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# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

October 2024



## Making every step count

Taking on the South Coast Ultra Challenge

### Inside:

- The battle of Monte Cassino
- Commemorating Brioux Bridgehead
- Ex-paratrooper takes his final jump



Rebuilding lives after sight loss



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# Spread festive cheer with our new Christmas card designed by blind veterans!

We're delighted to launch our new Blind Veterans UK Christmas card, designed by our Members as part of our National Creative Wellbeing Programme.

The beautiful bauble-inspired card can be ordered now to arrive in good time for the festive season. All proceeds go to Blind Veterans UK.

**For a pack of ten cards, simply visit our online shop at [blindveterans.org.uk/shop](https://blindveterans.org.uk/shop) or call us on 0300 111 22 33.**



Rebuilding lives after sight loss



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### On the cover

Member Andy Leitch with his wife and guide, Angie, at the South Coast Ultra Challenge last month.





# A summer of activity

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

I was so pleased to be able to get to the Rustington Centre a couple of times over the summer months. What a wonderful place to be when the sun's out. It was fantastic to see so much activity going on there.

I'm delighted, too, that our Llandudno Centre is fully open once again after



**Barry Coupe**

essential building works forced its temporary closure. Having the chance to meet with Members at our centres always reminds me of how much my father – and indeed my whole family – benefitted from this charity and why, in recent years, I've felt so passionate about being involved.

As you will know by now, we are currently planning a significant transformation of the charity with the clear aim of cutting costs and making our services more sustainable. If we don't balance the books, we simply won't be around in years to come to offer our support to those veterans who come after you.

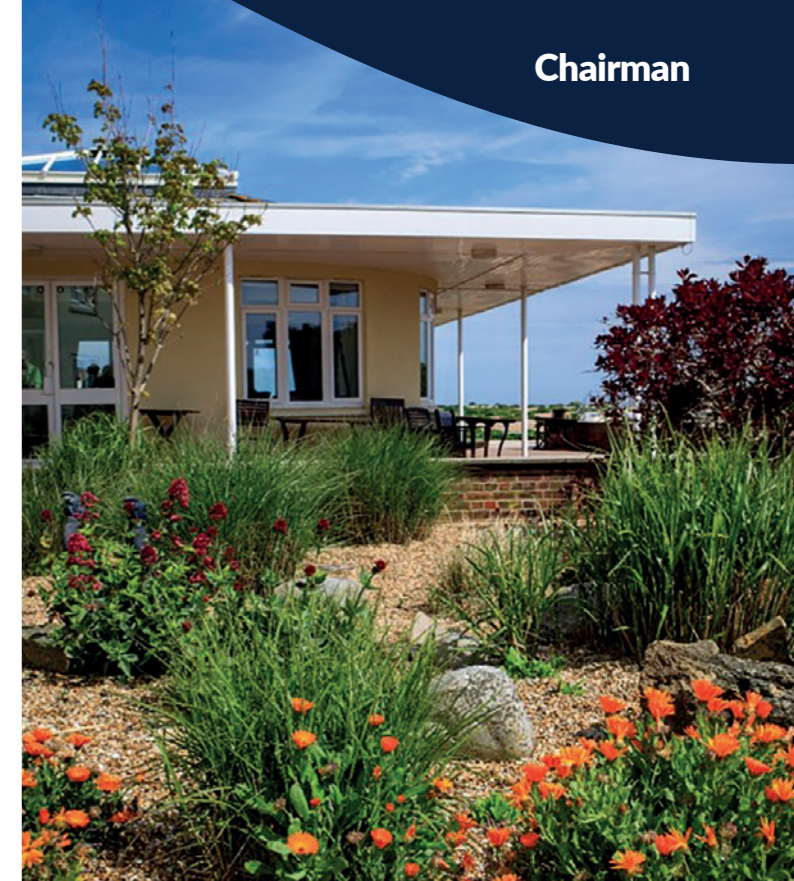
I know many of you may well be feeling concerned about potential changes to our services, but I want to be clear that we are committed to transforming the charity in a way that provides the most value to you. This is why our CEO, Adrian, has insisted on getting as much

input from you as possible over recent months via the Member Conference and subsequent survey.

As well as listening carefully to your thoughts and experiences, Adrian has been busy on a big piece of work establishing the financial principles for the transformation. I'm delighted to say that the numbers have now been approved by the Board. This is a very important step as it gives us a clear framework for a new strategy going forwards and all the work we still have to do.

We are also committed to being ambitious in our vision. We know there are an awful lot more veterans out there who we could be helping, from the thousands with severe sight loss who don't yet know about us, to those at the very early stages of their journey, desperately worried about their future. Whatever decisions we make in the next few months, we are still looking to maximise on our unique expertise in the long term.

I'm sure Adrian will provide a further update in next month's Review. For now, as we head into the winter months, our minds turn to Remembrance and to all those lives tragically lost at war, as well as the many good friends no longer with us from within this charity.



## Our Rustington Centre

The anniversary of D-Day has, quite rightly, been much celebrated this year, but did you know that it's also 80 years since another crucial battle in the Second World War? The battle of Monte Cassino in Italy was one of the most brutal of the entire war and many, many lives were lost on all sides.

On page 26, we are honoured to be able to share an extract of a first-hand account of this battle. The experience by SAS veteran Matt Mackinnon-Pattison, now 100, gives us a glimpse into the frightening reality of war and we thank him for sharing it.

This Remembrance, I will be sure to spare a thought for all of Matt's young comrades who never made it home. 🇬🇧



Staff and Members at Rustington during the festive season

# News

## Christmas at our centres

If you'd like to come to our Llandudno or Rustington Centres over the festive season, please register your interest via your community team by 25 October.

In order to maintain service delivery across the festive period and minimise the risk of spreading winter viruses, stays will be for either Christmas or New Year - there will be no opportunity to stay for both.

### Llandudno Christmas

North: 21-27 December

South: 23- 29 December

### New Year

North: 28 December-4 January

South: 30 December-7 January

### Rustington Christmas

23-29 December

### New Year

30 December-5 January

Once spaces have been allocated, those who have secured a place will be notified as soon as possible. Our bookings team will not be able to take requests for these dates.

## Sign up to our monthly e-newsletter

Did you know, you can receive all the latest Member news, announcements and opportunities for you and your family in your e-mail inbox every month?

Whether you're a Member, a family member or a carer, all you need to do is visit the Member area on our website at [blindveterans.org.uk/member-updates](http://blindveterans.org.uk/member-updates) and sign up. Simple.

## Llandudno Centre works uncover new floor

After its temporary closure to complete essential building works, our Llandudno Centre is now open again... with an original floor in the dining room!

During the work in the grade II listed room, a near perfect parquet floor was uncovered which has since been renovated. The closure also provided an opportunity for us to complete 'the hub' - an addition to the lounge which provides a single point of contact for support.

With occupancy rates at their highest, we're delighted to welcome our blind veterans back to North Wales!

## Members take on fundraising challenges

Over the past couple of months, you will have read about ways in which our Members are taking on their own challenge or fundraiser to support the charity:

- John Brice set up 'Every Penny Counts' in which he is encouraging Members to save an old milk carton and turn it into a fundraising collection pot (see September issue).
- Lawrence Booth opened up his garden to raise funds and show others what blind veterans are capable of (see page 20).
- Ex-paratrooper Danny Gibbon, 88, has returned to the sky for one final jump (see page 30). →



The original floor at Llandudno

- Members came together to tackle a range of distances for the South Coast Ultra Challenge (see page 11).
- **If you have your own fundraising idea or need inspiration, we can help. Please get in touch with the Community Partnerships team at [fundraising@blindsveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindsveterans.org.uk) or call Supporter Services on 0300 111 22 33.**

## Our Rustington Centre turns one year old

On 7 September, our Rustington Centre celebrated one year since its residents moved in and it began



**Rustington staff show off the amazing donations from local businesses**

welcoming guests. To celebrate, the centre held a community fete in which members of the public were invited to enjoy the beautiful gardens along with a range of classic fete fundraising stalls.

There was a bottle stall, a tombola and a raffle, as well as chutneys made by volunteers and crafts made by blind veterans. Those looking for a bit of fun could also try the coconut shy, the bouncy castle and a totally unique blind veteran human fruit machine!

All of this was made possible by the generosity of a number of local businesses who have come forward with donations and vouchers for our fundraising activities. 🍷



# In your community

Blind veterans across the country enjoyed the last of the summer sun last month together in their local areas



**The Somersham tea party**

## In Somersham

Community 12 hosted a vintage-themed afternoon tea dance in Somersham filled with laughter, music and lots of cake! The room was packed as veterans turned out in their droves to have a dance and catch up with friends old and new.

## In Llandudno

Since it's reopening, the fun has not stopped at our Llandudno Centre. There's been a trip to Aberfalls Gin distillery, a visit from some of our local feathered friends, while Cruise Week has seen Members transported around the globe with activities and cuisines from different countries and cultures.

## In Swindon

Our Swindon coffee morning was buzzing with Members and their guests, plus volunteers and staff. One Member, John, travelled up on the train from north Somerset to share details of his brilliant fundraising initiative, 'Every Penny Counts', while another, Danny, who was formerly in the Army Parachute Regiment, spoke about his upcoming skydive. Danny's wife, Carol, even brought along homemade chocolate cupcakes to celebrate. Such a lovely morning with plenty of chat and laughter! →



**Cruise week in Llandudno**



**Shropshire Members (and friend) at The British Ironwork Centre**

## In Shropshire

Our Shropshire Members enjoyed a visit to the British Ironworks where they were able to touch the enormous sculptures all made of different materials and shapes, making it an excellent sensory experience.

They then spent time in the amazing gift shop, a wonderland of unique items, and settled down in the delightfully quirky cafe for lunch and a well-earned cuppa.

**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.**

## In Swansea

We had a great turnout for our wonderful lunch at the beautiful Grand Hotel. The time was spent full of laughter as Members enjoyed each other's company and the chance to connect with others with shared experiences.

## In Rustington

It's been a busy time at the Rustington Centre with preparations for our one-year anniversary, alongside activity weeks and holidaymakers filling the centre to capacity. The centre has been packed with activities, from hiking week to history week, to croquet in the garden and a wonderful open day. 🎾



**Members at Rustington enjoying croquet in the garden**



Listen here



**Staff member, Glynis, takes a selfie with 'Team Blind Veterans UK'**

# Making every step count

On 7 September, a team of nine brave Members took on the South Coast Ultra Challenge... and lived to tell the tale

Last month, nine intrepid Members and their guides set off from Eastbourne on a mammoth coastal walk with one aim: to raise awareness of Blind Veterans UK.

In particular, the group wanted to let people know about the impact of experiences like the rehabilitation

weeks offered at our Llandudno and Rustington Centres. They took on the challenge of walking anything from 25km to 100km along the coast, with some walking as far as Arundel.

Ahead of the activity, five of the group spent a week at our Rustington Centre for training, building up their fitness →

and resilience to ready themselves for the task ahead of them.

They completed a range of training walks including 21km from the south Rustington Centre to Angmering Park Estate, and 29km from Shoreham to Bignor. This gave them confidence for the challenge and experience of the varying terrains they would encounter.

As the group set off on the day, the conditions were not what they would have hoped for - heavy rain meant the ground was extremely muddy and so walking was much harder than anticipated. Still, they kept going.

Of those who completed the maximum distance, Member Chris Kennedy made the best time, crossing the finishing line first in an impressive 20 hours and 30 minutes.

**We spoke to a few of 'Team Blind Veterans UK' afterwards to find out why they did it...**

### Wayne Perry

Wayne, 65, who managed the full 100km, served in the Army for 18 years with the Royal Armoured Corps in Northern Ireland, Germany and the UK. He told us: "I used to walk this kind of distance while in the Army but haven't done anything like this since losing my sight. It was tough but worthwhile. My



### A tired Wayne and his friend, Bill, conquer the 100km

feet are a bit shredded and my muscles are tired but it was fantastic and I hope to be back again next year.

"I finished the 100km walk in 24 hours and 30 minutes and would like to go faster next time. The terrain was extremely hard though, due to the mud. Not only were we facing the hills but it was slippery underfoot which was physically and mentally draining.

"We were trying to keep our balance and, as we're vision-impaired walkers, we were staring so hard at the ground to keep our footing.

"I wanted to take part as an opportunity to raise awareness of the charity. To be part of a team raising money with a challenge of this scope is purposeful and meaningful."

Wayne took part in the training week at Rustington. He says: "The week in Rustington alongside my fellow walkers really motivated me. I came home and planned walks in my local area and went to Wales to walk in the Brecon Beacons with a friend, which included some night training.

"This was my first big charity fundraiser and I can't think of a better cause. Blind Veterans UK is a special charity as it understands veterans and our needs. The charity gives us the confidence and supports us to take on challenges regardless of our age.

"At the age of 65, to take on and conquer 100km, is a very proud moment for me. I want to thank Blind Veterans UK as without the charity, I would never have done it."

### Andy Leitch

Andy, 50, joined the Army in 1992 and spent 19 years with the Royal Logistics Corps. At the age of 37, retinitis pigmentosa caused a gradual decline in his sight, forcing his retirement.

Andy's no stranger to taking on physical challenges for our charity, but this event was a first for him. He had aimed to complete 100km with his wife, Angie, as his guide, but found the walk incredibly tough. He finished at 57km.

He said: "Blind Veterans UK has invested a lot of time over the years to help me rebuild my life when I'd lost all hope. They made me realise what was possible and gave me the confidence to start doing physical activities again and get back to work."

"This was a new challenge for me. I've completed 100km walks previously but never in this area so, although I'm no stranger to the distance, it was an unknown route which I was excited for. I can honestly say it was one of the hardest challenges I've taken part in."

Fortunately Andy made a speedy recovery and went on to saddle up for the London to Brighton Cycle just a week later! →



### Andy and Angie

## Jill Humphries

Jill, 64, joined the team for the first 25km section of the challenge. This was not a gentle stroll option - it saw her climbing the Seven Sisters, a series of chalk cliffs.

Jill enlisted into the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps in 1979 and served as a nurse for four years. It was in her 30s that she first felt something wasn't right with her sight. She was later diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a hereditary eye condition.

She said, "I worked as a nurse and, at first, I was able to make my own adaptations to correct my eyesight. I found, for example, that the corridor lighting was low; I had to start standing by the window to read prescriptions and when making a cup of tea, I wouldn't attempt to pour myself a full cup. I didn't think much of these things at first so didn't mention them to anyone.

"In 2009, I realised I was starting to miss things and make small mistakes at work which scared me. I was worried that it would be detrimental to the patients I was caring for.

"Blind Veterans UK has helped me a lot with IT and technology, which has meant I've been able to carry on with using email. I'm also part of the group



**Jill, left, with guide, Ellie, approaching the finish line**

of veterans who are of working age and this has been brilliant and helped me to get back to work.

"Taking part in this challenge has been great for my wellbeing; walking and fresh air are so beneficial. I've always been a good walker but the most I had walked up to this point was around 10 miles. I was excited to push myself to complete the 25km. To do this with reduced vision was the most challenging part for me.

"A few years ago I took part in a walking week at the charity's Llandudno Centre. I wouldn't have been able to do walks like we did during that week on my own. The support I had to get out and about was amazing and I couldn't wait to get out there again with a team from the charity."

## Ian Summers

Ian originally planned to hike 57km from Eastbourne to Hove Park, but retired after completing the 25km.

The following day he told us, "My legs are aching; the mud was shocking and it made it so much more difficult than any of us could have anticipated. I spoke to one walker who said this had been the toughest ultra they'd ever done and for me it was my first!"

Ian, 44, enlisted into the Army in 2002, at 22 years old. He served for four years with the 2nd Battalion Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and carried out tours in Iraq, Kuwait and Northern Ireland.

In 2017, Ian lost his sight after he choked at home while eating dinner with his family. He says: "My brain was starved of oxygen which has resulted in severe sight loss. A simple everyday activity changed my life overnight."

Ian's mobility and speech were also affected and he has had to learn to walk and talk again making his commitment to the challenge even more incredible. Earlier this year he organised a 6km fundraising walk on the Isle of Wight to raise money for our charity, but this time round he added to that distance.

He said, "The bimbles I organised got

me excited to try new challenges. This time I was alongside my fellow blind veterans, which is a huge motivator. The week I spent at the charity's Rustington Centre made me feel much more prepared."

The team have already surpassed their £600 fundraising target - the equivalent of the cost of a rehab week at our Rustington Centre - and are even talking about doing the challenge again next year. We're sure you will agree that they've done us proud.

■ **There's still time to support Team Blind Veterans UK. Simply visit [justgiving.com/page/bvuk-ultra24](https://www.justgiving.com/page/bvuk-ultra24)**



**From left: Jill, Glynis, Peter and Ian**



# If it makes you smile, go for it!

As we mark World Mental Health Day on 10 October, we ask Member **Kevin Alderton** what he does to relax



**Kevin with his catch**

These days, it's easy to become completely overwhelmed by life, so taking the time to prioritise your mental health has never been so important.

In fact, your mental health is just as important as your physical health, if not more so. It affects how you think, feel and act, and also helps determine how you handle stress and relate to others. So what can you do to look after it?

For our Working Age Member Liaison Lead, Kevin Alderton, spending time on his two favourite hobbies, fishing and golf, can make all the difference.

Kev says: "Finding a hobby is an important part of our rehabilitation process as it can give us motivation, thinking space and freedom from our day-to-day lives.

"For many years prior to my sight loss, I've been a keen fisherman, along with other members of my family and my friends. Whether I'm standing on a freezing beach in winter on the hunt for cod, bass, pollock or smooth-hounds, or spending long summer days and nights beside a beautiful lake hunting illusive carp, I'm absolutely in my element.

"Not only does this give me the opportunity to enjoy an activity that I absolutely love, but it also gives me the chance to think things through and unwind, and forget about the stresses that sight loss can bring on a daily basis.

"Golf is my other passion. However, unlike fishing I didn't take up golf until after I'd lost my sight. Again, this has been a great outlet for me. It's a sport I've grown to love over time.

"I can't play golf on my own due to my sight loss (I'd lose too many balls), so I play with a dedicated volunteer guide who was sourced by Blind Veterans UK. This means I can play regularly and have also made a great new friendship – unless he loses my ball, of course!

"Playing golf has been amazing for both my mental and physical health – although I'd question whether it reduces my stress levels at times!



**Taking a shot on the golf course**

"We all need something in our lives that makes us smile, feel independent and gives us something to look forward too. Hobbies, like golf or fishing, can be great levellers and fantastic for making new friends.

"I can't recommend enough the benefits of being outdoors and would encourage the sighted and sight-impaired alike to get up off your backside and give a hobby a go. You never know what you might achieve." 🍓

**Is there a hobby you'd like to try? If so, we may be able to help. Speak to your Community Support Worker and check out our activities and groups at [blindveterans.org.uk/member](https://blindveterans.org.uk/member)**

# Rediscovering my passion

Former jewellery engraver, **Jeff Clarke**, 87, on the joy of taking up painting again ten years after losing his sight



Jeff using his equipment from us

I've always loved art. As a schoolboy, in the 40s, I was lucky enough to be picked for a free place at art college. After that, I went on to complete an apprenticeship in jewellery engraving.

I joined up for national service and was in the Catering Corps, now the Royal Logistics. I served in Aldershot, Blandford and Germany before going back to engraving after I was demobbed. I met my wife, Maureen, in the jewellery factory as she worked in the back office.

Drawing and painting were always such a big part of my life, that is until about ten years ago when I started to notice changes in my sight. I started seeing things that weren't there - straight lines were wavy and there were blank spaces in my vision.

“I've received so much information and equipment - talking clocks, magnifiers... all sorts”

By chance, I happened to read an article about age-related macular degeneration in the paper. Eventually I received a diagnosis and, over the following months, was given about 30 injections in my eyes to slow the condition down. I was registered as severely sight impaired in 2012.

Losing my sight can feel so debilitating. I found it hard not being able to read and write - I had a whole bookshelf full of military books I could no longer look at - and I couldn't even see well enough to paint anymore.

I was told about Blind Veterans UK by someone at a local organisation. The charity has been terrific. I've received so much information and equipment - talking clocks, magnifiers, all sorts.

After my induction, the staff sent me home with a very powerful tabletop magnifier. Suddenly, I was able to look at my artwork from 40 years ago and read pages from my books again.

I picked up the paintbrush again after

attending an art week at the old Brighton Centre. The magnifier really helps with this too. Of course, I can't do the kind of art I used to do as I can't see details, but blowing sections up on the screen helps me fill in some of the lines.

Sometimes I struggle to think of things to paint as the images have to come from my imagination, but once I get going there's nothing like being completely immersed in a project. I carry on for as long as I can manage before my eyes get too tired.

The charity has introduced me to other blind veterans in my area and it's been great getting to know others in the same boat as me. There's always laughter and jokes. We encourage one another.

I'm about to go off on holiday to the Rustington Centre with Maureen. We've been once before and loved being right next to the sea. She'll take her diamond painting along with her which she sells to raise money for the charity. I'm looking forward to finding inspiration for my art there.

Every day can be a challenge with sight loss, but with the help I've received from Blind Veterans UK I can keep on doing the things I enjoy. I really can't thank the charity enough for that. 🇬🇧

# Gardening gives me the lift I need

Member **Lawrence Booth** explains why he opened up his garden at the end of August to his community

Last month, green-fingered Lawrence Booth opened his garden to his local community on the bank holiday to raise money for Blind Veterans UK and also show what's possible after sight loss.

Lawrence, 85, spends hours caring for his garden and wanted to share his passion with his friends and neighbours.

He says: "I've been a keen gardener since I retired and spend around six hours a day outside tending to my pots, hanging baskets, vegetables and lawns.

"I wanted to open up my garden for the day as I thought it would be nice for me to talk to one or two people and to show them what a blind veteran can do.

"I take it nice and steady in the

garden and try to do as much as I can myself. I do all the pots myself and my son comes once a week to cut my lawns.

"I had some pots to sell, along with a tombola and teas, coffees and cake; I was hoping for a good turn out and to make a bit of money for Blind Veterans UK. The sun shone and about 20 people came along which I'm so happy with. I was able to show people how I grow things in pots and tubs."

Lawrence served in the RAF between 1958 and 1961. He lost his sight around 20 years ago.

He says: "It's like I'm looking through a fog all the time. I can't see anything at all out of my right eye and have only central vision in my left eye. I can cope though; I look after myself and I want to keep active while I can.

"There are days when I get a bit down but I pick myself up and try not to dwell on things. I go out two or three nights a week to my local club and Blind Veterans UK arranged a volunteer who takes me out and about.

"The charity also came out to assess my house and arranged for me to have a reading machine, which reads my letters to me, and a magnifier. They also put bumpons on my cooker so that I know where the dials are.

"My garden keeps me busy and stops me from getting down. It's the perfect way for me to do a little something to say thank you to the charity that has helped me so much." 🌱

"I've been a keen gardener since I retired and spend around six hours a day outside tending to my pots"



**Lawrence in his garden where he spends up to six hours a day**



Listen here



Left, Chris with Brigadier Jim Tanner, former Colonel of the Staffordshire Regiment and, right, at Fontenay-le-Pesnel in Normandy

# Remembering the brave 176 Brigade

Member **Chris Lowe** tells the moving story behind a new regimental memorial in Normandy, commemorating the battle of Brieux Bridgehead

After my national service with the 1st Battalion, The North Staffordshire (Prince of Wales's) Regiment, I served for 12 years with the territorials in the 6th Battalion.

It was this battalion, along with battalions from The South Staffordshire Regiment and supporting units, that had performed heroically in the push to cross the River Orne, south of Caen,

in early August 1944, and establish what became known as the Brieux Bridgehead.

As part of 59th (Staffordshire) Infantry Division, 176 Brigade held the bridgehead and ultimately triumphed over the fanatical 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitlerjugend). I subsequently served with men from the battalion who had fought with such bravery, crossing the Orne and holding the bridgehead for three days.

They never ever talked about their experiences. It was only on a visit to Normandy with my military historian friend, Phil Joslin, that we uncovered the full story. We were astonished by the doggedness and heroism of both the soldiers and the civilians in the area. It was a story that had to be told.

The inhabitants of the small village of Grimbosq have never forgotten the sacrifice of the Staffords and the units that supported them in securing their liberation.

On the morning of 10 August, Lieutenant-General Sir Ian Cave, Colonel of the Mercian Regiment, along with the Mayor of Grimbosq, unveiled the new memorial in the Grimbosq village square. The wreaths, laid by General Sir Ian and the Mayor of Grimbosq, Gilles Bunel, were

handed to them by pupils of the local primary school.

The touching involvement of young people was enhanced by heartfelt tributes by two youngsters who spoke of the importance of keeping the story of the sacrifices made by the soldiers and villagers alive.

The wording on the plaque poignantly links remembrance of both liberators and villagers. At the end of the ceremony, the Last Post was sounded, flags were lowered by both French and British veterans, and both national anthems were played.

Two of those present from the village, now in their 90s, were just boys at the time of the mayhem and slaughter that went on all around them. Their village was largely destroyed, but they were liberated. They bear no ill-feeling; in fact, they have nothing but love and respect for the territorial soldiers who came to free them.

In the afternoon, villagers, visitors and the Friends of the 59th (Staffordshire) Division paid their respects at the riverside memorial to a British soldier, Ernie Bincow, a Royal Artillery gunner from Staffordshire who, after the war, spent some 60 years fostering a lasting relationship with the area he had fought over. →

Finally, the British visitors and French hosts stood on the bridge over the Orne, Le Pont de Brie, and cast flowers into the water. There was barely a dry eye as we stood on the bridge which was at the centre of the battle. Brioux Bridgehead became a battle honour of the North Staffordshire Regiment.

The following day, in nearby Thury-Harcourt, more wreaths were laid, this time at the memorial to the 59th Infantry Division. Brigadier Jim Tanner, former Colonel of the Staffordshire Regiment, laid the regimental wreath and the Mayor of Thury-Harcourt, Philippe Lagalle, along with veterans and local people, added his. This was followed by parades and re-enactments by the local Friends of the 59th Division, dressed in 1940s battledress and carrying authentic weapons and equipment.

The visitors from the Staffordshire Regimental Association attended a mass to the fallen, then had lunch with the mayor and local dignitaries. This was followed by further re-enactments of the liberation, a 1940s dance and a firework display.

Throughout the day, the town's 'Espace Memoire' (Memory Space) to the 59th Division was open, displaying hundreds of photographs, letters and memorabilia, given by the soldiers and

**“Throughout the day, the town’s ‘Espace Memoire’ (Memory Space) to the 59th Division was open”**

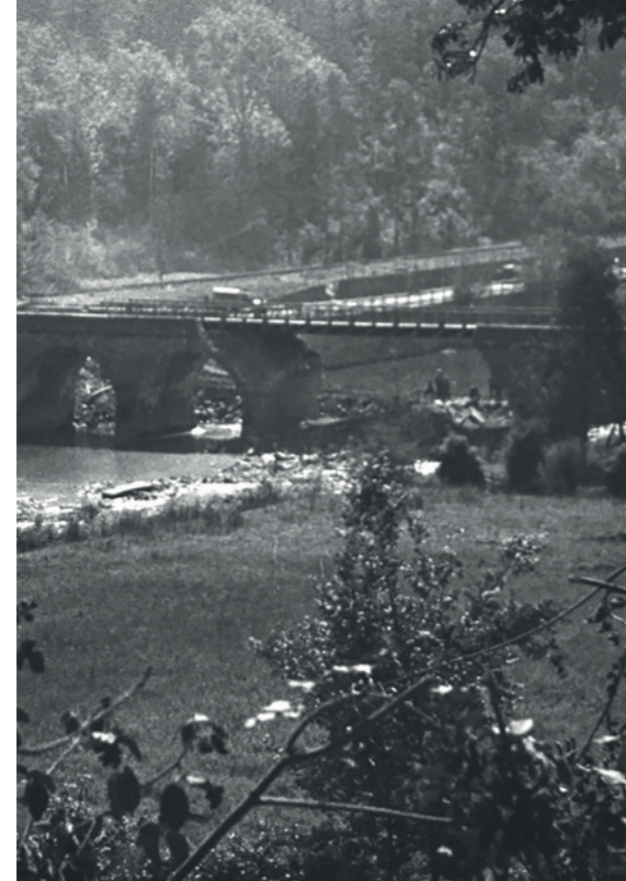
their families over 80 years of repeated visits. The special events over the weekend were a moving expression of the affection for the British liberators of their town - best summed up by notices in the Town Hall and in many shop windows, which read: “Welcome to our Liberators. Thank you.”

The Staffordshire Regimental Association’s visit ended with a short ceremony at the British military cemetery at Fontenay Le Pesnel, where many of the 241 soldiers who died in these Orne battles now rest in peace.

A wreath was laid on the memorial to all those who were killed and another was laid on the grave of a South Stafford soldier. I laid a wreath on the grave of a North Stafford soldier.

All these ceremonies and acts of remembrance gave real meaning to the simple, oft-repeated message, “We shall remember them.”

A new book telling the detailed story of the bloody battles across the hills of



**On the left, the damaged bridge over the Orne in August 1944 and, right, the same bridge in August this year packed with veterans and villagers**

Normandy and over the River Orne, leading to the final rout of the German army at Falaise, is now out.

Author Phil Joslin’s book, *The Hills of Hell*, captures the excitement of the fierce fighting by the 59th Division, from the Normandy beaches, through the bocage around Caen, to the formidable barrier of the River Orne and the surrounding hills. It contains many photographs taken during the battles that have never been published.

So fierce was the fighting that, after the war, detailed French maps of the area call the hill above Thury-Harcourt La Colline d’Enfer, the Hill of Hell.

To the Staffordshire soldiers at the time, all the hills and ridges were ‘hills of Hell’. Today, thankfully, they are havens of peace and tranquillity. The book can be ordered directly from the Staffordshire Regimental Museum at Lichfield by phone or email.

If you wish to pay your own respects to these gallant territorial soldiers, you can visit the war memorial in Stafford (opposite the railway station) or the commemorative tree, donated by the people of Thury-Harcourt, at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. Further information relating to the Normandy Campaign can be found at the Staffordshire Regimental Museum. 🇫🇷

# The battle of Monte Cassino

As we approach Remembrance in November, we share an extraordinary WWII experience by 100-year-old veteran **Matt Mackinnon-Pattison** from his time in Italy



**WWII veteran Matt Mackinnon-Pattison, right, in Llandudno**

When I was born, my mother died. Two years later, I couldn't walk or talk. I had to be force-fed. I wasn't even potty trained. I was handed in to Quarriers Orphan Home in Scotland where I stayed for the next 11 years. Then I came out and went to work on a farm.

We were sitting in the dining room of this farm home when Neville Chamberlain came on the news and told us: "This country is now at war with Germany." I thought, "Great! I can't wait to get stuck in!" The only thing was I wasn't old enough. I'm sitting back and I'm thinking, "I wish I was old enough to get stuck in." And, eventually, I became old enough...

I joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders at 18 and went to Italy just in time for the great battle of Monte Cassino. We arrived up to the

frontline opposite Cassino. They'd had three goes at crossing the Rapido and moving on, and three times they'd failed. Now was the fourth time.

We were the next ones in. I lined my squad up, and I said, "Right. Ready. Follow me!" I was only a young fella and I had men in that squad who were older than me and been longer in the Army than me, but they wouldn't take responsibility so I got lumbered with them.

So I've got them lined up, bullets flying everywhere. And suddenly a whistle goes. And there's a stunning silence. If you've ever heard silence, this is it. You can never understand how silent things can be until you've been in a bloomin' battle right over your head. But, anyway, I've got them lined up, side by side, waiting for a whistle. And suddenly a whistle goes, and... "Right, advance!" Now I've got to get my squad to advance.

Then suddenly you hear the whistle of a shell, and then you get the 'bang, bang!' and then you get the machine gun firing bullets. They are coming at you left, right and centre. Tuk, tuk, tuk, tuk, tuk!

We move down the river Rapido and then we row across the river. Now the river's flowing like the clappers.

Over head there's explosions, bullets everywhere... You just don't know when you're going to get hit.

All those bullets are coming your way. And you've got that all the time. While you're crossing the river, you've got them firing at you. You're wondering where they're coming from. You're stuck in the middle of it.

When you're on the frontline, you can have it flying over your head, all around you. Shells bursting... bang, bang! You think you're in a nice safe little position and suddenly, heeeeeee, boom! heeeeeee, boom! You think, "Oh my god, where's the next one going to go?"

It's absolute murder! You don't know where to jump or what to do. You're looking for a hole in the ground. You just run anywhere you can where you think you can get between you and the enemy.

We managed to advance and eventually we got up. The Allies managed to get up into the Monastery of Cassino and the Poles were able to take the monastery.

■ You can listen to Matt share more amazing wartime experiences from his time in Italy, and read the full transcript, at [blindveterans.org.uk/unseen-stories](https://blindveterans.org.uk/unseen-stories). 🎧



# Service spotlight

Review writer **Sheena Thomson** asks former Army Infantryman **Matt Rhodes** about his time in service

After joining the Army, Matt was posted to Germany and, in 1995, his unit was deployed to Bosnia as part of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). He remained in Bosnia during the transition from conflict to peace.

Matt lost his sight after a motorbike accident at age 20. He's been married for 22 years and has four children. He celebrates his 50th birthday this year. One of his paintings is in the Falklands Room at our Llandudno Centre.

### What were you doing in Bosnia?

We were sent out to protect the population. We were flown into Split and all the wagons were offloaded from the ships. The second day we went up by four tonners to take over from the regiment before us. I was a gunner for the Warriors, and we were swapping over the wagons.

At the start of my tour, I was in Maglaj finger and we could see them [the warring factions] shooting at each other, and we got bombed quite often. I remember on one occasion a Serb T54 tank came up over the hill and fired rounds down to our HQ. A round went through three walls and seriously injured a Royal Engineer. It took two hours for us to get permission to fire back. I also remember replenishment

rounds for our air cover provided by our armed helicopters were arranged to be brought up from Split.

We then moved to Mount Igman around July – above Sarajevo – ready to go into Sarajevo. We had artillery and several times we were ready to go in but were called back because of the artillery fire we received.

I was sent back a month early to Sennaglar, Germany, to do my PTI course, so I wasn't there when my unit finally went into Sarajevo.

### What difference has being a Member made to your life?

Two days after finishing my PTI training in late 1995, I had my accident. It was just three days before my 21st birthday and I was riding my motorbike on a straight road. I haven't got a clue what happened, but they think it was wildlife running on to the road.

I was in a coma for 10 weeks and was flown back from Germany to a hospital in Haywards Heath. When I started to regain consciousness, I couldn't remember my name or anything... only my service number. Then it all started to come back.

The initial evaluations were not good – I was badly brain damaged. But eventually I got help from Headley

“When I started to regain consciousness, I couldn't remember my name or anything... only my service number”

Court (a rehabilitation centre for injured veterans) and just cracked on, although it took ages to get back to reality.

After six months, I was told I wouldn't walk again, but I did. I ran the London Marathon in 2007 for Blind Veterans UK and the Brighton Marathon in 2010. Now I can't walk, however, because of the degenerative nature of my condition.

I've been a Member for 29 years, since being referred to Blind Veterans UK by Headley Court. I'm classed as totally blind. My eyes are fine, but my optic nerve is damaged. I can see clear tiny sections of vision. It's like a backward capital D.

I'd never painted before, but Blind Veterans UK helped me at the craft workshop and I painted a lot for three years, until my wrists made it too difficult.

The only true help I've had has been from Blind Veterans UK. This charity gives me something to be a part of. 🇬🇧



**Name:** Matt Rhodes  
**Trade:** Infantryman, Devonshire and Dorset Regiment  
**Service:** Army, 1992 - 1995

# Ex-paratrooper takes his final jump at 88

Member **Danny Gibbon**, an ex-paratrooper, recently made one final parachute jump - at the age of 88

At just 17, Danny enlisted into the Army and wanted to join the parachute regiment for the thrill of making jumps into enemy territory.

He says: "I joined up early so I could avoid a random posting under the national service regulations that were still in place at the time.

"Joining the Army was my way of honouring my father who was a sergeant in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. He was killed at Dunkirk during the war while protecting the route back to England for British troops."

Danny served for five years as a heavy machine gunner in tours in Cyprus, Egypt, Norway and Germany. He was discharged as a Lance Corporal in 1959.

One of his memories from his military days is of a training course at Netheravon Airfield in Salisbury where new and experimental ways of jumping were tested. It's here that Danny made his final jump on 13 September.

He says: "This jump was completely different to what I did 70 years ago. Back then I was attached; the plane pulled the parachute for you after you jumped. We had to get down as quickly as possible. I would just want to get out of the plane as I had a great big machine gun strapped to me and could hardly walk. Sometimes they would basically push you out.

"It was scary when I started, but you soon get your rhythm. If you refused to jump, you'd be court marshalled!

"This time, I was at 10,000 feet and free-falling for quite a distance before deploying the chute.

"When I called up to book the jump and told them I'd been in the parachute regiment, they told me, 'You must forget your training and remember not to try and land yourself.'

Danny says: "I was a bit nervous but I felt reassured to be attached to someone who knew what they were doing as I couldn't have done it on my own. It certainly brought back some

memories, but I'll never do it again!"

Danny was diagnosed with macular degeneration a few years ago and recently had cataract surgery which has meant he has a small amount of sight in one eye.

He says: "When I first lost my sight, it felt like there was nothing left that I could do. I've had to rely more on my wife; I can't do the buttons up on my shirt anymore or read a form, or drive.

We've found ways to adapt, but →



**Clockwise from left: Danny about to jump, in the air... and safely landed**





### A young Danny ready to take his first parachute jump

the word I would probably use to describe how I was feeling would be 'frustrated'."

When he was certified as partially sighted, Danny and his wife, Carol, went through a period of feeling helpless and alone. Carol says: "We have no children or family left and we were really struggling; we didn't know what to do."

However, after going online to try and find equipment or someone who might be able to help, she came across the Blind Veterans UK website.

She says: "I filled in the form and the charity got back to us within two days. Within two weeks we'd had a home

visit from a support worker; we've never looked back. Everything just felt better.

"It's just knowing that somebody's there because you can't describe just how isolated we both felt as we just had nobody to help us.

"We were sent lots of useful equipment and within weeks Danny was beginning to feel he had his life back and could still make a useful contribution."

Danny says: "Blind Veterans UK has been brilliant. I've been provided with talking books and I attend local meetings with fellow blind veterans, and I've played bowls. Getting in touch with the charity is the best thing I've ever done which is why I wanted to do something to give back."

Carol says: "I suggested that Danny made a parachute jump to celebrate his 88th birthday, as a tribute to his late father, a nod to his time in the parachute regiment and to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK. We want them to be able to help someone else who's going through what we went through."

■ **If you'd like to help Danny hit his fundraising target, visit his Just Giving page: [justgiving.com/page/danny-gibbon](https://www.justgiving.com/page/danny-gibbon)** 🎯



# 10 tips for crafting with low vision

Learning a new craft can feel daunting when your sight is limited, but with a bit of thought and preparation it's perfectly possible to craft your way to happiness

Anyone who loves crafting will know how relaxing it can be, but did you know that it can bring a whole host of other benefits?

Research has shown that immersing yourself in a craft, such as pottery, knitting, modelmaking or painting, not only boosts your mood and self-confidence, but can even improve your memory and concentration.

Whatever craft you choose to do, the following sight loss tips should give you a helping hand. We know everyone's experience of sight loss is different so feel free to try out the ideas you like and explore what works for you.

## 1. Read the instructions

It may sound obvious, but familiarising yourself with all steps of the project before you get started will save you a lot of stress in the long run. Read through the instructions first as often

projects have parts that need to be completed in order.

## 2. Set out your workspace

Take time to set out your workspace and lay out all the materials so you can identify what's what. You might find it helpful to put everything on a tray, →



**Crafting has many benefits**

“Remember that it’s not a race and just try to take it slowly”

but try to avoid reflective surfaces as this can cause glare.

### 3. Identify your materials

It might be helpful to label your materials or write the names of colours on your items so you can spot-read these later with a magnifier. Or you could just lay out the materials in an order you will remember.

### 4. Use your sense of touch

Get used to how each item feels. For example, if you have three paint brushes in a pack, feel the bristles – are they rounded at the top or square? Which is the largest brush and which is the one for small details?

### 5. Keep items together

One way to make items easily identifiable is to wrap an elastic band around one or use bumpers or blue tack as a raised tactile marker. Also, if you have lots of small items, you could try grouping them in separate dishes or containers.

### 6. Try the clock face

The ‘clock face’ technique can be handy for finding different items. Lay your materials out in order starting with 12

o’clock at the top, 3 o’clock to the right, 6 o’clock at the bottom, and 9 o’clock to the left.

### 7. Be methodical

Try to get in the habit of returning each item to the same place once you’ve picked it up. This means you can always find it again.

### 8. Use sight loss apps

For those with a smart phone, there are some really useful sight loss apps, such as Seeing AI, which helps with detecting colours and reading passages of text to you.

### 9. Find support

There are websites and organisations dedicated to helping people with sight loss to enjoy arts and crafts. Read our resource, Creative pursuits with a vision impairment, for ideas at [blindveterans.org.uk/member](http://blindveterans.org.uk/member).

### 10. Take it slowly

When you have a vision impairment, craft projects may take you longer than they used to and you may well get frustrated at times. Remember it’s not a race and just try to take it slowly, one step at a time. Just letting yourself become immersed in the process is what it’s all about.

■ **For more sight loss tips, visit** [blindveterans.org.uk/resources](http://blindveterans.org.uk/resources)



Members all dressed up for dinner outside Petwood Hotel

# Member voice

Our Member Engagement and Military Lead, **Tim Eckersley**, shares your latest news and updates

## An unforgettable dinner at Petwood

Almost 120 people attended our military dinner in August, which was held at the special location of Petwood Hotel, Lincolnshire. Steeped in military history, the hotel was once home to 617 Squadron, The Dambusters.

On arrival, guests were greeted by an RAF Regimental Piper as they entered the historically significant Grand Lounge. Our special guests in attendance included Second World War veterans Maurice Buck, Harry Wade and John Ryan, who were accompanied by officers from RAF Coningsby.





**Member Stuart James with Cpl Chris Lake**

Everyone enjoyed a fabulous three course meal, excellent service and great entertainment by a 1940s DJ who inspired some very questionable dance moves!

Founders Day Awards were presented to eight Members across a variety of categories, recognising their incredible achievements, ability to inspire and unwavering commitment to support others. The event also raised an impressive £390 through an organised raffle for Blind Veterans UK.

All who came, from our corporate partners to service personnel, said it was an unforgettable day.



**Several serving RAF personnel greeted guests and attended the dinner**

**Member Elaine McLeod:** “Fantastic and entertaining day at Petwood Hotel. Company was great, especially the military and volunteers. Thank you once again.”

**British Gas and Centrica:** “Thank you so much for a wonderful afternoon. This has given us lots of ideas of how we can support and work with Blind Veterans UK in the future. We shall be in touch and are very much looking forward to whatever comes next.”

**Volunteer Mark Newbold:** “It was just such a fantastic afternoon! What a brilliant way to celebrate the Members’ achievements. And having the RAF

present really was the icing on the cake. Brilliant!”

**Tim Eckersley, our Military and Engagement Lead, added:** “This is now the fourth in a series of military dinners the charity has provided. Around 400 people have attended these events across the country, with more planned in the coming months.

“Not only do they serve as an excellent opportunity to engage with Members, carers and families, but they also reconnect us to Armed Forces, celebrate our military history, recognise achievement and raise awareness of Blind Veterans UK to a much wider audience. They’re not just ‘dinners’; they offer so much more.”

## Give us your feedback

Have you attended a Blind Veterans UK event recently? We’d love to know what you thought of it so that we can improve our services and offer more of what you like.

Any of our Members, carers, and even staff members can now give us feedback directly via the Blind Veterans UK website by using our simple [blindveterans.org.uk/event-feedback](https://blindveterans.org.uk/event-feedback) online form.

## Veterans Art Project: VE80

The Veterans Art Project is an exciting initiative encouraging you to showcase your creative talents to help raise funds for the charity. We’re looking for submissions inspired by the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, marking the end of the Second World War on 8 May 1945.

The artwork and photography you submit could be exhibited online and at events, auctioned off, given as gifts and even displayed on our merchandise.

### How to take part

The project consists of three parts – two artwork kits, suitable for both beginners and more experienced artists, and a photography challenge. You’re welcome to take part in one, two or all three. →



**VE Day celebrations in London, 1945**

### Your personal story

We also ask that you include a short personal story with your submission with a brief outline of your service history, your sight loss journey, the techniques used in your work and the inspiration for your work.

If you're old enough to remember VE Day, we'd love to read about your recollections. If not, the project gives you the chance to explore the theme of war and peace and get creative!

■ Visit [blindveterans.org.uk/vap](https://blindveterans.org.uk/vap) to find out more and request a kit. Alternatively, you can email us at [ncwp@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:ncwp@blindveterans.org.uk) or leave your name and number on the NCWP voicemail at 01273 391 447 and we'll get back to you.

## Carers and Families Forum

We've recently run several Families and Carers Forums and are very keen to get more people involved. Meetings take place once a month and provide an opportunity for people to share their thoughts and concerns, and reach out for support. If you'd like to register, visit [blindveterans.org.uk/member](https://blindveterans.org.uk/member) or to find out more, please email Tim at [Tim.Eckersley@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:Tim.Eckersley@blindveterans.org.uk)

## Represent your local region

Our regional representatives keep Members connected by sharing relevant news at local community updates, and voicing Member feedback at the Regional Members Group.

The Regional Members Group meets bi-monthly and discusses new ideas, policies and other relevant work proposed. Some examples of this have been the Members Code of Conduct, safeguarding materials, and the Member engagement guidance.

■ We're currently looking for regional representatives across the country. If you'd like to register your interest, simply visit [blindveterans.org.uk/shape-our-work](https://blindveterans.org.uk/shape-our-work) or email [Jennie.Fuller@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:Jennie.Fuller@blindveterans.org.uk) for more information. 🗣️

### Coming up

**RAF Honington Military Dinner**

11 October

**Remembrance Weekend London**

9-10 November

**Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Military Dinner**

6 December

**Find out more about these events**

**at [blindveterans.org.uk/member](https://blindveterans.org.uk/member)**



Listen here

# National Creative Wellbeing Programme

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

If you'd like to order a kit for this month's activities, please call **01273 391447** to leave a message on the NCWP answer machine. You can also order them via the Member website. All projects come with VI friendly instructions and the option of audio instructions on a USB stick or by email if you request it.

Please note, there are delays with project dispatch at the moment. If you

requested a kit in August/September, please be assured that it will be allocated to you and dispatched in due course. Thank you for your patience and ongoing support.

## Mosaic

**Autumn mandala mosaic:** This bespoke mosaic has been designed by the NCWP especially for you for the autumn. A circular base with a concentric circle design, your tiles →



Community 6 coffee morning



Our autumn mandala mosaic



**Don Palmer's impressive Victory Over Blindness statue**

will be separated in labelled step-by-step bags with everything else you need for your mosaic.

**Showcasing your achievements**

Big thanks to those of you who have sent in photographs of your finished projects. Keep them coming!

The photo above is from Don Palmer who used his clay painting kit to create an incredible replica of the Victory Over Blindness statue, also known as "the lads". Don is a talented model maker and set himself the challenge when he received the materials.

Also, above right, we have Member Gordon Blundell showing off his fantastic flower moon mosaic from our spring kit. The mosaic is an intricate pattern of flowers in a crescent moon shape, with very neat grouting and tile placement by Gordon.



**Gordon Blundell with his beautiful flower moon mosaic**

And, finally, on page 39, you can see Members at the Community 6 coffee morning in Worcester taking part in a craft group, making mosaic coasters. We love to see everyone so hard at work on their mosaics. Thank you so much for sending these in. 🍷

**Send us your pics!**

**We'd love to see what you create with our kits. 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).**

**We also run hobby groups in gardening, woodwork, knitting and painting and drawing. To find out about these, email us or visit [blindveterans.org.uk/virtualgroup](http://blindveterans.org.uk/virtualgroup)**



# Quiz time

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

1. What happened on 7 December 1941 to change the war?
2. In which decade did barcodes first appear in the UK?
3. Which cartoon character has PAT 1 on his vehicle ?
4. The Bahamas consists of how many islands?  
a) 7  
b) 70  
c) 700
5. Which former PM ran away from the circus to be an accountant?



ENRICO PESCANTINI / ADOBE STOCK

**The Bahamas**

6. In which year was the first modern census in Britain?
7. Which of these is a true marine creature?  
a) Drummer prawn  
b) Fiddler crab  
c) Flute shrimp
8. Which country has the world's largest economy?
9. Winnie the Pooh was named after which Canadian city?
10. What is the cockney rhyming slang for money?

*Answers on page 47*



# Family news

**Doreen Scott** who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 20 October 2024.

**Ronald Roberts** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 30 October 2024.

**James Finnigan** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 4 October 2024.

**Freda Whittaker** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 16 October 2024.

**John Haddock** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 16 October 2024.

**Joseph Covell** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 16 October 2024.

**Richard Northam** who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 24 October 2024.

**Kenneth Guest** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 28 October 2024.

**Olwen Cantlay** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 31 October 2024.

**Arnold Bradbury** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 20 October 2024.

**Muriel Southgate** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 17 October 2024.

## Condolences

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

**Mary Elizabeth Begbie** who died on 27 July 2024. She was the wife of David Begbie.

**Marjorie Tucker** who died on 1 August 2024. She was the wife of George (Brian) Tucker.

**Lucy Harding** who died on 1 August 2024. She was the wife of Tony Patrick Reardon.

**Mary Eames** who died on 7 August 2024. She was the wife of Geoff Dalton Eames.

**Janet Marrison** who died on 5 August 2024. She was the wife of Bill Marrison.

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



# 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

**Dennis Edward Arnold** of Winchester, Hampshire died on 7 August 2024 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Hampshire Regiment.

**Brian Leslie Bartlett** of Wirral, Merseyside died on 11 June 2024 aged 73. He served in the Royal Air Force.

**Frank Berry** of Northampton, Northamptonshire died on 11 August 2024 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Alan Billington** of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 8 July 2024 aged 93. He served in the Royal Air Force.

**Nancy Alwyn Blackshaw** of Stafford died on 21 August 2024 aged 99. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Linden Bradley** of Telford, Shropshire died on 6 August 2024 aged 73. He served as a S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Richard Carling** of Stalybridge, Cheshire died on 29 July 2024 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Army Cadet Force.

**Jack Carter** of Manchester, Greater Manchester died on 1 August 2024 aged 88. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

**George Daly** of Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland died on 29 August 2024 aged 71. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**William Davies** of Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan died on 1 August 2024 aged 102. He served as a L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Gordon Henry Difford** of Trowbridge, Wiltshire died on 16 August 2024 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Queen's Regiment.

**Brian Eskriett** of Keighley, West Yorkshire died on 21 August 2024 aged 96. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

**Owen Fisher** of Alfreton, Derbyshire died on 1 August 2024 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Ronald Leslie Galvin** of Yeovil, Somerset died on 12 August 2024 aged 98. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Quentin Gapper** of Littlehampton, West Sussex died on 19 August 2024 aged 91. He served in the Royal Signals.

**Cecil Charles George** of Lydney, Gloucestershire died on 22 August 2024 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

**Ian Graham** of Sleaford, Lincolnshire died on 3 August 2024 aged 86. He served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Signals.

**Arthur Griffiths** of Southampton died on 2 September 2024 aged 95. He served as a Stoker Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

**Elizabeth Jill Holland** of Jersey died on 31 July 2024 aged 98. She served as a Wren in the Royal Navy.

**Keith Currey Beynon James** of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 5 June 2024 aged 94. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

**Brian George Jeffery** of Marlborough, Wiltshire died on 14 August 2024 aged 91. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Ruth Honor Kendall** of Yeovil, Somerset died on 6 August 2024 aged 98. She served as a Corporal in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**James Peter Martin Long** of Birmingham died on 13 August 2024 aged 78. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

**Pamela McLeod** of Shrewsbury, Shropshire died on 1 August 2024 aged 85. She served as a Sergeant in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

**Alexander McRae** of Wirral, Merseyside died on 19 July 2024 aged 101. He served as a Leading Stoker in the Merchant Navy.

**John Boyd Moncrieff** of Crieff, Perthshire died on 1 August 2024 aged 93. He served as an Officer Cadet in the Merchant Navy.

**John William Mott** of Walton-On-Thames, Surrey died on 11 August 2024 aged 101. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**James Murray** of Basingstoke, Hampshire died on 9 July 2024 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own).

**David John Nickisson** of Dundee died on 30 March 2024 aged 76. He served as a Captain in the Royal Marines.

**Jack Ernest Odey** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 22 August 2024 aged 91. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**William Richard Pearcey** of Romsey, Hampshire died on 7 August 2024 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Wiltshire Regiment (Duke of Edinburgh's).

**Ratcliffe Ralph Pilkington** of Ogmere-By-Sea, Bridgend died on 1 September 2024 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

**Robert Porteous** of Peterborough died on 23 August 2024 aged 83. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Iris Ann Ellen Randall** of Fleetwood, Lancashire died on 3 September 2024 aged 99. She served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force Police.

**Constance Rea** of Hereford, Herefordshire died on 4 August 2024 aged 100. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Joseph Riley** of Exmouth, Devon died on 15 August 2024 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**Brian Rimmer** of Southport, Merseyside died on 12 August 2024 aged 94. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Howard Roderick** of Christchurch, Dorset died on 22 August 2024 aged 91. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Graham Silwood** of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 18 August 2024 aged 92. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

**Gordon Warne** of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk died on 6 August 2024 aged 96. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

**Frederick Watson** of Lytham St. Annes, Lancashire died on 19 August 2024 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Anthony Arthur Weston** of Pevensey, East Sussex died on 27 August 2024 aged 97. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Stuart McLeish Wheatley** of Reading died on 2 August 2024 aged 98. He served as a Sergeant in the General Service Corps.

**Donald Whittle** of Prescot, Merseyside died on 21 July 2024 aged 93. He served as a Mechanic in the Royal Artillery.

**Arthur Williams** of Crawley, West Sussex died on 9 August 2024 aged 97. He served as an Air Mechanic 1st Class in the Royal Navy Air Service.

**Donald Wood** of Cardiff died on 19 July 2024 aged 92. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

**Eric Francis Worswick** of Blackburn died on 24 July 2024 aged 94. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**James Worton** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 2 August 2024 aged 84. He served as a Lance Bombardier 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 at [blindveteransuk.muchloved.org](http://blindveteransuk.muchloved.org)**



## Contact details

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

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

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

**Rustington Centre: 01903 945 300**

**Llandudno Centre: 01492 868 700**

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### Quiz answers – from page 41

1. Pearl Harbour attack
2. 70s
3. Postman Pat
4. 700
5. John Major
6. 1841
7. b) Fiddler crab
8. America
9. Winnipeg
10. Bees and honey

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