

Review



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here

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

September 2025



Ready to run?

Could you join our Fab Five in London?



Inside:

Regional
conferences

Remembrance
events

Bridge of Lies



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

Champion our cause in your community

Remembrance is a time when we come together to reflect on the bravery and selflessness of those who have gone before us, and consider how different our lives could have been without their sacrifices. It's also a time to pass on the spirit to never forget to the younger generation.

With this in mind, we are calling on you to spread the word about our Planning to Remember campaign, which calls on individuals, groups and organisations to plan an event or activity between 1-12 November 2025 to mark Remembrance, while also raising awareness and vital funds to support our work.

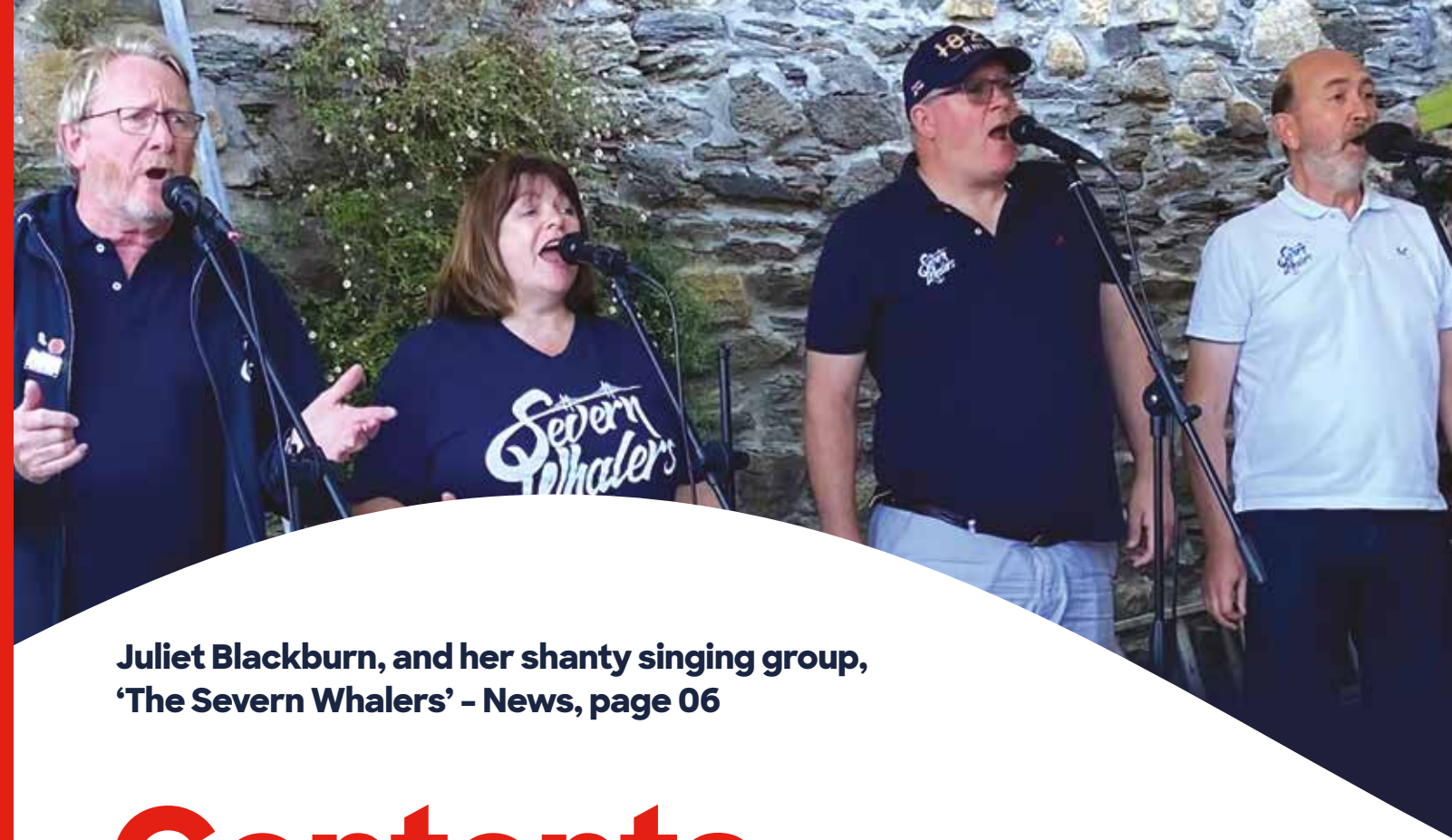
How you can help

If you're part of a group or organisation, maybe you could organise an activity like a war memorial walk? Or perhaps your local place of worship could hold a community Brew Up or a Remembrance collection for Blind Veterans UK as part of its Sunday service?

If you think you can help or would like to find out more, please visit blindveterans.org.uk/plan-now and send a message with your contact number. You can also call our Community Partnerships team on 0300 111 22 33 or email us at fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk



Rebuilding lives after sight loss



Juliet Blackburn, and her shanty singing group, 'The Severn Whalers' - News, page 06

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On the cover

Our 'fab five' runners training for the London Marathon 2026 to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK.



Regional dates for your diary

A message from your CEO, **Adrian Bell**

I hope you have all enjoyed the summer, whether at home or on holiday elsewhere.

My critical message to all Members is that you will shortly be receiving letters inviting you to attend a special set of Member Conferences this November. These conferences are in addition to



Adrian Bell

our regular conference in the spring, and will be taking place in five locations across the country to hopefully give as many of you as possible the opportunity to attend.

The conference locations will be Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Nottinghamshire, Cheshire and Northumberland, and all the information about how you can register is on page 08. As with our annual conference, we welcome your partners and carers too.

The main reason for holding these conferences is to consult with you on a couple of key changes that we are looking to make. I've written and spoken before about the need for us as a charity to pin down our charity objects to get a clear understanding of what Blind Veterans UK is here to do and, crucially, what it is *not* here to do.

I also spoke at our conference earlier



Members Simon, Alan, Jamie and Kev on BBC's Bridge of Lies

this year about the potential for us to create a Blind Veterans UK membership organisation. At the moment there is no membership association and I am keen to hear a wide range of views from Members, as well as family members and carers.

At each regional conference, the group will gather together in the late morning, hear and contribute to the sessions in the afternoon and then come together for a meal in the evening. Accommodation will be provided for one night. I plan to attend all five conferences, so look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

I will also be publishing a recorded presentation in advance so everyone

has the chance to comment, but I do encourage attendance at your nearest conference venue so we can discuss and debate in more detail.

In other news, I would like to congratulate our team of quizzers who took on the BBC's Bridge of Lies and won! The money won and donated is gratefully received but of greatest value was reaching millions of people and showcasing the impact Blind Veterans UK has. It was such a clear demonstration of how sight loss need not stop people from doing anything they wish. You can read all about it on page 14.

Well done to Simon, Alan, Jamie and Kev! 🎉

News

SeaBreeze Candles – Cheque presentation

Member Tony Gale has donated £2,000 to Blind Veterans UK out of the proceeds he raised from his handcrafted candles over VE Day. Tony's passion for candle making has grown since he lost his sight and to mark the anniversary of VE Day he made and sold special edition candles through his thriving business Seabreezecandles.co.uk.

Custom House Bistro and Bar in Poole sold over £650 of Tony's candles and hosted a cheque presentation. Meanwhile, we presented Tony with



Tony Gale with one of his candles

one of our Founder's Awards – The Life Beyond Sight Loss Award – to recognise his incredible commitment to embracing life after sight loss.

The Severn Whalers raise funds with song

One of our Community Support Workers, Juliet Blackburn, and her shanty singing group, 'The Severn Whalers', have raised over £1,600 for Blind Veterans UK.

The group is made up of four friends from villages along the River Severn in north Bristol who have been singing together at events and festivals for over six years. Over the past 18 months, they have been raising money for the charity at various events where they have been wowing the crowds with their music. What a wonderful way to raise money while they follow their passion and bring such joy to others!

John Hardy receives an Empire Medal

Member and volunteer John Hardy from Bridgewater has received a British Empire Medal for services as a volunteer for Blind Veterans UK. Despite John's own sight loss



Member John Hardy, far right, receiving his Empire medal

and physical challenges, he's worked tirelessly within his community and has been instrumental in developing the BridgewaterCommunity Hub. The Hub helps local charities and organisations to connect. He regularly cooks breakfast for dozens of attendees at the Forces Club and leads a team that turns surplus food into meals.

We wish to send John our heartfelt congratulations. We are extremely proud of all that he does for both our charity and his community.

Funds for Shropshire

Member Clive Jones has been a steadfast advocate of Blind Veterans UK within the world of Masonry, raising awareness and funds via his own lodge and others across the UK. The Shropshire Combined Services Lodge 9988 – of which Clive is a founder member and a past Master – meets quarterly and puts a great deal of effort

into fundraising for military charities and local causes including Blind Veterans UK.

In July, Clive and his Community Supporter Worker Claire were invited to a presentation at Redhouse Community Centre, Albrighton, where they received a donation of £1,500 from the Charity Steward of the Lodge, Richard Webster. This donation will be used to continue provision of support for blind veterans in the Shropshire area.

■ **If you are part of a group or organisation and you'd like to find out more about getting involved with fundraising for and raising awareness of Blind Veterans UK, please get in touch with our Community Partnerships team at fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk or visit www.blindveterans.org.uk/support-us.** →



Richard Webster, Claire Small and Member Clive Jones presenting a cheque for Blind Veterans UK



Blind Veterans UK regional conferences

This November five regional conferences will be taking place across the country to consult with Members on a number of key issues.

The regional conference locations will be Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Nottinghamshire, Cheshire, and Northumberland. We would welcome attendance by partners and carers of Members as well. Each regional conference will see the group gathering together in the late morning, hearing and contributing to the sessions in the afternoon and then coming together for a meal in the evening.



The 2024 Members Conference

Accommodation and breakfast will be provided for the one night following the conference and meal. Should you require any assistance with transport to or from the conference please contact your local community team in the first instance.

The dates and location for each regional conference are:

- **24 November** – Hampshire Court Hotel, Basingstoke
- **25 November** – Cheltenham Chase Hotel, Gloucester
- **26 November** – Nottingham Belfry Hotel, Nottingham
- **27 November** – Crewe Hall Hotel, Cheshire
- **28 November** – Slaley Hall Hotel, Hexham



Register your interest in attending by completing the short online form at blindveterans.org.uk/conference.

- If you require any assistance on completing or submitting your form you can call 0300 111 22 33 or contact your community team.

The deadline for registering your interest to attend each conference is 10 October 2025. 🇬🇧



In your community

The social gatherings across the country that have taken place this summer, bringing together Members in their local areas

In Andover

Our veterans recently felt blessed to spend time with some wonderful therapy dogs and their volunteers – and one of our Members, Des, had a particularly special time connecting with chipper little Jack Russell, Roadie. Des used to own a jack russell and still

misses him dearly, so his connection with Roadie was instant.

Meanwhile, Member Rona, who has spent time working with animals in the past, diligently remembered to bring a supply of treats for spaniel Willow – who seemed very appreciative of the kind gesture! →



Member Des bonds with Roadie, the Jack Russell

In Swansea

We held our first partnership meal in Swansea Veterans' Hub – and can't thank Morris, their volunteer who was once a military chef, and Wayne, former REME, for the warm welcome and safe space. Our Members felt relaxed and able to enjoy the banter without disturbing others. The Hub also presented a donation of £800 to Blind Veterans UK from Armed Forces Day, which they raised in partnership with Tesco and local businesses.



Karen, Penny and Will at the ceramics workshop in Fareham

In Fareham

Two local Members, Penny and Will, recently attended a ceramics workshop with local tutor, Karen. Both had worked with clay in the past but requested support to reconnect with this activity since their sight loss, and gain access to a kiln. It was wonderful to see them reconnect with their old passions in such an encouraging space. We are yet to see their creations out of the kiln and displayed proudly, but we're sure they are beautifully crafted.

In the Wirral

Our Wirral Members recently attended a music event at The Williamson Art Gallery & Museum in Birkenhead. The event, run by



Our Wirral Members at the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum

a son of a previous Member, very kindly reserved us front row seats, which was fantastic! Everyone was mesmerised by the classical pianist – with some even tearing up – and we also enjoyed performances from a singer as well as a short talk about a classical piece of music.

Following the event, we all gathered for lunch and a good catch up. No photos were allowed during the event, so we've included one of the lunch (above). All the Members said they'd love to do it again soon.

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.



Somerset Members enjoy a day at the Fleet Air Arm Museum

In Somerset

Members from Communities 7 & 8 came together this week to enjoy a day out at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton, Somerset.

We were lucky enough to be taken on a tour around the museum by two amazing ex-servicemen volunteers, who regaled us with the history of the exhibits as well as their own personal experiences.

Our Members shared their own stories too and one, Lindy Elliott, said she felt very emotional afterwards and described the day as, "a real trip down memory lane". Some Members even experienced going on Concorde for the first time. What an amazing day out! 🇬🇧



Swansea Members enjoying their first partnership meal together

Ready to run?

Do you know any keen runners who might want to join our Fab Five at next year's London Marathon?

On 26 April, five of our Members will be running 26.2 miles with 50,000 other participants in a clear demonstration of what is possible after sight loss – and we still have charity places available.

Thirty intrepid supporters have already signed up to run the London Marathon



Andy

for our charity, alongside our Members. They'll be raising awareness of the work we do raising funds so we're able to support even more blind veterans. Do you have any family or friends brave enough to join them?

Meet Team Blind Veterans UK and hear about why they've chosen to take on the challenge:

Andy

Andy Leitch, 51, is no stranger to physical challenges. In fact, this year saw him complete his tenth London Marathon!

After joining the Army in 1992, Andy spent 19 years with the Royal Logistics Corps until, at the age of 37, the genetic eye condition, retinitis pigmentosa, caused a gradual decline in his sight.

Forced to retire early from the military, Andy says: "Blind Veterans UK has invested a lot of time over the years to help me rebuild my life when I'd lost all hope. The staff made me realise

what was possible and gave me the confidence to start doing physical activities again and get back to work.

"Next year, I'll be running with an ex Royal Marine alongside me as my guide. His work colleagues will also be joining us. I hope my experience can help other blind veterans who are newer to the charity and that, as a team, we can all cross the finish line and be proud of our achievements and personal journeys.

"I now have ten London Marathon medals. Those of us with a visual impairment should never be written off – we can live full and active lives."

Kelly

Kelly Ganfield, 44, has run the London Marathon once before in 2015 – and is hoping that this time around she can finish in a faster time.

Kelly has accomplished many sporting achievements before and since losing her sight. She's competed twice in the Invictus Games for Team GB, and in the Veteran Games, and run several marathons and half marathons.

After joining the Army in 1998, Kelly served with the Adjutant General's Corps until she suffered a stroke at the age of 23 as a result of an auto-immune condition that causes blood clots. The stroke changed her life overnight.



Kelly

She says: "I found myself suddenly becoming a blind veteran at the age of 23 when I lost my sight and my career. The charity saved my life; I owe it a great deal. The staff took me in and have taken care of me ever since and I've met so many inspirational people, both staff and fellow blind veterans who have shaped my life. I'm so proud to be a blind veteran – I wouldn't be who I am today if I wasn't.

"My philosophy is that life is to be had as you never know what's around the corner. It's always an honour to represent the charity and to be able to give back for the support I've had. I'm looking forward to doing so again in 2026 at the London Marathon." →

Wayne

Wayne Pope, 44, will be taking part in the London Marathon for the very first time next year. He says: "The London Marathon is truly unique and I'll be fulfilling a lifetime dream when I cross the finish line."

Wayne served in the Royal Navy for four and a half years as an able seaman warfare specialist on board HMS Chatham and HMS Monmouth.

His sight loss journey only began at the end of 2022 when he was diagnosed



Wayne

with retinitis pigmentosa. He says: "My life changed completely; I lost my confidence and sense of purpose. I'd walked into the consultant's office as an independent man and walked out knowing my life was going to change."

Wayne began to receive support from the charity in Spring 2023. He says: "While staying at the Rustington Centre, I was asked to share some of the things I'd like to achieve that seemed out of reach to me because of my sight loss. I shared my dream of taking part in the London Marathon."

"The Wellbeing team at the Centre offered to support my aspirations by helping me train and prepare for the Worthing 10km – which I achieved in May of this year – with a view to being able to take part in the London Marathon alongside other blind veterans in 2026."

"I certainly don't have an end game in mind for this journey. The whole experience of the Worthing 10km – the training and preparation, the fundraising and the race itself – were life-changing for me. It showed me that anything can be achieved if you have the right mindset, great support from great people, and you're willing to put the work in to make it happen. I can't wait to hit the streets of London next year."



Alan

Alan

Alan Lock, 45, is certainly no stranger to the London Marathon course. In fact, he'll be taking on the prestigious 26.2-mile event for the 15th time. He says: "I love running – I've only been able to continue to run because of the support I've received from Blind Veterans UK."

Just three years after joining the Navy in 2002, Alan was diagnosed with a rare genetic condition, similar to macular degeneration. It took his sight and forced him to retire from the Armed Forces at just 24. He says: "I felt so lonely and was full of worry and uncertainty for my future. I'd been committed to a career with the Royal

Navy; it's what I expected to do for life but that was snatched away from me along with my eyesight."

"It sounds obvious but not being able to see properly has a massive impact on your life. I find it difficult to read; I can't drive; I can't see people's faces properly, including my own daughter's, which is heart-breaking."

Alan began receiving our support in 2005 and says that the rehabilitation and equipment we've provided has meant he can live independently and keep pursuing the sports he loves. He says: "The charity provided me with a running machine so I can continue to enjoy running. If I run outside of my home I need a guide, but with the running machine I have the independence to run alone and unaided."

"I can't thank Blind Veterans UK enough for all the support I've been given. It's a special charity and has been by my side throughout my journey, giving me the confidence to see beyond the limits of sight loss and achieve things I thought wouldn't be possible. I'm proud to run for Blind Veterans UK and the London Marathon is a terrific opportunity to remind myself I can still take on big challenges and endeavours in spite of my sight loss."





Chris

Chris

Chris Kennedy, 65, will be taking on his first ever marathon next year. Chris served in the Territorial Army in the late 1970s and early 1980s and later served as a firefighter with Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. It was during his career as a firefighter that he began to realise something was wrong with his sight.

He says: "It was at the age of 35 that I first thought something wasn't right. I found out I had a hereditary eye disease that would eventually take my central vision. I was devastated and felt I couldn't tell anyone, so I sat on it for a few years until I had to retire from the fire service. So with my eyesight also went my career.

"I'm taking on this challenge because I want to fundraise for the charity that has been there for me for the

last nine years. They have not only provided me with physical support, and technology and gadgets to help me live day to day life, but above all I've benefitted hugely from the camaraderie of being in the company of others who've also lost their sight and have a military background to bond over."

The team are jointly fundraising and aim to raise a minimum of £1,250 – which is the equivalent of each of them receiving a one-day bespoke training session in their own home from one of our Community Support Workers or ROVIs (Rehabilitation Officer for the Visually Impaired). These staff members work with our Members to help them overcome the barriers they face due to their sight loss and achieve everyday tasks that mean they can live independently.

Do you know anyone who would welcome the chance to run alongside these Members while also raising money to support the charity? We have a small number of charity spaces still available. Find out more at blindveterans.org.uk/londonmarathon

You can support our London Marathon runners by making a donation: justgiving.com/page/lm26



Listen
here

Crossing the Bridge

A team of blind veterans took part in a special episode of the BBC1 game show 'Bridge of Lies', broadcast last month

Members Kev Alderton, Simon Brown, Jamie Cuthbertson and Alan Holderness managed to successfully cross the BBC1's Bridge of Lies – and win a brilliant £850 for our charity.

The show, which is hosted by Ross Kemp, gets players to move across a bridge, made up of stepping stones, with each stone representing either a truth or a lie. By identifying the truths and making it to the other side of the bridge, you can win money for your team.



Simon, Jamie, Alan and Kev celebrating their win

For this special episode, the game was made accessible for our Members with a clock system, with 12 representing a step forward, 3 representing a step to the right, and so on. The team took on the topics English vs Scottish football teams, places in the Northern Hemisphere vs Southern Hemisphere, things you find in Space vs Earth, and Grimms' Fairy Tales.

In the grand finale, in order to win the money, the team were faced with the following two 'facts', one is a truth and one is a lie. Which would you choose?

- **The longest earthworm ever recorded was over 20ft.**
- **Fashion designer Coco Chanel's real first name was Camila.**



The episode is available on BBC iPlayer, which you can watch by scanning the QR code.

This was fantastic coverage for Blind Veterans UK, and allows us to reach lots of new people, so big thanks go to our four players! 🏆



Members, staff and volunteers with the Military Wives Choir outside Manchester Piccadilly station

Remembrance Weekend - Manchester 2025

As the most important date in the Blind Veterans UK diary, Remembrance is a time to come together to honour the service and sacrifice of old comrades and friends

This year, we're organising Remembrance Weekend events in Manchester. All the details and how to register are on the opposite page. You're welcome to bring along a

companion or carer and while we'll do our very best to provide places for everyone, if any of the events on offer are oversubscribed, then places will be allocated via a ballot.

Remembrance Weekend Activities in Manchester

Saturday, 8 November
Manchester Piccadilly Station
2pm - 3pm

To kick off the weekend, a short service will be conducted outside Manchester Piccadilly Station by 'The Lads' statue to commemorate the life of Sir Arthur Pearson and all those lost.

The Hilton, Manchester Piccadilly
6pm - 9pm

On Saturday evening, we will host an informal dinner at The Hilton, Manchester Piccadilly. This is free to



'The Lads' statue in Manchester

A short service will be conducted outside Manchester Piccadilly Station by 'The Lads' statue

attend for Members and their chosen guest. Priority will be given to those attending Remembrance Sunday.

Sunday, 9 November
St Peter's Square, Manchester
11am

On Sunday, blind veterans will attend the Service of Remembrance held at St Peter's Square, Manchester.

Accommodation for Saturday, 8 November

We are delighted to share that Blind Veterans UK is offering a £100 contribution to our Members who book a room at Manchester Piccadilly Hilton Hotel for the Saturday night.

Guests opting to stay at the Hilton will receive a discount code and booking instructions after registration has closed. Please note that the discount is applied per room. 🇬🇧

■ Register via blindveterans.org.uk/manchester, or by calling us on 0300 111 2233.

A sense of duty

Remembering **Bertram Akhurst** and his life of service, courage and care



A young Bertram

From a young boy watching the skies during the Battle of Britain to a Flight Sergeant in the RAF, Bertram Akhurst's journey was remarkable. His life was shaped by the Second World war, resilience, and a deep sense of duty — and in his later years, by the sight loss that threatened his independence.

As a child, Bertram lived near the RAF airfield at Lympne, Kent, where the roar of Hurricanes and the threat of German bombers were part of daily life. He vividly remembered diving for cover during air raids, taking refuge in Anderson shelters, and watching the skies light up with tracer fire. His mother would pray over her children during the bombings, offering comfort in the face of chaos.

Bertram's fascination with aviation grew from this point onwards. He joined the Air Training Corps at 13 and was dedicated to learning navigation, Morse code and aircraft recognition.

He witnessed the devastation of the Baedeker raids in 1942, helped the

Auxiliary Fire Service repair hosepipes after bombings, and even flew in training aircraft like the Avro Anson and Percival Q6. He narrowly escaped danger more than once — dodging shrapnel, surviving a bombing at Deal Station, and witnessing a Doodlebug crash just behind his home in 1944.

After the war, Bertram continued to serve, joining the RAF in 1946, and working in intelligence and administration. He had a passion for helping people, becoming a clinical psychologist after his service. In later life, as his sight began to fail, he faced a new kind of challenge. It was then that he turned to us.

Through a computer course at Blind Veterans UK, Bertram discovered new ways to stay connected and independent. He reconnected with old friends, embraced new technology, and continued to live an active life of quality. Although, he hadn't flown for many years since leaving the RAF, his passion for it never waned and after retiring, amazingly, he took to the skies once more.

His family remembers him as a man of quiet strength and great humour. His family member, Georgina, told us that Blind Veterans UK had such an impact on his life that he wanted to ensure others could benefit as he had.



Bertram in the Air Training Corps

That's why Bertram chose to leave a gift in his Will to Blind Veterans UK. It was his way of giving back — to ensure that future generations of blind veterans would receive the same life-changing support. Through his gift, Bertram is still helping others to this very day. 🇬🇧

■ **If you'd like to find out more about leaving a gift to future blind veterans in your Will, call Alice on 020 7616 7923, email giftsinwills@blindveterans.org.uk, or visit blindveterans.org.uk/leaveagift.**

WAM bond on action packed day

Member **Neil Hildred** writes about the recent East of England Working Age Members (WAM) Activity Day at Kempston Outdoor Activity Centre in Bedford

Thanks to a combined effort by staff from the community teams of Region 4 (East of England), we had a fantastic Working Age Members activity day at Kempston Outdoor Activity Centre in Bedford in July.

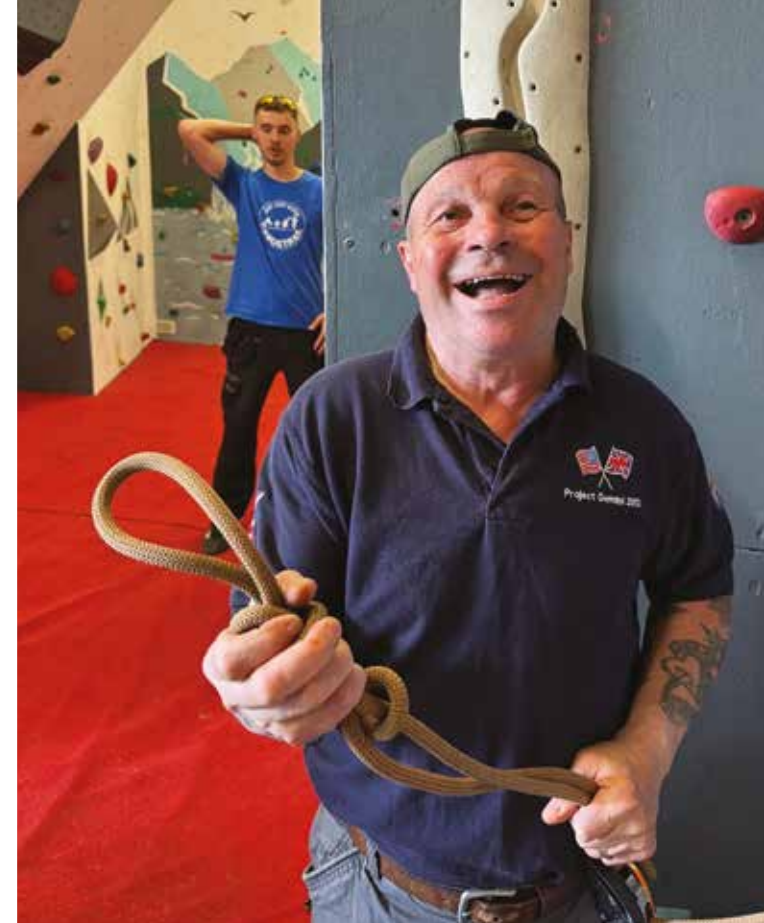
The day was aimed at giving Members an opportunity to step outside their comfort zone and challenge themselves physically. It was also geared towards improving their emotional wellbeing, building their confidence in an unfamiliar environment and enhancing social interactions with other Members from different parts of the region.

There were 11 Members and five carers in attendance, supported by three staff and one volunteer. The day began with tea, coffee and pastries, providing the opportunity for some Members to meet each other for the first time and for others to rekindle their acquaintances from past events.

After breaking into two groups, the Members tried indoor bouldering, which is a form of rock climbing performed on short walls without ropes or harnesses. Relying on crash mats for protection, it's a physically and mentally challenging activity focused on balance, technique and strength.

But, as it turns out, the bouldering was just to prepare Members for the 80-foot outdoor climbing wall. The wall had a combination of large and small climbing holds and proved to be a challenge for everyone. A number of the Members achieved climbs of over 60 feet.

There was also an opportunity to participate in axe throwing, with both short and long handled axes. This provided an impressive display from some Members who showcased their natural precision, technique and ability to focus while applying brute strength



Billy Baxter prepares to attempt the 80-foot climbing wall

in driving the axes deep into the log targets – and beyond in some cases.

We then enjoyed a barbeque-style buffet lunch and another opportunity for Members to interact with each other and reflect on the activities so far. Then, after lunch, it was time to work the food off with a change of direction as the activities moved from land to water.

Opting for either paddle boards or roped together crewed kayaks to take on the upstream river journey, the Members demonstrated their impressive skills once again as they completed their waterborne journey



Members took on axe throwing and river challenges

with the help of teamwork and coordination, along with strength and endurance. Meanwhile, those who felt safer on land were able to follow the exploits of those on the river via a guided and descriptive walk along an adjacent public footpath.

As the day came to an end it was time to reflect as a group, say our goodbyes to one another and thank the staff at the centre. If one thing stood out more than anything else during the day, it was the Members' positive interactions and the way they encouraged each other. They also communicated their firm desire to do it all over again in the near future. 🍷

Getting the most out of VoiceOver

Using the audio accessibility app for people with sight loss

VoiceOver is now a standardised accessibility feature designed to make smartphones and PCs usable for people who are blind or visually impaired. It works by transforming visual interfaces (what's on the screen) into spoken feedback, allowing the user to navigate digital environments with confidence and independence.

Available on Apple, Android, Windows and many other platforms, VoiceOver reads aloud everything on the screen, from app names and notifications to web content and text messages.

Users interact using gestures or keyboard commands, so they can explore, select and activate items without needing to see them. For instance, a swipe or tap can prompt VoiceOver to describe an icon, while a double-tap might open it.

VoiceOver also supports Braille displays and customisable speech

settings, allowing users to tailor the experience to their needs. On PCs, as well as Windows, there are specialist software screen readers like NVDA and JAWS which offer similar functionality, but with more customisation of settings.

The VoiceOver feature is more than just a tool – it's a gateway to digital inclusion. Whether browsing the internet, banking, shopping, sending emails or using social media, it empowers users to engage with technology on their own terms.

As accessibility continues to evolve, VoiceOver stands as a testament to how thoughtful design can transform lives.

Things to consider

Using VoiceOver is a very different way of interacting with a smart device or PC, so it might take a bit getting used to. From our experience of supporting

Members with using VoiceOver these are main areas to consider:

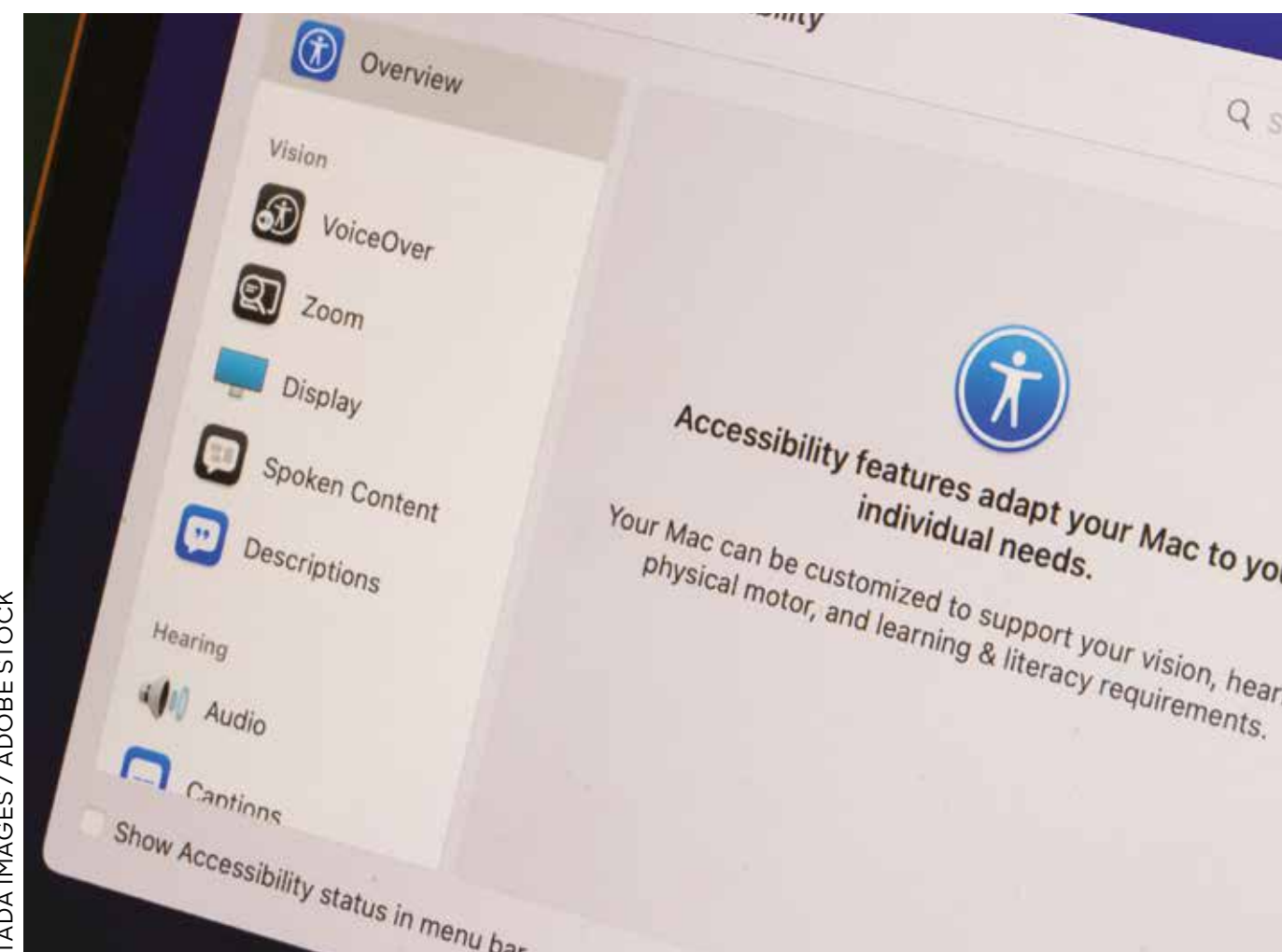
Navigation confusion

New users may find VoiceOver's gesture-based navigation unintuitive at first. Swipes, taps, and rotor gestures differ from standard touch interactions, which can lead to frustration. It can also be more challenging for people with dexterity issues – if this is you, you may want to consider utilising a stylus, voice activation controls or a switch.

The VoiceOver feature is more than just a tool – it's a gateway to digital inclusion

■ Audio overload

VoiceOver generally reads absolutely everything on the screen, which can feel overwhelming at first and can make it hard to find the detail you want. But with patience



TADA IMAGES / ADOBE STOCK

VoiceOver reads aloud everything on the screen

and practise, and by adjusting the settings, this challenge can be resolved.

■ Incompatible apps or websites

Some third-party apps or poorly designed websites lack proper accessibility labels so VoiceOver may well read out confusing or incomplete information.

■ System updates

Occasionally, updates to iOS, Android or Windows can reset accessibility settings or introduce bugs that affect VoiceOver's performance.

■ VoiceOver training

As with anything new, it can be hugely helpful to get some training on VoiceOver. At Blind Veterans UK, we have specialist staff and support available to Members to support them to utilise and set up the VoiceOver accessibility feature. If this is something you feel you require, please contact MeSH helpline or speak to a Blind Veterans UK staff member who can make a referral to the Digital Inclusion Team.

How to set up VoiceOver and screen readers on Windows, iOS and Android

If you are confident at finding your way

around your phone or computer and would like to set up VoiceOver yourself, we've included the instructions in the yellow box. Please be aware, though, that as with any changes to settings you may struggle to remember how to revert back to the original settings if you need to so it's often best to get help from someone you trust. 🧑🏻

Windows (PC)

Go to Settings > Accessibility > Narrator > Toggle On

iOS (iPhone/iPad):

Go to Settings > Accessibility > VoiceOver > Toggle On

Android:

Go to Settings > Accessibility > TalkBack > Toggle On



DEAGREEZ / ADOBE STOCK



National Creative Project

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

Here's the September 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 and request a project pack. You can also request a pack at blindveterans.org.uk/activitykit or you can send us an email at ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk. All projects come with VI friendly instructions and the option of audio instructions on a USB stick or by email if you request it.

Kintsugi teacup mosaic (medium/confident beginners):

Blind Veterans UK have spearheaded a collaborative initiative to share expertise in vision rehabilitation to support veterans in Ukraine in response to the escalating number of traumatic eye injuries resulting from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Kintsugi is a traditional Japanese art

form that involves repairing broken pottery mixed with gold lacquer. Veterans in Ukraine have been taking part in this activity as the symbolism of repair and resilience is pertinent to their experience. Our design for this mosaic is a nod to the veterans in Ukraine and their experience, ➔



Teacup mosaic



Taj Mahal model

with tile colours chosen to represent the Ukrainian flag. As with all our mosaics, your tiles will be pre-sorted for you to follow the step-by-step pattern, and you'll also receive some gold glitter to mix with your grout.

Woodland trio – squirrel

(easy/beginners): The final model in our woodland trio, this one comes with a graphic step-by-step guide and is around 25 pieces. Perfect for beginners and more experienced model makers alike. The hedgehog and mouse are still available on request. We'll continue to offer all three on a permanent basis.

Taj Mahal model

(intermediate): A few of you have requested models of buildings and so we hope you love this Taj Mahal model. Despite having 171 pieces, it's extremely symmetrical and a lot of parts are repeated so orientation of pieces isn't as important. The dimensions of the finished model are 18cm x 22cm x 22cm. You'll receive a step-by-step graphic guide to help you complete it with glue and sandpaper.

Also available

Fish mosaic: We still have a few of our summer fish mosaic kits. This special design has iridescent tiles for scales and blue grout to create a striking decoration.

Botanical sketchbook: A selection of specially chosen drawing materials and a handy inspiration guide from Member, Steve Halliwell. You're welcome to take part in this more than once if you've run out of supplies as this project is available all year round.

Acrylic painting: One of our regular art kits which includes a selection of acrylic paints, brushes and sponges and a canvas to help get you started with this painting medium. You can take part in this project more than once if you need more supplies. 🍷



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Your crafting stories

We love seeing your craft photos, whether these are NCP project kits or a completely separate hobby. This month, we're showcasing Member **Glynne Palmer**

With encouragement from his community support worker Lily, Glynne decided to give crafting a go and it turns out he's a natural – has recently been presented with a Founders Award for Creativity!

Glynne enjoys making both wooden models and mosaics, and he's getting more confident with each new project.



Glynne proudly holding up his Founders Award certificate

“I hope more Members try a creative hobby – they might surprise themselves with what they can achieve”

He's so passionate now that he even takes his completed crafts to his local lunch club to show to other Members in the hopes they'll be encouraged to give it a go too. Glynne says, “It's the best thing to keep you busy. I hope more Members try a creative hobby – they might surprise themselves with what they can achieve.”

Thank you Glynne, for your positivity, and congratulations on your creative achievements!

We always love hearing from Members, so whether it's to give feedback or share your photographs, please don't hesitate to get in touch via ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk.

Lucy and Reanna 🍷

Member voice

Tim Eckersley, our Member Engagement and Military Lead, shares the latest Member news and updates

Remembrance Weekend - London, Cenotaph 2025

This Remembrance weekend falls on the 8-9 November. There will be four main events in London for Blind Veterans UK.

Please note that registration is now closed, however anyone without tickets will be able to view the public parade at the cenotaph with the general public.

The agenda for the weekend is as follows:

- Sir Arthur Pearson Memorial Service at Hampstead Cemetery, London, on Saturday, 8 November, between 11am to 12pm.
- Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall, London, on Saturday, 8 November, arrival from 1pm.
- Informal evening social event at the Victory Services Club, London, on

Saturday, 8 November, between 6pm to 10pm.

- Remembrance Parade at the London Cenotaph on Sunday, 9 November, between 9am to 1pm.



The Cenotaph

CLAUDIO DIVIZIA / ADOBE STOCK

National Engagement Events

To book a place on any of our National Engagement Events, please go to blindveterans.org.uk/militarydinner. Alternatively, you can call MeSH on **0300 111 22 33**. The MET will be organising our first Christmas Dinner at the Village Hotel, Swindon, which will be held on the 5 December 2025.

Regimental Associations

The Member Engagement Team are keen to hear from any Members who belong to a Regimental Association. Regimental Associations help keep contact between former regimental members, focusing on fostering mutual friendship and providing social gatherings.

- Please contact **MET@blindveterans.org.uk**

Military anniversary - Victory over Japan

Known as VJ Day, this anniversary marks the surrender of Imperial Japan in WWII, which led to the end of the war. Japan's surrender was

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Surrender of Japan, Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945

a culmination of different factors; the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soviet Union's declaration of war, plus loss of soldiers, equipment and infrastructure.

The Atomic Bomb has not been used by any aggressor in wartime since. Upon President Truman's announcement that the Pacific War had ended, civilians began to celebrate in the streets, bars and clubs all throughout occupied Allied Forces territory. 🇺🇸



Quiz time

Our quizmaster **Ron Russell** tests your general knowledge

1. What's the name of the deepest point on earth?

2. What's the name of the famous painting by Edvard Munch?

3. In what city were the first modern Olympic Games held?

4. What does SPF stand for?

5. What does CODA stand for?
6. What country has the most islands in the world?

7. Until 1923, what was the Turkish city of Istanbul called?

8. In what year did Serena Williams win her first Grand Slam singles title?

9. What is the term for a group of flamingos?



Serena Williams winning her fifth US Open title



Family news

Birthdays

Alexander Mccombie who celebrates his 101st birthday on 11 September 2025.

Barbara Hart who celebrates her 104th birthday on 15 September 2025.

Grace Taylor who celebrates her 101st birthday on 11 September 2025.

Kenneth Windle who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 30 September 2025.

Leslie Fuller who celebrates his 100th birthday on 13 September 2025.

Nancy Bowstead who celebrates her 104th birthday on 18 September 2025.

Peggy Brooks who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 4 September 2025.

Robert Williams who celebrates his 100th birthday on 21 September 2025.

Ruth Hayes who celebrates her 100th birthday on 22 September 2025.

Thomas Cuthbert who celebrates his 100th birthday on 19 September 2025.

Condolences

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

Patrick Collins who died on 30 June 2025. He was the husband of Louise Collins.

Norma Lawrence who died on 1 July 2025. She was the wife of Gordon Lawrence.

Shirley Laws who died on 1 July 2025. She was the wife of Arthur Laws.

Freda Pritchard who died on 3 August 2025. She was the wife of Roy Pritchard.

Frances Scantlebury who died on 11 August 2025.

Patricia Smith who died on 27 July 2025. She was the wife of Tony Smith.

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

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here

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

John Ailes of Camborne who died on 7 June 2025 aged 58. He served as a Private in The Royal Corps of Transport.

Geoffrey Ashman of Cheltenham who died on 2 July 2025 aged 101. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Engineers.

Roy Barret of Newbury who died on 12 July 2025 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Airforce.

Raymond Bossom of Felixstowe who died on 7 July 2025 aged 87. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Airforce.

William Bruce of Glasgow who died on 24 June 2025 aged 87. He served as a Private in The Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Maurice Buck of Boston who died on 30 July 2025 aged 98. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Airforce.

Robert Chippendale of Corsham who died on 12 June 2025 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Airforce.

Jeffrey Clarke of Leamington Spa who died on 25 July 2025 aged 88. He served as a Private in The Army Catering Corps.

John Cockrill of Chatham who died on 1 June 2025 aged 92. He served as an A.C 1 in The Royal Airforce.

Alexander Cook of Sunderland who died on 1 August 2025 aged 95. He served as an A.C.1 in The Royal Airforce.

James Cook of Wisbech who died on 21 June 2025 aged 81. He served as a Sick Berth Attendant in The Royal Navy.

Michael Cooper of Chichester who died on 30 June 2025 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in The Household Cavalry Regiment.

Thomas Davies of Littlehampton who died on 23 June 2025 aged 96. He served as a Major in The Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Henry Dent of Burnham-on-Sea who died on 13 May 2025 aged 87. He served as a Private in The Royal Army Service Corps.

John Donnelly of London who died on 14 June 2025 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Military Police.

George Flynn of Worksop who died on 1 June 2025 aged 86. He served as a Corporal in The Royal British Army.

Joyce Grant of Cheltenham who died on 1 June 2025 aged 89. She served as a Leading Aircraft Woman in The Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

John Grant of Bungay who died on 17 June 2025 aged 94. He served as an Electrical Mechanic in The Royal Navy.

Alan Hacker of Carterton who died on 9 July 2025 aged 64. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Airforce.

Joseph Hallett of Banbury who died on 1 June 2025 aged 94. He served as a Private in The South Staffordshire Regiment.

William Hancox of Birmingham who died on 23 June 2025 aged 87. He served as a Sapper in The Royal Engineers.

Gerald Hayes of Whitby who died on 1 June 2025 aged 91. He served as a Bombardier in The Royal Artillery.



Stewart Haywood of Barnsley who died on 21 July 2025 aged 89. He served as a Private in The Lancaster Regiment.

Walter Herridge of Stamford who died on 14 July 2025 aged 91. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in The Royal Airforce.

Walter Hoad of Welwyn Garden City who died on 2 June 2025 aged 95. He served as a Private in The Royal Army Medical Corps.

Sheila Hope of Seaford who died on 8 July 2025 aged 91. She served in The Womens Royal Army Corps.

David Hotchin of Plymouth who died on 14 June 2025 aged 90. He served as an Able Seaman in The Royal Navy.

Kenneth Hubbard of Bradford who died on 1 July 2025 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Army Pay Corps.

Joseph Ingram of Newcastle Upon Tyne who died on 14 July 2025 aged 94. He served as a Private in The Green Howards Regiment.

Lesley Jones of Bodmin who died on 8 June 2025 aged 96. He served as an L.A.C in The Royal Airforce.

Harry Joyce of Ashby-De-La-Zouch who died on 18 July 2025 aged 88. He served as a Coder in The Royal Navy.

John Keith of Sheffield who died on 16 June 2025 aged 79. He served in The Coldstream Guards.

Derek King of Colchester who died on 8 July 2025 aged 94. He served as a Private in The Royal Artillery.

Michael Knight of Salsbury who died on 19 June 2025 aged 92. He served as a Lance Corporal in The East Surrey Regiment.

Alan Lance of Hayes who died on 8 July 2025 aged 90. He served as a Private in The Army Catering Corps.

Roy Lees of Preston who died on 25 July 2025 aged 83. He served as a Chief Technician in The Royal Airforce.

Fredrick Love of Gosport who died on 18 June 2025 aged 95. He served as a Major in The Royal Signals.

Peter Lowe of Largs who died on 1 August 2025 aged 86. He served as an Able Seaman in The Royal Navy.

Colin Margetson of Fakenham who died on 27 June 2025 aged 84. He served as an Air Mechanic in The Royal Airforce.

Kenneth Mason of Walsall who died on 1 June 2025 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Airforce.

Brian Muir of Swindon who died on 14 June 2025 aged 79. He served as a Sergeant in The Royal Airforce.

William North of Reading who died on 28 June 2025 aged 90. He served as a Surveyor in The Royal Artillery.

John Northedge of Southend on Sea who died on 20 June 2025 aged 93. He served as a Private in The Royal Engineers.

Henry Pattison of Polegate who died on 27 July 2025 aged 93. He served as a Sapper in The Royal Artillery.

Fredrick Platt of Wrexham who died on 23 July 2025 aged 92. He served as a Drummer in The Royal Welch Fusiliers.

John Proctor of Stratford-Upon-Avon who died on 1 June 2025 aged 99. He served in The South Wales Borderers.

Derek Reffell of Plymouth who died on 1 August 2025 aged 85. He served as an Able Seaman in The Royal Navy.

Kenneth Richardson of Scunthorpe who died on 30 July 2025 aged 90. He served as a Gunner in The Royal Artillery.

Alan Robinson of Walton-On-Thames who died on 14 July 2025 aged 95. He served as a 3rd Mate in The Merchant Navy.

Peter Sargent of Reading who died on 9 July 2025 aged 79. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Hampshire Regiment.



Michael Slight of Weymouth who died on 26 June 2025 aged 90. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Army Pay Corps.

Anthony Smith of Worcester who died on 8 July 2025 aged 85. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Worcestershire Regiment.

Michael Sweeney of Hassocks who died on 3 August 2025 aged 90. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in The Royal Airforce.

John Tillyer of Buckfastleigh who died on 29 June 2025 aged 94. He served as an L.A.C in The Royal Airforce.

Leslie Vinnicombe of Dorking who died on 21 June 2025 aged 75. He served as a Sergeant in The Queens Regiment.

John Walker of Pewsey who died on 7 July 2025 aged 91. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in The Royal Airforce.

Anthony Warner of Carmarthen who died on 20 July 2025 aged 92. He served as a Private in The General Service Corps.

Brian Webb of Rotherham who died on 5 June 2025 aged 85. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Airforce.

Christopher Wetters of Tyn-Y-Gongl who died on 7 July 2025 aged 93. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Airforce.

Dennis Whinray of Southport who died on 1 July 2025 aged 80. He served as a Signaller in The Royal Signals.

Freda Whittaker of Manchester who died on 10 July 2025 aged 103. She served as a Private in The Womens Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Sidney Willacy of Preston who died on 23 June 2025 aged 98. He served as a Lieutenant in The Loyal Regiment.

Roy Wilson of Hounslow who died on 18 July 2025 aged 79. He served in The Royal Signals.

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 at 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



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Review Editor: 0300 111 22 33 or revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

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Quiz answers – from page 32

1. The Mariana Trench
2. The Scream
3. Athens
4. Sun Protection Factor
5. Child of Deaf Adults
6. Sweden
7. Constantinople
8. A: 1999
9. Flamboyance

A different format?

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



Many of our Members are talented artists and creators, many of whom have taken on NCP projects. Here we are highlighting just a handful of the wonderful work they have created recently

