



# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

**February 2024**



## A blind veteran love story

How Members Rod and Pat found their way to each other

### **Inside:**

Secrets to a long  
and happy marriage

A lifelong love of aircraft



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss



Listen here

# Military Dinner on HMS Drake

We will be holding our first Blind Veterans UK Military Dinner in the afternoon of 26 April 2024 on HMS Drake in Plymouth.

This is a fantastic opportunity to join us in celebrating the amazing achievements of our Members, celebrate our military heritage, and strengthen relationships within the military community, making for an incredibly special and memorable day.

## The event will include:

- Welcome drinks and canapes
- Speeches and presentations
- A three-course meal with complimentary wine and port.

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



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## On the cover

Member Rod and Pat linking arms on Remembrance Sunday at Frome War Memorial.



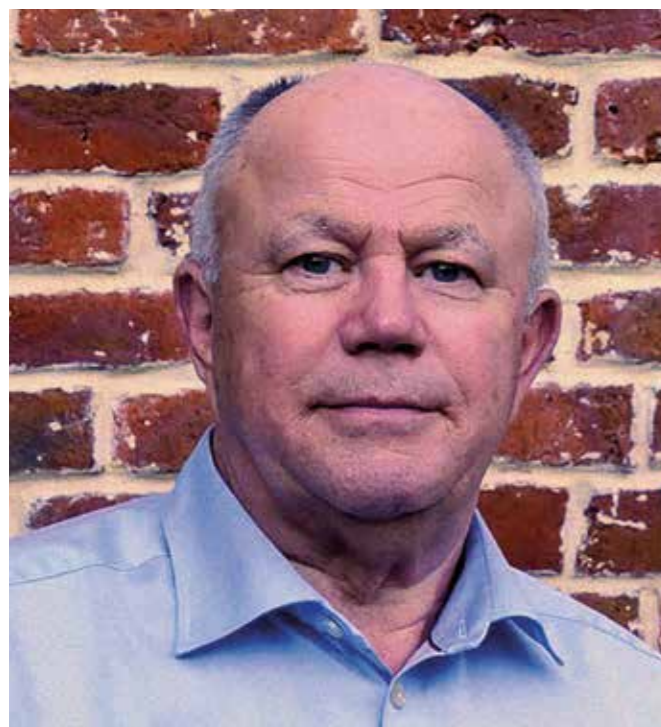
ANDREW BAYDA / ADBE STOCK

# Deep gratitude

Your message from your Chairman, **Barry Coupe**

As I pen my first Chairman's message of the year, I can't help but feel deep gratitude for all those who make efforts to support our charity on a voluntary basis.

We are extremely fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers who



**Caption: Barry Coupe**

go above and beyond in all kinds of ways to support our Members, from befriending to driving to supporting events.

One couple, Tim and Marilyn Bacon, have hosted a wonderful summer get-together for Members at their home in Tenterden, Kent, for several years now, which I've been lucky enough to attend.

As a former Trustee, Tim was determined to stay involved with the charity and this event is so valuable as it gives local Members a chance to reconnect and spend time together.

Tim and Marilyn deserve our sincere thanks and appreciation, as do all our wonderful volunteers.

I also want to thank all those who have worked so hard to make our move to Rustington a reality. Our new centre is looking fabulous now that the inside

“One unexpected treat for me was coming across my father's portrait on one of the walls”

is finished and I'm delighted to see our residents settling in. You may have spotted some of them in a lovely piece about the centre on BBC's The One Show in January.

I was at the centre towards the end of last year when some of our Members were testing out the facilities and was really pleased to hear their positive comments. I can't wait for more of you to come and test it out for yourselves.

One unexpected treat for me was coming across my father's portrait on one of the walls. I didn't realise that he'd been included in a series depicting 12 Members who have significantly contributed to the charity over its long history.

As a Member for most of his life, my father was completely devoted to this charity. He was blinded at the age of 20 during the Second World War and joined St Dunstan's, as we were known then, in 1944. Despite being black blind, thanks to the support he received, he went on to train as a physiotherapist

and enjoy a remarkably successful career.

He was a great inspiration to many Members and someone I certainly looked up to.

I have no doubt that he would have loved our new centre. He appreciated texture and colour and really enjoyed having a beautiful space described to him so he could picture it in his mind. Perhaps that's why, as a young boy, when I was asked why my dad was blind, I would respond, “He's not blind; he just can't see!”

I'm sure he would have also enjoyed spending time on Rustington beach, just a stone's throw from the centre. He would have been sitting in the sunshine, listening to the cricket and hearing the waves crashing on the shore. It really is a wonderful location and I'm so pleased it's now ready for all of you to enjoy.

Over the next few months, I'll be working alongside our Chief Executive, Adrian, to explore more ways in which we can deliver the kind of rehabilitation support you would like. What's important is that you have the chance to connect with one another, so we'll be looking into how we can develop our support in this area.

I hope you have a wonderful year. 🍀

# News

## Did you catch us on the One Show?

On 5 January 2024, the BBC One Show broadcasted a segment about our new Rustington Centre.



The show follows the move from Brighton to Rustington and features interviews with residents and WWII veterans Ken Hobbs and Nancy Bowstead. It also shows Billy Baxter, who is part of the

Member Design Group for Rustington, giving the presenter, Amar Latif, a tour of our new centre.

■ If you missed this, scan the QR code above to watch it back.

## Happy New Year, happy new starts!

2024 got off to a great start for our Rustington Centre as CEO Adrian Bell and the Centre senior leadership welcomed the latest cohort of Blind Veterans UK recruits on their induction course in early January. Working Age Member Sue, with her new guide dog Grady, also joined to share her own powerful member journey.



**Caption: New staff from Rustington Wellbeing Centre on their induction**

LUCID\_DREAM/ ADOBE STOCK



**Caption: A woman holding a phone and wearing earphones**

The Rustington Centre of Wellbeing is now almost at full strength as it heads into 2024 and continues to welcome more Members as part of its phased opening. Judging by the smiles from our latest new starters, Members can look forward to a great stay.

## 2024 Member Survey

Every year we ask 200 Members to take part in our Member survey between February and April. Those asked are selected at random, so you may receive a call from a representative at external research company, Clariant Research, requesting a short interview.

The questions cover your experience

of the charity and at no point will you be asked to share any information about your finances.

■ If you have any questions about the survey, please call our Member Support Hub on 01273 391 447. There is no obligation to take part.

## Have you heard of the Armed Forces Covenant Lead Nurse role?

In hospitals up and down the country, this role ensures they adhere to the Armed Forces Covenant, providing the best care for veteran patients, serving personnel and their families. A substantial part of the role is raising awareness of local support and services available as well as how more individualised support can be provided to patients and staff.

This service is expanding, so to find out if it's available in a particular area, Members should contact their local hospital and ask if they have a Veteran Service or support from the Defence Medical Welfare Service.

Our local community teams are always on hand to look into this for you as well.





**Caption: A recent photo of Major Mike Sadler**

## Member Mike, last of the SAS 'Originals', passes away at 103

We are sad to report that blind veteran Major Mike Sadler passed away on 4 January 2024 aged 103.

Mike was profiled in Review last year after the airing of the BBC Drama "SAS Rogue Heroes" in which his character was portrayed.

The announcement of his death saw obituaries in all the British newspapers, including the Times and Telegraph,

and around the world, including in the Washington Post and New York Times.

He lived an amazing life and you can watch the last interviews he gave, very kindly, to our team at Blind Veterans UK, at [blindveterans.org.uk/rogue-hero](https://blindveterans.org.uk/rogue-hero)

We would like to offer our condolences to his family.

## New Veterans Cards coming in January

This new digital service from the Ministry of Defence, Office for Veterans' Affairs and Government Digital Services will enable veterans who left the Armed Forces prior to December 2018 to verify their veteran status and receive a Veteran Card.

Veteran Cards have two primary functions: to ensure that veterans can quickly verify their status to access public and charitable sector support if they need it, and to provide a recognition of service in the Armed Forces.

The service will officially launch by the end of January 2024 following a successful assessment. Updates on this to follow.

## Blind Veterans UK Masonic Group

**A message from the Chairman/Secretary, Clive Jones.**

For many a year, blind veterans have organised annual meetings for Members who are also freemasons. As a result of the pandemic, our meetings were put on hold.

We are pleased that the masonic weekend will now continue at the Rustington Centre. If you are a freemason and interested in joining fellow masons for a great weekend, please join us in April at the Rustington Centre of Wellbeing, as guests of the Temple Lodge in Brighton.

Age, rank or experience is no barrier, it's a wonderful weekend. All that is required is that you are a freemason, independent and have good mobility. The dates for the 2024 meeting are Friday 26th to Monday 29th April.

Whether you have been before or never been, please join us. For more information or to show your interest in the weekend, please contact the Chairman/Secretary (details below):

**E-Mail - [dragoneye67@sky.com](mailto:dragoneye67@sky.com)  
Mobile - 07854 800256**

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## Do you have a D-Day story?

In preparation for the upcoming 80th anniversary of D-Day in June, our team have been speaking to as many Members as possible to capture their memories and stories.

If you were involved in D-Day or the liberation of France in any capacity then we would love to talk to you. Also, if any of your family members served on or around D-Day in France then we would also like to hear from you.

■ Please email [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk) or call 020 7616 7935.

# In your community

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

## Bowls event in Suffolk

The Rookery Bowling Club in Stowmarket, Suffolk, kindly hosted a bowls taster event for Members of Blind Veterans UK and their guests last summer. Club officers, coaches and members from the bowls club provided fantastic support to us all both on and off the green.

We received some great coaching which was followed by some team matches, with all games being played in fantastic spirit with lots of giggles. A splendid lunch was provided, and certificates were presented to the winners and runners up to bring a perfect end to the day. A fantastic day which everyone enjoyed with some Members keen to take up or return to bowls at their local clubs.

Rookery Bowling Club said, "Here, we take the approach of being open to all regardless of age, ability or disability. We welcomed the opportunity to host an event for Blind Veterans UK to

introduce their Members to the game of bowls and show that having a vision impairment doesn't preclude them from joining in."

One of our Members said, "Absolutely loved the bowls event yesterday. Loved seeing everyone so happy and enjoying themselves. Thanks to Blind Veterans UK for arranging it and to the members and staff of the Rookery Bowls"



**Caption: Member bowling**



**Caption: Members gathered around a table in Haywards Heath waving**

## Seasonal gathering in Swansea

Members in Swansea also had several seasonal gatherings. We had a lovely turn out and it was great to have Sign

Sight Sound also attend at one of the gatherings to talk about their services with Members. Two new Members attended, and another Member joined the gathering for the first time. Lots of new friendships formed and lots of laughter had.



**Caption: Swansea gathering**

## Festive fun in Haywards Heath

There was some festive fun for Community 18 before the New Year, with Members from the Haywards Heath social group gathering at the Fox and Hounds for Christmas lunch. They were joined by staff →

including Community ROVI Helen, who supported Members with sight loss and equipment queries. They were also delighted that Regional Administrator Paul was attending. Many know Paul as a facilitator of group calls but don't often have the chance to meet him in person.

## Singing at Newcastle Christmas social

Our community teams in North East England enjoyed a number of Christmas events at the end of last year. In Newcastle, we had a fantastic day and were entertained by our new Wellbeing Support Worker, Sharon, who happens to be a great



**Caption: Members in Newcastle**



**Caption: Spalding Christmas social**

singer. It was great to be joined by our President, Colin Williamson.

## First Christmas social in Spalding

Spalding's very first Christmas social saw Members coming together, enjoying each other's company, a good meal and some festive cheer. This will be a regular monthly group for South Lincolnshire members. 🍷

**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.**



# 'Meeting up is tricky, but we make it work'

Members **Rod** and **Pat** look forward to their first Valentine's Day together, writes **Liz Millar**

As singletons up and down the country brace themselves for another dreaded Valentine's Day, two of our Members are surprised to find themselves enjoying their first as an item.

Widowed pensioners Rod and Pat, from Community 8, weren't expecting to find themselves in a blossoming romance in their 80s. But this is what's happened, all thanks to their Community Support Worker, Sarah.

As Falklands veteran, Rod, 83, explains, "A few months ago Sarah asked if I'd mind having a telephone conversation with one of the female Members on our patch who needed a bit of company. I said I'd be happy to, and it all started from there.

"I spoke to Pat over the phone a few times and it was all rather nice, so we decided to meet up."

Pat, who's 82 and served in the



**Caption: Rod and Pat linking arms**



Army as a driver, says, “I’d been on my own for about 12 years which can get a bit lonely, so it’s been lovely to get to know Rod. He’s a very nice, caring chap.”

Both Rod and Pat lost their sight in their 70s, due to different conditions. Rod became black blind after being diagnosed with Central Retinol Vein Occlusion (CRVO), whereby the main vein in the retina becomes blocked - whereas Pat’s sight deteriorated with macular degeneration.

She says, “I was lying in bed one morning and noticed the radiator looking wiggly. That was when I realised something was wrong. I’ve got no definition in my sight anymore, but I can still see shadows.”

Despite the challenges this brings, Pat still lives alone in her bungalow, though her son is on hand to help her with shopping. Meanwhile Rod is nine miles away, living with his daughter, Julie, after falling down the stairs in his home three years ago and ending up in hospital.

Rod says, “The worst part of sight loss is having to rely on other people all the time. I can’t just get in the car and drive, and this makes meeting up with Pat tricky. It’s all do-able, but we have to plan ahead.

“Fortunately, my daughter, Julie, is very helpful and runs me down to Pat’s regularly.”

This is one of the reasons the pair jumped at the chance to spend a week together at our Llandudno Centre just before Christmas. Rod says, “We went to the Turkey and Tinsel week together, which was brilliant.”

Pat adds, “I really couldn’t fault the staff there. They’re so caring. I feel very fortunate that both of us are Members.”

And the more time Rod and Pat spend together, the more common ground they’re discovering – as well as one big difference: “Music is the only thing we differ on,” says Pat. “I like something that’s got a tune to it; he likes his jazz.”

Despite this, they couldn’t be happier. Pat says, “We’re both into rugby; we talk a lot; sometimes he nods off. We’re good company for each other. It’s nice to have someone to care about.”

Rod agrees, “Each of us knows what the other’s going through so we can be sympathetic towards one other and we can go out to dinner and other social things together, which is nice.

“As long as neither of us drives, we should be OK.” 🍷

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# Secrets to a long and happy marriage

In the run up to Valentine’s Day, we spoke to some of our Members to discover their secrets to a long and happy marriage

The three couples we’ve spoken to have been married for a total of 174 years between them and are still going strong. The couples recently met up during a stay at the Llandudno Centre.

## Eric and Margaret

Eric and Margaret have been married

for 68 years. They first met in 1952 while they were both involved in a local amateur dramatic society. Margaret turned up one day to find that Eric was standing in for the stage electrician role.

Margaret says: “The theatre organised a dance and Eric asked me to dance →



with him. He then dropped me home at the end of the evening and from then we dated for two years before we were married. We were not interested in anyone else.

“We’ve been married for 68 years and in that time, we’ve had lots of arguments, but not enough to separate us. You get set in your ways as you get older, but we have been together so long that we think the same way about a lot of things.”

Eric lost his sight due to macular degeneration and Margaret says that did have an impact on their relationship. Margaret says: “Eric could no longer read or watch TV so he needed to turn to something else to occupy his mind.

He started cooking and now takes charge of it all. I need to make sure he has all the ingredients, but he is very happy and good at cooking.

“For those young couples starting out on their marriage journey, I would say be tolerant and try to see the other person’s point of view. Also make up your quarrels. We don’t always do that as quickly as we should. And always make sure to give each other some space”.

### **Mabel and Ian**

Ian and Mabel have been married for 60 years. They met by chance during a particularly bad snowstorm in which Ian was unable to get home and Mabel’s mum took him in.



**Caption: Left to right, Jackie and Peter, Margaret and Eric, Mabel and Ian**

**“We are still strong after 60 years because I look after him and he looks after me”**

Mabel says: “When the snow started to improve, Ian was able to get home and my dad looked after the horses he was working with for him.

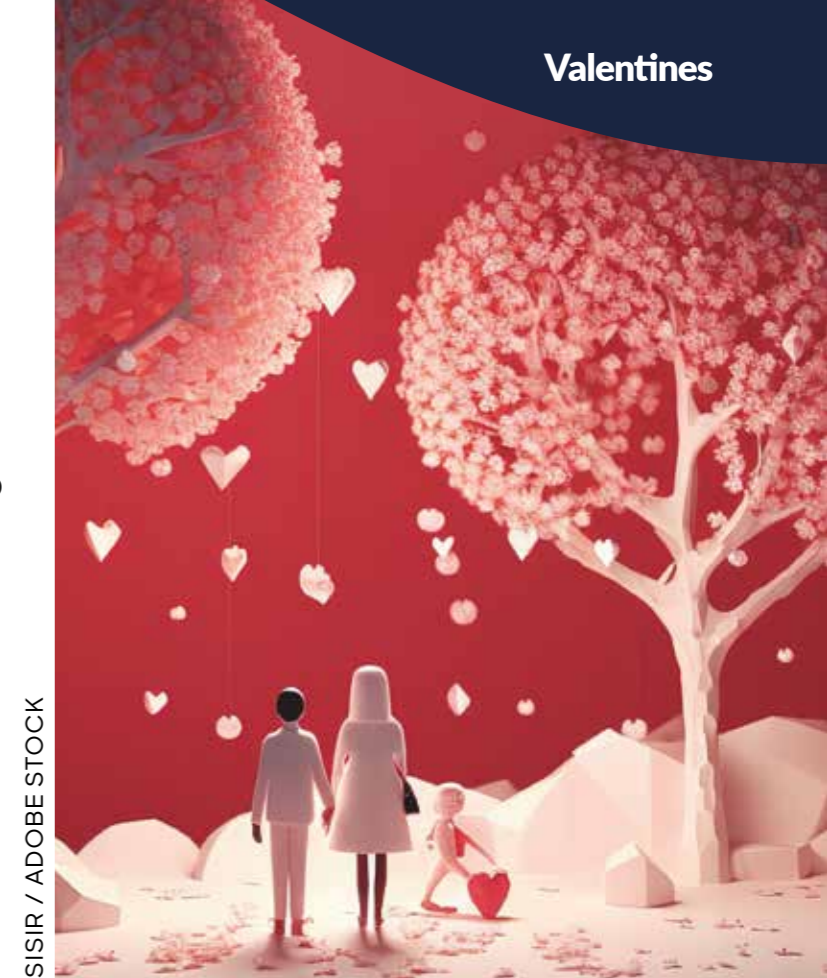
“Ian was working in the forest near to where we live so we met again and courted for eight years before we were married. I remember the day he asked me to marry him. Scotland were playing England in the football that day and we went out to choose my engagement ring.

“We are still strong after 60 years because I look after him and he looks after me. My advice would be to remember the vows you made when you got married.”

### **Jackie and Peter**

Jackie and Peter have been married for 46 years. They started off as pen pals while Peter was serving in Northern Ireland.

Jackie says: “One of my friends was engaged to one of the lads serving in Northern Ireland with Peter and he came to visit my friend and said they needed pen pals and I got Peter.



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“After four months of writing to one another, Peter came to visit me while on leave from service and I took him all around London.

“We continued to write and Peter was posted to Germany. He came home with an engagement ring and I didn’t really get a say in it!

“We married in December 1977, I remember my high heels were sinking into the ground outside the church.”

When asked about the secret to their successful marriage, Jackie says: “Always laughing and never going to bed on an argument”. Peter added: “Doing what I’m told.” 🍷



**Caption: Left, Member Ken and staff member Lynn, top right, Members at the pantomime, bottom right, Member Norman, with Rustington staff**

**Caption: Brownies visit Rustington for a carol concert**

**Caption: Top, Members at a beach cafe, bottom, Llandudno carol service**

# Christmas at our Centres of Wellbeing

During the festive period, our Centres of Wellbeing hosted Members for activity-packed weeks, full of festive cheer

## In Rustington...

This Christmas was extra special in Rustington as the doors to the Centre officially opened for our very first holidaymakers. There were in fact a number of firsts: first guest, first

female guest, first couple - even our first guide dog!

Over the Christmas period, our nine residents and 10 holidaymakers enjoyed a number of events and

activities on our festive programme. These included crafting, a music quiz, a trip to the Pavilion Theatre, Worthing to see The Sleeping Beauty pantomime, and a Christmas Carol Concert with Sussex West County Guide choir and the 4th Rustington Brownies.

One of the most popular events however was our very own "Rustington's Got Talent" competition.

All were treated to singing and joke telling from members.

Taking in the fresh sea air and shops so close by the centre were also a feature of the programme. Members explored Rustington village, as well as enjoying a winter sunshine-kissed Boxing Day walk along the sea front to the popular "Beach" café in Littlehampton.

For the New Year festivities, a similar programme ran, with poetry readings, a celebrity music quiz and a special New Year Boccia Championship.

On New Year's Eve, Members were treated to a special





**Caption: Left, Elvis at Rustington, top right, Member Roddy and Elaine at Llandudno, right bottom, Harmony Singers in St Paul's Church**

appearance from Elvis who was very entertaining and proved extremely popular. You'll be glad to know we are confident Elvis will make a return trip to the Rustington Centre.

Rustington staff have been so keen and enthusiastic to welcome the first holiday makers over Christmas and New Year. This is a time that many find difficult.

The feedback we have received over the festive period, however, has been lovely and a great time was had by all.

### **In Llandudno...**

Members enjoyed Christmas celebrations throughout December at the Llandudno Centre of Wellbeing with three weeks of Turkey and Tinsel themed holidays kicking off the festive fun.

With the centre decked out with lights and decorations, Members could get into the Christmas spirit from the moment they arrived. There was an array of activities, including festive baking, mince pie tasting and reindeer racing! Each week our Members tucked

**“We come to spend time with our Blind Veterans UK family and be involved in all of the Christmas fun”**

into a traditional Christmas dinner with all the trimmings and were treated to an abundance of festive entertainment.

The Community Engagement team at the Centre organised the first carol service for blind veterans in Llandudno. Held at St Paul's Church in Craig-y-Don, blind veterans, volunteers, and staff from the centre were joined by veterans from other local organisations as well as the Harmony Singers and members of Conwy Town Orchestra.

Members showcased their talents with Christmas karaoke and lots of carolling. Llandudno Town Band and ukelele group Silverstars gave festive performances, while Linzi Grace Dance School and Llandudno Youth Music Group put on fantastic song and dance shows.

The Turkey and Tinsel programme also included plenty of opportunities for Members from all over the UK to explore North Wales and get their Christmas shopping done! They enjoyed trips to Llandudno, Conwy,

Betws-y-Coed and Beaumaris, as well as a trip to the Christmas fair on Anglesey, which was a particular highlight for Member Michael.

Member Roddy said of his Turkey & Tinsel holiday, “The staff are exceptional and really bring us into the seasonal spirit.

“This week is our Christmas celebration; we don't have any family and so we come to spend time with our Blind Veterans UK family and be involved in all of the Christmas fun.” Around 30 Members from across the UK then spent the Christmas holiday at the Centre.

The Members, who were facing the prospect of spending Christmas Day alone, came together to enjoy traditional Christmas festivities including carol singing, lunch with all the trimmings, and watching the King's Christmas Day speech. During their stay the veterans also took part in a host of festive games, Christmas crafting sessions, a visit to a Christmas fair and much more.

The camaraderie continued into the new year, with Members, their partners and guests enjoying an evening of music and dancing and welcoming the start of 2024 with a rendition of Auld Lang Syne. 🎉



# Messages from your Supporters

Over the festive period, we asked Supporters of the charity to send any messages they have for blind veterans this Christmas time. Here is a selection of their heartfelt messages

**“Hello. I know loneliness and isolation is difficult and I want you to know you are thought of this Christmas. We are all grateful for all you have done. I wish you all the blessings possible.”** Sally

**“We wouldn’t be here writing this if it wasn’t for people like you who fought for our freedom. Bless you.”** Linda

**“Thank you for your selfless service to the country. May Christmas, and New Year, bring you company, friends, much talking, and love.”** Robert

**“I hope you find joy and companionship at Christmas. Never forget the love and respect you have from so many.”** Karen

**“I am wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and to thank you for your work in the military keeping us all safe and free from fear.”** Denise

**“May there be joy in your heart and love surrounding you this Christmas. Thank you for all you’ve done for your country. God bless you.”** Eileen

**“Sending love to you. My husband is a blind veteran. Know that we are sending our love and that you are not forgotten. Happy Christmas to you.”** Carol

**“In all that is bad in this world, the light that emits from brave people like you makes the world a much better place. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your service and sacrifice, I am humbled by your bravery and courage.”** Jayne

**“Thank you for your service to our country. You are appreciated more than words can say. Have a very happy Christmas and a healthy and healthy new year.”** Mandy 🍷



**Caption: Community Support Worker Karen at the Veteran’s Roadshow**

## “I become a detective”

Our Community Support Worker (CSW) for Northern Ireland, **Karen McKeown**, gives a snapshot of her typical week

When I first came to Blind Veterans UK in February 2019, I remember the butterflies in my tummy.

Some of my trepidation came from the

fact that I hadn’t served in the military. However, I have family and friends who are veterans, so I had an idea of what they had lived through and sacrificed.



I hoped I could use my experience from a career in health and social care and that Members would accept my support.

### **Happily, you did!**

My first visits with Members in their homes were educational. In fact, every visit is educational. I came to learn what type of help and assistance Members wanted and needed. These visits became part of my induction into Blind Veterans UK.

Luckily, any apprehension I had quickly disappeared as I got on with the job and I have now been here for five years.

### **Meeting the Members' needs**

My role as a Community Support Worker is ever-changing. We go wherever the priority is and a CSW has to think on their feet. This is where my past work experience has most impact. I need to know where to find help in the community to meet the Members' needs, whether it's housing, pensions, benefits, health, or mobility.

Like all CSWs, this is where I become a detective, investigating where to locate the right assistance. It's so rewarding to find the solution to a niggling problem, or to source information that allows a

Member to make decisions about their care.

Technology is crucial so that Members can stay in touch with family and friends. Boy, did I have to learn fast! I can find myself assisting one of our remote IT Instructors to resolve problems with a Member's phone or computer. Then there are community outings to plan, as well as transport and meeting points to coordinate.

### **Working with local partners**

Thankfully, there's a great body of veteran organisations working together in Northern Ireland. Often Blind Veterans UK will organise activities alongside the Defence Garden Scheme, Blesma, Help for Heroes, Andy Allen's Veteran Support and many others.

We're also part of the sight loss community working alongside Deafblind, RNIB and RNID.

### **Spreading the word**

While continuing to support our current membership, CSWs also look ahead. I'm often out and about telling the general veteran population that we are here. I do this by giving presentations on behalf of the charity.

This is all done with the backing of the Northern Ireland Veteran Support Office - we are a founding member of



**Caption: Karen, Chair of RBL Paul Castles, Member Hugh Megarry and his partner Pam**

the committee there. This committee has gone from strength to strength since the appointment of Veterans Commissioner, Danny Kinahan. Danny has met our Members at events.

The best reason to be a CSW is the incredible trust Members place in us. Your vast life experience, stories and genuine grit is the best reason I have to turn up for work every day.

### **A week in the life of a CSW**

**Monday**  
My four-day week always goes quickly. I start by responding to messages and then call a Member about local mental health support services.

I then work on my outcomes

assessment from a recent Member trip to Larne, a port on the east coast of Northern Ireland.

After lunch, I complete online training on cyber security, then write up notes from a recent Member visit, which includes a request for rehabilitation support.

### **Tuesday**

I start the day responding to messages as usual, before heading off to pick up Members from the train station to take them to the Defence Garden Scheme. This is a lovely UK-wide scheme where Members get to plant veg and tend to the allotment. Afterwards, I take them back to the station and return to base for lunch. →

“The morning starts with a phone around for a last-minute check to see who’s coming on our trip to the Bushcraft Activity Centre”

In the afternoon, after arranging outcomes assessments and writing up my notes, I join an online meeting with other veteran organisations to plan our joint activities.

### Wednesday

I conduct an assessment with a Member over the phone. They had problems accessing emails and connecting to the printer. With the right IT support the problem was easily fixed.

After lunch, I give a presentation to the Larne Branch of the Royal British Legion to tell them all about our services.

Once home again, I send them an email to thank them for hosting a fundraising event for us. The event took place in August. Our Members attended, accompanied by their partners, to enjoy the evening’s entertainment. One also attended the presentation of the £400 donation raised from the charity auction.

### Thursday

The morning starts with a phone around for a last-minute check to see who’s coming on our trip to the Bushcraft Activity Centre, which offers great outdoor activities. Then I head off to meet Members at the train station in Belfast.

There’s a choice of fantastic activities - fishing, archery, bushcraft or airsoft. Member Tom was a real Robin Hood at the archery. He hit the target every time.

Jack made a good effort at fly fishing, though the river was low and the fish were jumping further upstream at another post. Gary, Mary and Alec took their turn at airsoft and with guidance from the volunteer everyone hit the target. I stayed safely out of the range of fire!

We then enjoyed a picnic lunch together, along with Blesma members and Andy Allens Veteran Support Volunteers. The volunteers provided wonderful support throughout the event.

After making sure all Members return home safely, I get home, write up my notes from the day and send ‘thank you’ emails to our partner organisations. I’m pleased it’s been another busy and fulfilling week. 🍷



# A lifetime spent talking to the animals

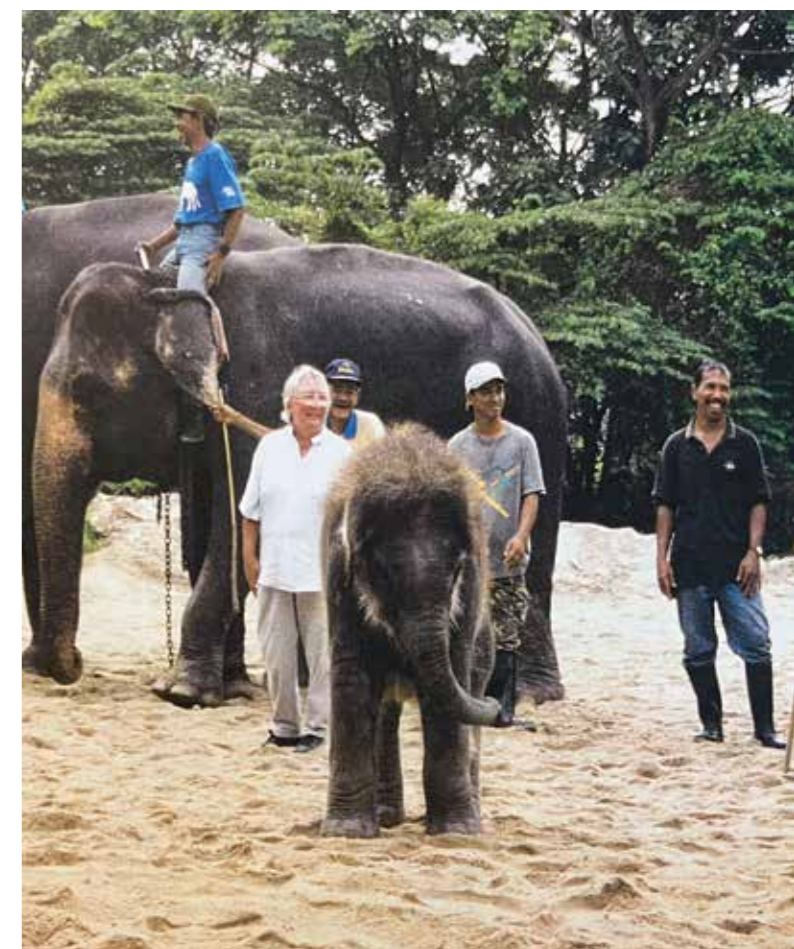
Many children dream of working with animals or going to Hollywood, for one of our Members both dreams came true. Member **Rona**, tells **Hazel Wills** about her incredible career as an animal trainer on films, the Hollywood stars she met along the way and the animals she cared greatly about

Rona’s first film was Disney’s ‘The Horse Without A Head’ which was released in 1962. Rona spent four years working at Pinewood Studios and working on Disney films. She met Walt Disney himself during this period of her career.

But what led Rona along this fascinating and unusual path . . .

Rona grew up in the west country and their family home was surrounded by farmland and animals.

She says: “I loved animals, so it was no surprise to my family when I got a job as an assistant keeper at Paignton Zoo at 16. I was paid £5 a week and tended to a whole range of animals including red pandas and giant anteaters. I was fascinated to study the individual characteristics of the animals and



**Caption: Rona with some of the elephants during the filming of Anna and the King**



**Caption: Rona**

the way in which they behaved.”

In the late 50s, Rona took up a position at Southampton Zoo working for the well-known safari and circus Chipperfield family. Rona was also reading zoology. It was during this time that Rona’s career as an animal trainer began.

She says: “Walt Disney visited the zoo to pick some animals for one of his productions and I was asked to go with them to Pinewood Studios to look after them. I went on to work at the studios as an animal trainer on films such as ‘The Three Lives Of Thomasina’, in which I was responsible for the welfare and training of 100 cats.”

Other films Rona worked on during her time at Pinewood Studios included Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and Dr Doolittle.

She says: “I had such a lovely time at the studios, the tennis courts were actually turned into an animal sanctuary to house the animals I was working with. I learnt on the job during these years. I knew how to train animals, but not how to train them for films.

“You need to get to know each animal and they have to like you or you won’t get anywhere. You must never let them down. I found that with any animal, you could guide it to do what you wanted to do, offering tit bits of food was always helpful.

“I was the voice of the animals; they relied on me for everything. It was my job to look out for their welfare. I could tell from their body language when they needed to rest and when I said it was time to stop, we stopped.”

Moving on to working with wild animals, Rona was employed by Unilever to monitor the welfare of animals featuring in their PG tips adverts.

She says: “Chimps are our closest living relative in the world. You can teach

them like you teach children. I raised many in my own home alongside my own two children. I ended up taking in chimps who were struggling in zoos and parks around the country, and I helped to return them to proper breeding groups.

“Chimps I raised starred in Gorillas in the Mist alongside Sigourney Weaver. My animals were all treated properly and nurtured as they should be, if they weren’t then they wouldn’t have done the work they did.”

Rona also worked with John Cleese and Kevin Kline on Fierce Creatures and trained 23 elephants for the film Anna and the King starring Jodie Foster. Rona says the latter was her favourite film to have worked on.

Outside of training animals on film sets,



**Caption: Signed picture given to her by the cast of Fierce Creatures**



**Caption: Rona with Kevin Kline**

Rona was pivotal in pushing for a new code requiring people to be licensed and properly trained before being able to provide animals for movies. She is also passionate about the education of young people and devised and put together the National Vocational Qualifications in animal training. Rona also lectured at an agricultural college regarding animal training.

Rona says: “The animals I worked with came from sanctuaries around the UK or from people who bred and kept certain animals. For me selecting animals was about assessing the owner as well as the animal.

“I frequently used the same people →

“It was not only the stars of Hollywood that Rona rubbed shoulders with; she also mixed with royalty”

over and over again, those I trusted and those with the animals welfare as their absolute priority.

“My relationship and reputation among film producers was also crucial to a successful career, they would contact me with ideas and ask me to draw up a budget for the use of animals on that production. I would then become the Head of the animal department for that production.

“I would only say yes to a script if I was happy with the way the animals were to be portrayed and if the animals would not be put in harm’s way.”

It was not only the stars of Hollywood that Rona rubbed shoulders with; she also mixed with royalty. She says: “I was working with one of the Queen’s horses on a magic show and the horse was kept at the Royal Mews at Buckingham Palace. I was there one day mucking out when along came a lady with two teenage boys. They had come to visit my kangaroo who was also staying with me. I realised the lady in question was Her Majesty Queen

Elizabeth II and the boys with her were two of her sons.

“I was invited by the Queen for tea, but I was covered in mud and couldn’t go as I was due at the theatre for the magic show. Following this encounter, the Queen arranged for me to be sent an invitation to lunch and I also attended two garden parties and various dinners.”

The film industry is within Rona’s family, her son has followed her into the same line of work and is currently working on a Netflix production, and her daughter runs three stage schools with her daughter’s husband working as a writer on several TV series’. Her granddaughter also works in wardrobe design.

Even now, Rona still does a bit of work guiding others on animal health and safety and still attends meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee for Entertainment.

Rona lost her sight around ten years ago and began to be supported by the charity in 2022. Rona tells how she felt extremely low when she lost her sight and credits the charity with picking her back up. She has recently given a talk to a group of blind veterans in her local community all about her career and is very happy to do more talks like this. 🇬🇧



# A lifelong love of aircraft

Growing up, 101-year-old Member **John Haddock** was fascinated by aeroplanes. So, when war broke out in 1939, the Royal Air Force was always going to be a clear choice for him. John tells **William Witt** his fascinating story



**Caption: John Haddock in Banff, Scotland in March 1945**

From an early age, while his classmates were writing about their pets or favourite holidays in English classes, John was writing about the aeroplanes of the day. He says: “Growing up in the Black Country I used to get taken on trips to the air shows in Birmingham. It was very exciting for me.”

As soon as John turned 18, he volunteered for flying duties in the RAF, and was accepted for training as a navigator. Following basic training in Britain, he completed his navigator training in Port Albert, Canada. He was then transferred to Vancouver Island for operational training in the Handley Page Hampden aeroplane with his pilot, named Ron Harvey, who remained with John for the rest of his flying career. →





**Caption: John Haddock (right) with his pilot Ron in Victoria, Vancouver**

Following completion of his training, John was given three weeks leave, using this time to travel America on the railway with a good friend.

John recounts an entertaining anecdote from his time in Hollywood: "We visited Warner Bros film studios. The beautiful Alexis Smith passed by and stopped to sign autographs. Now I wasn't normally an autograph hunter but I thought I would take the opportunity and handed her my fountain pen. The next thing I know she's screaming and there's a huge kerfuffle as all her assistants crowd



**Caption: John Haddock in the navigator's seat of a Avro Anson**

around her. It turns out my pen was leaking and her hands were covered in ink! She was quickly whisked away to get cleaned up before her next scene and I felt terribly embarrassed."

Following his leave John returned to the UK. He was posted to 143 Squadron Coastal Command in Lincolnshire and introduced to his aircraft, the Bristol Beaufighter. It was in this aircraft that John and Ron took part in their first missions. The aircraft was equipped with cannons and machine guns and their objective was to attack enemy shipping that was



**Caption: John's Mosquito plane attacks an iron ore carrier in January 1945 off the coast of Norway**

travelling along the coast of Europe.

Following a series of successful flights, John was moved onto a new assignment in the lead up to D-Day. As allied troops were amassing on the South Coast of England preparing for the invasion on 6 June 1944, German E-boats were patrolling the English Channel, causing damage and destruction to both cargo shipping and human life. John's mission was clear but fraught with danger. He was to patrol the Channel at night carrying bombs, flying low in order to try and spot the E-Boats. He says: "We had radar to

help us but we really couldn't see much and only had a little training in bombing so it was very hit and miss.

"They were shooting at us with anti-aircraft cannons which were quite effective so it was very scary at times. I remember one night very vividly when there was so much fire going off around us that I was convinced there was no way we would make it out alive. But somehow we did."

John was then moved back to North Cotes in Lincolnshire to resume normal operations. His squadron was →



**Caption: John's Mosquito attacks an iron ore carrier in South West Norway in March 1945**

converted to De Havilland Mosquito planes. He says: "At the time they were very technologically advanced so I was pleased to have been allocated to one. On top of the cannons and machine guns they also had rockets fitted under the wings."

It was in the Mosquito that John was given his next mission. Germany was extremely reliant on iron ore to maintain their war effort, so John was to fly across the North Sea and attack German transport ships around the coast of Norway and Denmark, as well as look out for U-boats in the area.



**Caption: John's Mosquito dives down to attack a U-boat in the Skagerrak in May 1945**

He recalls: "On one occasion we were flying 40 in formation over the sea between Denmark and Norway, when we spotted three U-boats on the surface travelling towards Germany. We managed to sink them all."

John recalls another incident in which Morse Code probably saved his and his pilot's life: "We were halfway across the North Sea when we noticed the aircraft next to us signalling in Morse Code with their Aldis lamp 'your rocket is hanging off your wing at 45 degrees'. We weren't allowed to use the radio on the way out as the enemy could pick



**Caption: Member John Haddock celebrating his 100th birthday last year**

it up so that's why they used Morse Code. And thank goodness they did as if we'd fired it like that, it most likely would have sent the aircraft out of control or set the wing on fire."

John took part in these missions until the end of hostilities and was in Scotland for VE Day. After a short time in Northern France he was posted to Wahn in Germany where he completed a gliding course, with training provided by ex-Luftwaffe pilots. Following this course, John's squadron was given a very special duty to perform. They were to provide a courier service for

the Nuremberg trials, carrying official reports of war crimes back to London.

John says: "I was sat in a room adjacent to the courtroom with a huge glass window, so I could see all the Nazi leaders sitting there like Goring and Hess. It was really quite surreal as we'd obviously all read so much about them and how powerful they were. It was amazing to be there and see them being brought to justice."

John was finally demobbed in 1946. In February 1954 he married and later had a son and a daughter. He went on to become a gliding instructor with the Air Training Corps where he taught for seven years. John kept in touch with his pilot Ron after the war. He says: "It's no surprise we kept in touch over the years, including at our squadron reunions. Sadly he died at an early age around 60."

John started to lose his sight four years ago when he was diagnosed with macular degeneration and it has gradually been getting worse ever since. Luckily last year he found out about our charity. He says: "Blind Veterans UK have helped me tremendously. They've given me a magnifier which means I can read all my correspondence independently. It's so important as it helps me stay organised." 🇬🇧



Listen here

HURTI GRUTEN EXPEDITIONS & OSCAR FARRERA G.



**Caption: Karl and his guide in their kayak in the Antarctic surrounded by icebergs**

# Kayaking in the Antarctic

When Member **Karl Hill** started losing his sight, he set himself an incredible challenge to explore the world. However, in 2020 a near fatal car accident almost stopped the challenge in its tracks. Thanks to our Wellbeing team in Llandudno, we were able to help Karl get his fitness back. William Witt talks to him about the incredible journey that led him to Antarctica



**Caption: Karl ready to get in his kayak**

Karl served with the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers for five years as a machine gunner including postings in Canada, Northern Ireland and Berlin.

He says: "I loved my time in the Army. I'm an outdoors type of person so it was amazing to be paid to be outside seeing things around the world. I have particularly fond memories from my time in Berlin as I had just got married and we spent our first year of marriage there."

Over 20 years after leaving the Army, Karl was diagnosed with macular degeneration following a routine



**Caption: Karl getting in a Kayak with Llandudno staff**

eye test. Armed with the knowledge that his central vision would slowly deteriorate until he had nothing left, Karl set himself an ambitious challenge: to see the Seven Wonders of the World, step foot on all seven continents, and swim in all Seven Seas.

After making good progress towards his goal, an incident in 2020 not only put a huge roadblock in the way of his challenge, but almost killed him too. Karl says: "My sight had deteriorated significantly, and I walked out in front of a car which I hadn't seen. I was lucky to survive but injured my head, pelvis and legs badly. →



**Caption: People in kayaks exploring around the icebergs**

“I’d severely damaged my right leg and doctors advised that it would be a minimum of two years to recover, and I would likely never be the same again.”

Over the next couple of years Karl had private physio treatment but on a trip to Greenland it was clear that not enough progress had been made on his leg. He says: “I tried to get in a kayak but my leg just wouldn’t do it. It was a big disappointment to be honest.”

“Soon after, I was on a walking week at the Llandudno Centre and I told the Wellbeing staff about what had happened. They immediately got to work on my physio and rehabilitation.

They took me up to a lake by Yr Wyddfa/Snowdon to practice getting in and out of a kayak. Thanks to their kindness and dedication, they got my leg flexibility back to where it should be and sped up the recovery process. I’ll forever be grateful to them for everything they did for me.”

In December last year Karl made his way to Buenos Aires and onto the South Shetland Islands before landing at Orne Harbour and finally setting off from Damoy Point in his kayak.

He says: “It was an incredible experience kayaking in the Antarctic surrounded by icebergs. The sheer size



**Caption: Karl and his guide in their kayak in front of a big glacier**

of them is just incredible and that’s just what we can see above the surface. It makes you feel so small. I was over the moon to have been able to do it and as soon as I left, I emailed Rhian in Llandudno to let her know.”

Karl was joined by his wife Angela on all of the challenges. He says: “I’d like to give huge thanks to my wife, who was always beside me as I took on these challenges. Since my sight took a turn for the worse in 2017, she has been my eyes on the road. Travelling would have just been impossible without her.”

Karl became a Member in 2017 after finding out about our charity through

his local vision support group. He says: “It’s a wonderful organisation. They’ve got me doing all sorts of things I wouldn’t be able to do by myself.

“The charity set me up on a computer with a voice assistant and the IT team trained me up on it, using a magnifier. We love going on trips so it means I can do the planning on the computer before we go.

“But the best thing about the charity is mixing with other people who have the same disability and also the camaraderie we all have as ex-forces. I love the banter so I really enjoy getting together with everyone.” 🍷

# Member voice

**Tim Eckersley**, Member Engagement and Military Lead, shares an update about how the Founder's Awards are changing and important dates for your diary if you wish to attend our new Military Engagement Dinners

## Founder's Awards

The Founder's Awards are held in recognition of the first 16 war blinded veterans welcomed by Sir Arthur Pearson to St Dunstan's Lodge in 1915. The Awards are a way for us to celebrate our charity and some of the remarkable achievements of the Blind Veterans UK community.

From 1 February 2024, The Founders Awards will be presented throughout the year, rather than at one annual event, to recognise the achievements of everyone nominated. This means a nomination can be submitted at any time within the awarding year (January to October months).



Our new process for presenting Founder's Awards will ensure a fair and inclusive process, continuing our

tradition and the upkeeping of our founder, Sir Arthur Pearson's spirit, ethos, and courage. Awards will be presented in one of two ways:

### Military Engagement Dinner –

A nominee who has been recognised by a panel vote as having made a 'highly significant contribution' will be invited to receive their award at a Military Engagement Dinner held closest to their home address.

**Locally** – Presented by the local community team, for a nominee who has been selected by panel vote but declines the invitation to a Military Engagement Dinner. Additionally, for any nominee not selected by a panel vote, but whose achievements should still be recognised.

### Nomination Process

Nominations can be made at any time throughout the year by staff, volunteers, carers, or our beneficiaries;



**Caption: Guests seated around tables for the 2023 Founder's Awards**

however, consideration should be given to the Military Engagement Dinner dates and locations to provide the best possible experience for recipients.

■ **Nominations can be submitted using our online form via [blindveterans.org.uk/foundersawards](https://blindveterans.org.uk/foundersawards), or by contacting our Member Engagement Team [MET@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:MET@blindveterans.org.uk) or your local community team who can directly assist you.**

**Military Engagement Dinners**  
The Military Engagement Dinners will celebrate our military heritage, involve the Service community, and create an incredibly special and memorable event. Selected Founders Award recipients will also receive their award. Military Dinners will help Members engage with one another as well as with current Service personnel over welcome drinks, canapes, a 3-course meal, table wine, and port. →



**2024 dates and venues**

- 26 April 2024: HMS Drake, Plymouth
- 15 May 2024: RAF Boulmer, Northumberland
- 6 June 2024: D-Day Commemoration Dinner, Victory Services Club, London
- 21 June 2024: HMS Sultan, Gosport
- September 2024 – RAF Cosford (date to be confirmed)
- 11 October 2024: RAF Honington, Suffolk

There is no food cost for Members attending any Military Engagement Dinner, where welcome drinks,

canapes, a bespoke 3-course meal, table wine and port will be served to all attendees.

No transport or accommodation will be provided, although the grants process remains open should it be of support to those that could otherwise not attend. As a result of Member feedback, these events will be conducted between 1pm and 6pm to reduce the requirement for an overnight stay.

- **To book, please refer to the Blind Veterans UK website or contact Supporter Services on 0300 111 22 33 who will be able to assist you further.**



**Caption: Noeline Charlesworth and husband John**



**Caption: Tim Eckersley presenting a certificate to Member Cameron**

# 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.

## Gardening

Surprise seeds (outdoor project): Designed and supported by Member Jim Long (read more about this project

on Page 45), you will receive a pack of mixed beetroot, tomato and dahlia seeds, and some hints and tips from Jim himself.

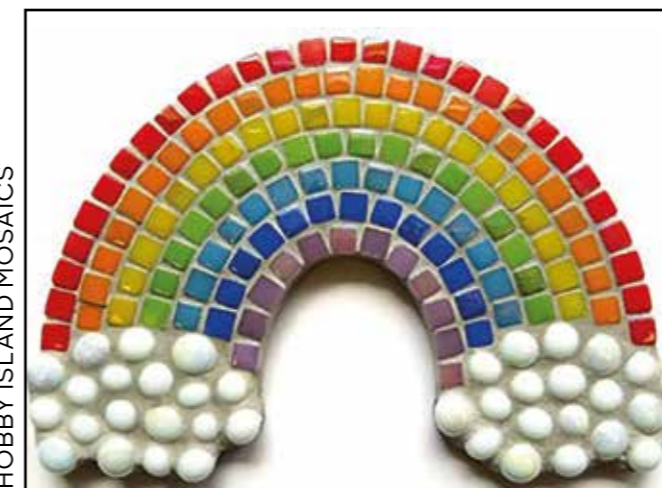
Scented herbs (indoor project): This pack will contain seeds, a pot and compost to grow a scented bunch of herbs, including lavender, mint and rosemary.

## Craft

**Rainbow mosaic:** You’ll receive tiles sorted into colour packs so they’re easier to identify, along with a rainbow base of around 20cm width. Grout, glue, gloves and a step-by-step guide with a design template will be included to make a decoration that will brighten up your space.

## Woodwork:

**Aircraft carriers:** A 171-piece wooden model kit of an aircraft carrier ship. This is a challenging project, but with a bit of patience the results are fantastic. You’ll receive a step by step



**Caption: Rainbow mosaic**

written and picture guide with some glue and extra sandpaper.

### Drawing:

**Seaside sketchbook:** This sketching kit is suitable for any drawing ability, even beginners. You will receive a variety of specially chosen art materials and tactile prompts to get started with the basics of drawing and sketching. There are two sketchbooks included – why not use one as a scrapbook journal?

### Painting:

#### Nature prints

You will receive a pack of art materials to try out this fun design method. Gel printing uses acrylic paint in an alternative way to the traditional method of using brushes, by using a roller on to a gel plate. Your prints can be displayed or used as a unique, homemade greetings card or gift tag.



**Caption: Woodwork**

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

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

### 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.

**Knitting, crochet or weaving** - this group is for Members to chat about your latest projects with wool. All abilities welcome.

**Woodwork** for those of you interested in woodwork, woodturning, wooden model making and more. This group offers peer support, tips and encouragement with your projects.

**Gardening** group for amateur gardeners and Members who have signed up for our gardening projects. This group aims to offer support with VI friendly gardening, no matter the size of your garden, greenhouse or windowsill! 🍷



STUDIO BARCELONA / ADOBE STOCK



**Caption: Oxheart tomato**

# Surprise seeds: an NCWP Project

Member **Jim Long** has designed this National Creative Wellbeing Project, providing his own seeds for Members who want to take part. Jim speaks with **Lucy Bradshaw** about this new project.

I have taken part in NCWP projects before and found having something creative to do gave me a real boost.

Until I became a Member of Blind Veterans UK, I felt like a lost soul. This

is a way for me to give something back. I hope this project can give my fellow Members a bit of a lift if they are feeling down.

I have gardened all my life and





# Quiz time

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

1. **NO is the chemical symbol for which gaseous element?**
2. **In horse racing, a bet of 10 to 3 is known as a what?**
3. **What football club used to be called Small Heath?**
4. **What does B.Y.O.B. on a party invitation stand for?**
5. **On which river does Balmoral Castle stand?**
6. **How many rode into the Valley of Death? a) 500 b) 600 c) 700**
7. **In fishing, what are 'gentles'?**
8. **In cookery, what is meant by the letters 'tsp'?**
9. **Which of these was not part of the group Spice Girls?  
a) Old Spice  
b) Posh Spice  
c) Baby Spice**
10. **Battersea Power Station opened as a working power station in the 1930s. In which decade was it closed?**



RUSSELL102 / ADOBE STOCK

Answers on Page 55



**Caption: Member Jim Long, designer of the new NCWP project**

remember growing vegetables from a young age. Prior to losing my sight I had allotments for vegetables, but this became difficult to manage so I moved to my own back garden.

I have a greenhouse and grow my plants in pots down one side of the garden. It is lovely to just walk outside and pick a tomato, rub it on my sleeve and eat it! I have made some changes to the way I grow vegetables since losing my sight, but I know my way around my garden, and I've made my

own systems. I've had some failures, but the vegetables I grow and the taking part is the main reward for me.

## The project

For this project, I've put together packs of fresh seeds. Inside are two varieties of beetroot, two varieties of tomato and some dahlia seeds. The dahlias could turn out to be any colour. The great thing about dahlias is you can dry out the flower heads and save the seeds for next year, but you can't guarantee the colour unless you take clippings. Next time round, you might get an entirely different colour of dahlia!

## Further information.

In your pack you will receive a bag of mixed seeds, a paper tape measure and a fact sheet of growing tips and information about the seed varieties from Jim.

We'd love to see what you manage to grow. If you have any photographs you'd be happy to share, whether it's flowers or vegetables, please send these to [ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk) and we will share the results at a later date.

■ **To request a surprise seeds pack, please leave a message with the NCWP voicemail on 01273 391 447.** 📞



# Family news

**George Barnes** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 1 February 2024.

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**Jeffrey Broadhurst** who celebrated his 101st birthday on 7 January 2024.

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**Jack Burton** who celebrated his 100th birthday on 5 January 2024.

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**Frank Buttery** who celebrates his 104th birthday on 2 March 2024.

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**Ivy Chafer** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 25 February 2024.

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**Ada Chell** who celebrated her 100th birthday on 12 January 2024.

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**Clifford Ellwood** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 29 February 2024.

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**Barbara Glanfield** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 3 February 2024.

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**Harold Griffin** who celebrated his 101st birthday on 20 January 2024.

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**Raymond Grose** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 27 February 2024.

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**Queenie Hall** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 16 February 2024.

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**Marjorie Hanson** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 16 February 2024.

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**Kenneth Hobbs** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 12 February 2024.

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**Roy Horlock** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 7 February 2024.

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**John Humphreys** who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 14 January 2024.

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**Jean Lacock** who celebrated her 105th birthday on 19 January 2024.

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**Valorie Maskell** who celebrated her 100th birthday on 20 January 2024.

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**John McOwan** who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 6 February 2024.

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**Wilfred Osborne** who celebrated her 102nd birthday on 28 January 2024.

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**Nancy Paterson** who celebrated her 102nd birthday on 19 January 2024.

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**William Philcox** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 26 February 2024.

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**Stella Read** who celebrated her 100th birthday on 26 January 2024.

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**Kenneth Simpson** who celebrated his 100th birthday on 23 January 2024.

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**Eric Taylor** who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 20 January 2024.

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**James Thompson** who celebrated his 101st birthday on 25 January 2024.

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**Arthur Warwick** who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 8 January 2024.

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**John Watson** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 4 February 2024.

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## Condolences

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

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**John Franks** who died on 15 November 2023. He was the husband of June Margaret Franks.

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**Georgina Hanson** who died on 1 September 2023. She was the wife of Barry Hanson.

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**Anita Fay Meredith** who died on 1 November 2023. She was the wife of Paul Graham Meredith.

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**Rosemary Piddell** who died on 1 November 2023. She was the wife of Keith Ivor Piddell.

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**Delphine Richards** who died on 11 November 2023. She was the wife of Alun John Richards.

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**Olive Dorothy Whiting** who died on 1 July 2022. She was the wife of Derek Whiting.

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**Mary Wilton** who died on 1 November 2023. She was the wife of Leslie Wilton.

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*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

**Norman Allender** of Cardiff died on 26 November 2023 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**Winifred Joyce Amos** of Littlehampton, West Sussex died on 3 December 2023 aged 96. She served as a Lance Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Dennis Albert Edward Andrews** of Llandudno, Gwynedd died on 20 November 2023 aged 98. He served as a Private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

**Roy Atkin** of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 18 December 2023 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Lincolnshire Regiment.

**Robert Baker** of Fareham, Hampshire died on 11 December 2023 aged 97. He served as a Private in the Parachute Regiment.

**Alan Henry Baker** of Llandudno, Conwy died on 1 November 2023 aged 98. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Trevor Bale** of Devizes, Wiltshire died on 9 December 2023 aged 91. He served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Gordon William Barlow** of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands died on 22 November 2023 aged 85. He served as an Aircraftman Second Class in the Royal Air Force.

**Brian John Beckworth** of Nottingham died on 2 December 2023 aged 87. He served as a Marine 1st Class in the Royal Marines.

**Edward Belcher** of Uxbridge, Middlesex died on 5 December 2023 aged 95. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Marjorie Bennett** of Bristol died on 7 November 2023 aged 101. She served as a Leading Aircraftwoman in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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

**Thomas Board** of London died on 1 July 2023 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Frank Morris Bullough** of High Peak, Derbyshire died on 11 December 2023 aged 94. He served as an Aircraftman First Class in the Royal Air Force.

**Ronald Butcher** of Rochester, Kent died on 25 October 2023 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps / Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Alan Cade** of Littlehampton, West Sussex died on 11 December 2023 aged 87. He served in the Royal Artillery.

**Anne Phillida Chetwynd-Stapylton** of Lewes, East Sussex died on 31 October 2023 aged 100. She served as a Petty Officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

**John Cowdrey Clifford** of Cockermouth, Cumbria died on 1 December 2023 aged 87. He served as a Major in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

**Ronald Edward Colbourne** of Worthing, West Sussex died on 1 December 2023 aged 89. He served as a Mechanic (E) 1 in the Royal Navy.

**Derek Frederick Coleman** of Sheffield died on 14 November 2023 aged 89. He served as a Flight Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

**Derek Nathan Colston** of Reading died on 1 October 2023 aged 88. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Charles Conduit** of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire died on 13 November 2023 aged 100. He served as an Operator in the Royal Navy.

**Reginald Dennis Creed** of Tavistock, Devon died on 5 December 2023 aged 97. He served in the Royal Navy.

**Lance Lionel Serdeville Cruse** of Folkestone, Kent died on 26 November 2023 aged 85. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Harry Dawson** of Nottingham died on 9 July 2023 aged 99. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

**Bertram Sherratt Dobbs** of Ipswich, died on 8 November 2023 aged 95. He served as a Lieutenant in the Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment).

**Brian Doherty** of Manchester died on 1 November 2023 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

**Raymond William Doughty** of Paignton, Devon died on 19 November 2023 aged 77. He served as a Corporal in the General Service Corps.

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

**Frederick Edwards** of Reading died on 1 December 2023 aged 96. He served as a Bombardier in the Corps of Royal Military Police.

**Robert Keith Ellington** of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire died on 16 December 2023 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Northamptonshire Regiment.

**Dennis Fitzpatrick** of Ilkley, West Yorkshire died on 8 December 2023 aged 93. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Charles Frankel** of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire died on 1 November 2023 aged 95. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

**Albert John Gough** of Ludlow, Shropshire died on 7 October 2023 aged 86. He served as a Private in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**Edmund Dilwyn Griffiths** of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 21 November 2023 aged 98. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**David Grime** of Bourne, Lincolnshire died on 10 December 2023 aged 94. He served as an Aircraftman Second Class in the Royal Air Force.

**Peter Grogan** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 11 December 2023 aged 94. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers. →

**Gilbert Norman Haley** of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 12 December 2023 aged 94. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

**Derek Arthur Hammond** of Crewe died on 17 July 2023 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Joseph Peter Hammond** of Guisborough, Cleveland died on 20 October 2023 aged 94. He served as a Trooper in the 3rd King's Own Hussars.

**Eugenia Lydia Harris** of Cullompton, Devon died on 16 October 2023 aged 101. She served as a Leading Aircraftwoman. in the Royal Air Force.

**Ralph Henderson** of Billingham, Cleveland died on 13 December 2023 aged 90. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

**Winifred Hill** of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 1 December 2022 aged 97. She served as an Aircraftwoman First Class in the Royal Air Force.

**Cynthia Holden** of Daventry, Northamptonshire died on 1 November 2023 aged 101. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

**Frank Ronald Holman** of Chatteris, Cambridgeshire died on 30 October 2023 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

**Brian Hudson** of Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire died on 17 November 2023 aged 90. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

**Colin Leslie Humphreys** of Colchester, Essex died on 17 December 2023 aged 85. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

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

**Douglas Alan Hutchins** of Harwich, Essex died on 28 November 2023 aged 93. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**Victor Jackson** of Dalton-in-Furness Cumbria died on 24 November 2023 aged 89. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Tank Regiment.

**Joan Emiline Jepson** of Cullompton, Devon died on 13 December 2023 aged 101. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Hugh Parry Jones** of Bangor, Gwynedd died on 27 November 2023 aged 88. He served as a Leading Aircraftman. in the Royal Air Force.

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

**Michael Kenneth Kaye** of Upminster, Essex died on 22 November 2023 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Noel Kelly** of Nuneaton, Warwickshire died on 17 November 2023 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Forester Brigade.

**Geoffrey Lee** of Swadlincote, Derbyshire died on 9 December 2023 aged 93. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

**David Lewis** of Scunthorpe, South Humberside died on 12 December 2023 aged 90. He served as a Squadron Leader in the Royal Air Force.

**Desmond Mahoney** of Sunderland died on 19 November 2023 aged 103. He served as a Lance Sergeant in the Royal Artillery.

**John Edward Mardle** of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 21 October 2023 aged 78. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**Ian James Marshall** of Norwich died on 13 December 2023 aged 88. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Ronald William May** of Portsmouth died on 9 December 2023 aged 95. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Ernest Houston** McDade of Preston died on 2 November 2023 aged 99. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Howard Thomas** Meadows of Oldbury, West Midlands died on 8 November 2023 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Worcestershire Regiment.

**Islwyn Middle** of Cardiff died on 18 December 2023 aged 100. He served as a Warrant Officer in the Royal Air Force.

**Anthony Mooney** of Liverpool died on 1 December 2023 aged 90. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Kenneth Moorhouse** of Canterbury, Kent died on 25 November 2023 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

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

**George North** of London died on 9 November 2023 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Kenneth Paine** of Ringwood, Hampshire died on 22 September 2023 aged 90. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Pioneer Corps.

**Joseph Perkin** of Oldham died on 8 December 2023 aged 101. He served as an Aircraftman Second Class in the Royal Air Force.

**Norman Pirie** of Boston, Lincolnshire died on 5 December 2023 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Ronald Leslie Probert** of Pontypool, Gwent died on 23 November 2023 aged 94. He served as an Aircraftman Second Class in the Royal Air Force.

**James Radcliffe** of Alsager, Cheshire died on 1 December 2023 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Victor Read** of Stoke-on-Trent died on 1 November 2023 aged 100. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

**William Ridgewell** of Shaftesbury, Dorset died on 8 November 2023 aged 98. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Mike Michael Sadler** of Cambridge died on 4 January 2024 aged 103. He served as a Captain in the Royal Artillery.

**George Short** of Bridport, Dorset died on 11 December 2023 aged 97. He served as a Marine in the Royal Navy.

**Sue Smith** of Swanage, Dorset died on 1 November 2023 aged 62. She served as a Leading Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

**Brian Lot Sperring** of Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset died on 20 December 2023 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps. →

**Richard Vernon St Clair** of Bexhill-on-Sea East Sussex died on 1 November 2023 aged 100. He served as a Leading Wireman in the Royal Navy.

**Andrew Storie** of London died on 20 November 2023 aged 85. He served in the Merchant Navy.

**Roy Sudlow** of Telford, Shropshire died on 13 December 2023 aged 93. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Barry Summerfield** of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 1 November 2023 aged 88. He served as an Aircraftman First Class in the Royal Air Force.

**Terrence Swales** of Northwich, Cheshire died on 1 November 2023 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Air Force.

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

**Derrick Algernon Taylor** of Wallasey, Merseyside died on 22 December 2022 aged 94. He served as a Junior Technician in the Royal Air Force.

**Peter James Taylor** of Seaford, East Sussex died on 1 December 2023 aged 87. He served as a Lieutenant Commander in the Fleet Air Arm.

**Ernest Taylor** of Bolton died on 18 April 2023 aged 83. He served as a Private in the Royal Pioneer Corps.

**Ernest George Taylor** of Preston died on 1 November 2023 aged 90. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Melvyn Thomas** of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 17 November 2023 aged 71. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

**Robert Thompson** of Bingley, West Yorkshire died on 1 December 2023 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Doreen Timmins** of Ellesmere Port, Cheshire died on 30 August 2023 aged 96. She served as an A.C. 1 in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Harold Rex Toomey** of Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire died on 11 November 2023 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**Frederick Tredwell** of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire died on 26 October 2023 aged 102. He served as a Private in the Home Guard.

**Albert Wait** of Newcastle upon Tyne died on 1 November 2023 aged 87. He served as a Fusilier in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers.

**Rita Watson** of Bradford, West Yorkshire died on 1 November 2023 aged 103. She served as a Lance Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Derek James Weston** of Liverpool died on 2 October 2023 aged 95. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Shane Brian Thomas Whitehouse** of Horsham, West Sussex died on 24 November 2023 aged 98. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Reginald Williams** of Bedford died on 2 November 2023 aged 76. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Anglian Regiment.

**Stanley W Wolfe** of London died on 15 November 2023 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.



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Contacts

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**

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**Quiz answers - from page 47** 1. Nitric oxide 2. Burlington Bertie 3. Birmingham City 4. Bring your own bottle 5. River Dee 6. 600 7. Maggots 8. Teaspoon 9. Old Spice 10. 1980s

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