



Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK
November 2023



Five years in Manchester

We marked the fifth anniversary of our Victory over Blindness statue in Manchester

Inside:

- Founder's Awards 2023 winners
- Breaks available to book in Rustington
- Our standard-bearers



Rebuilding lives after sight loss



Wear your support for Blind Veterans UK

Wear your Lads pin badge with pride and show your support for Blind Veterans UK.

Crafted in tribute to our iconic Lads statue at Manchester Piccadilly, which celebrates its five-year anniversary this year. This pin features seven blinded soldiers leading one another, with their hands on their comrades' shoulders, with text 'Blind Veterans UK' below.

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

Stay tuned for our upcoming collection of Christmas cards! Designed by blind veterans as part of our National Creative Wellbeing Programme.

The Rustington Beach Huts in Winter cards will soon be available on our shop to help spread holiday cheer.



Available on our shop for £3.50 (including P&P)



Contents

- 02** Wear your support for Blind Veterans UK
- 04** Chairman's Welcome
- 06** News
- 10** In Your Community
- 13** Founder's Awards 2023 winners
- 24** Victory over Blindness anniversary
- 26** Remembrance poem
- 28** Our standard-bearers
- 31** Bookings open at Rustington
- 34** Richard does late wife Maria proud
- 36** Why Tony marches for the fallen
- 38** National Creative Programme
- 40** Quiz time
- 41** Family news
- 42** In Memory
- 47** Contact details

On the cover

Our 'living statue' made up of staff, Members and volunteers at Manchester Piccadilly.

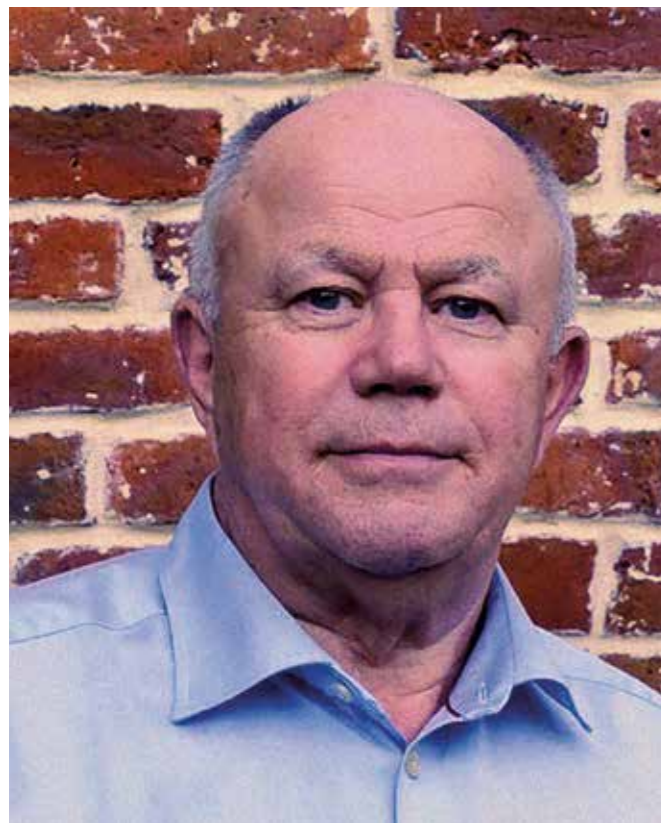


A time of reflection and gratitude

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

As we mark the UK's National Day of Remembrance this month, I know many of you will be paying your respects at services in your local communities around the country.

This year, I'm looking forward to spending it with some of you in



Caption: Barry Coupe

Llandudno, attending the special military dinner and Remembrance Parade along the seafront.

No doubt, with all the terrible atrocities going on in the world, it will feel especially poignant this year.

There's no easy way to make sense of the awful wars currently blighting so many innocent lives.

All we can do is say a heartfelt prayer for all those caught up in the horror and honour the heroes who have defended our freedom over the years, keeping their memory alive.

One of those heroes for me, is my father. He was my role model and my inspiration - full of life and personality, despite losing his sight at war.

He was also a proud St Dunstaner and the entire reason I was able to forge a connection with this wonderful charity as a young boy.

This year marks 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. With this in mind, we will be particularly thinking of all those tragically lost and wounded in these conflicts, and of their families.

Another hero from the Second World War is Member Alec Penstone who, I hear, at 98, is still remarkably energetic. Alec has shared some of his fascinating stories from the war years with our Military and Engagement Lead, Tim Eckersley, for a Remembrance Podcast Special.

Running over three episodes, apparently each as enthralling as the last, he describes life as a young teenager in London during the war, surviving the Arctic Convoys, and playing a trick on the KGB. I can't wait to have a listen. You can find all three episodes at blindveterans.org.uk/alec

I also can't wait to see your Remembrance photos in the December Review. Please send them to revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk by 15 November 2023.

As we look back with sombre reflection and gratitude, we also look to the future this month as our new Centre of Wellbeing at Rustington



Caption: Llandudno parade

will be open very soon. I have to say, it looks fabulous. I really couldn't be happier with it. We hope to be open for visitors later this month, so please do come along and have a look for yourself.

Although we won't be quite ready in time to hold a Remembrance service at the Centre, a few of our Members, including Jim Dunn, will be laying a wreath on behalf of us all in Rustington town.

It's wonderful that we are already making links with the Rustington community. I'm sure these will only grow stronger and deeper over the coming years. 🇬🇧

News

Llandudno Centre gets 'Excellent'

Care Inspectorate Wales has officially recognised our Centre of Wellbeing in Llandudno as 'Excellent' – the highest possible rating!

'Excellent' status acknowledges the care provided by the charity as

'outstanding' and confirms that high quality care is being delivered, and that recipients of care are central in planning the services and support they receive.

To celebrate this fantastic achievement, staff, volunteers, and blind veterans held a party where they enjoyed prosecco, cake and live music.



Caption: Staff and Members celebrate with cake



Caption: HMS Sultan

HMS Sultan Summer Camp 2024

This year, Andy Salter, who was previously Organising Secretary for the Sultan Summer Camp, announced he was stepping down from the role. Andy had this message to share with Members: "Please rest assured that although I have stepped down as Organising Secretary, the camp will carry on!"

A local newspaper described the camp as "a week packed full of fun and exciting diverse activities!"

The camp has welcomed blind veterans now for many years.

Why not give it a try?

The 'calling notice' for next year will appear in an early edition of The Review in 2024, sharing contact and application details.

The provisional dates are 2 - 10 August 2024, but will be confirmed in the calling notice."

Safeguarding Adults Week 2023



Safeguarding Adults Week is 20 - 24 November 2023.

During this week, we want to raise awareness of what safeguarding is, what to do about it and outlining our commitment as a charity to ensuring all Members are safe.

In this month's magazine, you'll find a new safeguarding leaflet which outlines what you can do if you or someone you know needs support or has a concern. →



Caption: Remembrance parade at the Cenotaph in London



To find out more about safeguarding, including the most common types of abuse, go to www.blindveterans.org.uk/safeguarding

Share your Remembrance photos

Are you going to any Remembrance events this month? We want to share all your photos from Remembrance in our December issue of Review.

■ **Send your photos into**

revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk by 15 November 2023.

Changes to allocation of tips at the Centres

We know many of our Members who visit our Centres like to leave a tip for the service they've received there.

Whilst we want to reassure you that tips are not necessary and your time with us at the Centre is our privilege, we understand it is your right to do so if you wish.

In the past, our process was to collect and distribute these tips to all staff

across the charity, not just to Centre-based staff.

Recent legislation has been changed, creating a statutory obligation on employers to allocate the full tip, gratuities and service charges to the workers who were specifically intended to receive it. Following this change in legislation, tips will be distributed to our operational Centre-based employees only (excluding senior managers).

If you'd rather give a donation during your stay, you can do this by speaking to the Hospitality Teams at either Centre who will be happy to assist. 🍷



Caption: Art and crafts at the Llandudno Centre

September 2023 Lottery Results

Winners of the £1000 prize:

Mr Clegg
Fowler
Mr Gambrill
Mrs Lloyd

Winners of the £100 prize:

Mrs Bullen
Mrs Forsyth
Mr Neylon
Mr Robson
Miss Urch

Winners of the £50 prize:

Miss Bee
Mrs Brazier
Mr Laverty
Mrs Mills
Mr Mullis
Mrs Wearmouth
Ms Parker
Mrs Sunderland
Mr Warne
Mr Watt



NEW STOCK

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

New Members in West Wales

Over the last few months, we have had several new Members join the charity in the rural areas of West Wales. To

welcome them into the charity, Chris Raine, who has been a Member since October 2019, assisted the local community team in finding a venue to help bring them together and meet one another.



Caption: New Members gather in West Wales for lunch



Caption: National Arboretum trip

Trip to the National Memorial Arboretum

In mid-September, Members and volunteers from North Wales and Cheshire braved the wet weather for a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum, in Staffordshire.

They had a tour of the site, from the comfort of the land train, seeing and hearing the stories of the many monuments there, like the RAF Association monument, the Polish war memorial, and the Shot at Dawn memorial (commemorating those Soldiers executed for “cowardice,” during the First World War).

We also saw the Blind Veterans UK memorial and commemorative path, with flagstones bearing the name of

blind veterans who have now died. A very touching moment when one staff member, Lisa, noticed the name of a Member she knew on one of the stones.

The day ended with a talk about the history of the Arboretum in the warmth of the chapel.

Everyone agreed that it was a fantastic day, with some people already planning return visits – but, hopefully, on a drier day.

First meet up in Spalding

The first Member social event in Spalding, Lincolnshire took place last week. Members enjoyed it so much that they have initiated the next meet up between themselves! →



Caption: Spalding social



Caption: Members on board a boat

Day out on the Medway River

We had fantastic weather for our morning and afternoon boat trips on the “Kingfisher” - a fully accessible river cruiser based at Watringbury, Kent. As well as enjoying the rather beautiful scenery, a couple of Members were given the opportunity to take over the wheel.

One of our new Members, Alister More, attended the event. Alister has done over 30 years of service in air/

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.

sea rescue but was pleased to relax on the water as the river was calm and our volunteer crew from the Kingfisher trust were extremely kind and professional.

Fishing Group in Warrington

Members had a brilliant day at Partridge Lakes in Warrington for the first fishing trip with our new fishing group. Everyone arrived early morning to do some guiding skills training with our two volunteers, who this event wouldn't have been possible without. Seven fish were caught and there were smiles all round. The day was a great success! 🎣



Caption: Fishing trip



Founder's Awards Ceremony 2023

In July this year, we shared the list of blind veterans who were nominated for the 2023 Founder's Awards. On 23 October 2023, we held our first Founder's Awards ceremony in over four years

Our 2023 winners

These awards mark the founding of Blind Veterans UK when Sir Arthur Pearson opened the doors to war-blinded veterans in 1915 for the very first time.

They recognise the inspiring contributions of those who share the same boundless spirit as our founder and help us celebrate all that's great about our charity.

Over 35 guests attended the ceremony, including nominees and those who nominated them and staff. They listened to messages from Community Team Leaders about those nominated and enjoyed a delicious evening meal.

Nominees who could not attend in person were still able to join the ceremony via an online video link. →



Caption: Founder's Awards 2023

Camaraderie Award winner: **Jed Splain**

Jed has been a Member of Blind Veterans UK since October 2018. Jed is part of the Vision in Song choir and was nominated for his greatest strength, which lies in supporting and caring for other Members of the choir.

He will often ring them to make sure they are alright and encourage them to speak with staff or seek professional support if they identify any issues. Jed welcomes all new Members of the choir with open arms and will always consider the thoughts and feelings

of others when expressing himself. With the support of the charity, he has learned to manage his own sight loss journey, but also now openly assists other Members through peer-to-peer support.

Carers Recognition Award winner: **Richard Booth**

Richard is the grandson of Member Lawrence Booth and moved from Sheffield to Skegness 27 years ago to look after him and has continued to do so since then. In 2021, Lawrence

spent most of the year in hospital with Covid-19. In this time, Richard came to see him every other week to make sure he was getting the care he needed. He also made sure everything was set up ready for him to return home.

Creative Award winner: **Keith Verral**

Keith has been a Member since 2017 and last year did some wood turning training locally. Keith now makes various items that he sells at craft fairs to raise money for Blind Veterans UK. He makes beautiful pens from a variety

of woods that he purchases, then turns, treats, polishes, and finally assembles. He also makes candle holders, coasters, bottle stoppers and is currently trying his hand at egg cups.

Alongside this, Keith volunteers with Age UK, holding a regular session for people with dementia who want to do something practical. Keith is not just creative, he is extremely kind, selfless, and giving.

“Keith is not just creative, he is extremely kind, selfless, and giving” →



Caption: Jed Splain



Caption: Richard Booth



Caption: Keith Verral



Caption: Ceremony drinks reception

Creative Award Special Recognition: Cameron Kennedy

Cameron has really embraced our National Creative Projects since they commenced in 2020. In particular, he has a real flair for mosaics, such as the Jubilee crown and poppy remembrance mosaic. He has a great 'can do' attitude and is keen to show other Members (especially new ones)

“Cameron has really embraced our National Creative Projects”

that you can continue with hobbies after sight loss and pass on his learning to others. He always has time to spend time with others explaining how he has learned how to do things differently.

Inspiring Community Award winners: Jules Lee and Les Fryer

Jules joined Blind Veterans UK in March 2019 in search of the camaraderie he missed from his time serving with the Army. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, Jules began

volunteering as a telephone befriender supporting Members and forming lasting friendships. He quickly became an integral part of remote introductory weeks, as he shared his experiences and knowledge with Members new to the charity.

Through his own initiative, Jules developed a monthly telephone group that he continues to run today. He also co-hosts various lunch clubs, acts as a Peer Support Lead for the London area and regularly supports activity weeks at the Llandudno Centre. His sheer drive and determination are unquestionable.

Les started a new bowls group in Worthing last year, which now has 10 members. The group is for people in the local area and further afield who want to continue bowling after losing their sight.

The group is now affiliated with the Worthing Pavilion Bowling Club, and they meet every Friday throughout the year thanks to Les' efforts. He arrives two hours early to set up the green and so new members can have a trial session. Les is extremely dedicated and passionate to bring vision-impaired bowlers the chance to try or return to the sport after sight loss. →



Caption: Cameron Kennedy



Caption: Jules Lee



Caption: Les Fryer



Caption: Member Craig and Ted Higgs' daughters

Inspiring Community Award Special Recognition: **Kenneth Hall**

Ken has embedded himself into the local community and made a determined effort to get to know all the Members who reside in the area. Ken has gone even further by researching and going out into his community and identifying what community facilities and groups are available and whether they are sight impairment friendly. Ken ensures that he is available to Members and

reaches out to them. He also brings Members together on a weekly basis by integrating them into the groups he has identified. Ken is a well-respected Member amongst his peers and has supported many people on their sight loss journey.

Life Beyond Sight Loss Award winners: **Ronald Smith and Adam Walsh**

Ron sadly recently became a widower and was informed that he was going blind that very same day. After tackling a period of self-isolation, Ron

became heavily involved in art and craft, which has provided him with drive, focus, and a new perspective on life. By using the kits available to him through the National Creative Project, Ron has become particularly skilled at diamond painting and building models of all types. He continues to excel in this area and now assists other Members, encouraging them to get involved in what has become a great love of his. He is a shining example of courage in the face of adversity.

Adam was still serving in the RAF when he was medically discharged as a result of losing his sight. He had so

much to overcome to re-build his life after joining as a young 16-year-old. On being medically discharged, Adam not only lost his career but also his housing, income, stability, and sight. It was so much for a young person to cope with, but Adam worked with Blind Veterans UK and other agencies to build his life after sight loss.

Adam is now actively working 16 hours per week, walking to work using his cane, and can cook a meal and shop for himself. He participates in local veteran and military groups and has a new life with meaning, way beyond his expectations. →



Caption: Kenneth Hall



Caption: Ronald Smith



Caption: Adam Walsh



Caption: Billy Baxter plays the bugle

Outstanding Achievement Award winner: **Noeline Charlesworth**

Noeline became a Member in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Her enthusiasm and passion towards engaging fully with the charity, and all it could offer, was evident from the very beginning. Noeline is highly motivated

“There is no end to Noeline’s care and compassion”

to get involved in any way she can and quickly became a Member volunteer so she could support other Members on their sight loss journeys. There is no end to Noeline’s care and compassion for other Members; every week, she telephones and maintains contact with numerous Members across the UK, some of whom are socially isolated. Noeline has also fundraised over £1,200 for the charity from selling Member’s crafts and organising a raffle. Noeline’s genuine care for other Members is an inspiration to both staff and Members. She is tirelessly dedicated to supporting other Members and will put others needs before her own.

Outstanding Achievement Award Special Recognition: **Shelia Botley**

Since joining the charity in 2019, Sheila has grown from strength to strength. With support from Blind Veterans UK, Sheila has pushed her boundaries and has grown in her independence. She now uses public transport independently and has gained access to many new social groups.

Following a wellbeing visit to the

Llandudno Centre, Sheila has found an interest and focus in mosaics which she now orders herself to create craft pieces to sell and raise money for Blind Veterans UK. Sheila’s positive attitude is infectious and she has helped other Members in the local area engage in craft-making to tackle social isolation.

Sporting Achievement Award winners: **Alan Lock and Andrew Leitch**

Alan is an inspiring Member of Blind Veterans UK. He has run the →



Caption: Noeline Charlesworth



Caption: Speeches



Caption: Sheila Botley



Caption: Alan Lock

London Marathon numerous times and has organised his own fundraising events, such as the London Marathon finishers event. To date, this has raised almost £20,000 for the charity.

Despite facing significant challenges due to sight loss, Andy has shown remarkable determination and dedication to sport, participating in marathons, ultra-marathons, walking, triathlons, and the Brighton cycle ride in recent years. Andy continues to push himself to achieve great heights, demonstrating his commitment to overcoming his obstacles. This year, Andy is busy training for his eighth

Marathon and is looking forward to being part of the great South run. He also represented Blind Veterans UK in Tel Aviv this summer. Andy has faced several challenges along his journey with sight loss, including navigating the world in a new way and adapting to life with vision-impairment.

He has continued to pursue his passion for running and is committed to fundraising for the charity. His many accomplishments in the face of adversity are truly remarkable, as he continues to inspire others with his determination and perseverance through sports.



Caption: Andrew Leitch



Caption: Craig Lundberg



Caption: Lesley Hall

Ted Higgs Prize winner: Craig Lundberg

Craig lost his sight in a grenade explosion in 2007 whilst serving in Iraq with the 2nd Battalion Duke of Lancaster's Regiment as Section Commander. Craig has remained an inspirational blind veteran ever since. He is very active and challenges himself on a regular basis; determined to live life as fully as possible.

Craig has completed the London Marathon and plays blind football for England; climbed Kilimanjaro; cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats;

and carried the Olympic torch in 2012. He also runs a successful property management business together with his partner, Nicola. Craig is well connected in the local and business community and is happy to mentor anyone starting out or struggling to cope with their sight loss. He truly embodies Sir Arthur Pearson's spirit.

Vocational Award winner: Lesley Hall

At the time Lesley joined the charity in 2019, she had just been registered severely sight impaired, which happened very suddenly.

Up until this point, she worked full time and was totally independent. After visiting the Brighton Centre, Lesley slowly began regaining skills and confidence to do things she never thought she would do again.

Lesley managed to return to work after receiving lots of advice and equipment to aid her to do her job.

After having long cane training last year, Lesley is now confident to go on trains and buses alone and can negotiate big shopping centres and escalators independently. Lesley is now confident and happy with life. 🇬🇧



Listen here



Statue

Caption: Left, 'living statue' next to our Victory over Blindness statue, top right, 'living statue' in the station, bottom left, Members laying a wreath

Caption: Top left, member of the public taking a photo, bottom left, standard-bearer John Nicols, right, CEO Adrian holding a collection tin

Anniversary of our Victory over Blindness statue

On Wednesday 18 October, we held a special event to mark the fifth anniversary of our 'Victory over Blindness' statue by taking over Manchester Piccadilly Station with a living version of the statue.

We held a ceremony, including a wreath laying and piper playing, outside the station to mark the anniversary. We were also joined by our 'living statue', made up of staff, volunteers and Members, who

mirrored the sculpture, then marched through the station.

another with their hands on their comrades' shoulders.

Our now iconic statue was unveiled five years ago by our patron HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh to commemorate 100 years since the end of the First World War. Conceived and designed by artist and sculptor Johanna Domke-Guyot, it shows seven blinded soldiers leading one

Our Chief Executive, Adrian Bell, said: "The statue's name, Victory Over Blindness, was a phrase used by our founder, Sir Arthur Pearson, and it continues to guide our principles today. It serves as a permanent reminder of why our charity was founded and why we're still here today." 🇬🇧



Listen here



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS / WIKIMEDIA CC

Caption: Soldiers digging a communication trench through Delville Wood

We WILL remember them...

Member **George 'Wilson' Taylor** shared a poem of his to commemorate Remembrance this month

It began on July 1st 1916. It was intended to be the battle that would quickly bring to an end a war that had started two years previously.

I joined several hundred people from all over Europe on that battlefield to

commemorate the occasion. It was the 80th Anniversary of 'THE SOMME'.

We weren't there to glorify war – far from it. We were there to honour the memory of the thousands of young men who gave their lives in the "War

“It was intended to be the battle that would quickly bring to an end a war that had started two years previously”

to End All Wars”.

I attended three Memorial Services at different locations.

The first around the lip of a huge crater formed by the detonation of thirty tons of explosives planted underneath an unsuspecting enemy.

The second on a steep hillside overlooking a stretch of flat ground in front of a wood. At this site, on the first day of the battle, hundreds of young men were decimated by the machine guns of the enemy as they advanced on their objective.

Here, during the singing of the last verse of Aberystwyth led by a Welsh Male Voice Choir, a row of soldiers dressed in First World War uniforms and carrying their rifles at the 'port', advanced slowly across no man's land. They moved as those they were honouring had done at that very minute eighty years before. As they disappeared into the wood, leaving narrow trampled trails in the green

corn, a bugler sounded 'The Last Post', preceding two never experienced before. The lively sound of 'Reveille' brought us back to reality...yet still silence prevailed save for the cheerful skylarks singing as they had done those eight decades previously. It was very moving, and unutterably sad.

The third service was at the site of one of the largest War Memorials in the world. It overlooks rows of graves and bears on its walls the names of seventy-two thousand dead with no known graves. Here, veterans of the conflict stood with tears running down their cheeks as they remembered their fallen comrades.

How short life is. I was born six years after The Great War. In between then and now we have experienced another huge conflict. As a boy I understood little about my father's four years in the trenches.

Just like the young man I spoke to on my return as I waited to catch the last bus to Hazelrigg after an exhausting fifteen hour trip returning from France. "I've just come back from The Somme Battlefield", I said, trying to make friendly conversation. "Never heard of it", he mumbled.

I wish nobody had... I thought to myself. 🌍

Our standard-bearers

Our Blind Veterans UK standard-bearers, **Brian Eldridge**, **Alan Walker** and **John Nicols** share why the role means so much to them



Caption: Brian Eldridge

Brian Eldridge:

I will never forget the first time I was asked to carry the standard for Blind Veterans UK, which was called 'St Dunstan's' at the time, when a good friend suddenly took ill and sadly was unable to perform the task in hand.

I still remember the many emotions I felt the first time I paraded the standard at the graveside of our founder, Sir Arthur Pearson. What an honour!

I stood smartly in my clean and pressed uniform, polished shoes, and my beret correctly positioned on my head. All compliments to my lovely wife Margaret because if it had been left to me, I'd probably be wearing odd shoes and my beret back to front.

I remember taking hold of the standard and thinking how much heavier it was

than what I expected, especially when lowering it and holding it in position. It was almost impossible to keep the standard steady, not because of the weight but because I didn't want to let down the people who had entrusted me with this honour. I was also so excited knowing I was involved in such a special and important part of our organisation.

It has been an honour and privilege to have carried the Blind Veterans UK standard on so many occasions since that first day over 10 years ago and I continue to feel those same emotions to this day.

I have attended so many public events with pride and pleasure since that first day.

Armed Forces Day is always a special day for me when I can march and parade with fellow standard-bearers from different organisations, but all with a single thought in mind, 'to be the best for your charity, organisation or whatever forces unit you represent.'

I have carried our standard to many places up and down the country as well as locally in my hometown.

I must mention one parade that I will never forget, which was at Westminster Abbey in 2015 to commemorate The

“It has been an honour and privilege to have carried the Blind Veterans UK standard on so many occasions”

Blind Veterans UK anniversary of 100 years since the formation of our charity. I still have a lump in my throat when I think of that special day.

To me, being a Blind Veteran UK standard-bearer means so much more than just turning up at a required time. It is the pride I take in looking after the standard, ensuring it is 100% clean and tidy for any event. The brasses, the pole, and the gauntlets are all cleaned, and the strop and the bucket (all made of brass) are sparkling.

A standard-bearer is also an ambassador for Blind Veterans UK, talking to fellow veterans but especially blind veterans who wish to touch the standard and feel the strength that it holds for us all, leaving some with tears in their eyes. After all, it is their standard and represents us all. It is my way of giving a little back, just a little, to Blind Veterans UK for all they have done for me, for giving me my confidence back and allowing me to be part of this huge happy family that the charity gives to all its Members and →



Caption: Alan Walker

their close family.

When I carry our standard, I stand a little straighter, grow a little taller, it makes me feel my best self. I will never tire of being part of Blind Veterans UK and all it stands for. I cannot stress enough how proud and honoured I am to carry our standard and what a truly humbling experience it is.

Alan Walker:

A standard-bearer's job is to lead and represent an organisation, which is what I do for Blind Veterans UK.

Historically, the standards were very important to the soldiers. They weren't only signs for them to follow into battle, but were sacred symbols

carrying a lot of meaning for soldiers.

When asked by the public or by a family of a Member who has passed away, I, as a Blind Veterans UK standard-bearer, will lead the procession of the coffin and families in the church or cathedral. If the public hold a fundraiser for the charity, then the standard bearer will attend to show the charity's support.

I have now been a standard-bearer for the past four years and I am immensely proud and honoured to do this for the Members of Blind Veterans UK, who have been through so much in their lives.

John Nicols

I've been a Member as well as a volunteer for nine years and was invited to become a standard-bearer for the Llandudno Centre in 2019.

I felt honoured to hold this position and every time I carry the standard, it fills me with pride. I've attended many events, including local military parades, Remembrance parades, RAF Cosford, First World War monuments in France and Belgium and many more.

My proudest moment was at the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, when we marched into the centre of the memorial in front of 2,000 visitors from all over the world. 🇬🇧



Bookings open at our Rustington Centre

Head of Centre at Rustington, **Lesley Garven**, shares everything you need to know for when we open the doors at our new centre, including the programme of activities and how you can book your stay



Caption: Billy Baxter with Rustington residents, Nancy and Ken

Hello and a very warm welcome to our new centre on the south coast. It fills us with great pride to open our doors to our Members and we look forward to seeing many of you soon.

With the building work now complete, we are excited to tell you about our new programme which will offer the opportunity to explore our new centre and all that Rustington and the wider region has to offer in the beautiful setting of West Sussex.

We are really keen to have as many of you as possible visit and explore the centre and are interested to hear your thoughts, so please do make sure you let us know how you find your stay. This building has been designed alongside many of our Members to ensure we create an accessible home, which we hope will be the setting for many new experiences, friendships, and tall tales. →



Caption: Member Terry Bullingham touching the new art installation

Bookings now open!

Sat beside the beach in Rustington, you'll be greeted on arrival by our modern sculpture inspired by the Lad's sculpture housed in Llandudno.

The building is set over two floors with brand new facilities where you will be able to learn new skills in our Wellbeing Suite, maybe work out in our Fit Pit gym, enjoy a drink and some sport on the large screen in Nelson's Bar, enjoy some quiet time in the Muster Room or Book Bothy, and dine in our light and airy Mess. We

can't wait to welcome you!

The seafront location is wonderful, while the delightful high street with its shops, restaurants and pubs is just a short stroll away. West Sussex boasts many sights of historical and military interest, beautiful scenery and plenty of visitor attractions to explore, along with one of the mildest climates in the UK.

Be among the first to come and join us for a much-needed holiday break in early 2024, try out our new



Caption: Top, lounge, bottom, staff

facilities at the same time as enjoying inhouse activities, trips out and lots of entertainment!

Rustington Centre Wellbeing breaks calendar

January

9 - 15 Welcome to Rustington
 16 - 22 Welcome to Rustington
 23 - 29 Welcome to Rustington
 30 - 5 Feb Welcome to Rustington

February

6 - 12 Welcome to Rustington
 13 - 19 Romance and Pamper

20 - 26 Welcome to Rustington
 27 - 4 Mar Welcome to Rustington

March

5 - 11 Planes, Trains and Automobiles
 12 - 18 Welcome to Rustington
 19 - 25 Welcome to Rustington
 26 - 1 Apr Easter Week

Christmas and New Year breaks

Our first Christmas in our new Rustington Centre will be a truly special time. For those of you who have registered your interest via your community team, once spaces have been allocated, you will be notified as soon as possible.

To make a booking at the Rustington Centre

Our Rustington bookings team are waiting to take your call on 01903 945300 or email BookingsRustington@blindveterans.org.uk

Visitors

We will be opening our doors for those who wish to visit and make use of facilities for a day, such as lunchtime dining or the Members' lounge and bar from **1 November 2023**.

Please book your visit in advance by calling reception. We are unable to offer regulated care to people who are only visiting for the day. 🇬🇧

Richard does late wife Maria proud

Widower **Richard Hughes** recently completed the gruelling 55-mile London to Brighton Cycle, two years after he rode the course with his late wife, Maria Pikulski-Hughes

One of our former Vice Presidents, Maria was a much-loved Member of the charity before she tragically passed away last year.

The husband-and-wife team completed the challenge on a tandem bike in 2021, less than a year before she lost her battle with cancer. Richard made the difficult decision to ride again solo in her memory as he wanted raise money for the charity she loved.

Cheered on by friends

A group of friends from Blind Veterans UK were there to cheer Richard on, including Member Andy Leitch.

Andy says: “A small group made sure we were there to see Richard off at Clapham Common on what we knew would be an emotional ride for him, particularly as it was the weekend of his wedding anniversary.

“He kept us updated as he cycled his way along the course and told us that after pedalling up the unforgiving Ditchling Beacon, his legs were so tired that he couldn’t get off his bike to take fluids and needed the assistance of a steward.

“He said that all he had in his head to keep him going were the words, ‘This is for you, Maria.’ After a brief stop, he kept going and we watched an emotional Richard cross the line in a time of five hours.

“We took him for a well-deserved pint, and he told us that it had made all the difference to have friends see him off at the start and be there to cheer him at the finish line. “Congratulations, Richard. You did Maria proud.”

Building a new life

While Richard has been adjusting to life on his own, he recently rehomed a



Caption: Richard Hughes

rescue dog from Spain called Treacle.

He says: “Treacle is a big softy. He’s been great company and means I get outside every day. I’m also buying myself a little place in Spain where I can spend the winters.

“But no matter where I am in the world, I’ll continue to support Blind Veterans UK as the charity meant so much to Maria. I want to forever keep the link with the charity and keep her memory alive.”

Fundraising for a loved one

Victoria Beech, from the Community Partnerships team, says: “A huge congratulations to Richard for

completing this gruelling challenge.

“Maria raised more than £5,500 for the charity in her time with us and we are so touched that Richard is continuing her fundraising efforts.

“Grief can often result in a loss of direction, particularly when the person who has died is part of our everyday routines. Getting involved in training for a challenge or organising a fundraising activity can help one regain that sense of purpose and feel connected to their loved one.

Set up a tribute page

Victoria adds: “Another way to honour the memory of a loved one is to set up an online tribute page where you, your family and friends can post messages, share photos and remember your loved ones.

“You also have the option to fundraise through the page, which can be a lovely way to raise money for their treasured cause.”

So far, Richard’s raised £760 for his cycle challenge. If you’d like to support him, visit: [JustGiving.com/fundraising/ridingformaria](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ridingformaria)

■ **To find out more on fundraising for us or setting up a tribute page, visit [blindveterans.org.uk/support-us](https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/support-us)**

Why Tony marches for the Fallen

This Remembrance Sunday, on 12 November, will mark the 32nd time Member **Tony Harbour** has marched in honour of those who have sacrificed their lives on the battlefield



Caption: Tony Harbour

He says, "As soon as that band starts, the pride comes out and the tears roll."

In fact, Tony's so passionate about Remembrance that, this year, he's helping us with our annual Remembrance fundraising appeal.

A tribute to Eddie

The letter sent to our supporters pays tribute to much-loved Member Eddie Gaines, who sadly passed away in April this year.

We were lucky to hear the D-Day veteran's story of how he set sail for Normandy on 5 June 1944, aged 19. Eddie told us that he didn't feel frightened as he approached the shore, adding, "It was an incredible sight going across as one of 5,000 boats."

But he then went on to describe how, as he went back and forth to the

"I stood there and tried to feel and think what it must have been like for those guys coming off of those landing crafts"

beaches, unloading equipment, the landing flap would fall down onto piles of dead American soldiers.

He told us, "I remember the tears came to my eyes as I thought these chaps are many thousands of miles from home and there they are. This is as far as they got. It was terrible."

Tony recently visited the site of the D-Day landings in Normandy where Eddie had fought.

As Tony says in our appeal, "I stood there and tried to feel and think what it must have been like for those guys coming off of those landing crafts, some of them just 18 or 19 years of age."

"The most important thing is remembering people; remembering that they gave their lives for what we have today."

Our tribute to Eddie

To mark Remembrance this year, we've set up a special tribute page



Caption: Eddie Gaines

to remember Eddie. To light a candle on the page, or make a donation in his memory, visit eddie.gaines.muchloved.com.

Set up a tribute page

If you'd like to set up a tribute page in honour of a loved one at this special time of year, call us on **020 7616 7923** or visit blindveterans.org.uk.muchloved.org.

■ And if you'd like to have a look at our Remembrance appeal, visit blindveterans.org.uk/remember

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.



Caption: Robin Mosaic project

Craft

Robin Mosaic project

A festive craft project for Members to take part in. Mosaics have been made by Members in our Centres of Wellbeing for many years and to pay tribute to that, here is a mosaic project to do at home. You will receive a pack with everything you need alongside large print instructions, audio instructions if needed and a reference picture of the finished product. You can either follow the suggested pattern or let your imagination run free and create your own design.

Hot Air Balloon Tea Towels: A collaborative project

Hot air balloons are a symbol of all that is possible. What could be better than a lasting reminder of optimism, hope and a chance to be creative from the comfort of your own home? All you need to do is decorate the blank balloon template with the variety of craft materials provided. Then send it back to us in the addressed envelope

enclosed and we will incorporate your design into a tea towel, creating a piece of artwork designed alongside your fellow blind veterans that you can keep forever and use in your home.

Gardening

Hyacinths

This indoor gardening project will bring colour to your home in the winter months. If you'd like a go at growing your own beautiful blooms, we will send you everything you need. No garden, equipment or expertise required, just some patience and a little bit of TLC! You will receive a ceramic pot, compost and three hyacinth bulbs along with easy-to-follow VI-accessible instructions on how to care for your plants.

■ **Please call 01273 391447 for more information or to request an activity pack.**

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.

Gardening a group for amateur gardeners and Members who have signed up for our gardening projects. This group aims to offer support with

JACOB LUND / ADOBE STOCK



Caption: Knitting needles

VI friendly gardening, no matter the size of your garden, greenhouse or windowsill!

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

Painting and drawing. A group for artists of all abilities - whether you are just starting out or are an experienced artist, this is the space to chat with other vision impaired artists and exchange ideas, tips, advice, 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. 🌲



Quiz time

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

1. What is the collective name for a group of hippopotamuses?
2. Which country was Sir Cliff Richard born in?
3. True or false: the Isle of Man is not officially part of the UK.
4. What chocolate bar shares its name with an athletic event?
5. Which US city became the capital in 1800?
6. How long is the River Nile?
a. 3,560 miles b. 3,833 miles c. 4,132 miles
7. What drink is made from hot water, whiskey and sugar?
8. Queen Victoria was on the throne from 1837 until when?
9. Horse drawn trams were first used in which Welsh town in the 1800s?
a) Cardiff b) Swansea c) Llandudno
10. What was Daniel Craig's first film as James Bond called?

Answers on Page 47



Caption: Queen Victoria



Family news

Peter D'arcy Champney who celebrates his 101st birthday on 20 November 2023.

Robert Dickman who celebrates his 101st birthday on 1 December 2023.

Constance Evans who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 18 November 2023.

Muriel Gaffney who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 14 November 2023.

Joan Harding who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 1 December 2023.

Eugenia Harris who celebrates her 101st birthday on 6 November 2023.

Jean Hughes who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 4 November 2023.

Barbara Jones who celebrates her 101st birthday on 26 November 2023.

Desmond Mahoney who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 22 November 2023.

Thomas McKenna who celebrates his 104th birthday on 1 December 2023.

Bryan Wardell who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 23 November 2023.

Condolences

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

Margaret Baines who died on 1 September 2023. She was the wife of Joseph Baines.

Joan Bower who died on 3 September 2023. She was the wife of Jack Bower.

Maureen Holman who died on 1 May 2023. She was the wife of Frank Holman.

Doreen Phillips who died on 8 September 2023. She was the wife of George Phillips.

Valerie Smith who died on 6 September 2023. She was the wife of Kenneth Smith.

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 Victor Armstrong of Redditch, Worcestershire died on 27 September 2023 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Bernard John Ball of West Molesey, Surrey died on 20 September 2023 aged 85. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Brian Goodwin Barlow of Wigan, Lancashire died on 26 September 2023 aged 91. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Barry John Barton of Drybrook, Gloucestershire died on 25 September 2023 aged 87. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Gerald Beadling of Rochdale, Lancashire died on 20 September 2023 aged 91. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Mavis Patricia Bloxam-Rose of Brixham, Devon died on 22 September 2023 aged 99. She served as a Senior V.A.D in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Glenys Calton of Olney, Buckinghamshire died on 8 September 2023 aged 99. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

David Lloyd Carey-Evans of Criccieth, Gwynedd died on 12 September 2023 aged 98. He served as a Temporary Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

Evelyn Margaret Church of Lincoln, Lincolnshire died on 13 September 2023 aged 94. She served as a Wren in the Royal Air Force.

Charles Clarke of Porthmadog, Gwynedd died on 20 September 2023 aged 94. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Cyril Davison of Bishop Auckland, County Durham died on 19 September 2023 aged 91. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

William Delaney of Bradford, West Yorkshire died on 3 October 2023 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Leslie Penman Dobson of Washington, Tyne and Wear died on 3 October 2023 aged 91. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

Thomas Evans of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 27 September 2023 aged 99. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

Anthony Fox of Rotherham, South Yorkshire died on 11 September 2023 aged 87. He served in the Royal Air Force.

Gerald Gilbert of Brighton, East Sussex died on 13 September 2023 aged 92. He served as a General in the British Army.

Alan Grandfield of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 5 September 2023 aged 86. He served as a Junior Technician in the Royal Air Force.

Mary Elizabeth Hitchcock of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 3 October 2023 aged 100. She served as a Colonel in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps. →

John Edward Hodges of Alcester, Warwickshire died on 7 September 2023 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Fredrick John Howe of Egham, Surrey died on 13 September 2023 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Fanny Tudor Imogen Hugill of Fairford, Gloucestershire died on 2 October 2023 aged 100. She served as a 3rd Officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Ronald James Joyce of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 18 September 2023 aged 93. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Kenneth David Jubb of Pudsey, West Yorkshire died on 12 September 2023 aged 89. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Signals.

Hartley Keightley of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 7 September 2023 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force.

Alan George Kilbey of Chigwell, Essex died on 11 September 2023 aged 93. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

John Lionel Owen Lee of Shrewsbury, Shropshire died on 20 September 2023 aged 100. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Bryan Lewis of Ruthin, Denbighshire died on 15 September 2023 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Roy Lucas of Seaford, East Sussex died on 12 September 2023 aged 94. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Colin John William Macdonald of Porthmadog, Gwynedd died on 29 September 2023 aged 93. He served as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment).

Marion May of Dartford, Kent died on 18 September 2023 aged 99. She served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

John Moore of Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire died on 29 September 2023 aged 92. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Margaret Eileen Palmer of Sleaford, Lincolnshire died on 26 September 2023 aged 97. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Derek Andrew Rae of Lincoln, Lincolnshire died on 2 October 2023 aged 84. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Herbert Eric Rimmer of Ruthin, Denbighshire died on 2 October 2023 aged 87. He served as a Corporal Sergeant in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Gloria Sikora of Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire died on 19 September 2023 aged 97. She served as a Gunner in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

David James Summers of Epsom, Surrey died on 18 September 2023 aged 93. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Barry Thurlby of Boston, Lincolnshire died on 21 September 2023 aged 68. He served as a Private in the Royal Anglian Regiment.

David Brian Townsend of Brighton, East Sussex died on 15 September 2023 aged 89. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Ashley Peter White of Christchurch, Dorset died on 3 October 2023 aged 88. He served as a Trooper in the King's Hussars.

Brian Wilkes of Kidderminster, Worcestershire died on 20 September 2023 aged 89. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery. →

Eli Leslie Thomas Williams of Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria died on 18 September 2023 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Raymond Joseph Williams of Coventry, Warwickshire died on 5 September 2023 aged 88. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Margaret Elizabeth Wilson of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire died on 28 September 2023 aged 100. She served as an Aircraftwoman 1st Class in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

James Edward Wright of Wolverhampton, West Midlands died on 22 September 2023 aged 85. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

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



AGENTURFOTOGRAFIN / ADOBE STOCK

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**.

A different format?

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

Quiz answers - from page 40 1. A bloat 2. India 3. True 4. Marathon 5. Washington D.C. 6. 4,132 miles 7. Hot toddy 8. 1901 9. Swansea 10. Casino Royale

Rustington Centre: 01903 945 300

Llandudno Centre: 01492 868 700

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

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

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

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



The 2024 Birmingham International Tattoo

We invite you to join us at Britain's biggest indoor tattoo, the 2024 Birmingham International Tattoo on **Sunday, 11 February** at the Resorts World Arena.

An event unlike any other, the 2024 Birmingham International Tattoo brings together marching bands, pipes and drums, field gun racing and much, much more. There will also be a spectacular Grand Finale featuring over 1,000 performers.

We have a limited number of subsidised platinum tickets for our registered blind veterans who would like to come along to enjoy the show together with their fellow blind veterans.

Please book your place using the form on our website: blindveterans.org.uk/tattoo. You can also call us on **0300 111 22 33**.

Once booked online, our customer services team will be in touch within five working days to take your payment over the phone.

Please note that due to popular demand we can only offer up to two tickets per blind veteran.

Travel to the venue and accommodation is **NOT** included and these tickets are not wheelchair accessible.

For more information visit the event site: bhamtattoo.com/

Tickets:
£10
(RRP £35)

