

Review



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The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

November 2025



Adrenlanine junkies

A fun-filled week in Cumbria

Inside:

Centre breaks 2026

Herbie's pride of Remembrance

Accessible Christmas gifts



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss



Remembrance special edition Sea Breeze candles



Sea Breeze Scented Candles has created a special edition Remembrance candle, featuring a one-off wax melt poppy. This luxury Rock Salt and Driftwood candle has been designed by Member **Tony**, to light during Remembrance, in honour of old comrades and friends.



**Only
£9.99**



Half of the profits for these special edition candles go to Blind Veterans UK. What's more, by buying Tony's candles you get to support one of the brilliant businesses founded by our Members.

Visit the website at:

www.seabreezecandles.co.uk



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss



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On the cover

A group of Working Age Members enjoying a hike during Adrenaline Week in the Lake District.



Coming together

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

This month is set to be a very busy one, with several opportunities for Members to get together.

As well as Remembrance events in London, Manchester and Rustington, we will also be holding our five regional Member conferences. Thank you to everyone who has signed up to attend one of these.

More than 200 Members and guests are attending the conferences. We



Adrian Bell

will be discussing proposals to change our Charity Objects and potentially forming a Membership organisation, so I very much look forward to hearing your feedback on these.

To ensure that the conferences remain inclusive as practicably possible, a video and audio recording of a presentation on these topics is also being sent to all Members, so that those of you who can't attend in person can still share your views. Links and instructions on how to watch or listen to this message will be sent in a letter, with an explanation of how you can give your feedback.

I've received feedback questioning why all the conferences are being in England. I'd like to assure Members that locations were selected based on venue availability and the largest of our Member populations throughout the UK. This allowed us to be close enough to most Members and remain as cost effective as possible.

All areas of the UK are important to us - we recently delivered military



Rustington Village Remembrance Parade 2024

dinners in Scotland and Wales, which were extremely well received by the Members in attendance. In the future, we are also looking to extend Blind Veterans UK national Remembrance events to Edinburgh.

In other news, you may have seen reports about the potential sale of our Llandudno Centre recently and I would also like to take the opportunity to update everyone on this.

I can confirm that we have an interested potential purchaser and are presently in negotiations. These are quite complex and relatively slow-moving.

This is to be expected and is not unusual with deals of this nature. The

potential purchaser is also a charity and a member of Cobseo – the Confederation of Service Charities. It serves the broader population, as well as veterans.

It's hoped that the purchase might be complete later this year, but this will be dependent on many separate issues. I will update you all in due course.

In the meantime, I'm very much looking forward to catching up with many of you over the coming weeks. For any Members I won't be seeing over the Remembrance weekend or at any of the conferences, please remember I'm always here if there's anything you wish to discuss. It may take me a little time, for which I apologise, but I will always get back to you. 🇬🇧

Contact details

Contact address Blind Veterans UK,
York House, Wetherby Road,
York, YO26 7NH
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

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

Feedback: To give us feedback on any of our services, please email us at **supporter.services@blindveterans.org.uk** or call **0300 111 22 33**.

Donations: To make a donation, simply call **0300 111 22 33** or visit **blindveterans.org.uk/donate**.

To listen to Review on Alexa, the command is: **“Alexa, ask TuneIn to play Blind Veterans UK Review.”** If you have any problems getting it to work, please contact the MeSH helpline on **01273 391 447**.

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.



News

Raise some Christmas cheer (and vital funds) for Blind Veterans UK!

With Christmas just around the corner, this is the perfect time to bring communities together. Our Community Partnerships team share their ideas for ways you can get into the Christmas spirit while raising funds and awareness of Blind Veterans UK.

Festive Brew Up: Grab your Christmas jumper, get out the minced pies and hold a tea party or coffee morning for family, friends or neighbours. Ask for donations in exchange for festive fayre.

Games Night: Crack open the board games, or sign up for our SWOT Up quiz resources, and hold a fun games night. Charge a small entry fee with a prize for the winning team. →



Hold a tea party or coffee morning and raise funds for blind veterans

The season of giving: Approach your local church to request a Christmas Collection.

Festive 5k: Explore your own local 'winter wonderland' while keeping fit ahead of the excesses of the big day. Devise a route to walk or run 5k then go solo or invite family or friends to pull on their winter woollies and join you. Up the anti with Santa hats or challenge those taking part to sing carols on route.

■ **For more ideas, resources or advice on how to bring your own plans to life, contact the Community Partnerships Team.**

RAF police women walk 20 miles blindfolded

Two serving members of the RAF based at RAF Marham in Norfolk have raised over £500 for our charity by walking 20 miles along the Norfolk coastline blindfolded.

Kat and Rosie, who serve with the RAF police, took on the challenge on 29 August - no doubt expecting sunshine and warm temperatures, but were instead met by a gruelling nine hour walk in torrential rain. They started their challenge in Wells-Next-The-Sea and finished in Cromer.

Kat says: "When we initially conceived the idea to take on a challenge for Blind Veterans UK, we could not have anticipated the extent of the laughter, physical discomforts, and adverse weather conditions we would encounter along the way."

The pair wanted to elevate their challenge by completing it under blindfold, taking it in turns to guide one another over the difficult terrain they faced.

Kat says: "We wanted an experience that would mirror the daily struggles of our brave veterans. Without sight, I was completely at the mercy of Rosie's guidance, hanging onto her words and trust, desperate to find my way through the unknown."

■ **If you would like to take on your own challenge to mark Remembrance and raise money, please visit blindveterans.org.uk/support-us/fundraise-for-us/planning-to-remember/**

Volunteer's fundraising victory

Serving reservist Stephen Hail, a volunteer in Community 10, recently organised and hosted a memorable fundraising event in September,



Kat and Rosie walking from Wells-Next-The-Sea to Cromer

aboard the historic HMS Victory.

Guests were welcomed with a guided tour led by the Officer of the Day, who delivered a captivating account of HMS Victory's storied past. The tour included exclusive access to Lord Nelson's cabin and war room, providing a rare glimpse into the strategic heart of the ship during the Battle of Trafalgar.

Attendees were immersed in tales of naval life, leadership, and the operational intricacies of running a warship in the age of sail. Following the tour, guests enjoyed a superb dinner in

a setting befitting the occasion.

The atmosphere was warm and convivial, with veterans from across the services swapping stories and reconnecting over a shared sense of duty and pride.

The event raised an impressive £1,500 for Blind Veterans UK.

■ **If you would like any advice or support on ways you can fundraise at an activity or event you are planning, contact the Community partnerships Team.** 📞

In your community

Just some of the social gatherings that have taken place across the country, bringing together local Members

In Northumberland

Members got to practise their swing at a golf session at Close House driving range. Both Members and staff had

a go, with varying levels of success. This was a wonderful experience for Members, some reconnecting with an old passion and some taking a swing for the first time. Next stop, the Ryder Cup!



Russell Welsh giving it his best shot



Tom Donnelly takes his first swing

In Worthing

Members enjoyed an afternoon tea social gathering, hosted by the wonderful team at Tarring Manor Care Home. They were treated to delicious brownies and a cuppa whilst catching up and having a good laugh.

In North Lanarkshire

A very informative session visiting the local council Tech Flat. The flat is kitted out as a working home with tours offered to members of the public and organisations to show what assistive technology can be put in place for people living with dementia, sensory impairment, or other additional support needs. Not all of the equipment can be provided by the council but they can support people with setting up the equipment and learning how to use it. This is a wonderful display of what can be done in the home to make daily life a little smoother.

In Cornwall

Cornwall Association of Blind Shooters facilitated an acoustic shooting event for our Members. They really enjoyed the day, some having never shot before and others having the opportunity to reconnect with an aspect of their



Blind Veterans UK staff visiting the local council Tech Flat

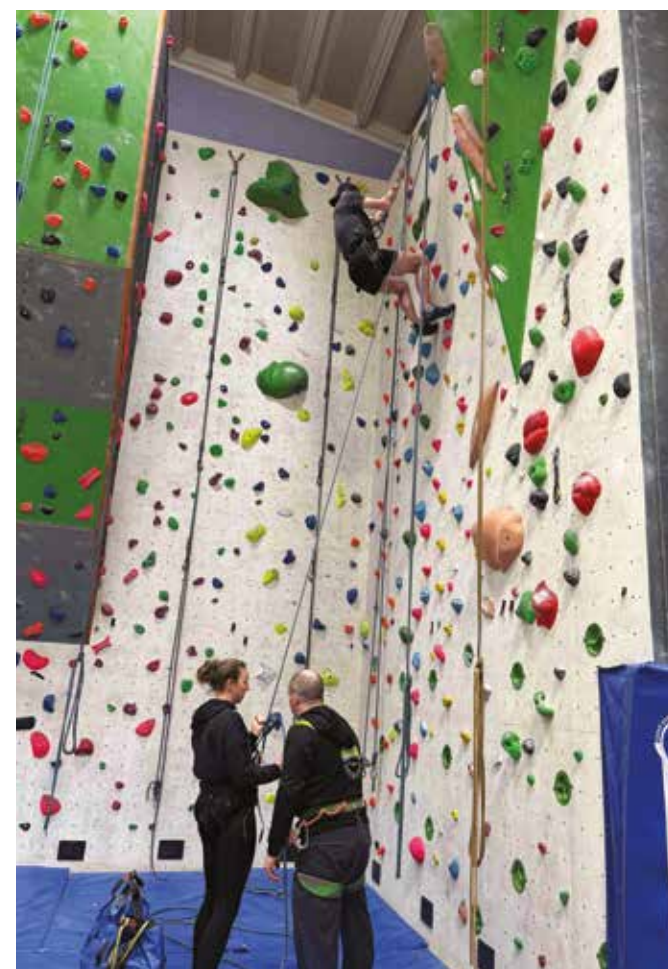
old military career. Acoustic shooting takes place in a different kind of shooting range, where participants find their target using sound rather than sight, making it the perfect accessible activity for our Blind Veterans. Members enjoyed a catching up over lunch afterwards and, all in all, had a wonderful day. 🇬🇧

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.

Centre breaks

We are delighted to share our breaks on offer at our Rustington Centre from January to December 2026

As we start thinking about next year at our Rustington Centre, we look forward to welcoming you to our fabulous seafront location, from where the delightful village high street full of shops, restaurants and pubs, is just a short stroll away.



The climbing wall at Rustington

With a renewed focus on rehabilitation and welcoming new Members, we will offer bespoke rehabilitation weeks, tailored to your goals, and welcome experiences providing an introduction to the charity.

Our rehabilitation week will be supported by our team of ROVIs, occupational therapists, and physical & outdoor sports practitioners with physiotherapy specialism. If you need support in any of these areas, your community team who can refer you.

You can also book onto specialist activity weeks, dedicated stays for carers and widows, themed military and Turkey & Tinsel weeks, and wellbeing breaks.

What's more, each community will have it own dedicated wellbeing week, so that bonds of friendships can be formed locally. Bookings for these will be confirmed once transport is approved, approximately six weeks prior to the date.



Water sports week at Rustington, 2024

What's available to book?

Specialist Activity Weeks

Come along on our activity weeks - adventurous fun-filled weeks. There couldn't be greater proof that sight loss doesn't have to limit your horizons! Bookings for activity weeks are limited to Members only.

Activities Taster Week

Ready to discover your next favourite activity? Then this is the ideal week for you. You can try paddleboarding, hiking, golf, martial arts, rock climbing

and even axe throwing. There really is something for everyone.

Adrenaline Week

Get set for a buzzing week packed full of extreme activities that will get your heart pumping! This fast-paced week will include anything from water sports, to scaling heights, to team challenges, this week is set to test your nerve and leave you buzzing with energy!

Beginners Archery Week

This is an opportunity to enjoy learning the skills of archery in a supportive environment at a local archery club, guided by expert VI archery →



Members on an angling day trip during Fishing Week

spotters. You'll also have the chance to become a member of Blind Veterans UK Bowmen. Active Members of Blind Veterans UK Bowmen are invited to join our Archery weeks in June and September.

Bootcamp

Kickstart your New Year with a new you! This week, we have a mix of different workouts, designed to get your body strong. You'll also learn the best things to eat and drink and top it off with tips and tools to de-stress and calm your mind. Expect to work hard as you take part in sessions of cross-fit, spin, boxing and more. Whether fitness is a regular part of life already, or you're



Bullseye! A Member trying axe throwing on Adrenaline Week

just starting your journey, this week is about showing up, pushing through and celebrating progress.

Bowls Week

Blind Veterans UK Bowls Championships returns! From beginners to frequent bowlers, everyone will be warmly welcomed to join in the competition. Shoes and woods can be provided if you don't have your own.

Fishing Weeks

Enjoy five fishing days on five different lakes in beautiful Sussex. A chance to catch a 30-pound Carp or a 10-pound Tench. Your tackle will be provided.



Members enjoying a walk in Sussex during Hiking Week

Hiking Week

Get your hiking boots, backpack and poles ready and step into Summer with a week of hiking! We'll take you on a multitude of terrains in a stunning setting, covering around 9-15 miles each day. From meandering paths to challenging slopes, you'll need a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy it.

Military Weeks

These weeks are a celebration of our military culture and a chance to share stories from your days in the Armed Forces, compare modern military lifestyles and get your hands on new equipment. In November, we include a 13 night stay for Remembrance.



Members enjoying time in the gym during Bootcamp

Strolling Week

Come and enjoy the wonderful South Downs scenery and coastline this coming August, with some gentle strolls and ambling walks. With a mixture of beach, woodland and villages, we have some super strolls for all to enjoy. Covering between three to five miles a day, we'll go at a nice, steady pace and leave plenty of time for rest, chat and photos.

Carers Week

Carers can often find themselves in need of some time to recharge. Our Carers Week offers an opportunity for anyone who cares for a Blind Veterans UK Member to spend



time with other carers sharing similar experiences. During the week you will be invited to enjoy our wellbeing and entertainment programme, and trips out to the local area.

Widow/Widowers Week

This is an opportunity for anyone who has been a partner of a Blind Veterans UK Member to join us for a relaxing and fun wellbeing week by the sea. During the week, you will enjoy great food and be offered our wellbeing and



Members cycle around a velodrome

entertainment programme, along with trips out to the local area.

Wellbeing Breaks

Unwind and relax on a wellbeing break with us. Get outdoors, explore, eat great food and enjoy fantastic trips and entertainment. Wellbeing breaks are available to book throughout the year. Due to high demand, we need to restrict bookings to one wellbeing break per Member in high season. Should you wish to book a second break you will be invited to go onto the waiting list for the low season.

The cost of your stay

Our costs vary depending on whether you need care and if you lost your sight as a result of your service. Please note, Blind Veterans UK has a comprehensive grants policy, so should you feel that cost is a barrier to you coming to stay then please do speak to your community team. Trips and activities are included in the cost of your break. 🇬🇧

Booking an activity week

To register your interest, book or for more information, please call the Rustington Centre on 01903 945300 or go to [Blindveterans.org.uk/member-events-and-activities/centre-breaks/](https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/member-events-and-activities/centre-breaks/)

Date	Week
26/01 – 01/02	Activity Week: Bootcamp
02/02 – 08/02	Widow’s Week
30/03 – 05/04	Easter
04/05 – 10/05	Activity Week: Beginners Archery
04/05 – 10/05	Activity Week: Activity Taster
01/06 – 07/06	Archery Week
24/05 – 31/05	Activity Week: Fishing
22/06 – 28/06	Military Week
29/06 – 05/07	Activity Week: Hiking
20/07 – 26/07	Activity Week: Fishing
03/08 – 09/08	Activity Week: Strolling
31/08 – 04/09	Activity Week: Bowls
31/08 – 06/09	Archery Week
07/09 – 13/09	Activity Week: Adrenaline
26/10 – 01/11	Carers Week
02/11 – 15/11	Military Week – 13-night stay
30/11 – 06/12	Turkey & Tinsel
07/12 – 13/12	Turkey & Tinsel
14/12 – 20/12	Turkey & Tinsel



Members having fun as they get ready to explore a mine

Adrenaline Week junkies

Seven intrepid Members attended our Adrenaline Week at Calvert Lakes outdoor activity centre in the Lake District in September – and lived to tell the tale...



On a group hike

Seven blind veterans faced their fears on our Adrenaline Week in the Lake District last month. The group formed strong bonds of friendship as they supported each other to take on a series of challenging activities - and achieve many firsts along the way.

First up was a mine exploration experience, quickly followed by the 'Rock and Rope' outdoor abseiling and climbing. This saw many in the



Exploring a Cumbrian mine

group overcome a fear of heights to complete the activities.

The following day was spent in the water. Our intrepid group spent the morning navigating obstacles like waterfalls and pools on an exhilarating ghyll scramble and this was followed by an afternoon of canoeing on the lake, which was slightly more sedate though no less strenuous.





On the indoor bungee swing

Having overcome their fear of heights on day one, a new challenge was set on the high ropes and zipline course. There were lots of smiles and incredible peer support to complete the course, before finishing off with Lakeland hike to round off the activities.

The residential centre provided an excellent base for the week with a swimming pool, hydro pool, games



Forming friendships in the group

room and plenty of space to relax, unwind and spend time connecting with new friends.

Member Rob, who attended the week, said: "This fun-filled week of physically challenging activities held at the Calvert Trust was a prime example of rebuilding lives after sight lost.

"I would not have considered doing any of these activities since losing my sight,



Trying indoor rock climbing

Having overcome their fear of heights on day one, a new challenge was set on the high ropes and zipline course

but in the welcoming environment of Blind Veterans UK, surrounded by my peers, I was able to push the boundaries and have a fantastic time.



Hiking through a river

"I wish to express my thanks to Theresa Farley, Richard Phinbow, Katie Birch and Liam, our driver. They were very supportive throughout the week and empowered us to grow in ourselves and have fun, from waking up to going to sleep each evening.

"These activities are key to rebuilding lives after sight loss. They provide the pathway to enable us to push ourselves in the future." 🇬🇧

Digital Veteran Card launched nationwide

The UK government has unveiled a digital version of the Veteran Card – bringing convenience, security and recognition to nearly 2 million veterans across the country

From Friday, 17 October, Veterans can apply for and download their digital Veteran Card directly to their smartphones.

Much like a digital Debit Card or Supermarket Loyalty Card, this new format offers instant proof of service, displaying essential details such as name, photo, date of birth and branch of service – all protected by robust security features.

The card is available via the **GOV.UK One** Login app, which uses passcodes, Face ID or Touch ID to ensure secure access. Once approved, the card can be downloaded in minutes – eliminating the wait for a physical card and putting vital support just a tap away.

Services Made Simple

The digital Veteran Card is more than just a form of ID – it's a gateway to essential services and benefits.

Veterans can now:

- Register their military background with GPs to access specialised healthcare services like Op RESTORE and Op COURAGE.
- Confirm eligibility for supported housing through Op FORTITUDE, designed for ex-Service Personnel facing homelessness.
- Connect with career advisors and Veteran-friendly employers via Op ASCEND.
- Enjoy discounts at participating businesses, museums, and shops—just in time for Remembrance Sunday.

CREATIVESHAPER / ADOBE STOCK



The card is available via the **GOV.UK One Login**

Plan for Change

This initiative is part of the government's broader 'Plan for Change', aimed at transforming public services to better fit people's lives. By digitising the Veteran Card, the government is removing bureaucratic barriers and making it easier for veterans to access the support they need and deserve.

As Technology Secretary, Liz Kendall, said, "Our veterans have given everything by serving for their country and it is only right that we give them all the support they need. The digital Veterans Card will help remove barriers, reduce red tape and make it easier for people to access the public services they need."

Minister for Veterans and People, Louise Sandher-Jones, added, "This digital Veteran Card removes barriers and puts convenience back in their hands – whether they're registering with a new GP, seeking housing support or simply getting a discount at their local museum."

Security meets accessibility

Initially available for in-person use, the card's functionality will expand in the coming months to support online services – further enhancing accessibility while maintaining high security standards.

■ **Get your Digital Veterans Card at gov.uk/veteran-card/get-digital** 🇬🇧

Accessible gifts for Christmas

If you're looking for handy stocking fillers, you've come to the right place. Whether you want something creative, practical or simply different, read on to be inspired...

The holiday season is the perfect time to show your appreciation for the blind veterans in your life by selecting thoughtful, accessible gifts. Whether you're looking to inspire creativity, enhance daily living or reignite a passion, here are some great ideas...



The holiday season is approaching and it's time to select gifts

Cards and advent calanders

■ Braille cards

You can find a variety of Braille cards on cardsinbraille.co.uk along with tactile cards for those who don't read braille but could feel the shapes and images on the card.

■ Braille advent calanders

Brands like Cath Kidston, Dotty about Braille, Not on the High Street, and Amazon all offer braille or tactile advent calendars that could make a lovely gift this Christmas.

Gifts for the tech enthusiast

■ Amazon Echo

Why not use Alexa to simplify everyday tasks? Ask 'her' for weather updates, the latest news, and even to play your favourite song or audiobook. Plus Alexa can assist with shopping lists, timers, and alarms.

■ Amazon solar chargers

These work with iPhones, iPads and Android devices and eliminate any stress about losing phone battery without being able to find a charging point when out and about.

■ The Tile Mate item locator

A smart bit of tech that can be attached to any item (keys, wallet) and connects to your phone. When you hit the button on your phone to find the item the Tile Mate will play an alarm to help locate it.

■ A digital voice recorder

Instead of a notebook for making lists or writing down reminders, a digital voice recorder allows you to record and store personal notes.

■ A scan reader, video magnifier or another reading aid

A handy gift, depending on what best suits your loved one's sight.

Gifts for the other senses

■ Audiobooks

Gift an Audible subscription for £7.99 a month and give your loved one access to thousands of audiobooks from fiction to WW2 biographies.

■ Spotify or Apple Music subscription

Unfettered access to all their favourite tunes.

■ A massage or manicure

Everyone loves to be pampered.

■ Fragrance

Know their favourite perfume or cologne? Pick up their tried and

true, or have a look at fragrance subscriptions like the Fragrance Shop's £12 a month Scentaddict subscription.

■ Tactile board games

Monopoly, Lego, Scrabble, checkers, UNO cards and decks of playing cards can all be bought in Braille, tactile and large print options.

■ Tactile Rubik's cube

A stocking classic that can be solved without sight and is suitable for those who don't read Braille.

Gifts to ignite a passion

■ Blind-adapted supercar experience

For those with a need for speed.

■ Adjustable task lamp

Perfect for crafters.

■ Music lessons

Ignite an old passion or learn a new one!

■ Woodwork, pottery or arts workshops

Get creative for the New Year.

■ A gift voucher

Simple but effective, get your loved one a gift voucher for their favourite craft shop so that they can choose the colours, textures and tools that suit them best.

■ Membership to a golf club, leisure centre or gym

A great opportunity for sports fans to get them trying something new or revising the sport they used to love before sight loss.





Membership to an accessible museum makes a great gift

■ Membership to an accessible museum or attraction

For example the Victoria and Albert Museum have accessible displays to touch and feel.

■ National Parks or Heritage site memberships

Handy for history buffs and hikers.

Practical gifts

■ A helping hand

Offer your help with home chores, paperwork, home repairs etc.

■ Helpful services

Hire cleaning services to help with household chores.

■ Transport gift cards

The perfect gift for someone with

sight loss who loves going out. Lyft and Uber both offer gift cards and can make getting around so much easier.

■ Talking watch/large print watch

An everyday essential - the gift that keeps on giving.

■ Kitchen aids

Liquid level indicator, talking kitchen scale, tactile timer, talking food thermometer, talking measuring jug...The list of specialist kitchen appliances are endless and perfect for someone who loves to cook.

Time together

■ Cinema date

A movie night voucher for a film screening with subtitling and audio description. Or if going out isn't an option, why not bring movie night to them?

■ Something tasty

A voucher to spend quality time with you at their favourite restaurant or a home cooked meal.

■ Homemade vouchers

Create your own voucher for your loved one to do an activity of their choice with you or with family.

We hope we've given you a few ideas. A thoughtful gift can really make a difference for someone with sight loss - and show how much you care. Whatever you choose, we wish you a wonderful Christmas. 🎄

Member voice

We have some exciting winter events coming up in the calendar, which you can now register to attend

Turkey and Tinsel Week

8-14 December 2025

The Rustington Centre

Registration Date 7 December 2025

If you have any further questions about the week or your suitability, please contact us on **01903 945300**.

Other dates are available for →

Let us help you get into the Christmas spirit...! Our popular pre-Christmas holiday breaks will be full of festive cheer, trips out, entertainment, carols, mince pies and, yes, you guessed it... turkey and tinsel! There's much to celebrate, so come and join in the fun.

How to register your interest for a centre break

1. Fill in the form at blindveterans.org.uk/events/turkey-and-tinsel-week-8-dec/.
2. All the breaks are listed lower down the form. Simply tick the breaks you'd like to take part in. It's best to choose a few as they can fill up fast.
3. Someone from our team will call you to talk through the options, and complete your booking.
4. If you're unable to register online, please do call us on **01273 391 500**.



Celebrating Christmas with us



Turkey and Tinsel weeks. Please go to our website or call us to book the week that best suits you.

RMA Sandhurst Military Dinner

Date: 13 February 2026.

Registration closes:

2 January 2026.

Time: 12.30 to 16.30

We're pleased to offer a special event at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, home to the future leaders of the British Army. The dinner offers a unique experience located within the prestigious Indian Army Memorial Room, overlooking RMA Sandhurst's stunning grounds and promises to be an afternoon filled with laughter, camaraderie and delicious food.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity full of history and heritage. Mark your calendars and get ready for a dinner to remember.

■ **Please note: This event is free to registered Members.**

Venue

**Royal Military Academy
Camberley
GU15 4PQ**

Access into Sandhurst

This will be granted via Main Gate, located on the A30, opposite Camberley Premier Inn, GU15 3LP.

Ballot tickets

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

We will let you know if you've been successful via email, letter or phone call by **Friday, 9 January 2026.**

Important information about this event

No accommodation and transport will be provided by Blind Veterans UK.

Dress code

Males: Military blazer, lounge suit or dinner suit.

Females: Knee length dress, trousers, skirt and blouse or equivalent.



Register your interest via
blindveterans.org.uk/events/rma-sandhurst-military-dinner-2026/

or click on the QR code above.
Alternatively, you can call us on 01273 391 500. 📞

Edinburgh honours blind veterans and volunteers

Blind veterans, volunteers, carers and staff from Scotland and Northern Ireland gathered at the Royal Scots Club in Edinburgh for a day of recognition and connection

Our Members from Scotland and Northern Ireland recently came together in Edinburgh, with their carers and our staff and volunteers, to share stories and celebrate achievements. The afternoon began with a performance from the Military Wives Choir, followed by a three-course meal and the presentation of awards.

Our award winners

Chris overcame sight loss to graduate with his degree.

Member Chris received our Outstanding Achievement Award in recognition of his determination and success. A few years ago, he set himself the challenge of completing a degree in Human Evolution at the University of York. With support from our rehabilitation team - including specialist note-taking materials - he adapted how he studied and wrote and, earlier this year, graduated wearing his Blind Veterans UK tie as he crossed the stage.

Niall found new confidence and passion through golf.

When blind veteran Niall joined us just over a year ago, he was struggling to adapt to life with sight loss. A week at our Centre introduced him to new activities, including golf, which quickly became his passion. Today, he plays regularly with Blind Golf Scotland and competes in events across the country. Niall received the Sporting Award, recognising how much he has overcome and achieved through his sporting endeavours. →



Chris accepting his award

Ann is a steady link for her fellow blind veterans.

For nearly ten years, Ann has played a vital role in her community. She regularly phones blind veterans to check in, makes sure no one feels left out at lunches and events, and attends funerals to lay wreaths for her fellow veterans. Ann received the Camaraderie Award, recognising her kindness and the comfort she brings to others.



Ann with her award

Lauren gave blind veteran Barry the confidence to step back into the world.

When Barry was first matched with volunteer Lauren as his outings companion, he admits he was nervous. It had been a long time since he'd been out and about after losing his wife. But from their very first trip, the two clicked.

Since April 2023, Lauren and Barry have shared more than 20 visits to



Niall accepting his award

museums and heritage sites across Scotland. Each outing has been carefully chosen to reflect Barry's passions – from railway heritage to hidden gems he'd never discovered before. But their bond has gone far beyond days out. Last November, Lauren supported Barry to his wife's grave on the anniversary of her passing.

Barry nominated Lauren for the Volunteers Award and his words were read aloud at the event.

Frances spent 120 hours bringing a blind veteran's memoirs to life.

Frances received a Volunteer Award for her incredible dedication to supporting the late blind veteran John, a former Desert Rat with the 7th Armoured Division. When John decided to record his wartime memories during the pandemic, Frances became his typist

and editor. He would handwrite his story, photograph the pages and send them on. Frances typed every word, spending more than 120 hours on the project.

She now describes her role as a privilege, saying she "laughed and cried" as she worked – living the story alongside him. Thanks to Frances's patience and commitment, John's memoir, *A Centenarian's Memoirs of World War II*, was published and became a lasting legacy for his family, his community and his fellow veterans.

Two others were recognised for their achievements on the day. Maureen



Barry with Lauren and his award



Frances with her award

received the Carers Award for the steady support she gives to one blind veteran, and Hannah received a Volunteers Award for lifting spirits through her regular befriending calls.

The day ended with a toast from blind veteran Ian and closing words from our President, Colin Williamson.

Gatherings like this are a reminder of how important it is for blind veterans to come together to celebrate achievements, share experiences and feel part of a community. It was also a chance to show our appreciation. Every blind veteran, volunteer and carer recognised on the day reflects the strength of our community in Scotland and Northern Ireland. 🇬🇧

The pride of Remembrance

Navy veteran **Herbie** shares his reflections on the challenges of sight loss and the honour he feels at being able to march at the Cenotaph on Remembrance



Herbie during his Navy days

I joined the Royal Navy when I was 20 and volunteered for the submarine service. By the time I'd finished training, 9/11 had happened, and that meant deployments all over the world. Most of my service was spent in the Arabian Sea.

On submarines, everyone had more than one role. I was a stores accountant, but I also qualified as a diving planesman instructor and a fireman. I enjoyed the responsibility, but honestly the best bit was when we finally went into port. We'd been away for weeks, and getting letters from home was really special. Back then, none of us had mobile phones, so letters meant everything.

A couple of years into my service, I became very unwell. I was diagnosed with Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma

cancer. I'll never forget the consultant holding up my X-ray and saying, "The whole of the right side of your chest is grey. That's all cancer." It was a huge shock – I was only 24 – but I used the resilience and humour the military had given me to keep going.

When I went into remission I wanted to stay in the submarine service, but because of my health, I was told I'd need to be on a ship with a doctor. That would have meant having a job with a lot less responsibility than I had on a submarine. This is when I made the incredibly difficult decision to leave the Navy.

Unfortunately, health challenges have followed me through life. A few years ago, I had a stroke caused by diabetes, and soon after I noticed my eyesight starting to go. Stress and exertion made it worse and I was referred to a specialist. This is when I first heard about Blind Veterans UK.

Now I'm severely sight impaired, and my eyesight is still declining. I haven't driven in two years; that feeling of independence is already leaving me. Day to day, I've had to adapt small things like walking along the edge of the curb to keep myself in a straight line, as well as using aids that help me stay safe.

"I've had to adapt small things like walking along the edge of the curb to keep myself in a straight line, as well as using aids that help me stay safe"

Blind Veterans UK has been a huge support for me, and what makes them so inspiring is how much they give people back their confidence and independence.

The charity doesn't just provide practical help; they create a real sense of belonging. You suddenly feel part of a family again; a military family that understands what you're going through.

What inspires me most are the other veterans. Everyone's story is different, but the way they face sight loss with strength and determination is remarkable. Some are doing things you wouldn't think possible – sports, hobbies, even taking on new challenges – all because Blind Veterans UK gave them the encouragement and support to believe they could.

It shows you that sight loss doesn't have to be the end of independence or ambition.



“For me, Remembrance is about thinking of others, about the people who served, those who gave everything”

In many ways, I feel more connected to the military now through the charity than I ever did when I was serving. They’ve given me friendship, motivation and the belief that I can still achieve, despite my challenges. That’s why I’ll always say Blind Veterans UK is a truly inspiring charity.

This year I feel honoured to be marching at the Cenotaph alongside other blind veterans, including some who fought in the Second World War. I’ve watched the ceremony on TV so many times so being part of it is going to be very special.

I’ll be thinking of my dad that day. He served in the Enniskillen Regiment in the war and was badly injured. He never spoke about his experiences, but I know he was awarded medals for his service. He carried those memories quietly, and I’ll carry his memory with me as I march.

For me, Remembrance is about thinking of others, about the people who served, those who gave



Herbie today

everything, and the families who stood by them. As I march, I’ll be thinking of my dad, and I hope I can make him proud.

And I’ll also be thinking of Blind Veterans UK because they’ve shown me, and so many others, that no matter what challenges we face, we can still live full and meaningful lives. 🌍

National Creative Project

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

We’re pleased to let you know about the project available from the NCP in November. You can take part in as many projects as you like. To request a kit, please leave a message on our voicemail on 01273 391 447 or email ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk. You can also request a kit via the Members’ area of the website.

Bauble mosaics

These festive mosaic bases come with a small hole in so you can actually hang your bauble in your home once it’s finished - we’ll send you festive ribbon, along with the usual mosaic materials. All tiles will be pre-sorted for you into labelled bags, although you can make your own design if you wish. **(Suitable for beginners)**

Christmas cards papercraft

This papercraft kit has materials to make your own Christmas cards and gift tags, using collage techniques. We’ll provide a variety of paper, sequins and other decorative items with a Christmassy theme, and we’d encourage you to use your own materials too so you can make some really unique cards to send your loved ones. **(Suitable for beginners)**

Hyacinths

For this year’s winter indoor



Christmas bauble



Listen
here

Your crafting stories

Showcasing the creative talents of our Members – from the National Creative Project and beyond!



Rod proudly looking at his completed models

gardening project, we're bringing back the Hyacinth bulbs! This kit will contain everything you need to nurture some winter blooms – there's also a plastic pot and some slate chips to add interest. Suitable for indoor gardening, no additional materials required.

(Suitable for beginners)

Tank model

We've had lots of requests for model vehicles – especially tanks so we really hope you enjoy this 171-piece model. It measures 16x29x15cm when completed and has some moving parts. It will come with our bespoke step by step graphic guide, and some hints and tips. **(Suitable for confident beginners)**

Also available: Woodland trio

All three of our simple wooden models are now available on a permanent basis – hedgehog, mouse and squirrel. You can request the ones you've missed them, or the whole set.

Circle coaster kit

These circular mosaics have been designed in complementary colours to make as a gift for your loved ones (or yourself!) just in time for Christmas. 🎁

Rod Lythgoe

Rod is a keen wooden model maker and has been taking part in these projects for a few years now. Rod says that they do take him some time to complete, but he enjoys working through them slowly and switching his mind off to other problems while he concentrates. Rod has also discovered papercraft after doing some of the NCP collage projects – he enjoys recycling interesting paper and card and making new artwork out of unused items.

His creative designs have been featured on the bauble and balloon tea towels, alongside artwork from his fellow Members. Rod encourages his fellow Members to get crafting, saying, "It's a great way to divert your thoughts away from the everyday stresses of life."

Intricate models:

Dave Higgins shares the story of Member Mick from Kent

On a recent home visit, I had the pleasure of meeting Mick from Kent – an ex-guardsman and proud member of The Royal Artillery Band who could play the cornet, trumpet and violin!

During my visit, Mick humbly shared his remarkable hand-crafted model soldiers and intricate wood carvings, made prior to losing his sight. The



Intricate models crafted and painted by Mick

work showed his artistic talent, dedication and attention to detail.

Despite the life-changing challenge of losing his sight, Mick was keen to try something new. Inspired by the creative opportunities offered through the charity's NCP projects, he has decided to apply his talents to wooden modelmaking so that he can continue expressing his creative streak. We look forward to seeing what Mick creates next!

■ **We love seeing your craft photos, whether these are NCP project kits, or a completely separate hobby – old or new. You can share them with us at any time via ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk – we'd love to hear from you.** 🎁



Quiz time

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

1. How many eyebrows do Bert and Ernie have combined?

2. What's the most populous city in the USA?

3. According to the nursery rhyme, what do the bells of St Clements say?

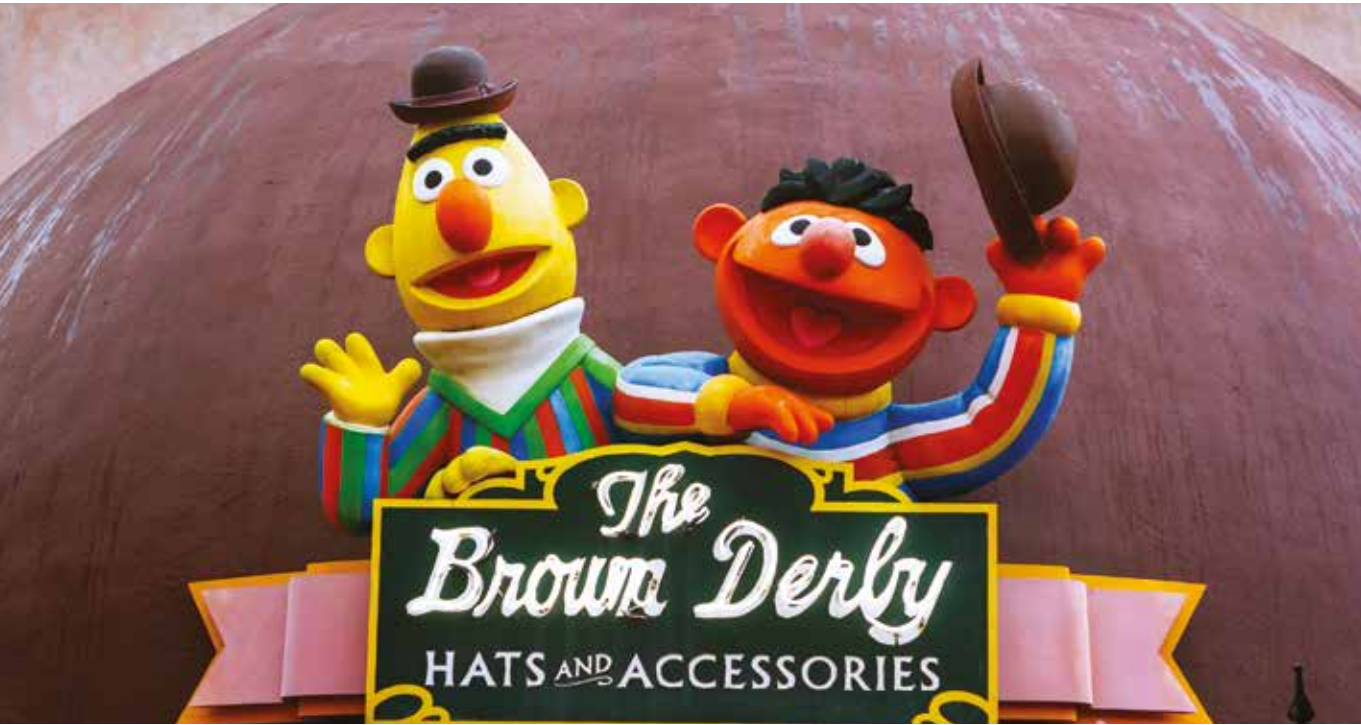
4. Which creature is associated with the fourth sign of the zodiac?

5. Originally, Amazon only sold one kind of product. What was it?
6. Who was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize?

7. What is the last name of the designer who created the perfume, No 5?

8. In the Catholic Church, the Bishop of Rome is more commonly known as what?

9. What's the human body's heaviest organ?



ALEKSANDR SIMONOV / ADOBE STOCK



Family news

Maxwell Brown who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 4 November 2025.

Peter D'arcy Champney who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 20 November 2025.

Arthur Hammond who celebrates his 101st birthday on 21 November 2025.

Joseph Hinge who celebrates his 101st birthday on 29 November 2025.

Barbara Jones who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 26 November 2025.

Peter Mullins who celebrates his 100th birthday on 10 November 2025.

William Newton who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 5 November 2025.

Jean Reese who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 23 November 2025.

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

Marion Flint who died on 1 October 2025. She was the wife of Peter Flint.

Jean Gerard who died on 8 October 2025. She was the wife of Kenneth Gerard.

Christine Phillips who died on 1 September 2025. She was the wife of Godfrey Phillips.

Enid Steer who died on 1 October 2025. She was the wife of Dennis Steer.

Roshan Taylor who died on 1 September 2025. She was the wife of Richard Taylor.

June Tufnell who died on 1 October 2025. She was the wife of Dennis Tufnell.

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



Listen
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

Norma May Beeforth of Doncaster who died on 17 October 2025 aged 92. She served as a Private in The Womens Royal Army Corps.

Peter Roy Brown of Bognor Regis who died on 15 October 2025 aged 88. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Derek Brown of Staines-Upon-Thames who died on 25 September 2025 aged 93. He served in The Royal Air Force.

Douglas Brown of Boston who died on 1 September 2025 aged 91. He served as a Sergeant in The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Ian Kinnoch Butt of Chelmsford who died on 1 May 2025 aged 94. He served in The Royal Air Force.

John Chapman of Berkhamstead who died on 10 October 2025 aged 94. He served as a Lieutenant in The Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards.

Harold Connell of Coventry who died on 15 September 2025 aged 95. He served as a Gunner in The Royal Artillery.

Neena Rose Crossingham of Heathfield who died on 26 September 2025 aged 100. She served as a Private in The Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Robert Howard Dickman of Sheffield who died on 16 October 2024 aged 102. He served as a Leading Airman in The Royal Air Force.

Leslie Faram of Newcastle who died on 24 September 2025 aged 96. He served as a Private in The General Service Corps.

James Boyle Anderson Getty of Portsmouth who died on 22 September 2025 aged 89. He in The Royal Army Ordinance Corps.

Alan Gordenfelt of Bushey Heath who died on 2 October 2025 aged 87. He served as a Senior Airman in The Royal Air Force.

Terence Gray of Bury St.Edmunds who died on 14 October 2025 aged 91. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Army Ordinance Corps.

David Arthur Jones of Llandudno who died on 24 September 2025 aged 88. He served as a Private in The Royal Engineers.

David Walton Joy of Haywards Heath who died on 21 September 2025 aged 92. He served as a Bombardier in The Royal Artillery.

Paul Langan of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea who died on 17 September 2025 aged 72. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Leonard William Lewis of Gloucester who died on 1 September 2025 aged 83. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Signals.

Bernard Leyland of St. Helens who died on 15 July 2025 aged 95. He served as a Trooper in The Royal Lancers.

James Lynch of Derby who died on 7 October 2025 aged 91. He served as a Senior Airman in The Royal Air Force.

George Anthony Matthews of Spalding who died on 8 October 2025 aged 92. He served as an A.C.2 in The Royal Air Force.



James George Murphey of Birkenhead who died on 29 September 2025 aged 91. He served in The Royal Marines.

Donald Oates of London who died on 22 September 2025 aged 87. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Kieth Ivor Piddell of Sherborne who died on 15 September 2025 aged 93. He served as a Leading Airman in The Royal Air Force.

Alan Roy Potter of Poole who died on 1 September 2025 aged 81. He served as a Sergeant in The Royal Air Force.

John Shrimplin of North Shields who died on 17 September 2025 aged 87. He served as an L.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

David Smith of Blyth who died on 1 May 2025 aged 89. He served as a Senior Airman in The Royal Air Force.

Barrie Michael Smith of Windermere who died on 1 October 2025 aged 86. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Signals.

Alfred Vincent Smith of Lincoln who died on 2 October 2025 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Army Medical Corps.

Leslie Kenneth Springall of Lincolnshire who died on 27 September 2025 aged 86. He served as a Private in The Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Stanley Thompson of Dartford who died on 3 October 2025 aged 91. He served as a Private in The Royal Signals.

Peter Waldron of Cardiff who died on 17 September 2025 aged 89. He served as a Petty Officer in The Royal Navy.

Norman Williams of Calidcot who died on 2 August 2025 aged 83. He served as a Private in The Royal Army.

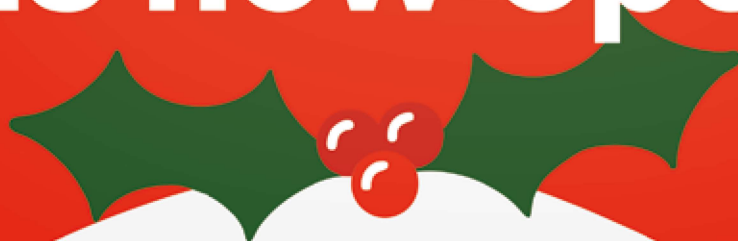
Did you know that we can set up online Tribute Pages for the loved ones of staff, Members and Supporters? Find out more about setting up a Tribute Page here: blindveteransuk.muchloved.org

Quiz answers – from page 38: 1. One 2. New York 3. Oranges and Lemons 4. Crab 5. Books 6. Marie Curie 7. Chanel 8. Pope 9. The skin



Members hang off ropes in Cumbria

The Christmas Raffle is now open!



BIG WIN

£15,000

Tickets cost £1
and help to rebuild blind veterans' lives



Phone **0300 111 2233**

Play online raffle.blindveterans.org.uk/review

Raffle closes 19 December. Draw takes place 2 January.

No under 18 allowed to enter. No prizes will be paid to anyone under 18 years of age. Full terms and conditions apply, please visit raffle.blindveterans.org.uk/rules for more details.



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