

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

April 2024



## The power of creativity

Showcasing your talents for World Art Day

### Inside:

Keith's photography journey  
Preparing for D-Day 80  
Gardening with low vision



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss



# Centre break costs

Member charges for centre breaks at our Llandudno and Rustington Centres of Wellbeing in 2024

Hopefully you will have received your copy of our Centre Supplement with last month's Review, outlining upcoming centre breaks on offer at our Llandudno and Rustington Centres of Wellbeing.

Please find below the new costs for our centre breaks in 2024/2025. The first table is for those who require residential or nursing care, while the second is for independent Members who don't require care. We also have different costs for blind veterans who lost their sight as a result of their service.

All trips and activities during the breaks are included in these costs. However, if there's an opportunity to enjoy a visit to the theatre, we will contact you in advance to gauge your interest and request that the cost of the ticket is covered on arrival.

Please note, Blind Veterans UK has a comprehensive grants policy, so should you feel that cost is a barrier, please do speak to your community team.

■ **To register your interest in a centre break, please go to [blindveterans.org.uk/](http://blindveterans.org.uk/)**

CARE STAYS 24/25				
	Weekly nursing (7 nights)	Daily nursing	Weekly residential (7 nights)	Daily residential
War-blinded	£ 543.31	£ 77.62	£ 446.29	£ 63.77
Non war-blinded	£ 892.58	£ 127.51	£ 659.73	£ 94.25

INDEPENDENT STAY 24/25		
	Weekly (7 nights)	Daily
War-blinded	£ 368.68	£ 52.67
Non war-blinded	£ 475.40	£ 67.91
Child aged 3-16	£ 184.34	£ 26.33



**Birmingham Military Tattoo 2024**

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### On the cover

Members from the local community presenting their Union Jack mosaic to Rustington staff.



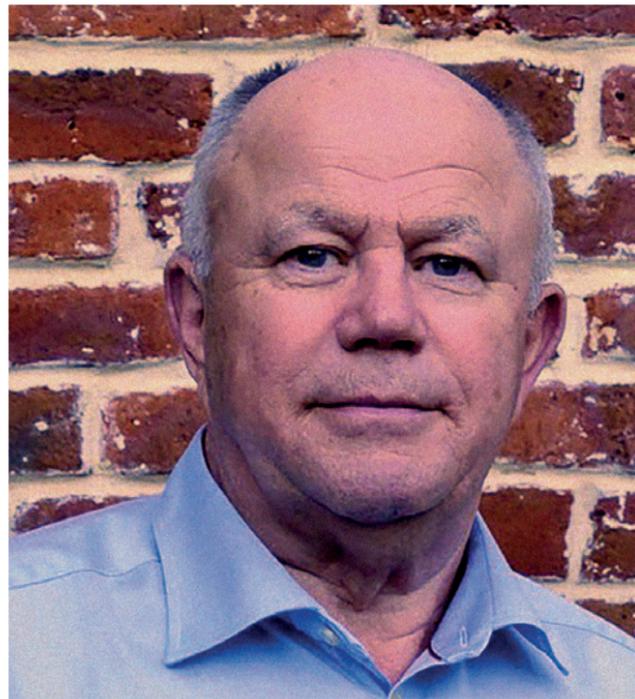
\*On the cover of our March issue, we incorrectly captioned the cover photo. This was actually Member Jack Burton and his sister, Jill.

# Shaping our future work

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

It's been a busy month as I've been attending all the sub-committee meetings here at Blind Veterans UK, in which each function of the charity reports on their results and targets.

These meetings have been very interesting and impressive. They



**Barry Coupe**

have also helped prepare me for the upcoming Board meeting where we will continue our discussions around the future financial sustainability of the charity and the need to balance the budget.

As our CEO, Adrian, shared in his message last month, this is of paramount importance if we are to support Members properly and appropriately in the years ahead.

To that end, Adrian is working on a range of options which we will be exploring over the course of the summer. He has announced that he is organising a national Member conference to take place this coming May in London, so that those of you who wish to can also be involved in the conversation.

The conference will be an excellent opportunity for you to listen to the



**'The lads' statue in Manchester**

options and bring your thoughts to the table. For those unable to attend in person, he is looking into providing an online video link. He will also share a report of the event afterwards.

Our financial sustainability is a complex issue and I find it helps to stay focused on the core purpose of the charity, which is to provide rehabilitation to veterans with sight loss.

I am reminded whenever I see our wonderful statue of 'the lads' that in the First World War soldiers would come home from battle only to find the country had washed their hands

of them. There was no rehabilitation and they were left to cope alone. This is why the charity initially came into being – to help these men go on to lead full lives and show them that 'victory over blindness' was even a real possibility.

Today, we are still doing this, and every month I read stories of your extraordinary achievements in this magazine and never fail to feel inspired. I know many others feel the same, not least a dear relative of mine, 96-year-old Aunty Eileen Roberts, who was my mother's sister-in-law. She's an avid reader of the Review and every month, without fail, calls me to say, "I've read the magazine you sent me from cover to cover and it's marvellous!"

Whatever direction we take in the future, we are clear that our expertise lies in helping you to live as independently as you can and continue to do the things that matter to you. We also understand that our rehabilitation can never be 'one size fits all'; that the support you need will depend on many individual factors, not least, for many of you, changes in your vision over time.

I'm sure Adrian will share more details about the conference in next month's *Review*. In the meantime, as we step into the long-awaited spring, I wish you all a wonderful month. 🍀

# News

## Cenotaph weekend activities 2024

There will be four main events in London for Blind Veterans UK Members over Remembrance weekend, the main one of which is the Remembrance Parade. You are welcome to register your interest in as many of the events as you wish.

As we have been allocated limited places for the Remembrance Parade and the Festival of Remembrance, names will be chosen for these via a random ballot.

■ For more information, go to 'Member voice' on page 38 or visit [blindveterans.org.uk/cenotaphweekend](http://blindveterans.org.uk/cenotaphweekend)



Members at the Cenotaph in 2023



Members at a conference

## Our Member Conference 2024

On Monday 6 to Wednesday 8 May, we will be holding a Blind Veterans UK Member conference at the Union Jack Club, London.

The conference, led by our Chief Executive Adrian Bell, will give you the chance to share your thoughts, feedback and ideas on important decisions regarding our future strategy. At the same time, you'll be able to get together with your fellow Members and meet senior staff from across the charity.

Due to restrictions set by the venue, places are limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Members will be responsible for their own travel arrangements and we are currently exploring whether it

will be possible for those of you who can't attend in person to get involved remotely.

■ If you would like to find out more or register your interest, please visit [blindveterans.org.uk/conference24](http://blindveterans.org.uk/conference24)

## Free tickets for cricket fans at Lords

Free tickets for Members (and their plus one) have been made available for the Inter Services T20 Cricket at Lords, London, on 16 May 2024. This is the second year Blind Veterans UK has been picked as the charity to benefit



Lords Cricket Ground

from the tournament. Last year it raised £16,000 for our cause.

For more information about the event, go to [interservices20.co.uk](http://interservices20.co.uk) and if you'd like to enquire about a ticket, please get in touch with [met@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:met@blindveterans.org.uk)

## Remembrance wreath requests – don't miss out!

More Members than ever before took part in local Remembrance Sunday commemorations last year, which meant that wreaths were laid on →



Blind Veterans UK poppy wreath

our behalf from Plymouth to Rosshire, from Lincoln to Belfast.

If you'd like the opportunity to lay a wreath in your local area this coming November, please contact your Community Support Worker, by 6 September 2024 with the name of the memorial or church you would like to lay a wreath at.

The number of wreaths is limited and will be available on a first come, first served basis.

As with previous years, we will be reaching out to individuals and organisations to fundraise or make a donation in order to support this activity and the continued provision of support in our communities. If you are part of a group or know a local business that may wish to take



**Member Tony Harbour laying a wreath, Remembrance 2023**

part in our Gift a Wreath campaign, please contact the community partnerships team by emailing them on [fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk) or call our Supporter Services Team on **0300 111 2233**.

■ **For more information about our Gift A Wreath campaign, please visit [blindveterans.org.uk/GAW24](https://blindveterans.org.uk/GAW24)**

## Llandudno Centre Facebook group launched

We have a new Facebook group for our Llandudno Centre and we'd love you to join!

By becoming part of our community, you'll receive the inside scoop into all the exciting things going on at the

**If you're on Facebook, simply scan the QR code or search 'Blind Veterans UK Llandudno Centre of Wellbeing' to join. And please share with your friends**



**and family so they can enjoy finding out more about your holidays in North Wales.**



**Staff and Members at the Legacy Giving Awards 2023**

centre, including highlights of all the breaks, event announcements, news and stories from our fundraisers and supporters, plus insight into the history of the building and the staff who work for us.

## Member Billy helps us reach Legacy Giving Awards shortlist

Member and Vice-President Billy Baxter has featured in our short film promoting gifts in Wills.

Billy shares his journey to overcome sight loss and talks about how important these gifts are. He also explains why he's pledged a gift himself. His video has been watched by thousands of people, raising vital support for future blind veterans. It's even been shortlisted for the annual Legacy Giving Awards in several

categories – the second year in which we've achieved this accolade.

■ **You can watch Billy's video and find out more about the awards and gifts in Wills at [blindveterans.org.uk/legacyawards](https://blindveterans.org.uk/legacyawards)**

## Carers break at Rustington now open

Our Rustington Centre of Wellbeing is running a complimentary carer's break for two nights, from Tuesday 23 to Thursday 25 April 2024.

■ **To find out more or to register your interest for this week, please email [sharman.collins@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:sharman.collins@blindveterans.org.uk)**

We will be unable to offer transport on this occasion. 🚗

# In your community

Read about some of the social gatherings across the country that have taken place recently and brought together Members in their local areas

## Birmingham Military Tattoo 2024

Over 60 Members and family/carers attended the Birmingham Military Tattoo on Sunday 11 February. Travelling independently from as far afield as Kent, Manchester, Devon and Cornwall, the group were treated to spectacular displays of precision marching, flying frisbees, scampering dogs, motorcycle display and youth



Birmingham Tattoo 2024

dance clubs, just to mention a few. The music was marvellous and the singers were incredible.

The RBL standard bearers were very smart and despite not being able to identify anyone individually, our very own Wayne (Gary) Perry carried one of the standards. Well done Gary!

It was a brilliant turnout from Blind Veterans UK, so much so, some staff at the NEC Arena were surprised to hear we had all travelled independently. A great example of how to live life after sight loss.

## Visit to RAF Coningsby

A group of Members from the Yorkshire area visited the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) visitor centre at RAF Coningsby on 19 February 2024. This was the second organised event at RAF Coningsby.

The day was an excellent opportunity for Members to engage with one another and discover how each airframe (Dakota, Hurricane, Spitfire and Chipmunks) was used during the Second World War conflict.

This was a private tour booked via BBMF Squadron personnel and both tour-guides on the day were former RAF. Overall, the tour was a huge success filled with opportunity to really delve into the history of each airframe, their purpose and a full sensory experience with noise from onsite RAF mechanics working on the airframes.

## Gathering in West Wales

The West Wales gathering was filled with friendship forming and exploring new activities.

Member Neville (101 years old) attended to share his busy week of hobbies and activities with the group and told them about how his sight loss is not a barrier to him getting out and about multiple times a week.

The group learnt about the types of weekly activities organised at our Centres of Wellbeing from Member Chris. Staff member Sam (Rehabilitation Officer for the Vision



## West Wales gathering

Impaired) also attended to assist with technical issues on equipment. This resulted in a new Member booking and attending the Llandudno Centre along with Chris in March.

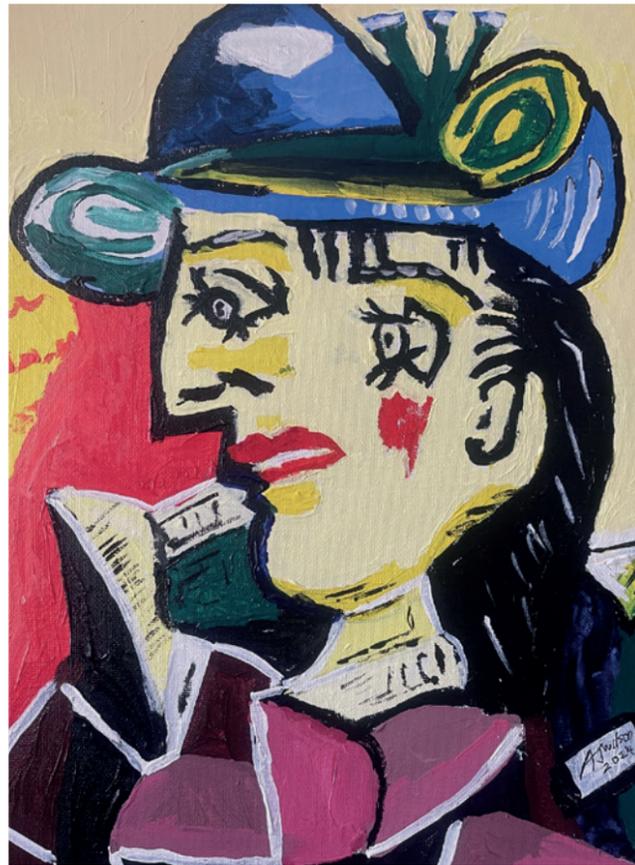
The Members at the gathering are now wanting to meet up to try new activities with Neville to understand if this is something they would like to start up locally.

Everyone enjoyed getting together and we cannot thank Neville enough for sharing his experiences and enthusiasm for life beyond sight loss! 🍷

**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.**

# An artist's way

To celebrate World Art Day on 15 April, we asked four Members who take part in our National Creative Wellbeing Programme (NCWP) to tell us how it benefits them



**'Femme avec un Chapeau Bleu'**  
painting by Member Andrew Wilson

As World Art Day takes place this month, promoting the many benefits of having art in our lives, what better time to shout about our NCWP?

Our NCWP is our VI-friendly arts and

crafts project, free to all our Members, whatever your age or ability.

You may have loved arts and crafts prior to your sight loss and need a helping hand to continue, or you may simply be looking for something to occupy your time.

We post out kits every month to wherever you live in the UK with everything you need to make your piece of art.

You'll also find easy to follow, step-by-step large print instructions in the kits, as well as audio instructions if requested.

The instructions are written with a vision impaired user in mind, with tactile prompts and image descriptions, offering a more bespoke project, something you would not find in a craft store.

Art is a fantastic, relaxing way to spend your time. Over the next

couple of pages, four Members who take part in the project share one of their brilliant pieces of art and their thoughts on how art benefits them.

## **Jennie: "You can always achieve more than you think"**

I always thought I couldn't draw but after taking a "so you think you can't draw" course many years ago, I began a journey of learning.

Since I became partially sighted, I turned to the NCWP with its specially designed, bespoke kits

with art materials chosen for vision-impaired artists. It's provided me with wonderful opportunities to regain confidence, reconnect and learn to paint again. The hobby circles also connect like-minded Members.

The piece I share here is a pen and ink drawing of a large country house, surrounded by detailed foliage. I also enjoy using pastels and acrylic paint to create landscape artwork with vivid colours. Another hobby of mine is crochet. I recently created a potted orchid. →



**Jennie Fuller's drawing of a large country house**

Patience is key to being creative with a vision impairment. Some methods have to be adapted, but you can always achieve more than you think.

When I spend time painting, drawing or crocheting I become immersed in another place. I think of this as “my place” and when I stop, I realise how relaxed I am. It’s a real boost to my mental wellbeing and keeps me out of trouble!

**Gary: “My workshop is the place I go to de-stress”**

“I didn’t take up woodturning until after I lost my sight. In 2019, I attended the Llandudno Centre where I was taught how to do it safely. This was the start of a major hobby of mine.

My workshop is the place I go to de-stress. I love the challenge of building something and the more complicated



**Member Gary Stevenson holding his woodwork**

the better! I love building wooden models - I’m holding the NCWP aircraft carrier in the photo (page 14).

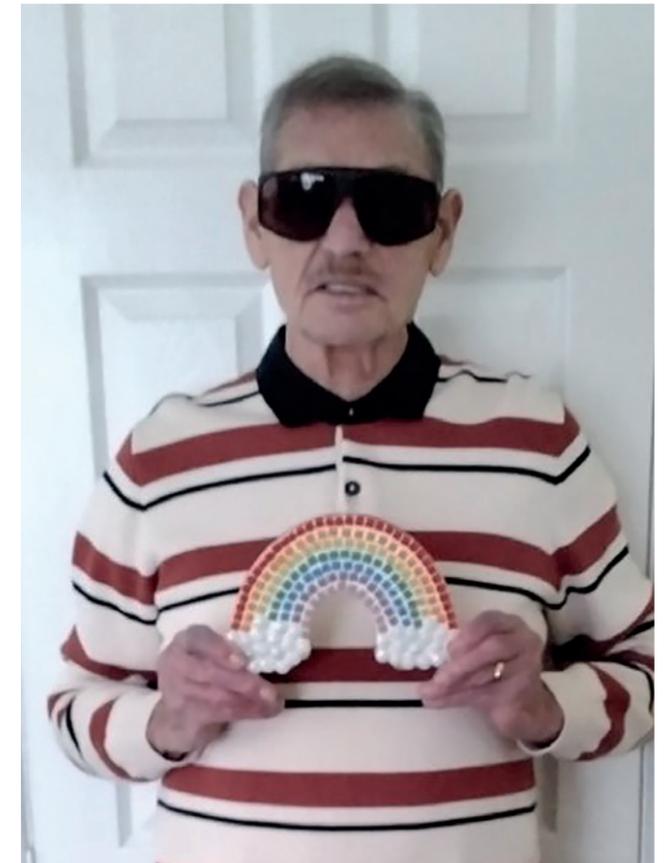
I also like to repurpose wood and logs with a story behind them. I repurposed wood from the Llandudno Centre into a bandsaw box and ended up with a collaborative art piece with two other Members. I’ve also incorporated other crafts into my work, such as mosaic tiles, to add colourful detail.

At Christmas, I turn small decorations, like snowmen or nativity figures, and my wife decorates them so we can give them as gifts. It’s lovely to share my hobby and I would always encourage Members to just have a go at being creative. You never know what you might be able to make.”

**Cameron: “When I’m focused all my worries go away”**

“I regularly take part in as many craft projects as I can, including mosaics, painting, and gardening. I find that concentrating on a creative task helps my wellbeing and mental health. As I focus on the thing that I’m enjoying, all my worries about what is going on around me go away for a while and I can just enjoy being creative.

The photograph (above right) shows me holding up a recent NCWP project



**Member Cameron Kennedy holding his rainbow mosaic**

- the Rainbow Mosaic. There’s always hope at the end of the rainbow, and I think this is particularly important for Members to keep in mind.

Completing a creative project with friends and family is always fun. Sometimes I need a bit of help identifying smaller pieces, but I have support from my wife and, between the two of us, we get there in the end.

I think World Art Day is a great idea. I always promote creative projects to fellow Members wherever I go.” →



**John Hortop next to one of his plants**

**John: “My eyes lit up at the offer of a plant project”**

“Since leaving the army some 30 years ago, I’ve been an enthusiastic gardener and have become quite experienced, learning from my mistakes – as you do!

When glaucoma started to gain the upper hand, thankfully I joined the charity. That was in 2014. I now have a lower maintenance garden with a small vegetable patch and a wildflower

bed. When the NCWP started in 2020, my eyes lit up at the offer of a plant project that you could grow on your windowsill.

The first autumn project was an amaryllis bulb. What a resounding success that was, especially for those of us who had never even seen an amaryllis in flower, let alone grown one!

There’s also a gardening phone group once a month which I’m proud to support, where we discuss our successes and failures. Members at all levels of gardening ability join in. We’re happy to survive and thrive on the projects selected by the staff, posted out to us with everything needed to nurture something green to fruition on a windowsill.

This could be anything from succulents to the current indoor project - scented herbs, a lovely selection that should live up to its name.

If you enjoy gardening, you’d be most welcome to join the group.” 🌱

**Turn to page 42 to see what you can make this month and simply call us on 01273 391 447 and leave a message to request a kit.**

# The power of creativity

Brighton craft group presents our Rustington Centre with a beautiful mosaic Union Jack collaborative artwork to commemorate King Charles III

A group of 25 Members, volunteers and staff from community 18 and 19 Art and Craft Group in Brighton recently visited Rustington Centre of Wellbeing to present a stunning Union Jack mosaic flag.

The 25cm by 25cm Union Jack and raised relief of King Charles III was designed and worked on over a number of weeks by all members of

the group. The artwork was created to commemorate the new King and the opening of the new centre at Rustington.

**Art and banter in Brighton**

The Brighton Arts and Crafts Group was established in June 2022 for local Members who wanted to get together to participate in arts and crafts. The group initially met at the Brighton Centre so wondered what would become of them when the centre closed its doors last year.

Local Community Support Worker, Ben Gillam, has worked for Blind Veterans UK for over 20 years, so had a close attachment to both our old centre in Ovingdean and this group of crafty Members.

Having seen first-hand the camaraderie among the Members attending the daily craft workshops - and heard →



**Members presenting their Union Jack mosaic to Rustington staff**

the great banter - Ben was compelled to find a way to continue the craft group after Ovingdean shut its doors.

Ben explains, "As we saw the centre close, we lost several volunteers, but we had a number who wanted to stay on supporting our Members. They wanted to look at if they could help within the community.

"Their knowledge and understanding to continue a service was a winning formula, and I wanted to see this in the community."

### A new home in Hove

Ben went on to secure a venue, and



**Mother and daughter team, Diane and Member Irene**

asked his own father, John, to lead this new community group, which is now well established.

Ben says, "Our volunteers collect Members attending each fortnight.

"We charge each of the members £2 per session and this funds materials for new projects. Each Member project makes me feel proud. I'm particularly proud though that, as an organisation we have pulled together to make something work within the community from something we lost."

The activity is supported by some long-standing volunteers, some who had



**The Brighton arts and crafts group in action**

worked alongside Members for over a decade.

One of those, John Gillam, has been a leading light in the group. He says, "As a volunteer for over 12 years, I reflected on my time at Ovingdean and the impact of the activities on Members.

"I was so pleased that the Community Support Team decided to open a fortnightly craft workshop at the Youth and Community Centre (YACC) in Hove, which I am now part of.

This has enabled Members to not only flex their skills, but also their brains. You can see and feel the real pleasure they get from being together with other Members and friends."

### Being creative together

The presentation at Rustington took place on 2 February 2024. Jack Odey was one of the Members who attended the special presentation. He shared how important continuation of these activities are to him.

"As a Member of Blind Veterans UK, I feel it's wonderful that events have been set up within the community. This allows us, as Members, to continue with these activities.

"Two aspects are especially important to me: the chance to occupy my time



**Member Peter Burbery working on the mosaic**

doing something creative, and of course, there is also the social aspect.

"Talking to fellow Members and volunteers is so important. Life can be very lonely and isolating when there's nothing to look forward to.

"Being part of one big project team which has come together to create this flag using wood and mosaic has made me feel valued.

"Presenting this artwork to the Rustington Centre on behalf of Members we remember from Ovingdean makes us all feel very proud. Our centre may have closed but we still feel part of the organisation." 🍌

# My journey through the lens

Thirty years ago, Member **Keith Harness**, was shot in the head while serving in Bosnia. Today, he's a successful photographer. Here, he shares his courageous story...

"Growing up in Cleethorpes, my personal connection to nature was formed through participating in outdoor activities including fishing, gardening and camping in the

Yorkshire Dales. This connection was strengthened after joining the Army at the age of 16 where I served in the 2nd Battalion the Royal Anglian Regiment, stationed in Germany, and participated

in operational tours in Northern Ireland, Kuwait and Bosnia.

While serving in Bosnia during 1994, my life changed when I tragically sustained a gunshot wound to the head. Following life-saving surgery in the field, I was evacuated to Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital. I woke from a medically induced coma, bed bound and unable to fend for myself. This was the beginning of a 10-month stay in hospital.

## The road to recovery

I embarked on a period of recovery which involved intense rehabilitation, including physiotherapy, speech, and

occupational therapy. I tried to adjust to life with a disability where medical treatment and extended rehabilitation would shape my future.

The simplest of tasks became major hurdles, but this only encouraged the emergence of an altered character with an inner determination to succeed. Over time, I set my sights on achieving short-term personal goals, rather than the negative aspects of my condition.

## Adjusting to civilian life

A joint decision between myself, and my therapists and doctors eventually paved the way for me to leave hospital and return to my Regiment in Germany, where I felt a growing sense of uncertainty about how my injuries would impact my future.

Months passed with no change in my condition, my hopes of remaining in the Army diminished and, given my sight limitations, mobility restrictions and cognitive difficulties, I was medically discharged. With no choice but to accept that my military career was over, I redirected my focus towards education.

My family and I moved back to England, and just two months later, I completed an information technology course with the Grimsby College of Technology. I settled into a vastly different



From left, Keith in service, receiving intense physio, and as a civilian

Keith with his wife Martina whilst stationed in Celle, Germany

routine than one I'd had 10 years prior, which along with my ongoing difficulties with accessing treatment, posed many challenges.

Yet I persevered, and went on to successfully complete another course, this time in computerised accounts. This experience helped me develop my confidence and learn how to be upfront about my condition and the areas that I needed assistance in.

### Rediscovering photography

In April 2001, my family and I moved back to Germany. I attended long-term rehabilitation and my health remained stable which allowed us as a family to explore areas of natural beauty along the Baltic Sea and North Sea coastlines, awakening my interest in photography.

Despite being keen to take photographs as a child, the interest had diminished shortly after joining the Army. But that all changed during a visit to Brittany in 2004 when photographing the stunning coastline and I realised that this was something I could do regardless of my disabilities.

Self-education and attending local courses helped me hone my skills, leading me to view photography not just as a hobby but as a serious pursuit. I was able to participate in activities alongside able-bodied photographers,



### Keith inspecting his photography

regardless of whether these were studio-based or on location.

### Education and recognition

Through positive feedback from photographers and viewers, I grew in confidence and knew I could develop further. Having exhausted local opportunities, I researched organisations in England that provide online tuition. This led me to pursue formal education, completing a professional photography diploma course with The Photography Institute, London, and later a BA (Hons) degree in photography with the Open College of Arts, overcoming many personal challenges along the way.

### Reconnecting with Blind Veterans UK

I joined Blind Veterans UK as a War

Blinded Member in the late 1990s, but lost contact with the charity for over 10 years after moving back to Germany. One day, I received a call out of the blue inviting me to attend a refresher week. I was greeted with a sense of overwhelming understanding by staff and Members and felt a real sense of belonging.

This sense grew as the charity recognised my interest in photography and facilitated my participation in photography groups. This offered me a platform to share my experiences and advice with fellow Members, as we learnt from one another.

I was not only able to enhance my skills in a meaningful way, but I was also offered the chance to contribute by guiding others through the unique challenges of pursuing photography with a visual impairment.

### Developing my photographic style

Inspired by influential photographers like Ansel Adams, I continued to challenge my own abilities, pushing the boundaries of my disabilities as I went on to produce work in a wide range of genres. This saw me establish a personal photographic style, focusing on high contrast black and white landscapes.

This approach not only showcases my technical skill but embodies my personal journey, particularly through my project "At Ease," which explores my connection with the natural world. Only now over 29 years on from injury can I fully comprehend my journey, as I spend prolonged periods walking with my family through local countryside. A place where I find myself at ease.

### Keith's journey

Photography over time has progressed from being a childhood hobby to playing an important role in my long-term rehabilitation. It not only gives me incentive and drive but it also provides a means through which I'm able to communicate how I perceive my surroundings and emotions as I progress on my personal journey.

Given my initial prognosis, I feel I've achieved so much more than I thought possible. I now hope to use my experience to provide an incentive to others. 🌍



You can visit Keith's audio described virtual gallery showcasing his At Ease project by scanning the QR code.

# Last night Alexa saved my life

Member **Carole Brown**, 80, shares how IT training during her Blind Veterans UK telephone group paid dividends after an accident at home



**Member Carole loves Alexa**

Carole Brown is a huge fan of her Amazon Alexa. The former RAF Senior Aircraftwoman, who served in Northern Ireland in air traffic control in the 60s, only recently learnt how to use the virtual assistant technology. Yet it's already saved her life.

Carole, who lives alone, lost her sight in both eyes in 2019 due to macular degeneration and these days sees the world as a "fuzzy place". So, she was delighted when in her monthly telephone group she learnt how to use simple voice technology, Alexa, which prompted her to set up her device.

This turned out to be very fortunate as just a few days later disaster struck. Carole explains, "I started running a bath and then went looking for Christmas decorations under my hinged storage bed. While I was reaching under the bed it collapsed on my arm, trapping me."

In pain and unable to reach her mobile phone, she frantically tried her careline alarm system but couldn't get a signal. She says, "I was in extreme pain and terrified I'd be stuck there overnight as I didn't have anyone coming that day."



**Staff member Henry demonstrating how to use Alexa**

Thankfully, Carole remembered her Alexa session and was able to call out to her device and make phone calls for help. She managed to phone her doctor through Alexa who then called the emergency services. Help arrived within the hour.

The paramedics told her that had she been trapped there overnight she would have sustained much greater damage to her arm, and could have lost it altogether.

Carole says, "If it hadn't been for Alexa I don't know what I would have done. I would have been there all night with my bathroom flooding."

Fortunately, Carole made a speedy recovery and was even able to go on a cruise she'd booked a few days later – making sure she swapped out her short sleeve gowns for glamorous long sleeves to hide the bruising.

Suffice to say, she's no longer allowed to lift her underbed storage, but she's very keen for all her fellow Members to learn how to use simple technology like Alexa.

She says, "I'm 80, widowed, vision impaired and I live on my own. I'm an independent oldie, if you like. And if I can use technology anyone can do it!"



## What is Alexa?

Alexa is a voice-controlled digital assistant that you use through your smart speaker or phone. A product from Amazon, 'she' comes with built-in smart speakers like the Amazon Echo Dot.

'She' can understand your questions and commands, and respond in a human-like voice when you ask her to do something. For example, you can ask Alexa for the weather report and



Member Jules learning about Alexa

she'll read the forecast to you. If you tell her to put on the radio, she'll play your favourite station.

## Truly accessible technology

Alexa is a brilliant tool for people with a vision impairment because it allows you to control your speaker with your voice. There are no buttons or dials to fiddle with and no on-screen controls to navigate.

## Using Alexa for help with everyday tasks

You can use Alexa to do everything from playing music to compiling shopping lists to making phone calls. It's a handy gadget that makes daily tasks a little bit easier, especially if you struggle with sight loss.

## Helping vision-impaired people at home

Alexa-enabled devices can be an important part of your rehabilitation. These devices allow you to do things independently that you might otherwise struggle with, like following recipes, getting travel information or catching up on the news.

## How do I use Alexa?

To use Alexa, you'll need an internet-connected smart speaker like an Amazon Echo Dot, or you can use the Alexa app on your smartphone. If you're using an Amazon smart

## “Alexa-enabled devices can be an important part of your rehabilitation”

speaker, Alexa will already be enabled. If you want to use Alexa on your smartphone, you will need to download the Alexa app.

To activate Alexa, just say her name, then tell her what you want her to do. For example, you might say, “Alexa, what's the weather forecast for today?” or “Alexa, add milk to my shopping list” or “Alexa, set timer for five minutes”.

## How do I set up my account?

While Alexa is largely a voice-activated product, you will still need to use your phone screen or the screen on your smart speaker to do things like:

- registering your account
- inputting some details such as telephone numbers and your location to get personalised news and travel information
- downloading the features (known as 'skills') you might want to use

## What are Alexa skills?

Alexa's features are known as 'skills'. Skills are like apps, similar

to the ones you download on your smartphone. Alexa has a range of skills instantly available when you set up your device which allow you to do things like:

- find out the time and date
- access your digital calendar
- get the latest news and weather
- set timers and alarms

## Adding new skills

You can add thousands of skills to Alexa. To find more skills, just say, “Alexa, what skills do you have?”. You can also search for more specific skills. Try saying, “Alexa, what trivia games can I play?”.

Most skills are free, but for some you have to pay a fee or a monthly subscription. Alexa will tell you if there is a cost associated with a skill, and you will need to register a debit or credit card on your Amazon account if you want to pay for it.

You can find the full range of available skills on Amazon's website by visiting [amazon.com/alexa-skills](https://amazon.com/alexa-skills)

- Find out more about Alexa by visiting our sight loss resources on digital technology at [blindveterans.org.uk/sight-loss-resources](https://blindveterans.org.uk/sight-loss-resources) or call MeSH on 01273 391 447. 🗓️



Listen here



George, far right, on the deck of HMS MTB 710



George on his birthday



From left: Members John, Ken and Raymond

# Happy birthday to our D-Day veterans!

In the run up to the 80th anniversary of D-Day, we celebrate with four of our brave Second World War veterans

In last month's Review, you may remember we included a call-out for your recollections of D-Day. This is to mark the 80th anniversary of this historic invasion which changed the course of the Second World War.

### George Chandler, 99 years old

We received fascinating responses. One was from Member George, who was actually there on 6 June 1944, taking part in the convoy across the Channel.

At age 19, George was a gunner on a torpedo boat and says that on the afternoon of 5 June, their Skipper handed each member of the crew a pamphlet containing a message from General Eisenhower.

After weeks of secrecy they discovered they were about to be part of the greatest invasion in the history of war. George's crew were to escort and defend the troop ships heading for Omaha and Utah beaches.

At 4am, George watched the planes going over. He says the sea was

covered, from horizon to horizon, with ships of all shapes and sizes. When the battleships, Nelson and Warspite, and the cruiser, Belfast, bombarded the German positions on the French coast, he says the noise was tremendous, "like all hell had been let loose".

Sadly, George believes the Americans could have landed unopposed at Omaha and Utah beaches, but due to a navigation error they landed a mile and a half too far to the west and were slaughtered as they came in. George says, "Half of them didn't even have time to get off their assault craft. →"

It was something I wouldn't want anybody to watch. Very brave men."

On board his ship, George had been ordered to stay out at sea, to protect against E-boats and R-boats. "All we could do was sit and watch and wait," George says. He had to watch as men, younger even than he was then, landed in the wrong place. Instead of landing on gently sloping beaches, they were more like cliffs. The Germans had either been given information or watched them come in from the top of the cliffs and used these young Americans as "cannon fodder".

George says today, "There's still lots of people who think there's fun in war. There's no fun in war – no fun in war at all."

George and his crew were called back at about 3pm. As they pulled back into Newhaven, they could see something on the quays and couldn't work out what it was. As they got closer, they realised it was coffins.

Today, George lives in sheltered accommodation, visited often by his son. He has macular degeneration in both eyes and enjoys the support Blind Veterans UK has given to help him adapt to his sight loss. His community support worker, Jan, has given George training with talking books which he



**George in uniform, Malta 1944**

absolutely loves. His hearing is very poor after his time as a gunner, but he's able to sit and listen to the books.

On 23 February, George turned a magnificent 99 years old and had a lovely party, with a delicious cake. There was even a member of the Royal Family in attendance... George is a fan of HRH Queen Camilla, having met her a couple of times, and his son acquired a life-size cardboard cutout of Her Majesty. George says there will be dancing and frolicking at his next birthday.

#### **John McOwan, 103 years old**

In fact, February was a busy month for birthdays. As well as George, three more of the D-Day veterans we have

interviewed recently celebrated their special days, too. John has just turned 103. On D-Day, he landed on Gold Beach with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. Before the start of the invasion, they were held in sealed camps to maintain the secrecy. John says they landed safely, despite the beach being under fire from snipers and artillery from further back in the German lines.

Despite his advanced years and his sight loss, John wrote a book about his experiences of the war during lockdown, to keep himself busy. Volunteer support as well as his CCTV reader made the process possible. He's now working on his second book.

#### **Ken Hobbs, 101 years old**

Ken was 101 on 12 February and enjoyed a party at our Rustington Centre of Wellbeing. A mechanic with the Royal Army Service Corps, Ken remembers how horrible D-Day was as the Germans were waiting for them.

He knows he was one of the lucky ones as so many around him died. He lost his sight in one eye during a wartime fire and also has macular degeneration.

#### **Raymond Grose, 100 years old**

Last, but certainly not least, Raymond turned 100 in February. Raymond was

in the Royal Army Ordnance Corp and spent D-Day waiting, before finally landing at Arromanches in Normandy. Arromanches was particularly difficult for the Allied forces to take as the Germans had embedded themselves in its natural defences.

Despite the horror, Raymond remembers the camaraderie amongst the soldiers with particular fondness. "Everybody was your friend. All you had to look for to find a friend was the uniform. See that? Friend."

We hope our D-Day veterans enjoyed their special birthdays and wish them all a wonderful year ahead.

You can read more about these four Members – and 12 more who fought on D-Day – in the commemorative magazine which will be printed in time for the 80th anniversary in June. 🇬🇧

**We were delighted when George's son rang us to share his father's story. Please let us know if you have an interesting service story or would like to share your sight loss journey. We are always looking for Members to be case studies in our campaigns. Please contact [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk).**



# Brotherly love at Rustington

Members **Chris**, 80, and **Terry**, 83, enjoy a precious holiday together while they test out our new centre

Brothers Chris and Terry Ottewell, both in their 80s, have given our new Rustington Centre an excellent rating.

Their recent stay was instigated by Chris, who was recently diagnosed with cancer in his liver. He needed a break to lift his spirits and also wanted to check out our new centre.

Chris hadn't spent much time with Terry since the pandemic. So, after contacting the hospitality team at Rustington, he rang his brother, along with another Member, George Connolly, and a reunion was planned and booked.

Chris explains: "As I'm suffering from cancer, the side-effects from my medication can make me low, and I wanted to give my wife a break as well as catch up with Terry and George."

Chris and Terry come from a military family. All five siblings served in either the UK or Australian Services. Unfortunately, sight loss issues also run in the family, and out of five siblings, three developed a vision impairment.

Terry was the first to be impacted by the family's inherent genetic issue, experiencing loss of his central vision in his early 20s. This led to his early discharge from the Royal Army Medical Corps and he went on to run businesses before becoming a telephonist for Barclays Bank.

Their sister, Lorraine, lost her sight in her early 30s. Then Chris began experiencing sight loss issues in his late 30s, some years after he'd left the Army.

The brothers became Members in the early 90s and have made multiple visits



**Members Chris and Terry outside our new Rustington Centre**

to our Llandudno and Brighton Centres over the years. They've also been involved in the HMS Sultan annual summer camps and Remembrance Day parades. Chris was also very active with the Blind Veterans UK's golf club.

Terry says: "I've benefitted tremendously from being a Member. I've learnt new skills, such as pottery and woodwork, but it was my introduction to archery that was the real game changer for me.

"I went on to become very active in British Blind Sport, and the Welsh Archery Association. I am also a gold medallist archer, winning the title in

the 1996 European championships in Slovakia. My wife was my spotter. The fact that services like this are provided and are available is a huge benefit."

The brothers have also been active supporting many others impacted by sight loss. Chris spent 27 years working for RNIB, helping others adapt to life with vision impairment, and now supports new Members joining Blind Veterans UK.

Meanwhile, Terry has sat on accessibility groups to advise national parks and his local Hospital Patient Environment (HPE). He was also Welsh Trustee for the British Wireless for Blind Fund.

So what did they think of our new centre? Chris says, "As I walked through the door I felt all the past love that I always used to feel from Ovingdean. It has come over with the move. That feeling of love has been with me since I arrived at Rustington."

Terry echoes this, adding: "It's the people at the centre, the ambiance of the place, the attitude. It's how it always used to be.

"It's a fantastic organisation. The biggest benefit to people like me is that we get door-to-door service. That this is available is a great benefit." 🇨🇪

# Service spotlight

RAF veteran **Danny Murray** spoke to Lisa, from the hospitality team at our Llandudno Centre, about his time in service



He's also great grandfather to 15, the youngest being little Jacob who's just a few months old.

Danny became a Member in 2019 after learning about the charity through a social group. A friend there told him about our Brighton Centre and it was there where he had his induction and heard from other Members how great the Llandudno Centre is. He's since visited Llandudno four times.

Having once been a keen golfer, Danny now loves listening to talking books and music, especially classical. He's a big Mozart fan.

### What was life like in the Airfields Construction Branch?

"I enjoyed what I did in the RAF and ranked AC1, laying new RAF runways across the UK.

"During my service in Egypt, I was put in charge of guarding utilities, including oil and water. We would guard water towers overnight, sometimes being exposed to gunfire.

Member Danny enlisted in the Royal Air Force in March, 1953. After National Service in Egypt, he joined the RAF Airfields Construction Branch as an Aircraftman First Class.

Now 89 years old, Danny has two sons and a daughter, and 12 grandchildren.



### Llandudno Centre at night

"It was during this time that I also became an escort to the local padre. Having been raised as Catholic, this was a role I was pleased to take on. Strangely, on occasion, I would have to enter the church armed with a rifle!

### What difference has this charity made to your life?

Being a Member has made an enormous difference to my life.

The VI-friendly equipment Blind Veterans UK has provided me with is beyond belief. I now have a phone I can use and a device which narrates

my newspaper to me. It's all very handy and makes a big difference to day-to-day life.

Visiting the Llandudno Centre gives me something to look forward to. I've made new friends – long-term friends – and we all meet up at the centre together.

I've found people I have lots in common with. We're all daft!

■ **If you'd like to be under our service spotlight, please email [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk) or call 0300 111 22 33.**



Listen here



Two people gardening on an allotment

# Gardening with low vision

Anyone can enjoy gardening, no matter what your level of sight. MeSH Rehabilitation Officer **Bryan Kilburn** shares his tips on how to garden safely when you have low vision

As the weather gets warmer, gardening is one of the best hobbies there is for someone with sight loss as it can be as simple or as complex as you like. Even if you don't have a garden of your own, the joy of a few pots of colour around

the house, or a handful of home-grown herbs, can be a big boost.

With a bit of thought, you can fill your space with colours bright enough for you to see, or with beautiful unique

“As much as possible, keeping everything clean and tidy will help you avoid accidents”

- **Bryan, Rehabilitation Officer**

scents and textures. Growing your own fruit and veg can also be incredibly satisfying.

**These are some simple gardening techniques we recommend:**

### Think about contrast

It can be helpful to buy gardening tools and pots in bright colours that stand out. It's also a good idea to go for flowers or fruits that have bright or contrasting colours.

### Organise your space

Put things where you can find them - not just your tools, but your flowers and plants too. We know that some of you organise your gardens in a very structured way to help you find your way around. You may also mark plants with fluorescent golf balls or painted stones so that you know where to water and where to weed.

### Use seed tapes

If you're planting from seed, you may want to try seed tapes which you can buy from most garden

centres. Stuck to a biodegradable cloth, these seeds are much easier to handle and space. You can buy seed tapes in various shapes and sizes, and even with mixes of veg or flowers on the same tape.

### Take extra care

Without the use of your sight, it's far easier to injure yourself on gardening tools and the like, so take extra care. As much as possible, keeping everything clean and tidy will help avoid accidents.

### Protect yourself from canes

If you're using canes to support your plants, always pop a small plant pot or cap on the top.

### Keep your tools together

Make sure all your tools are together in a bucket, pointed downwards.

### Sharpen your tools

As with cooking, a sharp blade will often be safer than a dull one as you have better control and need less force. Do be careful with it, though.

### Wear gardening gloves

Always wear gloves to protect your hands, even if you're just pulling out a few weeds.

■ **For more sight loss resources from our MeSH team, go to [blindveterans.org.uk/sight-loss-resources](https://blindveterans.org.uk/sight-loss-resources)**

# Member voice

Our Member Engagement and Military Lead **Tim Eckersley** shares news, events and this month's Member survey

## Monthly survey

We are developing a library of information resources on our website for people with a vision impairment and their loved ones, and would love your feedback.

We'd be grateful if you could take a moment to view the resources at [blindveterans.org.uk/resources](https://blindveterans.org.uk/resources) and answer the following questions:

**Q1 Do you think the resources are relevant and respond to the main challenges faced by people with sight loss and their loved ones?**

- a) Not relevant at all
- b) Fairly relevant
- c) Very relevant
- d) Any comments (optional)

**Q2 Do you find the resources easy to understand?**

- a) Not at all easy
- b) Fairly easy
- c) Very easy
- d) Any comments (optional)

**Q3 Who do you think will find the resources most useful?**

- a) Members
- b) Your loved ones and carers
- c) The wider sight loss community and their loved ones
- d) Sight loss/healthcare professionals
- e) Other (please state)

**Q4 Which categories are you most interested in reading about? Please tick your top three:**

- a) Adjusting to sight loss
- b) Daily living tips
- c) Digital skills
- d) Families and carers
- e) Getting out and about
- f) Wellbeing and hobbies
- g) Managing money
- h) Reading and writing
- i) Other (please state)

**Q5 If you had to choose one, which of the following topics would you like more resources on?**

- a) Hobbies with low vision (eg sports)
- b) Guidance for families and carers
- c) Rehabilitation techniques from staff

- d) Tips from your fellow Members
- e) Other (please state)

■ If you would like to share your thoughts, please visit [blindveterans.org.uk/monthlysurvey](https://blindveterans.org.uk/monthlysurvey) or contact the Member Engagement Team via [MET@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:MET@blindveterans.org.uk)

## Cenotaph weekend activities 2024

Over Remembrance weekend this year, on 8-10 November, in London, there will be four main events for Blind Veterans UK Members, the main one of which is the Remembrance Parade.

**You are welcome to bring a companion or carer for these weekend activities if you wish to.**

- **Saturday, 9 November:** Sir Arthur Pearson Memorial Service (Hampstead Cemetery, London)
- **Saturday, 9 November:** Festival of Remembrance (Royal Albert Hall, London)
- **Saturday, 9 November:** Victory Services Club Evening (Trafalgar Room, London)
- **Sunday, 10 November:** Remembrance Parade, London Cenotaph (Whitehall, London)



### Members getting ready to march at the London Cenotaph

You are welcome to register your interest in as many of these events as you wish. However, as we have only been allocated limited places for the Remembrance Parade and the Festival of Remembrance, names will be chosen for these activities via a random ballot.

You will be notified whether you have been successful no later than 31 August 2024. →

## Optional hotel accommodation

This year, we'd love to bring everyone who attends Remembrance activities in London together under one roof. We plan to block book our hotel accommodation for Saturday, 9 November.

The Premier Inn London, Euston is currently available and offers

affordable accommodation in a central location with excellent transport links.

If you would like to book a room, please let us know your room type when registering. There are single and double rooms.

■ **For more information, go to [blindveterans.org.uk/cenotaphweekend](https://blindveterans.org.uk/cenotaphweekend)**

## Military Engagement Dinners

**We are organising Military Engagement Dinners to celebrate our military heritage with the service community, and create an incredibly special and memorable event. These formal dinners will give you a chance to enjoy a wonderful afternoon together with welcome drinks, canapes, a three-course meal, table wine, and port.**

### 2024 dates and venues (between 1pm-5:30pm)

- **6 June 2024: D-Day Commemoration Dinner, Victory Services Club, London**
- **21 June 2024: HMS Sultan, Gosport**
- **30 August 2024: Petwood Hotel, Lincolnshire**

- **September 2024: (To be confirmed)**
- **11 October 2024: RAF Honington, Northumberland**

**There is no cost for food for Members, but you will need to cover your own transport and accommodation. Having said this, the grants process remains open should it be of support to those who could otherwise not attend.**

- **To book, please go to [blindveterans.org.uk/member](https://blindveterans.org.uk/member) or contact Supporter Services on 0300 111 22 33 who will be able to assist you further.**



# A unifying art project

Members **Don** and **Alice** talk about their work for a recent National Creative Wellbeing Programme collaboration

In Autumn 2023, Members up and down the country took part in the NCWP 'Balloons' project, creating a collaborative piece of artwork which was printed on tea towels.

Dozens of beautiful designs were submitted. One Member, Don, said, "I find that being creative fills my spare time nicely. Since losing my sight I can't do the fine details like I used to, but I find the VI adaptations in the kits help.

For my balloon design, I created dark shadows between colour 'segments' as a hot air balloon would have in real life. Knowing that other Members were



Member Don making his balloon

taking part in the project was nice. I wondered how everyone was getting on with it and if they'd have similar ideas. The balloons on the tea towels all look like they belong together even though they're a bit different."

Another Member, Alice, said, "I've always enjoyed creative hobbies, so my magnifier is now an essential lifeline as I'm still able to write and draw using it.

For this project, I was inspired by the designs of Ukrainian Easter eggs on a bowl, as well as a trip to a local art gallery when at the Llandudno Centre. I used the colours of the Ukrainian flag as the main background and used coins as templates for the sunflowers. I then included the Ukrainian Orthodox cross in the centre with more leaves.

"I was very happy to take part and thrilled to see my design included. The other designs were all very special too."

- **The balloon tea towels will be available on our online shop very soon. Visit [blindveterans.org.uk/shop](https://blindveterans.org.uk/shop) for updates.**

# National Creative Wellbeing Programme

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



KERONNART / ADOBE STOCK

## Paint your clay creations

To sign up to or find out more about the following projects or hobby circles, simply call **01273 391447**. You can leave a message on our answer machine if you'd like to request a kit, or visit [blindveterans.org.uk/activitykit](https://blindveterans.org.uk/activitykit) to sign up online. All our projects come with VI and reader-friendly instructions, as well as the option of audio on a USB stick if requested.

## Craft

**Clay painting:** Making air drying clay models is a relaxing and tactile artform and we'll also provide four tubes of

acrylic paint and a brush to decorate what you create. You can make cheerful ornaments, or gifts for your loved ones. This beginners kit will enclose a variety of tools to support you with forming the clay and a full VI friendly instruction guide with techniques and ideas.

## Gardening

**Scented herbs:** This is an indoor gardening project containing seeds, a pot and some compost to grow a scented bunch of herbs - lavender, mint and rosemary. We also provide a high contrast cardboard planting guide to help you place your seeds separately from each other in the pot.

## Drawing

**Seaside sketchbook:** This sketching kit is suitable for any drawing ability, even beginners. The kit contains a variety of specially chosen art materials for visually impaired artists, two sketchbooks and a few seaside-themed tactile prompts to get started with the basics of drawing and sketching.

**A note about mosaics:** As mosaics are proving popular, we have lots of plans in the pipeline for future designs. We will always give you a few extra tiles with each kit as spares. If you are able to, please store these away somewhere safe along with a set of tweezers from your other mosaic kits. At the end of 2024, we'll be offering a 'Christmas Leftovers' mosaic pack to use up your spares and make a special coaster with your own unique design.

## Send us your photos!

We'd love to see what you create. If you'd like to share photos of your work, or just want to get in touch, please contact us via email at [ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk).

## Completed surveys

Thank you for continuing to return the surveys in your kits. Your feedback helps us shape future NCWP projects.



KERONNART / ADOBE STOCK

## Join our knitting hobby circle

## CREATIVE HOBBY CIRCLES

You are welcome to join other Members with a shared interest in monthly hobby circles for a chat to offer ideas, tips and support with ongoing projects. The groups meet over Microsoft Teams and are facilitated by Blind Veterans UK staff and volunteers. You can join the groups via our website at [blindveterans.org.uk/virtualgroup](https://blindveterans.org.uk/virtualgroup)

### Painting & drawing group

A group for amateur and experienced artists to share tips and hints and talk about your current creative projects.

### Knitting, crochet or weaving

A group for you to chat about your latest projects with wool. All abilities welcome, this is a friendly group to support and inspire.

### Woodwork

For those of you interested in woodwork, woodturning, wooden model making and more, this group offers peer support, tips and encouragement with your wooden model projects.

### Gardening group

For amateur gardeners and Members who have signed up for our gardening projects, this group offers support with VI friendly gardening, no matter the size of your garden, greenhouse or windowsill! 🌱



# Quiz time

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

1. Which country remains the only one to omit its name on postage stamps?

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2. What character does the actress Sue Cleaver play in Coronation Street?

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3. Which European country is champagne exclusively produced in?

---

4. How many of Henry VIII's wives were called Anne?

---

5. The town of Bakewell is in which county?

---

6. Which of these creatures has kings as well as queens?
  - a) Bees
  - b) Termites
  - c) Wasps

---

7. Which character in Oliver Twist has a dog?

---

8. True or false: Bowler hats were originally designed as safety headgear.

---

9. In what competition is the Hungaroring in Hungary used for?
  - a) Horse racing
  - b) Formula One Grand Prix
  - c) Speedway

---

10. What is the UK's largest freshwater lake called?

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Answers on Page 51



# Family news

**Stanley Booker** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 25 April 2024.

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**Catherine Drummond** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 7 April 2024.

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**William Feeley** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 2 May 2024.

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**James Fenton** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 21 April 2024.

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**Derrick Grubb** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 12 April 2024.

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**Arthur Lawson** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 19 April 2024.

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**John Mott** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 26 April 2024.

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**Joyce Poolman** who celebrates her 104th birthday on 30 April 2024.

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**Kenneth Robson** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 2 May 2024.

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**Betty Thomas** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 10 April 2024.

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**Joan West** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 15 April 2024.

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**Robert Wheelhouse** who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 18 April 2024.

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## Condolences

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

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**Margurite Cross** who died on 1 December 2023. She was the wife of Derrick Cross.

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**Patricia Ann Hocking** who died on 1 February 2024. She was the wife of William Hocking.

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**Lee Hopson** who died on 5 February 2024. She was the wife of Christopher Hopson.

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**Valerie Hunt** who died on 1 December 2023. She was the wife of Peter Hunt.

---

**Mollie Martin** who died on 1 January 2024. She was the wife of Vincent Martin.

---

**Elizabeth Morris** who died on 1 June 2023. She was the wife of John Morris.

---

**Vera Rowbotham** who died on 1 December 2023. She was the wife of Thomas Rowbotham.

---

**Pamela Thomas** who died on 9 February 2024. She was the wife of Peter Thomas.

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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

**Godfrey Melroy Telbert Abrams** of Warrington, Cheshire died on 19 February 2024 aged 81. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Signals.

**Elsie Amos** of Gloucester, Gloucestershire died on 1 February 2024 aged 95. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

**Nicholas James Bateman** of Plymouth, Devon died on 1 February 2024 aged 56. He served as a Bandsman in the Queen's Division.

**Leonard Brittain** of Northwich, Cheshire died on 1 November 2023 aged 102. He served as a Driver in the Royal Engineers.

**Trevor Arthur Brown** of Nottingham died on 19 February 2024 aged 89. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

**Frederick Richard Bull** of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 28 January 2024 aged 97. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**William Sidney Bye** of Bristol died on 26 January 2024 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**Robert Clark** of Cramlington, Northumberland died on 31 January 2024 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers.

**Richard Eric Claxton** of Swanage, Dorset died on 27 February 2024 aged 88. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**Anthony Derrent Cleave** of Wokingham, Berkshire died on 1 December 2023 aged 97. He served as a Cadet in the Merchant Navy.

**Frederick George Cosgrove** of Nottingham died on 9 February 2024 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Mercian Brigade.

**Gerwyn Davies** of Port Talbot, West Glamorgan died on 11 February 2024 aged 97. He served as a Writer in the Royal Navy.

**John Kevin Dowsett** of Peterborough, Cambridgeshire died on 10 February 2024 aged 59. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Gordon Edwards** of Houghton Le Spring, Tyne and Wear died on 1 February 2024 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**Clifford Ellwood** of Addlestone, Surrey died on 19 February 2024 aged 100. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment.

**Charles Graham Field** of Sale, Cheshire died on 2 December 2023 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

**Richard Fisher** of Swindon, Wiltshire died on 21 February 2024 aged 84. He served as a Private in the Royal West Kent Regiment.

**Dennis Haig Fleckney** of Hove, East Sussex died on 1 January 2024 aged 93. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**James Leonard Fookes** of Royston, Hertfordshire died on 28 January 2024 aged 90. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Alan Fowler** of Nottingham died on 11 October 2023 aged 81. He served in the Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment).

**Kenneth Raymond Furnell** of Hornchurch, Essex died on 14 February 2024 aged 86. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

**Barbara Zofia Gabrielczyk** of London died on 11 February 2024 aged 95. She served in the Polish Army. →

**William Arthur Gardner** of Bridgnorth, Shropshire died on 1 January 2024 aged 89. He served as a Private in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

**Donald Graham** of Wigton, Cumbria died on 1 February 2024 aged 89. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**Frank Vincent Greenhalgh** of Burnley, Lancashire died on 14 February 2024 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

**John Charles Archer Hanks** of Trowbridge, Wiltshire died on 15 December 2023 aged 89. He served as a Marine 1st Class in the Royal Marines.

**Edna Pauline Harrington** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 18 November 2023 aged 99. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Harold Haslam** of Swinton, Manchester died on 6 January 2024 aged 85. He served as a Private in the King's Own Royal Border Regiment.

**Robert Hutton** of Inverness died on 19 February 2024 aged 90. He served in the Fleet Air Arm.

**George Ingle** of Ilkley, West Yorkshire died on 5 February 2024 aged 87. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Educational Corps.

**John Ifor Jones** of Newcastle Emlyn, Dyfed died on 16 February 2024 aged 97. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Ronald Jones** of Prescott, Merseyside died on 19 December 2023 aged 87. He served as a Colour Sergeant in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

**Gordon Jones** of Ellesmere Port, Cheshire died on 1 February 2024 aged 88. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Kenneth John Knowles** of Liverpool died on 1 November 2023 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Rex Lane** of York died on 21 February 2024 aged 91. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Thomas Felix Lavelle** of Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire died on 23 February 2024 aged 91. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Brian Lawton** of Wolverhampton, West Midlands died on 1 January 2024 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

**Raymond Anthony Lord** of Crewe, Cheshire died on 20 February 2024 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Roderick Maclaren** of Auchterarder, Perthshire died on 1 February 2024 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Seaforth Highlanders (Ross-Shire Buffs, The Duke of Albany's).

**Raymond Mason** of Portsmouth, Hampshire died on 2 February 2024 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Iain Victor Stuart Millard** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 3 March 2024 aged 65. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**John Joseph Moulden** of Accrington, Lancashire died on 14 February 2024 aged 85. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

**John Mount** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 23 January 2024 aged 93. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Sarah Navichas** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 23 February 2024 aged 98. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Reginald Fredrick Oram** of East Grinstead, West Sussex died on 28 December 2023 aged 92. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**Ronald Sidney Phillips** of Newmarket, Suffolk died on 24 February 2024 aged 103. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Patrick Powell** of Birmingham died on 29 January 2024 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Jai Bahadur Rai** of Harrow, Middlesex died on 15 February 2024 aged 80. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

**Huw Rees** of Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan died on 22 November 2023 aged 86. He served as a Private in the Welsh Regiment.

**Cyril Saunders** of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 23 January 2024 aged 92. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery. →

**Roy Shepherd** of Padstow, Cornwall died on 10 February 2024 aged 98. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**Gerald Robert Smith** of London died on 21 February 2024 aged 95. He served as an Aircraftman Second Class in the Royal Air Force.

**Jean Ray Staff** of Seaford, East Sussex died on 8 February 2024 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Irvine Stephenson** of Halifax, West Yorkshire died on 1 January 2024 aged 92. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**David Stickler** of Cardiff died on 1 February 2024 aged 92. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

**June Lillian Margaret Sutehall** of Swanley, Kent died on 30 January 2024 aged 98. She served as an Aircraftwoman in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Olga Florence Tilley** of Winsford, Cheshire died on 19 February 2024 aged 97. She served as a Private in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

**Anthony George Waters** of Malvern, Worcestershire died on 28 January 2024 aged 88. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**John C Watson** of Morpeth, Northumberland died on 26 December 2023 aged 95. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Doris Wilkinson** of Blackpool, Lancashire died on 1 February 2024 aged 102. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Arthur Edward Willerton** of Lincoln, Lincolnshire died on 23 February 2024 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Gordon Williams** of Cardiff died on 11 February 2024 aged 79. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Did you know that we can set up online tribute pages for the loved ones of Members, staff and supporters? Find out more about setting up a Tribute Page here: [blindveteransuk.muchloved.org](https://blindveteransuk.muchloved.org)**



## Contact details

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

**Member Support Hub (MeSH): 01273 391 447**

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

**Rustington Centre: 01903 945 300**

**Llandudno Centre: 01492 868 700**



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### Quiz answers – from page 44

1. United Kingdom
2. Eileen Grimshaw
3. France
4. Two: Anne Boleyn and Anne of Cleves
5. Derbyshire
6. Termites
7. Bill Sikes
8. True
9. Formula One Grand Prix
10. Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland

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# D DAY 80

## Be a part of Armed Forces Month this June

On 6 June, the nation will come together to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings, which changed the course of the Second World War.

We are calling on Members to take this opportunity to organise your own local fundraising events or activities to commemorate and celebrate.

We have lots of ideas for both

individuals and organisations, so if you and your loved ones would like to get involved, or you know of a group or local business who would support this initiative, please do get in touch.

■ **Simply visit our website at [blindveterans.org.uk/armedforcesmonth](https://blindveterans.org.uk/armedforcesmonth), email us at [fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk) or call 0300 111 22 33 and ask for the Community Partnerships team.**

