



 Listen here

# Review


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The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK  
**December 2023**

## Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our Members!

Wishing you a wonderful  
festive season and the best  
possible start to 2024.

**From all of us at Blind  
Veterans UK**

 **Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss**  
Registered charity in England and Wales (216227)  
and Scotland (SC039411)



**Never forgotten**  
Your Remembrance commemorations  
around the country



**Inside:**  
London Cenotaph march  
Llandudno Military Week  
Your Remembrance photos



 **Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss**





# New Christmas cards on our online shop!

We're delighted to present our new 'Rustington Beach Huts in Winter' Christmas cards, designed by Members as part of the National Creative Wellbeing Programme.

Each pack of ten cards, including envelopes, features the design made in acknowledgement of the opening of the Blind Veterans UK Centre of Wellbeing in Rustington in 2023.

## Christmas bundle

Looking for an even merrier offer? Don't miss our Christmas bundle - save £7.50 and get our Christmas cards, new pin badge, and mug for £20!

To make it yours, visit our online shop at [blindveterans.org.uk/shop](https://blindveterans.org.uk/shop) or contact Supporter Services on 0300 111 22 33.



£9.50 (including P&P)



£20 (including P&P)



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## On the cover

Members attend Remembrance events across the country. Go to page 20 for full captions.





# Reflecting on significant matters

Your message from your Chief Executive, **Adrian Bell**

One of the great joys for me in writing this article for The Review is that it causes me to reflect on all that has been going on and the significance of matters I have become aware of or involved in. I would note in particular the decision around rail ticket offices, Remembrance at the Cenotaph, a

service of remembrance at Sir Arthur Pearson's grave, in-person General Staff Meetings and the launch of the Eye Care Support Pathway and I will cover all these topics.

I was particularly relieved when it was announced that the proposed closure of railway ticket offices would no longer go ahead but concerned that ministers and officials don't seem to grasp the Equality Duty as defined in the Equality Act 2010 and neither do they seem to understand the degree of distress and worry the proposal caused to so many people. I think this highlights a dislocation between decision-makers and the realities of life for people with disabilities and is an issue I am actively pursuing with colleagues in the Vision Impairment Charity Sector Partnership.

A small number of us gathered for a short but uplifting service of thanks and remembrance at the grave of our founder, Sir Arthur Pearson, in



**Caption: Tim Eckersley, Simon Brown and Adrian Bell**



**Caption: Adrian with Member Peter Kay**

Hampstead Cemetery on Armistice Day morning. The local vicar, Alistair Tresidder led the service and we were joined by a few members of the public who were passing by. I am particularly grateful to Brian Eldridge for his stalwart work as Standard Bearer. The gravestone itself is well cared for but the railings are deteriorating so I have commissioned a small refurbishment project.

A larger number of us gathered at the Victory Services Club on Saturday evening for a fork buffet and a get-together. To my mind this was great fun and reminds us all of the value of

such events. There was a real buzz in the room and I am looking forward to seeing how we can replicate and improve on this for next year. It was great to see so many Members and be able to take time to talk and to listen and a huge thank you to Tim Eckersley and Glynis Gillam for planning the weekend.

Despite the weather, the Cenotaph itself was a fine occasion but a change in the order of the parade left us a long way down Whitehall and out of touch with the service and the bands. We are talking to The British Legion about how this is handled next year. →



After the September board meeting I undertook a series of in-person staff meetings at both Centres and in Bristol, Leeds and London. It was great to see so many staff gathered together and also witness the added bonus of those who normally work from home having the opportunity to engage with colleagues. I am also trying to get to Member events nationally although I struggle at times because of the calls on my time. I remain keen to see as many of you as I can and will keep trying to attend events when possible.

Finally, I went to the launch of the Eye Care Support Pathway very recently and am hopeful that it will make a

difference across our sector. In brief, it has been designed to enable better support for adults with eye care needs to be consistently delivered across the UK. It aims to highlight people's needs at four key stages in their eye care journey which are: on having an initial appointment, on having a diagnosis confirmed, on support after a diagnosis, and on living well with the condition. I would very much value your feedback if you happen to experience this pathway – thank you.

That is probably quite enough from me for the time being and I will bow out by wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year. 🎄



**Caption: Adrian with other Members getting ready to march**



## Christmas Message from President, Colin Williamson

As Christmas rapidly approaches, it's no secret that as you get older, the years pass more quickly.

But we should count ourselves fortunate, and not regret growing older, as it is a privilege denied to many.

As another year draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all once again for your resilience, your stoicism and your patience as this life-changing charity continues its journey of transition. I have recently returned home from a short stay at our new marvellous Rustington Centre of Wellbeing, which I'm sure you are all looking forward to visiting. I am certainly excited for the future.

But in these challenging times, with the ever-present cost of living crisis, the seemingly endless war in Ukraine and the terrible scenes that we have witnessed in Israel and Palestine, for me, this year Christmas is a necessity. There must be a time when we are

reminded that we are here not just for ourselves, but others too, and Christmas gives us the opportunity to pause and reflect on the most important things in our lives.

When we look back at Christmas past, we tend to find that it isn't the presents or the delicious food that live in our memories, but the fact that we were surrounded by people we loved, and who loved us, and the wonderful glow of happiness that made the day truly magical.

Let us all take time out this Christmas to make a special effort to be kind to everyone, and to continue to be kind all year round. We should take a piece of this special day and carry it around with us in our hearts, to share with everyone each and every day.

May I wish you all a very happy, healthy and magical Christmas and may you never grow too old to look up at the sky on Christmas Eve and listen for those bells... 🎄



# News

Here to stay



WITTAYUT / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: National Rail ticket office and machine**

## Train ticket offices

We are delighted the government has listened to the voices of blind veterans, other vision-impaired and disabled people across the country and reversed their decision to close ticket offices.

Our CEO Adrian Bell said: "We welcome the decision from Mark Harper and the Department for Transport. It is heartening that the voices of the sight loss community have been heard."

"We should not underestimate the impact ticket office closures would have had on the lives of many of the blind who are so reliant, not just on public transport, but on having unimpeded access to this service."

Adrian added: "Ticket offices are the gateway to those services, and they should remain in place until there is a viable alternative that people with sight loss and other disabilities can access with similar faith and confidence."



## Have your say

One of the key questions we have as Blind Veterans UK is 'what do Members need to live as independently as possible today and into the near future?'

Over the last few months, Members from across Blind Veterans UK have been helping us to better understand what they need to live as independently as possible through interviews and a questionnaire. We want to thank all of those who have shared their insights, it has been incredibly helpful.

However, with a question as important as this one, we want to include as many Members as possible. If you have not been contacted so far and would like to take part, please get in touch.

■ For those of you who are able to complete online surveys it is available online at [forms.office.com/e/5PX8eYVkad](https://forms.office.com/e/5PX8eYVkad).

Equally you can contact our Member Support Hub Team on 01273 391447 or email [mesh@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:mesh@blindveterans.org.uk). The team will arrange a convenient time to complete the survey which takes somewhere between 20 and 40 minutes to complete.

## Cost of Living

Last month, we joined together with 75 other charities to urge the Chancellor to provide urgent support in the Autumn Statement for those living with sight loss and other disabilities.

■ You can read the full letter on our website: [blindveterans.org.uk/chancellor](https://blindveterans.org.uk/chancellor) →



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**Caption: Graph showing price rise**





**Caption: Member Charlie Parkinson being interviewed by The One Show presenter Amar Latif**

## Rustington Centre featured on BBC One Show

At the time Review went to press, the BBC One Show is due to broadcast a segment about our new Rustington Centre on Monday 8 January 2024.

The show follows the move from Brighton to Rustington and features interviews with residents and Second

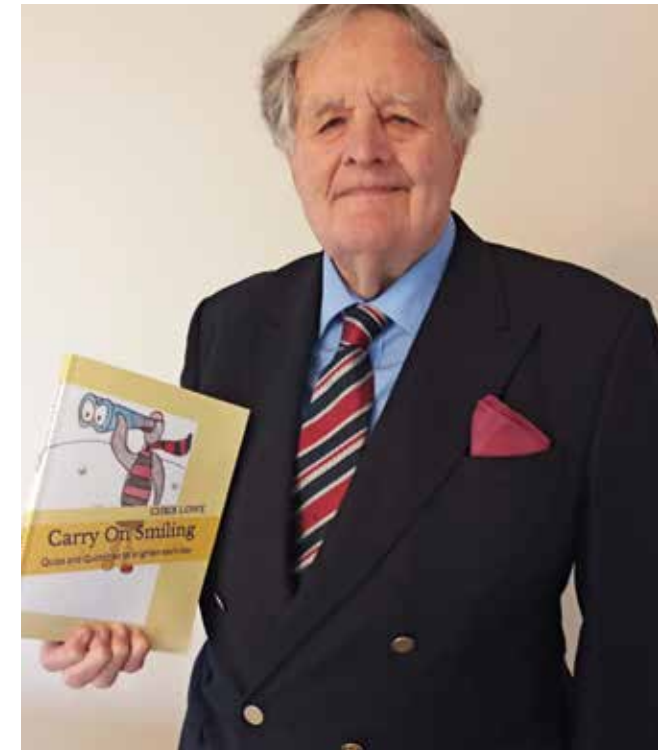


World War veterans Ken Hobbs and Nancy Bowstead. It will also

show Billy Baxter, who is part of the Member Design Group for Rustington, giving the presenter, Amar Latif, a tour of our new centre.

## Are you looking for Christmas present ideas?

Since joining us in May this year, Member Chris Lowe has been so impressed and grateful for the support he has received for his published book that is raising funds to support the charity. 'Carry on Smiling' is a collection of 366 jokes, anecdotes and humorous poems and



**Caption: Chris Lowe with his book**

stories, one for each day of the year (plus a spare for leap years!). Perhaps a gift to add to your Christmas wish list?

■ Available in paperback or Kindle on Amazon or at the Llandudno Centre if you are due to visit.

## UK Covid-19 Inquiry: Every Story Matters events



The UK Covid-19 Inquiry are now starting to hold 'Every Story Matters' events across the country so you can share your story with them in person. If you're in one of the areas, please join and help them understand how the pandemic affected you.

Some of these events are targeted for specific groups of people affected by the pandemic, such as those with sight loss.

■ Find more information about these and future events on the Every Story Matters events page of their website and on their Facebook page. 🌐

## October 2023 Lottery Results

<b>Winners of the £1,000 prize:</b>	<b>Winners of the £100 prize:</b>	<b>Winners of the £50 prize:</b>	Mr Coleman
Mr Durling	Mr Hore	Ms Lowdon	Mrs Drummond
Mr Locker	Mr Brownlow	Mrs Belfield	Mr Musgrove
Mr Vanrooyen	Mrs Shore	Ms Evan	Mrs Henderson
Mrs Thomas	Mr Frizelle	Mrs Glover	





Listen here



Remembrance



**Caption: Member Brian Eldridge and wife Margaret at Horse Guards Parade**

**Caption: Members Mike Warren and Ruth Warren**

**Caption: Andy Stowe with old Navy friend**

**Caption: Natalie Piedade and Member Ron Jury**

## Camaraderie and Poignancy at London Cenotaph March

Our veterans gathered for Remembrance weekend as the nation remembers Korea and Iraq - writes **Mark Wheeler**

More than 40 Members marched at the Cenotaph in London on Remembrance last month, while others attended events at our centres or laid wreaths on our behalf at local events across the whole country.

This year saw many important anniversaries for our veterans, not least

the 20th anniversary since the invasion of Iraq and 70 years since the end of the Korean War.

The weekend in London started with a small gathering at the grave of our founder Sir Arthur Pearson for a service at 11:00 on Armistice Day. Member Brian Eldridge once again carried the

standard at Hampstead Cemetery and the service was led by the local vicar.

The majority of those marching the following day then gathered for an informal reception at the Victory Services Club. It was a great opportunity for everyone to meet with old friends and make new ones. Many of the guides assisting our Members the next day were able to join too.

Member Peter Kay made the extraordinary gesture of bringing handcrafted models of the Cenotaph, cut himself and painted by his wife, as a gift for every blind veteran marching.

Peter started receiving support from the charity in 2021. He says: "Before I lost my sight, I was really into woodwork and craft. I thought that was out of the window and was close to throwing all my tools away, but Blind Veterans UK has given me the confidence to rediscover my hobby and shown me there are ways to still do things, it may just take more time."

His wife has created a Facebook page called 'The Blind Artisan' through which Peter is able to sell small woodturned and laser etched items similar to the Cenotaph models he created. He very kindly donates the profits to us. →





**Caption: Member Mark Pile with his son, Ben**

On Remembrance Sunday our contingent gathered on Horse Guards Parade with wreaths being carried and laid by Dennis Smith and Mark Pile. Second World War veteran Dennis, who is 97, was marching at the Cenotaph for the very first time and described it as “the proudest day of his life”.

We have written in Review before about Mark and his brave battle with terminal cancer and many of you will have read about his skydive earlier this year to raise money for the charity. Mark also carried a wreath as he marched with his son Ben for the last



**Caption: Adrian Bell and Members Billy Baxter and Dennis Smith at Horse Guards Parade**

time. He said: “Being at the Cenotaph this year was incredibly important to me, it gave me the opportunity to remember those who died in conflict one last time.

“The overwhelming support from the nation as we march past is a truly special thing to experience. I’ve been told I don’t have long left so this was the last time I got to stand beside my fellow blind veterans and I was determined to be there.

**“I can’t wait to do it again”**  
Mark Vidler marched at the Cenotaph in London for the first time.



**Caption: Member Neil Eastwood with brother Lee**

Mark served with the 3rd Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment between 1984 and 1991.

It was later in life that Mark started to lose his sight following an operation to remove an orange-sized brain tumour from his pituitary gland. After two rounds of surgery, most of the tumour was removed but Mark’s peripheral vision was severely affected.

Fortunately, Mark found out about Blind Veterans UK last year. He says: “They’ve been amazing. My support worker Neil sorted me out with a laptop where everything on the screen



**Caption: Member Janet Hazlewood and her great grandson, Dillon**

is bigger than normal so I’m able to use it to do research and keep in touch with friends and family.

“This was my first time marching and I felt so very proud. I lost my mum in September and she always wanted me to do it so I know she would be very happy.

“It really was emotional, and as well as my mum I thought about my dad and grandad who was in the 8th Army as a desert rat during the Second World War, as well as my fallen comrades. It was an amazing experience and I can’t wait to do it again.” 🇬🇧



# Llandudno Military Week spares no second

In the week running up to Remembrance weekend this year, the Llandudno Centre hosted another activity-packed Military Week, writes **Gianna Molica-Franco**

The purpose of Military Week is to help Members reflect on their own military experiences.

Member Stan Chatt who took part in the week said: "there were lots of

activities; there was hardly time to stand still!"

During the week, Members enjoyed trips to the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester, the Royal

Air Force Museum Midlands, and a local military history tour of Eryri/Snowdonia. On these trips, they heard stories from museum guides and had the opportunity to explore real-life RAF aircraft and artefacts, including the world's oldest Spitfire!

In the evenings, Members were entertained by visitors, including cadets from the Llandudno detachment of Clwyd and Gwynedd Army Cadet Forces for a lively game of bingo and the RAF Valley Military Wives Choir. For many of the cadets it was their first visit to the centre and some initial

shyness was quickly replaced by lively conversations and a touch of friendly competition!

There were also some fantastic talks and demonstrations for Members to learn more about military history. This included a fascinating talk from the Royal Navy, the Station Warrant Officer from RAF Valley, serving soldiers from the Welsh Guards, Royal Welsh, and 203 Field Hospital.

The Historical Warfare Day was particularly special, with a talk from the National Military Working Dogs →



Caption: Act of Remembrance service



Caption: RAF Cosford visit



Caption: Member Les Hammond



Caption: Members being shown military vehicles



Memorial charity. Throughout the day, Members had the opportunity to view displays of historical weapons and military vehicles. Re-enactors from the 1979 Group and the Anglesey Hussars ensured everybody was alert for the afternoon activities with a cannon firing!

On the Thursday afternoon, Members, staff and volunteers transported themselves into the 1940s and took to the floor for the annual tea dance, with singer Joanne Denis getting plenty of people dancing and singing along with her vintage setlist.

Military Week at the Centre would not be the same without the



**Caption: Member David Thomas enjoying the historical warfare talk**

military dinner. Members, staff and Hogwarts dining room were dressed in their finery to welcome guests on the Friday evening. Following the pipes and drums, the Centre's Community Engagement Lead and Royal Navy Reservist Rosina Hearn took on presenter and master of ceremony duties, sharing thoughts on Remembrance from our Members before a delicious dinner and the traditional passing of the port.

On the Saturday, Members were joined by the local community to mark Armistice Day with an Act of Remembrance and coffee morning at the centre. Reverend Julia Bartholomew led the service with music from Beulah Brass and Sian Roberts. 90-year-old Member Tom Jones from Deganwy laid a wreath during the service with a cadet from Conwy County Sea Cadets.

Earlier in the day Tom had been interviewed about the importance of Remembrance by BBC Cymru Wales, who had contacted the Centre to speak to a Welsh speaking veteran. Tom had not spoken Welsh since his mother passed away 20 years ago and after some practice with Hospitality Team member Catrin on Friday, Tom spoke eloquently to interviewer Llyr in both English and Welsh. Tom, who served as a corporal in the RAF said:



**Caption: Members and staff in Llandudno's Remembrance Day parade.**

"It's a day to remember our friends and colleagues who gave their lives so I could live." Which in Welsh is "Mae'n ddiwrnod i gofio ein ffrindiau a'r cydweithwyr a roddodd eu bywydau er i mi gael byw."

Staff at the Centre were delighted to welcome the community to mark Remembrance at the centre, along with serving Armed Forces personnel, local cadet units, the Mayors of Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Conwy and Llandudno's Miss Alice. They were invited to plant their own poppy outside the Centre.

Members were thrilled to meet Whistlestop motorcycle club,

who arrived at the centre on their motorcycles and trikes. Members Steve Mosely and John Westerby wasted no time in trying the bikes and we were delighted to hear about the the club's fantastic fundraising for Blind Veterans UK over the past year.

The week culminated in 40 Members taking part in Llandudno's Remembrance Day parade, following a service at the town's Trinity Church. Member volunteer John Nicol was standard-bearer for the parade and wreaths were laid on behalf of the Blind Veterans UK by Second World War veterans Les Hammond, Ron Heath and Connie Rea along with 90-year-old Tom Jones. 🇬🇧



# Remembrance commemorations around the country

Captions: **1.** Clare Keating with her Military Wives choir in Weymouth **2.** Ada Chell with a Remembrance wreath **3.** Terry Bullingham and granddaughter Isla laying a wreath in Peacehaven **4.** Noeline Charlesworth at the Ynysangharad War Memorial in Pontypridd **5.** Tony Harbour with Brighton Train Station Manager Danny Sands **6.** Alan Overton and volunteer Andy Dark in Whitby **7.** Brian Marshall and his wife Barbara at Askern War Memorial in Doncaster **8.** Jim Wilson at the Craigneuk Cenotaph **9.** H Richards laying a wreath in Porthcawl **10.** Brian Eskriett laying a wreath in Skipton **11.** Graham Hulley laying a wreath in Mexborough **12.** Shelia Botley laying a wreath in Swansea **13.** Ted Kendall on Plymouth Hoe **14.** Colin Adamson and guide dog Diamond ready to lay a wreath at the Horwich War Memorial **15.** Wayne Perry carrying the RBL standard at the National Memorial Arboretum **16.** Chris Johnson in the Remembrance parade in Bolsover, Derbyshire **17.** Alex, Gary and Hugh at Ledley Hall Remembrance breakfast **18.** Alan and volunteer Andy in Whitby **19.** Len Williams and his son Darren at the Farnham Remembrance ceremony **20.** Sheila Botley in Swansea **21.** Ray Taylor at Westgate on Sea Memorial **22.** Member Peter Tavener and volunteer Gavin in Milton Keynes **23.** President Colin Williamson in South Tyneside **24.** Rod Hartnell and Pat Mason at Frome War Memorial



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# Warm welcome to Remembrance

With the charity relocating from Brighton to our new Rustington Centre of Wellbeing, our residents took part in Remembrance alongside their new community for the first time this year

Two of the centre's residents, 102-year-old Nancy Bowstead and 100-year old Ken Hobbs joined local blind veteran Jim Dunn, 82, in laying wreaths during the town's Remembrance Service on Sunday 12 November. Nancy and Jim were supported by staff from the

centre on the day and Ken was joined by his son.

Member Alan Walker, who is also from West Sussex, carried the charity's Standard.

Those residents who were unable to take part in the service at Rustington War Memorial were able to partake in Remembrance at the centre during a service led by Padre George.

On Armistice Day, staff laid a wreath and marked the two-minute silence at the St Dunstan's Cemetery in Brighton.

Community Engagement Lead for the Rustington Centre, Jo Parker-Smith, said: "Taking part in the Remembrance event in Rustington was an honour, not only due to the importance of the occasion but also as



**Caption: Wreaths laid in Rustington**



**Caption: Rustington residents Nancy and Ken holding wreaths**

our first opportunity to join the local community. We received a lovely warm welcome and our blind veterans were invited to lead the parade.

"Meanwhile, we continue to take care of the St Dunstan's Cemetery: it is still very much in our minds and was important that we marked Remembrance at the site."

A group of blind veterans supported by the charity, alongside staff and volunteers, also marked Remembrance at Brighton Train Station. A two-minute silence, during which the trains were stopped, was held and wreaths were laid at the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway War Memorial.

Blind veteran Tony Harbour, who served with the Royal Air Force Police, said: "Having the opportunity to lay a Blind Veterans UK wreath and to be part of Remembrance Day events is a wonderful thing. It's an honour every year that I stand and remember the fallen.

"Those who fought for our freedom must never be forgotten, they gave their lives so we can be who we are today.

It's about remembering so many people including my father who fought in the First World War and fellow veterans who are no longer with us but were like brothers to me." 🇬🇧





Caption: Alec and wife Gladys

# Tim and Alec release Remembrance podcast

For Remembrance this year, our Member Engagement & Military Lead, **Tim Eckersley**, has recorded a podcast with a very special Member

Second World War veteran, Alec Penstone, who's 98, served on the treacherous Arctic Convoys during the war. He shares his incredible experiences with Tim over three riveting parts, starting with life as a teenage ARP messenger in London

before joining the convoys where he saved lives in a force 15 hurricane and took part in D-Day.

Tim was overjoyed to interview Alec for the podcast. He said, "Remembrance is the most important

date in the Blind Veterans UK calendar, so I was over the moon to have the chance to interview such an amazing fellow Navy veteran to mark this special anniversary.

"Chatting to Alec was an absolute honour. He's an unstoppable force and his stories are mind-blowing.

"I hope you all enjoy listening to him as much as I did."

■ You can listen to all three parts of this special podcast, **Surviving the Arctic Convoys**, at [blindveterans.org.uk/alec](http://blindveterans.org.uk/alec) where you can also read the transcripts.

## Meeting Gladys

In this extract from his memoirs, Arctic

Convoys veteran, Alec Penstone, describes a wonderful chance encounter while on leave at Christmas, age 18.

"I was given seven days leave just before Christmas 1943. I had nowhere to go for Christmas dinner, so I went to see my aunt. Her two sons were in the Navy as well.

I wanted to see if I could scrounge a Christmas dinner, as my mother, brother and my niece had been evacuated to Darlington. My aunt said she couldn't give me Christmas dinner as she was sharing it with two other neighbours and there was no spare food.

While I was there, a young lady →

### My Ten and a Half Arctic Convoys

Alec has written a book about his amazing life, with the help of his friends. The book, *My Ten and a Half Arctic Convoys*, is self-published and costs £16, plus £4 P&P.

In this article, we share a heart-warming extract in which he describes a wonderful chance encounter one Christmas Eve during

leave after his first convoy in 1943.

There is also a DVD of Alec discussing his war experiences, available for £12 plus P&P, which you can also order on a memory stick or CD for £7.99 plus P&P.

■ To buy the book, DVD, memory stick or CD, please email [jamesking21@sky.com](mailto:jamesking21@sky.com).





**Caption: Alec as a young man**

came in and introduced herself as my cousin Alf's fiancée. They were going to get married on his next long leave. He was on Mine Sweepers out of Harwich at the time.

It was getting late in the afternoon, so I offered to walk her home. She invited me to come in and meet the family. I went in and there was this gorgeous 17-year-old younger sister, Gladys. She was absolutely beautiful. It was love at first sight.

I stayed there until the early hours of Christmas morning talking to her. She was opening in Pantomime on Boxing

Day at the Alexander Theatre in Stoke Newington. I asked if I could take her to the theatre and she agreed.

I said goodnight to her in the early hours of Christmas morning. I took the chance to say: "There's no mistletoe, but can I give you a Christmas kiss?" to which she said, "If you want to." So, I did!

I had agreed to meet her on Boxing Day and so Christmas Day could not go fast enough. It was the only time of my life that time dragged most slowly. I didn't get Christmas Dinner and I had to go to a restaurant and had spam and chips instead.

On Boxing Day, I was up early, washed and dressed in "my number ones", my naval dress uniform. I opened the front door and there was a thick, thick, London smog. Yellow, sulphurous, horrible fog.

I went out and found my way to her house, only to be told she had already left with some of the girls of her Dance Troupe.

They told me where the theatre was. I had to walk about three miles because there were no buses...

I got to the theatre and when they had a break, Gladys came to find me. There

**"I just wanted to disappear underneath the seat, but I was told to stand up and take a bow"**

was a greasy spoon cafe on the other side of the road and we had our first meal together, which once again was spam and chips!

For the next four nights I was a 'Stage Door Johnny'! I took her there in the morning and brought her back at night.

On the day before I was due to go back



**Caption: Alec proudly displays his medals**

to Dunoon, Gladys had got me a ticket for the show. During one of the scenes, a spotlight came on from the stage.

It started searching around the audience above my head, went up into the gallery and all the way down and finally settled on me. I thought, "What on earth is happening?"

Then this group of lovely young ladies appeared from the centre stage and moved over to where I was sitting.

They all got down on one knee and started singing a song, 'Sailor, who are you Dreaming of Tonight?' They sang it all the way through.

I was getting lower and lower in my seat because of the embarrassment, and I just could not understand what was happening.

They finished singing and the lights came on in the theatre and everyone started cheering.

I just wanted to disappear underneath the seat, but I was told to stand up and take a bow. Oh dear!

It was a wonderful experience... From then on, we wrote to each other regularly. She was the only girlfriend I ever had. Two years later we were married." 🍷



# Rustington stress test week

Members **Alan Walker, Sue Eyles** and others in the Member Design Consultation Group were invited to our new centre at Rustington to “stress test”. Below is their report from the week

The focus of the week’s stay was to try out all the facilities, look at how the building is coming together as well as some trips out and getting to know the local community. In effect the whole

service delivery to ensure your stay is the best it can be.

It must be pointed out that there is still some work to be done around the



**Caption: Members enjoying some tea in Rustington**

building and phase two will see the external landscaping take shape.

On arrival one of the first things some may comment on is the size, but we must remember that this is Rustington and not Brighton or Llandudno and the size is relevant to the number of people that will be in the building.

The reception area can certainly be a real meeting hub, with the NAAFI and seating around where you can purchase additional drinks and snacks throughout the day.

After a very tasty lunch we were orientated around our rooms and the building, there are singles, doubles and twins. All rooms are equipped with one cup boilers, mini fridges, television and an Alexa.

We then had the rest of the day to take in the surroundings and some even went for a brisk walk to take in the sounds of the sea.

Day two began with a hearty breakfast, we were then treated to a talk from Clare who works at the Rustington Museum, which is definitely worth a visit.

Then a lovely stroll about 15 minutes along the promenade to a beach café for lunch.



**Caption: Alan Wortley and wife Joan**

On day three we went on a trip to Fort Nelson, a restored Victorian fortress. After we had lunch at the Golden Lion pub which is drenched in World War history.

In the evening chef Elizabeth and her team hosted a cheese and wine tasting.

Day four gave us options of joining in with the in-house craft session or a visit to the local leisure centre to check out the facilities, including a swimming pool. The staff hired a lane just for us and this worked extremely well and being just a short walk away from the centre, it is certainly a place which I am sure Members will make use of during their stay.

Despite the rain, the afternoon saw us visit the local golf driving range which thankfully was undercover. →



Day five gave us the morning free to really find our way around the building and the local village, which is just a 10-minute walk away, then it was time to have lunch at one of the village's many restaurants.

In the afternoon two young boys who had done some fundraising for us came to visit, they were presented with a certificate for their achievements and also got to meet one of our very own Second World War Members.

On day six, we had free time in the morning to attend a religious service, then in the afternoon it was off to the local ten pin bowling. This was on the same site as the driving range and all within just a few minutes drive away from the Centre.



**Caption: Members standing outside a pub in Rustington**

The bowling was fully accessible for all so a great find and, of course, great fun.

Going forward the new centre has so much potential not only in the building but with so much on offer locally and on speaking to many of the local people, not only are they so pleased that we have moved in they are very friendly and helpful.

As with any change it will take time for things to settle down, but this is where all of us as Members have such a vital role to play in making Rustington the amazing place we all want it to become, and also help the new staff settle in and become part of our family. We hope you do go and stay there and enjoy it. 🍷



# How we engage with Members

Member Engagement and Military Lead, **Tim Eckersley**, tells us how we are improving Member engagement in the new year so that our Members, who have personal experience of sight loss, can shape what we think, decide, and do

## Why are things changing?

We need to make changes every so often to improve how we operate. In this case, it's about ensuring Members are heard and involved in the decision-making process from the outset.

## What exactly is changing?

Our strategic commitment to Member engagement has not changed. We remain focussed on keeping Members at the heart of everything we do, involving them in shaping and informing service design.

To that end, the Member Engagement Team have issued renewed operational guidance and procedures for all staff at Blind Veterans UK. This guidance, ratified by senior leaders, will assist the charity in planning, preparing, and supporting Members to be involved in its work.

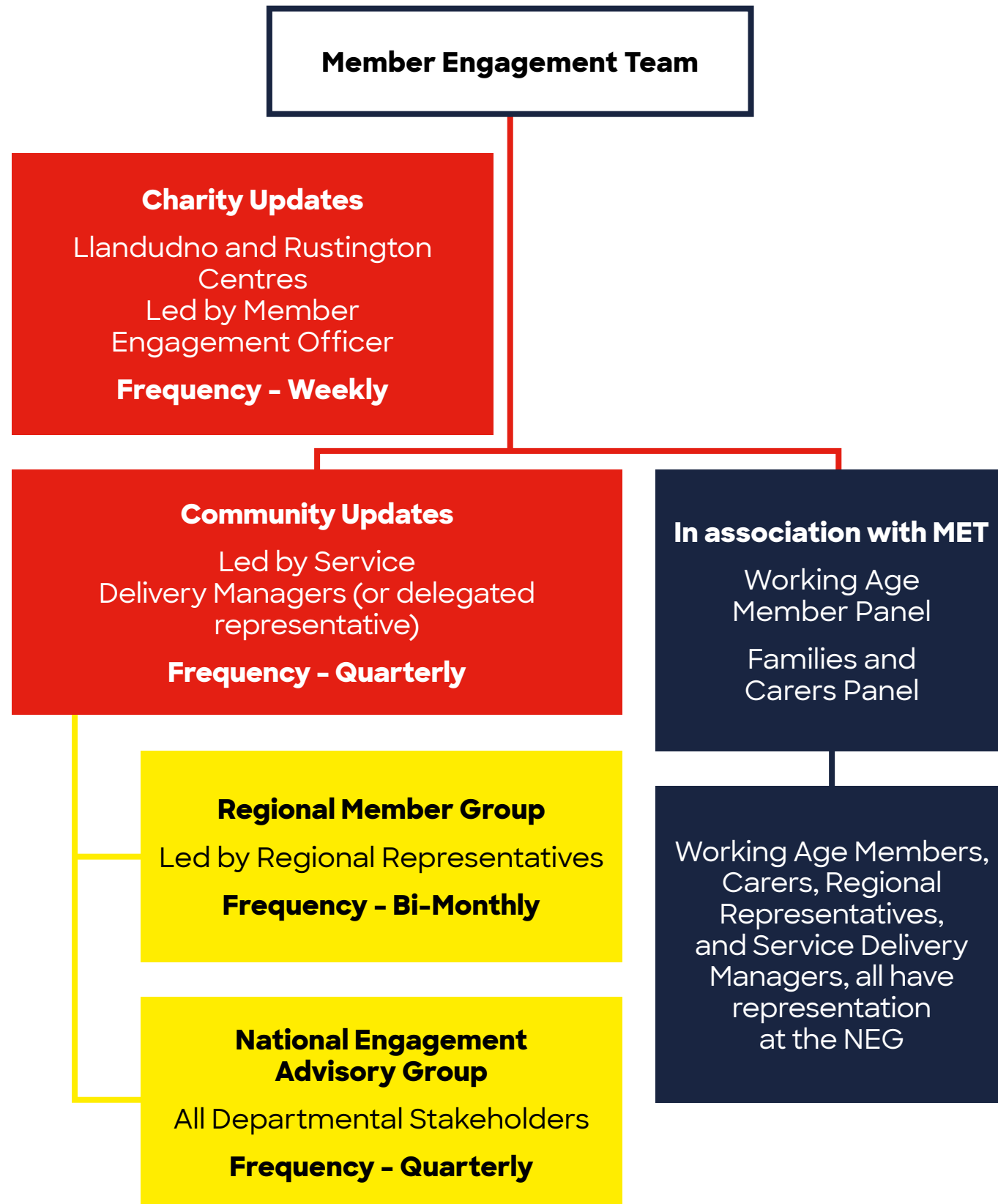
## Charity/Community Updates

Currently we deliver "Charity Updates" to inform and ask questions to Members visiting the Llandudno Centre and very soon Rustington. This means we capture the views and responses from Members nationally, in greater numbers, and more frequently.

We will now be delivering these updates in the community, called 'Community Updates'. These will replace the Community Panels, running on a quarterly basis and being delivered face-to-face where possible. If there is a large demand in your area, your Community Team will look to run more than one.

You can still raise a question at any time via your Community Team. If your question can't be answered straight away, it will be re-directed to the Member Engagement Team (MET). →





**Caption: A flowchart showing how the new groups fit together**

The MET are responsible for Member Engagement charity wide and aim to ensure Member’s voices are always heard.

**Regional Members Group and National Engagement Group**

Two new groups have been formed, the “Regional Members Group” and the “National Engagement Group”.

The Regional Members Group is completely Member-led and will advise on new initiatives and documentation that have a direct impact on Members. The group can voice your opinions and suggestions on your behalf. Regional Group Members will be attending your Community Updates to keep you informed and gather feedback.

The new National Engagement Group will discuss your thoughts and ideas and is held accountable by a set of objectives that improve Member engagement. The National Group has departmental representation from across the charity, including the Community, National and Centre teams, as well as representatives from the Regional Members Group, Working Age Members, Volunteering, Rehabilitation, and Families and Carers.

**How will these changes affect me?**

As well as being able to have your say

“The new National Engagement Group will discuss your thoughts and ideas”

at a local Community Update, you can also ask your Regional Representative to take a specific question, concern, or suggestion to the Regional Members Group for further consideration.

You will also be kept more informed, not only through the interactions with Regional Group Members, but by engaging with staff from all departments across the charity.

**How will you know if these changes work?**

The Member Engagement Team will keep track of the number of Members attending Charity Updates over the next few months.

The team will also regularly meet and update the Regional Members Group, assessing how well this new initiative works. We will monitor feedback from question setters, ensuring it is timely and communicated via Community teams and the Review Magazine.

Finally, we will work with the wider charity to ensure they are considering Member engagement in their business planning from the outset. 🌐





**Caption: Don painting**

# A lifelong passion for art

At 11-years-old, Member **Don Gooch** realised he had a natural flare for sketching and painting. Now 93 and registered blind, he remains determined not to let sight loss steal away his passion for art. Don shares his story with **Hazel Wills**

My love for art began in 1941 during the Second World War. At this time, paints were virtually impossible to get hold of and therefore I used a black pen to draw. As soon as I got home from school, I'd open the Daily Express

and spend hours copying the photos.

My very first sketches were of very famous and prestigious people such as King George V and General Montgomery.

I have never received any formal art training, I found that it came to me quite naturally. My sketches were so good that one teacher even accused me of tracing the subject!

I joined the Army in 1949 and served for a short time before being discharged as a sapper. I then joined the Merchant Navy in 1950 and served until 1958.

Upon leaving the Merchant Navy, I was extremely busy and had several businesses over the years. I bought a shop in Essex, then went into the property business converting houses to flats before moving to the Highlands and buying a caravan park.

During these working years I was sadly too busy to paint, but my passion was reignited after retirement and having something to occupy my mind has proved to be hugely beneficial.

I was born with little sight in my left eye, then at 85 my sight started to deteriorate due to glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration; I now only have around 15% vision remaining but painting and sketching keep me out of trouble in my retirement. I am lucky to have a hobby that is so relaxing.

I was determined that despite my sight loss I would continue to paint, I just



**Don Gooch**

**Caption: One of Don's paintings**

had to adapt how and what I painted.

I used to paint with oils, but I've found that with sight loss that can be quite messy so now I stick to watercolours. I enjoy painting a variety of things but particularly animals and country scenes. I've recently spent a week at the Llandudno Centre where I enjoyed spending time in the craft room. I painted a lovely landscape watercolour while I was there.

I've been loaned a magnifier by the charity, which has helped me with the details of my paintings as this was something I've found most challenging. I'm a perfectionist, so yesterday I spent around five hours trying to get the wheels right on a Porsche that I am painting for my son-in-law.

My remaining sight is precious to me and I have my fingers crossed that I can continue to paint for as long as possible. 🍀



# In your community

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



**Caption: Vision in Song as part of 160 strong choir for the festival**

## Vision in Song Choir sings at a festival

Eight Members from Essex performed with a 160 strong choir at the Harwich International Sea Shanty Festival in October, in front of more than 300 members of the local community.

The festival is widely regarded as one of the premier events in the sea shanty performance calendar, attracting acts from far and wide, including overseas entrants.

They sat alongside other veterans who, as a collective, form the Vision in Song Veterans Community Choir under the control of its new musical director Clare Leach. They were also accompanied by 60 children from Clare's children's choir.

The choir sang five sea shanties, which included 'John Kanaka', 'South Australia' and 'It's all part of being a pirate!' Everyone was taken aback by how good it was, especially considering they had not previously had the chance to practice with the other choirs present that day.

The garrison commander of Colchester was also present in the audience with his wife and spent some time drinking tea with the Members after the show.

The Vision in Song choir has a growing presence in the community and is evidence of strong partnership working with other organisations and the military.

## RAF Cranwell Officer Cadets Graduation Rehearsal Parade

Members in the North East were invited to RAF Cranwell Officer Cadets Graduation Rehearsal Parade in November. This was a fantastic event, giving our Members the opportunity to liaise with senior to middle RAF Officers, experience the RAF culture, and take a trip down memory lane.

Officer Cadets endure six months of testing, training and developing their academic, physical, policy, command and leadership skills. After completion of this, successful OCs will commission

into the RAF.

The event unfolded with a warm welcome from RAF Officers, Warrant Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers in The Whittle Room, College Hall Officers Mess. Members exchanged career stories, found out about the Officer Cadets training regime, and were served delicious refreshments. Compliments to the RAF staff!

After making our way onto the Parade Square, we proudly observed OCs and the RAF Band rehearse and be inspected by an Air Commadore. They all looked spectacular. Once the →



**Caption: Members and staff outside RAF Cranwell**





**Caption: Members exploring the gardens at Erddig**

rehearsal was over, the OCs marched directly past us enabling a special round-of-applause to be given.

We would like to send our kindest thanks to RAF Officer Training Academy staff and wish those commissioning Officer Cadets the very best with future endeavours and safe travels wherever their duty takes them!

Member Jill Humphries said, "It was an honour to be invited to this event. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day. It was also great to catch up with other Members and Blind Veterans UK staff. Also, great to interact with the people at RAF Cranwell. Looking forward to future events."

## Day out to Erddig in North Wales

We had a wonderful day out with Members in early October, visiting the beautifully restored National Trust property in North Wales. Erddig sits on a dramatic escarpment above the winding Clywedog River and tells the 250-year story of a gentry family's relationship with its servants.

We had a guided tour of the servant's quarters and member Ron, who once owned his own bakery, helped the tour guide identify a piece of their collection in the bakery and confirm its use, which they had long suspected but were pleased to hear.

After a lovely lunch we had a guided tour of the gardens, passing round a few different apples from the 200 varieties they have growing there. None would be available in your local supermarket!

The staff went out of their way to make the tour interactive with sounds, smells and touch. Along with our own lovely volunteers helping with transport and guiding, the Trust provided wheelchairs and volunteers to help with the day. Everyone had a great day out.

## Driving experience day in the South West

In October, the South West community teams held a driving experience day for Members. This was a joint venture, facilitated with Dorset Blind Association and Somerset Sight.



**Caption: Members ready to drive**



**Caption: Member in the driver's seat**

The experience was made possible with Henstridge Airfield providing their runway and dedicated driving instructors from Second to None Driving School.

It was an amazing event with Members having the opportunity to get behind the wheel, socialise with their peers and exchange numbers.

Large grins and wonderful comments were captured as they returned from the runway, with one Member saying, "Absolutely excellent, I've not driven in 20 years, and I got up to 81mph". 🍷

**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.**



# National Creative Wellbeing Programme

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

To sign up to or find out more about the following creative activities or hobby circles, simply call **01273 391447**. You can leave a message on our answer machine if you'd just like to request an activity pack. All our projects come with VI and reader-

friendly instructions, as well as the option of audio on a USB stick if requested.

## Woodwork:

### Aircraft carrier:

This is a challenging but fun wooden



PONSULAK / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: Seaside sketchbook**

construction kit. The aircraft carrier kit has a similar process to the popular St Paul's Cathedral and Titanic kits. The completed model is 20cm high, 55cm long and 17cm wide with 172 pieces in total. You will receive VI friendly step-by-step instructions or audio instructions if requested.

## Painting:

### Nature prints

A painting project inspired by nature. You will receive a pack of art materials to use. Gel printing uses acrylic paint in an alternative way to the traditional method of using brushes, by using a roller onto a gel plate. Your prints can be displayed or used as a unique, homemade greetings card! The gel base is re-useable so you can create as many designs as you like. You could even incorporate this method into existing art projects with water-based paint if you are inspired by mixed-media art.

## Drawing:

### Seaside sketchbook:

This sketching kit is suitable for any drawing ability, even beginners. Within your pack, you will receive everything you need to get started, alongside a guide to some basic techniques to experiment with. There are a variety of art materials for you to try out and find your favourite way of working. The theme for inspiration is



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**Caption: Robin mosaic**

the seaside, however this sketchbook is yours to do whatever you like with, you can follow the theme or use your imagination!

## Craft

### Robin mosaic project:

Mosaic crafting is a calming, tactile hobby and we have chosen one with a festive twist! You will receive materials to make a robin mosaic with VI friendly instructions. There is an optional hook enclosed so you can turn your robin into a Christmas decoration if you wish.

## Gardening:

Hyacinths: There are still some







Listen here

# Members artwork takes centre stage

In November, two veterans' charities, Woody's Lodge and the VC Gallery, organised an exhibition to coincide with Armistice and Remembrance

The show, titled 'Veterans, Family, Wales', features work by nearly 100 Armed Forces and blue light veterans, including many of our blind veterans.

The show celebrates art in its many forms and how it supports our veterans' wellbeing. It gives voice to the variety of veteran's art across

Wales. Some entries reveal how art supports veterans to work through challenges they face after military service and the effect on their mental and physical health. Other work sheds light on a host of human experiences, including pieces that celebrate colour and connections.

Our Collaboration in Colour piece took centre stage in this wonderful exhibition. Collaboration in Colour was produced as part of the National Creative Project, which many Members contributed to during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nadia Wazera, Community Support Worker who worked with Woody's Lodge to organise the exhibition said, "Collaboration in Colour celebrates triumph over adversity, through art, after our Veterans experienced extreme loneliness and challenges during Covid." 🍷



**Caption: Opening night of exhibition**

## CREATIVE HOBBY CIRCLES

Facilitated by Blind Veterans UK staff and our member volunteers, Members with a shared interest meet monthly using Microsoft Teams for a chat to offer ideas, tips and support with ongoing projects.

**Knitting, crochet or weaving**, for Members to chat about your latest projects with wool. All abilities welcome, a friendly group to support and inspire!

**Painting and drawing**, for artists of all abilities – whether you are just starting out or are an experienced artist, this is the space to chat with other visually impaired artists and exchange ideas, tips and support.

**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**, for amateur gardeners and those who've signed up for our gardening projects, offering support with VI friendly gardening, no matter the size of your garden, greenhouse or windowsill!

AKUAKU / ADOBE STOCK



**Caption: Potted hyacinth**

remaining hyacinth packs available if you would like to have a go at growing your own. You will receive three bulbs, a pot, compost and large print instructions on how to care for your plants.

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

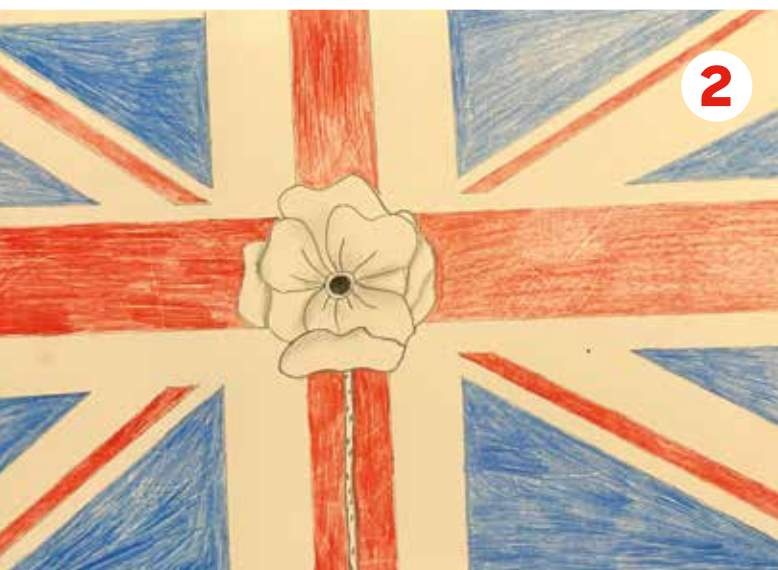
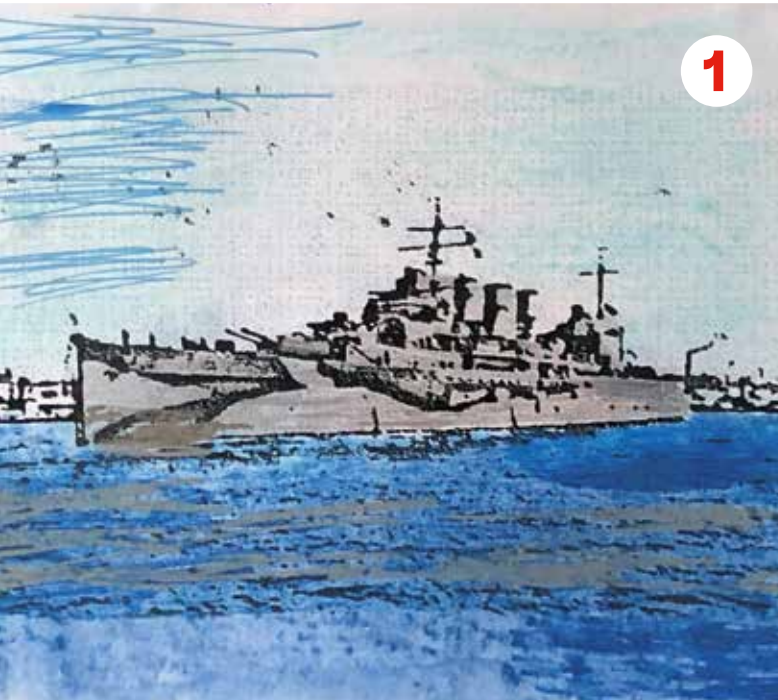
Thank you for continuing to return the surveys within your packs. Your feedback is very valuable to us and will help us to continue to shape the NCWP going forward. 🍷



# Artistic Flair

We are pleased to present more artwork by our Members for the National Creative Project

**Captions: 1. Eddie Tann - HMS Suffolk 2. Naz Niner - Remembrance 3. Naz - Christmas Pencil Drawing**



# Carers Review

A page dedicated to the families and friends who care for our Members, **Sharman Collins** shares the latest opportunities and useful information to support you in your Caring role

With Christmas looming, we hope all our carers who were born before September 1957 have now received their Winter Fuel Payment. This can be anything between £150 and £300 and should happen automatically.

While most people can relax, unwind and enjoy the festive cheer over Christmas, it can be a challenging time for carers. From responsibilities and worries that come with taking care of a loved one, to additional pressure to join in with typical Christmas activities, many carers are at greater risk of experiencing anxiety or stress.

As a carer, it's important to acknowledge how you are feeling and make sure you are putting your own wellbeing first. It's

ok to take time out for yourself to unwind. If you are unsure where to turn or who to talk to, contact your community team for further support.

An excellent way to unwind is to listen to one of the carer's podcasts where you can listen to the experiences of other carers.

### Carers Voices on Apple Podcasts

To access the podcast on your phone, go to the Apple Podcast App (iPhone users) or Spotify. Or you can ask Alexa, 'Alexa, play BBC podcast Carers Voice'.



**Caption: Apple podcasts**

Whatever your Christmas holds for you, Blind Veterans UK acknowledges all you do to support your loved ones and is here to help if you need it. 🇬🇧





Listen here

# The Carol Singer

Member **George 'Wilson' Taylor** shares a poem of his about Christmas

It was the tenth Christmas on his own. As he went through the heart-breaking motion of decorating the familiar tree his mind flooded with memories of past Christmases. Happy times with his lovely partner and children.

Now alone, he felt constrained to carry on as before, even though each tree trinket stabbed at his heart. The little glass trumpet still sounded. The coloured baubles still sparkled as the old flashing fairy lights brought the tree to life.

His wandering thoughts brought to mind the occasion when his wife had set the scene for a memorable Annual Carol Service. Standing at the back of the gallery in a darkened church, and with a voice of an angel she sang, 'Once in Royal David's City.' While she sang, the church gradually brightened as hundreds of candles flickered into life.

For weeks a constant stream of carol singers to his door had stretched the old man's patience to the limit. Strains of 'Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer', and 'Santa Claus is coming to town', had ousted the well-loved carols of the past.

Unexpected snow fell heavily on Christmas Eve. The street outside, with its four-inch white blanket was hushed. The air was clear, crisp and quiet.

Thoughts of bed were interrupted by a gentle knocking on the front door. As he walked down the passage in response, he heard a child's voice quietly and expressively singing 'Once in Royal David's City'.

He opened the door slowly. There stood a child. She was a miniature of his late wife. Her voice was so beautiful and moving he had to close his eyes to fight back the tears. The child, sensing his distress stopped singing after the first verse.

Composing himself he opened his eyes to thank her.

He was quite alone and there were no footprints in the snow leading up to the door. 🎄

ADOBE STOCK / PRO HI-RES





# Quiz time

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

1. What was the original colour of Father Christmas' suit?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which is the only nationality to be mentioned in the 12 Days of Christmas?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which beloved character died in the 2012 Downton Abbey Christmas special?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What was the original name of Christmas Island?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the Christmas Number 1 song in 1973?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How many Christmas specials has Call the Midwife aired to date?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. When was Christmas first celebrated in the UK?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How many reindeer does Father Christmas have?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Who originally recorded the song 'All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth'?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Who wrote the poem 'Twas the Night Before Christmas'?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answers on Page 59



# Family news

**Hugh Batty** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 28 December 2023.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mryddyn Davies** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 12 December 2023.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**William Gann** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 29 December 2023.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Christine King** who celebrates her 104th birthday on 21 December 2023.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Eileen McAllister** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 25 December 2023.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Islwyn Middle** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 14 December 2023.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Walter Nixon** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 7 December 2023.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Doris Wilkinson** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 26 December 2023.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Condolences

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

**Moira Naylor** who died on 25 October 2023. She was the wife of Bryan Naylor.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Nellie Smith** who died on 13 October 2023. She was the wife of Kenneth Patrick Smith.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Patricia Mary Stepney** who died on 8 October 2023. She was the wife of Douglas Victor Stepney.  
\_\_\_\_\_

*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

**John Clifford Adams** of Barry, South Glamorgan died on 23 October 2023 aged 77. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Regiment of Wales.

**Roy Colin Anthony** of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 1 October 2023 aged 93. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Douglas Frank Ayling** of Epsom, Surrey died on 1 October 2023 aged 94. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**Charles Oliver Barker** of Leeds, West Yorkshire died on 1 October 2023 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**Peter Bew** of Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire died on 12 October 2023 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment (29th and 45th Foot).

**Alison Marjorie Binns** of Stonehouse, Gloucestershire died on 1 September 2023 aged 100. She served as a Petty Officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

**George Fredrick Edward Blake** of Lincoln died on 22 October 2023 aged 91. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Dennis Brett** of Sleaford, Lincolnshire died on 10 October 2023 aged 99. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Peter Alfred Brown** of Rochdale, Lancashire died on 1 October 2023 aged 87. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Ernest James Bullock** of Bristol died on 18 October 2023 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

**Peter Frederick Bunyard** of Rugby, Warwickshire died on 12 October 2023 aged 87. He served as a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

**William Samuel Stewart Campbell** of Paisley, Renfrewshire died on 1 October 2023 aged 85. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**John Ronald Carroll** of Glasgow, Lanarkshire died on 16 September 2023 aged 88. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Frank Sydney Cyril Carter** of Bridgwater, Somerset died on 10 October 2023 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

**Terence Collins** of Chorley, Lancashire died on 1 October 2023 aged 85. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Allan Derek Cox** of Bracknell, Berkshire died on 10 October 2023 aged 74. He served as an Assistant Cook in the Royal Navy.

**Leslie Penman Dobson** of Washington, Tyne and Wear died on 2 October 2023 aged 91. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

**John Patterson Dunlop** of Denny, Stirlingshire died on 1 April 2023 aged 84. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**James Douglas Elms** of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 10 October 2023 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

**Raymond Emms** of Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire died on 1 October 2023 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Robert Roy Faulkes** of Loughborough, Leicestershire died on 1 October 2023 aged 93. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**John Fletcher** of Rochdale, Lancashire died on 9 October 2023 aged 96. He served as an Aircraftman First Class in the Royal Air Force. →



**Douglas William Gibson** of Weybridge, Surrey died on 24 October 2023 aged 97. He served as a Leading Writer in the Royal Navy.

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**Alan Fred Gilham** of Lytham St. Annes, Lancashire died on 28 September 2023 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).

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**Brian Goodall** of Ossett, West Yorkshire died on 18 October 2023 aged 90. He served as an Aircraftman First Class in the Royal Air Force.

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**Peter Walter Gray** of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 28 October 2023 aged 93. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**David Hall** of London died on 22 August 2023 aged 83. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Signals.

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**Thomas John Herbert** of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire died on 17 October 2023 aged 87. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**Robert Hill** of Preston died on 5 October 2023 aged 96. He served as a Cabin Steward in the Merchant Navy.

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**Robert Hughes** of Llanfyllin, Powys died on 1 October 2023 aged 90. He served as a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

---

**Fergus Hunter** of Tavistock, Devon died on 28 October 2023 aged 88. He served as a Squadron Leader in the Royal Air Force.

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**Gordon Jones** of Harwich, Essex died on 11 October 2023 aged 98. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Peter Kane** of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 9 October 2022 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

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**Bernard Wilfred Knights** of Billingham, Cleveland died on 12 October 2023 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

---

**Leslie George Laity** of Gloucester, Gloucestershire died on 7 September 2023 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Reginald Thomas Latham** of Newcastle, Staffordshire died on 27 September 2023 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

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**Derek George Frederick Leney** of Brighton died on 20 October 2023 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

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**Daniel Roy Maher** of Weston-super-Mare, Avon died on 18 October 2023 aged 96. He served as a Stoker First Class in the Royal Navy.

---

**Owen George Francis Ryall Masters** of Kingsbridge, Devon died on 6 October 2023 aged 86. He served as a Sub Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Alexander Mckenzie** of Dundee died on 30 September 2023 aged 84. He served as an Acting Sergeant in the Parachute Regiment.

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**Kenneth Edward Mealey** of Brixham, Devon died on 4 October 2023 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps / Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

---

**John Kevin Murphy** of Liverpool died on 6 January 2023 aged 99. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Kenard Peter John Nott** of Maidstone, Kent died on 11 October 2023 aged 90. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Philip O'Sullivan** of Cardiff died on 27 October 2023 aged 89. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**John Donald Rowland** of Christchurch, Dorset died on 1 October 2023 aged 91. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Richard Saunders** of Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire died on 1 October 2023 aged 90. He served as a Private in the East Anglian Regiment.

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**Brian Senior** of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands died on 5 October 2023 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Terence Terry Sooley** of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 1 August 2023 aged 90. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

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**Stewart Symons** of Consett, County Durham died on 6 October 2023 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Ernest Talbot** of Slough died on 1 October 2023 aged 96. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

---



**James Tarsey** of Grays, Essex died on 19 October 2023 aged 85. He served in the Royal Navy.

**Rowena Marion Taylor** of Saltash, Cornwall died on 18 October 2023 aged 75. She served as a Senior Aircraftswoman in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Charles William Taylor** of Maidenhead, Berkshire died on 11 October 2023 aged 103. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

**Michael Thane** of Havant, Hampshire died on 16 October 2023 aged 83. He served as a Stoker in the Royal Navy.

**Derek Thompson** of Redcar, Cleveland died on 24 July 2023 aged 95. He served as an Aircraftman First Class in the Royal Air Force.

**John Jack Tuckley** of Wolverhampton died on 8 October 2023 aged 91. 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 staff, Members and Supporters? Find out more about setting up a Tribute Page here: [blindveteransuk.muchloved.org](https://blindveteransuk.muchloved.org)**

**Walter James Watts** of Southampton died on 16 October 2023 aged 98. He served as a Private in the Royal Sussex Regiment.

**Maurice Gerald West** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 21 October 2023 aged 86. He served as a Guardsman in the Coldstream Guards.

**Gillian Elisabeth Whale** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 9 October 2023 aged 86. She served as a Lieutenant in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

**Frederick Winder** of Seaford, East Sussex died on 31 August 2023 aged 95. He served as an Aircraftman First Class in the Royal Air Force.

**James Henry Wood** of Telford, Shropshire died on 5 October 2023 aged 91. He served as a Company Sergeant Major in the Royal Military Police.

**Clifford Wright** of Newcastle upon Tyne died on 1 September 2023 aged 98. He served as a Private in the Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own).

**Tak Fai Yik** of Banbury, Oxfordshire died on 4 October 2023 aged 75. He served in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps.



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## Contact details

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

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**Quiz answers - from page 52** **1.** Tan/Brown **2.** France **3.** Matthew Crawley **4.** Kiritimati **5.** 'Merry Christmas Everybody' (Slade) **6.** 10 **7.** The name Christmas is first recorded in England in 1038 **8.** Nine **9.** Spike Jones **10.** Clement Moore