualised so may cover a lot more than the following:

“What's your preferred learning style, availability of sessions and motivation to learn?”

- Helping identify your goals, by discussing what is important to you in terms of interests, responsibilities, passions, motivations, the future aims
- Evaluation of current experience and ability with technology. Which technologies do you use or have used in the past? Which technologies do friends and family use? What are your favourite or most used applications and websites?
- Impact of other factors that are important to you. Are there other health conditions that need to be factored in? Do you have caring responsibilities, employment, etc? What is your wifi / mobile network coverage like? What's your preferred learning style, availability for sessions and motivation to learn?

These initial discussions lead to how we will best support you, agreeing the solutions and practically how we will provide the rehabilitation. Any rehabilitation is delivered using a hybrid approach of tele-rehabilitation which is generally over the phone, face-to-face in your home, or a combination. →

We will communicate and agree the plan with you before we start. Generally, an intervention will run over several weeks with regular sessions planned of approximately one hour.

The team will always work at your pace and give you plenty of opportunity to ask questions, go over areas again and have a chance to practise.

What are the main areas and devices we are currently supporting Members with?

Many of you are using smart devices and computers to communicate with friends and family, research areas of interest online and access audiobooks, banking and word processing. Many

“The team will always work at your pace and give plenty of opportunities to ask questions”

use iPhones, iPads, Android phones and tablets, smart speakers and PCs.

- If have any have any goals you think could be supported with technology, or questions about how you can best utilise the technology to meet you current goals, please get in touch on 0300 111 22 33 or by email at mesh@blindveterans.org.uk



Member Billy Baxter using a laptop

ADOBE STOCK / PLANETOFVECTORS



A close-up of a man in glasses looking through a magnifier glass

What to do if you notice changes in your vision

It can be tempting to ignore changes in your vision, but it's important to get even seemingly minor issues checked out. By following these steps, you can get the help you need

Your eyesight is precious, and any changes-whether gradual or sudden-shouldn't be ignored. Early detection of vision issues can make a significant difference in treatment and long-term eye health. It's equally as important to continue monitoring and testing

your eyesight after a diagnosis of a condition or an eye injury.

Recognising the signs

Common warning signs include blurry vision, difficulty reading, double vision, eye pain, or seeing flashes →



“Headaches, head and face pains and dizziness can also be indicators of changes”

your own specialist as soon as possible. If symptoms are severe, contact your GP or NHS 111 for urgent advice or go straight to Accident and Emergency at your local hospital.

Get regular check-ups

Even if your vision hasn't changed in years, or you already have a diagnosis of a condition, routine eye tests-typically every two years-help catch problems early or further complications with current eye conditions or injuries. Those with diabetes, a family history of eye disease, or other risk factors may need more frequent checks.

Regular eye tests after sight loss can help monitor any remaining vision, detect underlying conditions like glaucoma or infections, and assess overall eye health. Eye exams can also reveal other health issues, such as diabetes or high blood pressure. If you use visual aids or prosthetics, an eye test can also help ensure they remain effective and comfortable.

Maintaining eye health is crucial, even without functional sight. 🇬🇧

of light. Sudden vision loss, even if temporary, required immediate medical attention.

Those who already have a diagnosis of an eye condition or have obtained an eye injury may already experience these things. Keep track of what is common for you to experience and note any changes or sudden differences in the vision you have. Headaches, head and face pains and dizziness can also be indicators of changes or complications to pre-existing eye conditions and should be noted with your optometrist.

Take action

If you notice any changes, schedule an appointment with an optometrist or

Member voice

Our Member Engagement and Military Lead, **Tim Eckersley**, shares your latest news and updates

Sign up for our Member Conference 2025

We are holding another Member Conference this year to give you the opportunity to engage with the Senior Leadership Team in an environment that promotes questioning, feedback and listening during an important time regarding our future strategy.

The Conference will be held between the 22-23 May at Aston Conference Centre, Birmingham, B4 7ET, where accommodation will be provided for the evening of 22 May.

■ Please register your interest, at blindveterans.org.uk/conference25 or call us on 0300 111 2233. →



Our Member Conference 2024

VE80 Celebrations at Petwood Hotel

Our VE80 celebrations - remembering Victory in Europe, 1945 - offers a unique experience to share memories, celebrate together, enjoy a delicious buffet and explore the Second World War vehicles and equipment on display, courtesy of the Military Vehicle Trust. The event takes place on 8 May at Petwood Hotel, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, LN10 6QG

- To register your interest, please visit blindveterans.org.uk/events/ve-day-80-celebrations-petwood-hotel/

National events programme fixtures 2025

- VE80 Celebrations at Petwood Hotel, Lincolnshire, on 8 May
- Annual Members Conference, Birmingham on 22 and 23 May
- Military Dinner celebrating D-Day 81, Fareham, on 6 June
- Military Dinner at The Royal Welsh, Cardiff, on 4 July
- Military Dinner at Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire (Date TBC)
- Military Dinner at HMS Drake, Plymouth on 10 October



GERALD VILLENA / ADOBE STOCK

See vehicles like this one on display at our VE80 celebration at Petwood

- Military Dinner at RAF Honington, Bury St Edmunds on 31 October
- Remembrance evening dinner at the VSC, London on 8 November

Founders Day Awards 2025

To nominate a Member, carer or volunteer for a Founders Day Award in 2025, reflecting the spirit, ethos and dedication shown by our Founder, Sir Arthur Pearson, please visit: blindveterans.org.uk/veteran-s-area/login/member-area/member-events-and-activities/nominate-a-member-for-a-founder-s-award/

Military Sight Loss Champions Scheme

We continue to onboard serving personnel across the Forces who are provided the opportunity to fundraise, volunteer, host Blind Veterans UK within their establishments Mess and download useful content around eye care, including resources. This is a fantastic opportunity as we continue to build our network within the Forces community.

- Visit blindveterans.org.uk/support-us/military-sight-loss-champions/ to find out more about the scheme.

Military anniversaries – The Iraq War (2nd Gulf War)

UK Forces were deployed into Iraq supporting of the American led invasion on 20 March 2003. Operation Telic was given to all British military deployed, where over 46,000 Servicemen and women were involved within the initial invasion, including over 5,000 reservists. British officially withdrew from Iraq in May 2011.

A total of 179 British Forces or MoD civilians died serving on Operation Telic, of which 136 were killed from hostile action.

Give us your feedback

Have you attended a Blind Veterans UK event recently? We would like to know what you thought so we can improve our services and offer more of what you like.

Our Members, carers or even our staff can now provide events feedback to us directly via the Blind Veterans UK website by using our simple online form at blindveterans.org.uk/event-feedback



ADOBE STOCK / FINEVECTOR

Give us your feedback!

National Creative Programme

This month's VI-friendly creative activities you can take part in – all from the comfort of your own home

Here is the March programme of VI friendly creative activities to take part in from home. Please call **01273 391447** to leave a message on the NCP answer machine to request a project pack. You can also request a pack on the Members area of the website. All projects come with VI friendly instructions and the option of audio instructions on a USB stick or by email if you request it.

Dragonboat

We've loved hearing how some of



An assembled dragonboat

you are getting on with this 141 piece model kit! We still have plenty left for those who haven't taken part yet. This ornamental boat will measure 28cm H x 36cm L x 16cm W when built and the kit we send you comes with bespoke NCP graphic designed instructions with a step by step, high contrast guide.

Flower mosaic

In time for spring, this cheerful mosaic has been designed for you by the NCP with a step-by-step pattern. Your tiles will be sorted for you into labelled bags and you'll receive everything else you need in your kit. The base is 20cm wide and the tiles are a cheerful spring mix of greens and pinks.

Papercraft scrapbook

Following lovely feedback, we have designed this kit for you to make a papercraft and collage scrapbook. There's plenty of materials enclosed which we hope will inspire you to use

ADOBESTOCK / S.H.EXCLUSIV



Spring flowers

this scrapbook in your own unique way. There's a few specially chosen items in there for those Members who take part with grandchildren and other little helpers!

Surprise seeds 2025 – outdoor gardening

Following the success of 2024's gardening project, designed and provided by the late Jim Long, this project is back again in his memory, supported by Jim's son, Mick. The varieties of seeds were picked out by Jim last year and you will receive a pack of various seeds to try growing in your garden such as lettuce, cabbage and cauliflower. In this kit you will receive separated seeds in labelled plastic bags, and a hints and tips guide for planting them in your garden.

Also available: Watercolour pencils kit

Back by popular demand, with some hints and tips from Member and watercolour artist, Peter Murphy.

Acrylic painting

We have a few acrylic painting kits leftover, containing 12 tubes of paint, paper, a canvas and a variety of brushes. Thank you for continuing to return your NCP surveys, they are so helpful and enable us to shape the service going forward. And thank you for all your suggestions for future projects. We will be looking to make some of these a reality in 2025!

■ **We always love hearing from you, whether it's to share photographs, feedback or just to have a chat about your crafting activities. Please don't hesitate to get in touch via ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk**



Painting by Member and watercolour artist, Peter Murphy



Quiz time

Our Quiz Master, **Ron Russell** tests your general knowledge

1. What is the name of the famous golf course of St Andrews in Scotland?
a) The Royal and Ancient
b) The Royal and Old
c) The Royal and Youthful

2. What kind of baby animal would you find on the human body?

3. What were the names of the Kray twins?

4. Which former actress became an MP?

5. The abbreviation 'biz' is short for what word?

6. Which of these titles is addressed as m'lud?
a) Judge
b) Duke
c) Bishop

7. What is James Bond's code name?

8. In what US state is the city Nashville?

9. What was the old name for a Snickers bar before it changed in 1990?

10. What is the northernmost country in Africa?

Answers on Page 40



HELGAQ / ADOBE STOCK



Family news

Joan Home who celebrates her 104th birthday on 22nd March 2025.

Marion Hibbins who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 26th March 2025.

Peggy Harding who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 2nd April 2025.

Arthur Lilley who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 5th March 2025.

Margaret Winney who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 14th March 2025.

Mary Sayer who celebrates her 101st birthday on 10th March 2025.

Gladys Goodridge who celebrates her 101st birthday on 2nd April 2025.

Aviva Thwaites who celebrates her 100th birthday on 16th March 2025.

Ronald Cox who celebrates his 100th birthday on 23rd March 2025.

Gwendoline Dangerfield her 100th birthday on 29th March 2025.

Condolences

It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of the following, and we offer our heartfelt condolences.

Marian Jones who died on 1st February 2025. She was the wife of Gerald Jones.

Sheila Stanyon who died on 25th January 2025. She was the wife of Roy Stanyon.

All birthday information was correct at the time of going to press



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

Ronald Messer Anderson of Edinburgh died on 18 January 2025 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Highland Brigade.

Kenneth Arthurs of Rushden, Northamptonshire died on 12 February 2025 aged 94. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

Wallace Beaumont of Wilmslow, Cheshire died on 1 December 2024 aged 91. He served as a Trooper in the Cheshire Regiment.

Christopher Bensley of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 26 January 2025 aged 98. He served as a Private in the National Fire Service.

Lawrence Booth of Skegness, Lincolnshire died on 1 January 2025 aged 85. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Donald Charles Bourne of Birmingham died on 1 January 2025 aged 97. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

Neville Bowen of Ammanford, Dyfed died on 26 January 2025 aged 102. He served as an Acting Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Donald Brown of Radstock died on 4 February 2025 aged 98. He served in the Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's).

William Cornelious Carroll of Glasgow died on 1 January 2025 aged 87. He served as an Engineer in the Royal Engineers.

Geoffrey William Caunt of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 3 January 2025 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

Peter John Cotter of Newton Abbot, Devon died on 28 January 2025 aged 91. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

John Robert Coutts of South Shields, Tyne And Wear died on 6 February 2025 aged 80. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Leonard Croft of Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire died on 12 January 2025 aged 99. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

John Davis of Stamford, Lincolnshire died on 11 January 2025 aged 100. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

John Duckett of Ellesmere Port died on 11 January 2025 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Cheshire Regiment.

Royston Albert Durbin of Bristol died on 10 January 2025 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

Richard Evans of Chesterfield, Derbyshire died on 3 February 2025 aged 86. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

George Lewis Evans of Dinas Powys, South Glamorgan died on 21 January 2025 aged 88. He served as a Major in the Welsh Guards.

Arfon Hughes Evans of Bangor, Gwynedd died on 14 January 2025 aged 91. He served as a Flying Officer in the Royal Air Force.

Albert John Godfrey of Woodford Green, Essex died on 7 February 2025 aged 87. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Anthony Joseph Greenwood of Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire died on 16 January 2025 aged 86. He served in the Royal Engineers.

Vivian Griffiths of Cardiff died on 1 January 2025 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the Wessex Brigade.

Emmanuel Gripton of Wolverhampton died on 1 January 2025 aged 91. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Frank Willoughby Grosse of Salisbury died on 28 January 2025 aged 103. He served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Artillery.

Kenneth Edward Guest of Sittingbourne, Kent died on 9 February 2025 aged 102. He served as a Flight Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Douglas Hall of Rossendale, Lancashire died on 1 February 2025 aged 90. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Peter Roland Harvey of Cardiff died on 9 February 2025 aged 87. He served as a Junior Technician in the Royal Air Force.

William Hocking of Swansea died on 17 January 2025 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Mobile Defence Corps.

Samuel Hunter of Nottingham died on 2 February 2025 aged 89. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Clive Huntingford of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire died on 18 January 2025 aged 70. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

Michael Joseph Jackson of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 15 November 2024 aged 90. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Launcelot Jones of Seaford, East Sussex died on 27 November 2024 aged 95. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

William Laffling of Newmarket, Suffolk died on 13 December 2024 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

James Lanaghan of Sunderland died on 20 January 2025 aged 98. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

William Manby of Tarporley, Cheshire died on 12 January 2025 aged 87. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Engineers.

Gerald Morecroft of Manchester died on 19 January 2025 aged 90. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

John Pickering of Wirral, Merseyside died on 17 January 2025 aged 92. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Sidney Pincher of Bridgwater, Somerset died on 3 January 2025 aged 89. He served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

George Pither of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 1 February 2025 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Pioneer Corps.

Brendan Protano of Winsford, Cheshire died on 31 January 2025 aged 75. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Michael Ernest Rice of Blyth, Northumberland died on 1 February 2025 aged 82. He served as a Private in the King's Own Royal Border Regiment (4th, 34th and 55th Foot).

Christopher Bernard Ricketts of Polegate, East Sussex died on 19 January 2025 aged 87. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

Frederick Jospeph Smith of Liverpool died on 16 December 2024 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

Andrew Paul Stowe of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire died on 12 February 2025 aged 68. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

Christopher Strudwick of Sittingbourne, Kent died on 22 January 2025 aged 60. He served as a Guardsman in the Irish Guards.

James Robertson Sutherland of Retford, Nottinghamshire died on 14 January 2025 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Lloyd Desmond Tarr of Taunton, Somerset died on 7 February 2025 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

Derek Taylor of Bingley, West Yorkshire died on 28 January 2025 aged 89. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

James Thompson of Birmingham died on 9 January 2025 aged 98. He served as a Private in the South Staffordshire Regiment.

David Thomas Thompson of Colchester, Essex died on 15 January 2025 aged 87. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Anthony Tookey of Southport, Merseyside died on 16 January 2025 aged 99. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Engineers.

Alfred Tucker of Deal, Kent died on 24 January 2025 aged 91. He served as a Leading Air Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

Raymond Reginald Ungless of Derby died on 14 January 2025 aged 92. He served as a Leading Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Francis Walls of Maryport, Cumbria died on 29 January 2025 aged 89. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Gordon Walmsley of Hull, East Riding Of Yorkshire died on 31 December 2024 aged 94. He served as a Leading Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Bryan Carter Wardell of Eastleigh, Hampshire died on 31 January 2025 aged 103. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

Thomas Owen Wardle of Gateshead, Tyne And Wear died on 20 January 2025 aged 86. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

Ronald Arthur West of Plymouth died on 14 December 2024 aged 94. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Frank Wilkinson of Skipton, North Yorkshire died on 1 January 2025 aged 93. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Leonard Charles Williams of Farnham, Surrey died on 6 February 2025 aged 95. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Edward Wilson of Congleton, Cheshire died on 28 December 2024 aged 86. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Army.

Margaret Winney of Reigate, Surrey died on 17 January 2025 aged 101. She served as a Leading Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Max Woosey of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 7 February 2025 aged 88. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Military Police.

Peter Robert John Wright of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire died on 17 January 2025 aged 95. He served as an Aircraftman 1st Class in the Royal Air Force.

Marjorie Yeomans of Winchester, Hampshire died on 1 February 2025 aged 95. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Did you know that we can set up online Tribute Pages for the loved ones of staff, Members and Supporters? Find out more about setting up a Tribute Page here: blindveteransuk.muchloved.org



Contact details

Contact address Blind Veterans UK, 126 Fairlie Road, Slough, SL1 4PY
0300 111 22 33

Member Support Hub (MeSH):
01273 391 447

New Members: Anyone who may be eligible to join Blind Veterans UK, can phone our Membership Department on freephone **0800 389 7979**.

Rustington Centre: 01903 945 300

Llandudno Centre: 01492 868 700



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Quiz answers – from page 32

1. Ancient 2. Calves 3. Ronnie and Reggie. 4. Glenda Jackson. 5. Business 6. Judge. 7. 007. 8. Tennessee. 9. Marathon. 10. Tunisia.

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