

# Review



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The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

**November 2024**



## A call to arms

An archery takeover in Rustington

### Inside:

Standup comedy

Malaya veterans reunite

Member poetry



Rebuilding lives after sight loss





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### On the cover

Current secretary of British Blind Sport, Carol Davies, 73, shooting her arrow with Blind Veterans UK Bowmen





# Remembering Sir Arthur's spirit

A message from your CEO, **Adrian Bell**

As Remembrance Sunday nears, I would like to draw your attention to the small service we hold in Hampstead Cemetery on the Saturday morning at the grave of our founder, Sir Arthur Pearson. The service is at the grave itself and if you find yourself in the area, you are very welcome to attend.

When we held the service there last year, the grave was looking a little



**Adrian Bell**

forlorn and unloved, so we have had work done on it to return it to an appropriate state. We will publish pictures of this service in the next copy of the Review.

In his article in last month's Review, Barry wrote about the planning work we are undertaking to balance the charity's budget and make the charity more sustainable.

Our present annual deficit is about 40% of our £32 million expenditure. As part of our Transformation Programme, we are aiming to eliminate the deficit by 2028. Some of you might conclude that this is not sufficiently ambitious, but the work we have to do is complex and we believe it is better to progress in a measured fashion than rush at it with the risk of either reaching the wrong outcomes or failing altogether.

At the same time, and in a move supported by many of you who have commented, our ambition remains to



**Sir Arthur Pearson's grave**

support more serving personnel and veterans earlier in the sight loss journey so that we can help more people to live independent lives. This will not be easy and there is much work we must do to understand how best to deploy limited resources to the best effect, but we are committed and determined.

Success in our Transformation Programme is partially reliant on hearing from our present Members about what they value most in terms of what is most beneficial to their lives today. This is why we commissioned both the Member Conference in May this year and the subsequent Member survey. We now have the results of that survey, and comparative findings from the last six years of the annual Member satisfaction survey. The

results of these pieces of work are summarised on page 11.

The conference and the surveys will be feeding into our Transformation Programme and we will also be seeking further engagement with Members to help us develop our plans as time goes on. More details of how this will work will be with you all in due course.

I would just like to reiterate my very sincere gratitude to all of you who have supported the conference and the survey and strongly encourage support for further work from as many of you as possible who share the vision of a sustainable charity.

On a lighter note, we held the final military dinner of the year recently at RAF Honington. The Station Commander, Wing Commander Max Hayward and his team did us proud and 80 Members and guests thoroughly enjoyed the day. Planning has already commenced for similar events next year and details will be forthcoming shortly.

I will close by mentioning the recent achievements of two of our Members: Clive Jones was nominated for the BBC Make a Difference Award and Jamie Weller took to the stage at the Edinburgh Festival with his stand-up comedy act. Well done to you both. 🍷



# News

## Lady Emma Barnard, Lord Lieutenant of West Sussex visits Rustington

We were honoured to receive a visit by Lady Emma Barnard, the Lord Lieutenant of West Sussex, to the Rustington Centre on Wednesday 18th September.

Lady Emma was given a tour of the building by Centre Manager Lesley Garven and met a group of blind



Resident Nancy with Lady Emma

veterans gathered in the lounge, including Miriam and Stuart who joined the charity earlier this year and attending an induction week at the centre, and residents Margaret and Nancy. Lady Emma enjoyed hearing about our charity's history as well as our future work and the connections we have making across the county.

## 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 and sign up at [blindveterans.org.uk/member-updates](https://blindveterans.org.uk/member-updates). Simple!**

## Member Clive nominated for BBC Make A Difference Award

Member Clive Jones has spoken about how proud he was to be nominated for BBC Make A Difference Award by

his local radio station BBC Shropshire.

He was nominated in the Fundraiser of the Year Award category for all his efforts in raising money for many good causes, including Blind Veterans UK. In total Clive's fundraising efforts have raised over £115,000.

He said: "I was really pleased to have been nominated and make the final four, but I was also very happy that the eventual winner was a young girl who's a wonderful fundraiser, particularly for military charities in the area.

"It was lovely to meet her, and she approached me before the event to give me a bouquet of red roses and a handmade plaque as she said I'd inspired her. I gave her a Blind Veterans UK badge and know that military charities in Shropshire are in good hands for many years to come."

## Grace completes half marathon for us and grandad Peter

Congratulations to Grace Russell for completing her first half-marathon, raising over £2,700 for Blind Veterans UK in the process.

She chose to run in the Richmond



Grace and Peter

Half Marathon for us because of the support we have provided to her grandad, the appropriately named Peter Richmond, who became a Member last year.

She said: "I wanted to do something to show my support to the charity as I've seen firsthand the amazing work they do rehabilitating and supporting individuals who have given us so much."

Peter, who served in the Royal Navy between 1958 and 1980, added: "I'm very proud of Grace. It means a lot to me that she chose to raise money for Blind Veterans UK as they have been there for me since I lost my sight." 🇬🇧



# In your community

Just some of the many social gatherings which have taken place across the country recently, bringing together Members in their local areas

## In Kent

A group of Community 19 Members recently visited the RAF Manston History Museum. We were lucky enough to be given a tour by four very knowledgeable volunteers from the museum and it was great to see everyone sharing their personal experiences of these amazing aircrafts.

We were able to go into the cockpit of the Hawker Siddeley Nimrod MR2, XV229, and sit in the pilots seat as well as take in all the displays and artefacts.



Members at RAF Manston

We then headed for a nice bit of lunch where all the chatting and laughter was fantastic to hear. The staff were amazing and enjoyed the company of our Members too.

We then crossed the car park to visit the Hurricane and Spitfire Museum. The museum holds a collection of historic artefacts from the Second World War and we were also able to see a Supermarine Spitfire and a Hawker Hurricane. It was a great day.



In the aircraft cockpit



The Llandudno Centre trip to Llanberis

## At the Llandudno Centre

Members recently enjoyed an informative trip to the Henfas Bee Centre Tour and Talk where staff were very welcoming and the talk gave us an incredible insight into the lives of bees and beekeeping. The centre is linked to Bangor University and they also keep Alpacas and sheep.

The staff provided teas and coffees, as well as honey and mead tasting. And, as visitors to the centre, we also enjoyed a trip to Llanberis, making new friends and catching up with old on a train ride. Such a wonderful day.

## In Northern Ireland

Community 1 in Northern Ireland recently attended the national conference, Hope 24, which is dedicated to fostering a culture of learning, innovation and solidarity by empowering individuals and organisations.

During the conference, we heard guest speakers, including Health Secretary Mike Nesbitt, who shared his hope for supporting people struggling with mental health. Members also enjoyed some music, drama and workshops. →





**Members pose in front of a lifeboat**

## In North Wales

Last week a small group of hardy local veterans, volunteers and staff from Community 4 braved gale force winds on a visit to the Lifeboat Station and crew in Rhyl. Visits officers Phil, Chris and Les provided our veterans with a presentation that was incredibly

**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.**



**At the Rhyl Lifeboat Station**

interesting, informative, humbling and, of course, hugely enjoyable.

## At the Rustington Centre

Members have been enjoying Sports Week at the Rustington Centre with the aim of keeping up their basic military fitness and learning new sports pursuits. Some have even reconnected with sports they thought were passions of the past after losing their sight. 🇨🇪



# Listening to you

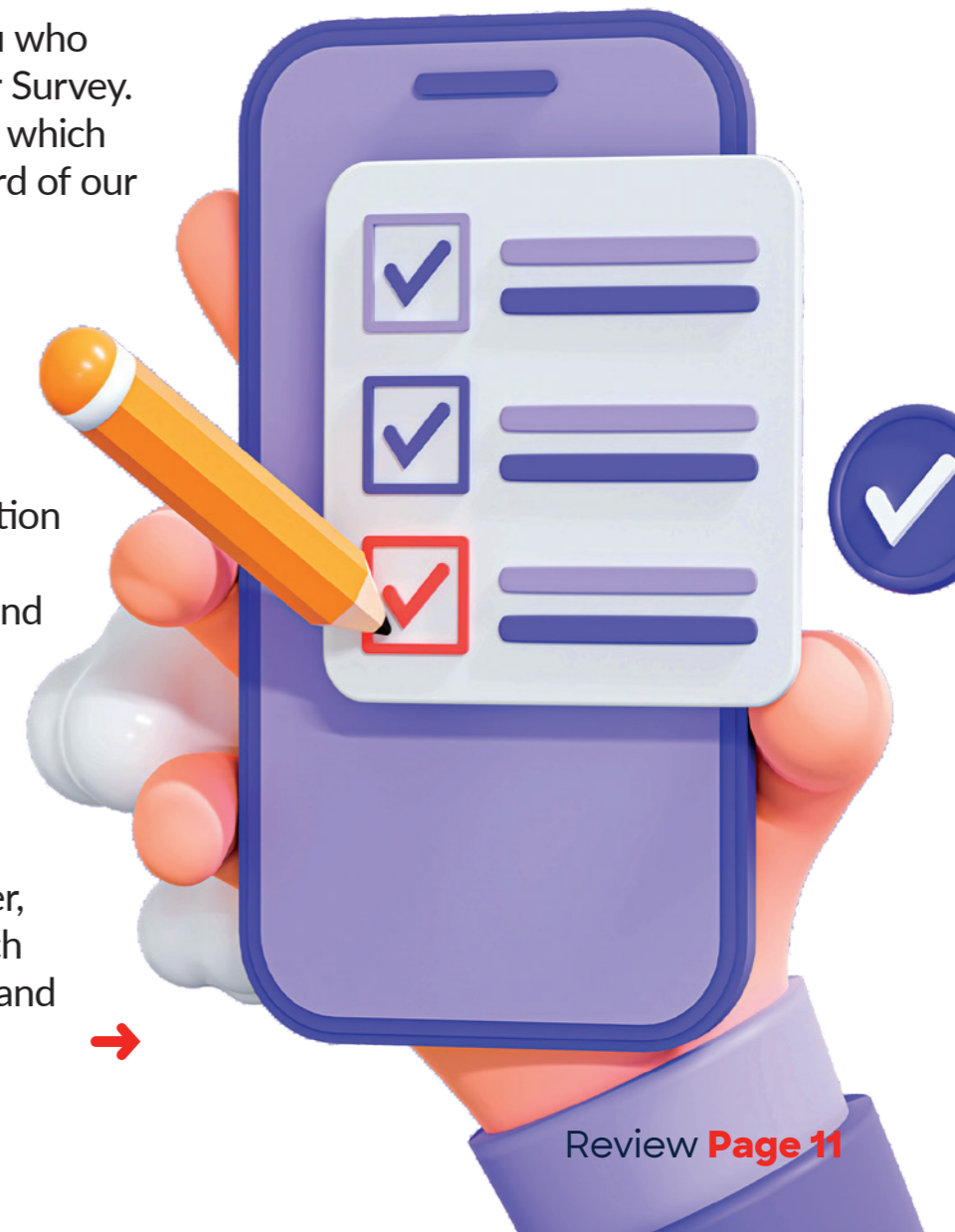
Our annual Member Survey was rolled out earlier this year to find out more about what you think of our services. This was what you told us...

Huge thanks to all those of you who completed our annual Member Survey. Almost 1,100 of you took part, which is a great result - about one third of our membership.

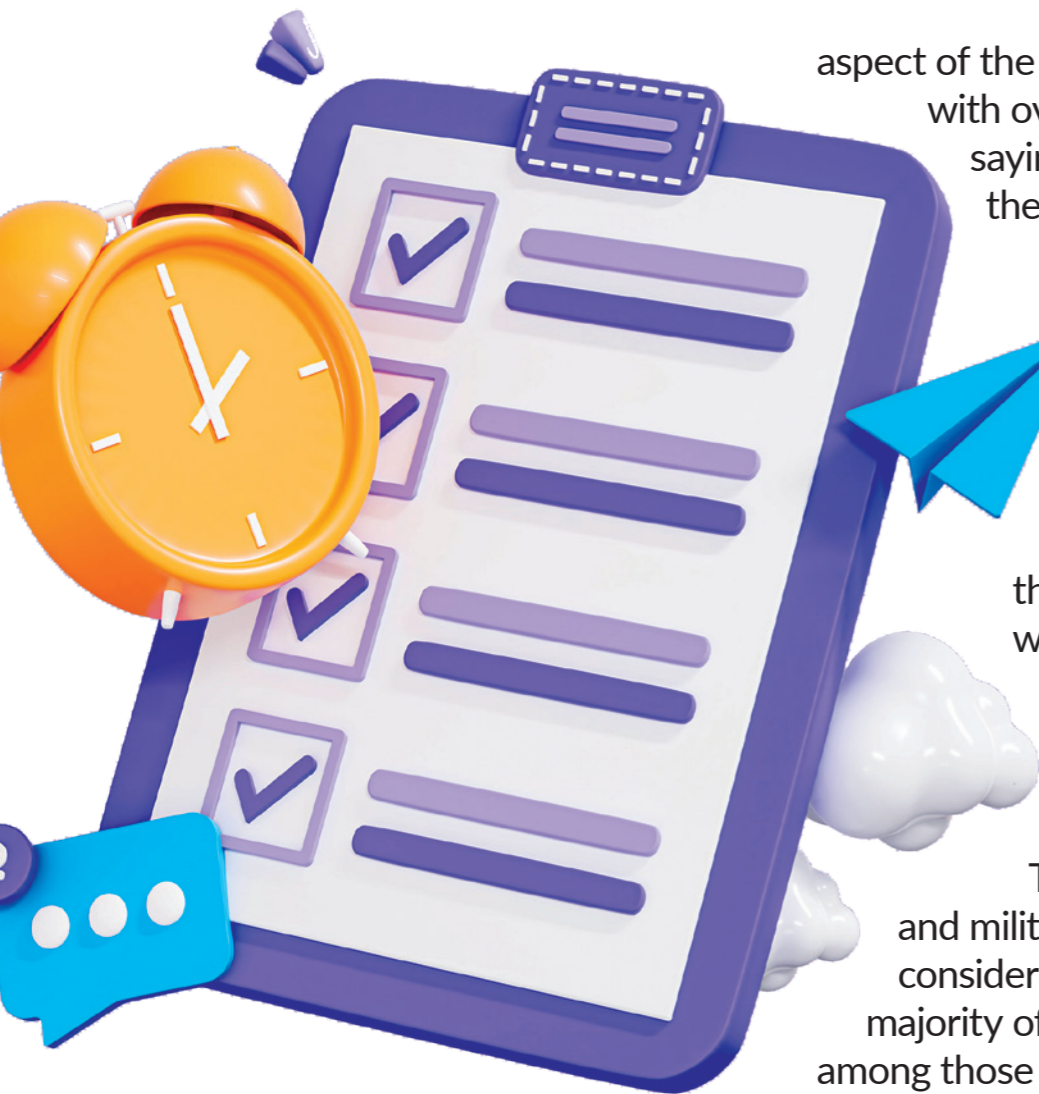
This year, our CEO Adrian Bell wanted to survey as many of you as possible to establish what's most important to you and help shape the transformation work the charity is currently undertaking to cut the deficit and balance the books.

The survey questions were developed by Members during our Member Conference, held in the summer, with the aim of giving us a much greater idea about your needs and experiences.

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aspect of the service provided to you, with over 84% of all the groups saying this was important to them.

Also, training was seen as crucial, particularly training to live well with sight loss. An average of 77% of those who completed the survey said that this was important, while this number rose to 94% when it came to those of you still in work.

Things like online support and military-related events were considered less important by the majority of respondents, particularly among those Members who lost their sight later in life.

## What did you say?

### The importance of practical support

The survey shows that support services providing practical support are highly valued by Members with things like visual impairment aids and other equipment deemed really important. Over 90% of all the different types of Member groups surveyed rated this as important to them.

Additionally, support by phone was consistently rated as an important

### Early support

The survey asked all respondents to look back to their time as a new Member and remember the early support received.

It shows that this early support provided by Blind Veterans UK plays a pivotal role in Members' adaptation to sight loss. The most important part of this early support were induction weeks which were rated as important by 85% of the Members.

## “The survey also asked all respondents to remember their time as a new Member”

Rehabilitation support and support for family and carers were also rated as important by a majority of Members.

### The last 12 months

As part of the survey, Members were asked to consider the level of contact they've had with our charity, particularly over the last 12 months.

**97% of you said you have been contacted by someone from the charity** in the last 12 months with **85% having been visited at home** at least once or twice in that time.

**84% of Members surveyed have reached out to us in the last 12 months.**

**47% of Members surveyed have visited a centre** once or more in the last year, while **52% have attended social events** organised by the charity. However both of these go up in the cohorts who are in work and still active in their community.

### Why do Members contact us?

The survey asked Members to think

about the reasons for them to get in touch with us.

The two reasons that saw people contacting us most frequently were for general support, with 75% of Members contacting us about this, and for support with equipment and technology, which saw 66% of respondents give that as a reason.

The two areas which saw respondents needing to contact us least were around grants at 8% and housing at just 3%.

### Gaining a certificate of visual impairment (CVI)

One topic discussed at the Member Conference was how many of you have a CVI and the difficulties around getting one.

A large number of respondents said it was easy, but there was also a significant proportion of Members saying it was either difficult or very difficult to attain their CVI. Also, a significant portion of respondents indicated that they don't have a CVI.

### How do Members become aware of us?

When asked how you first became aware of Blind Veterans UK, the top response was through involvement with other sight loss and veteran →



“597 Members spoke about valuing the reassurance that support and help is available”

organisations or people connected to them.

Many of you also said you heard about us through healthcare visits or referrals.

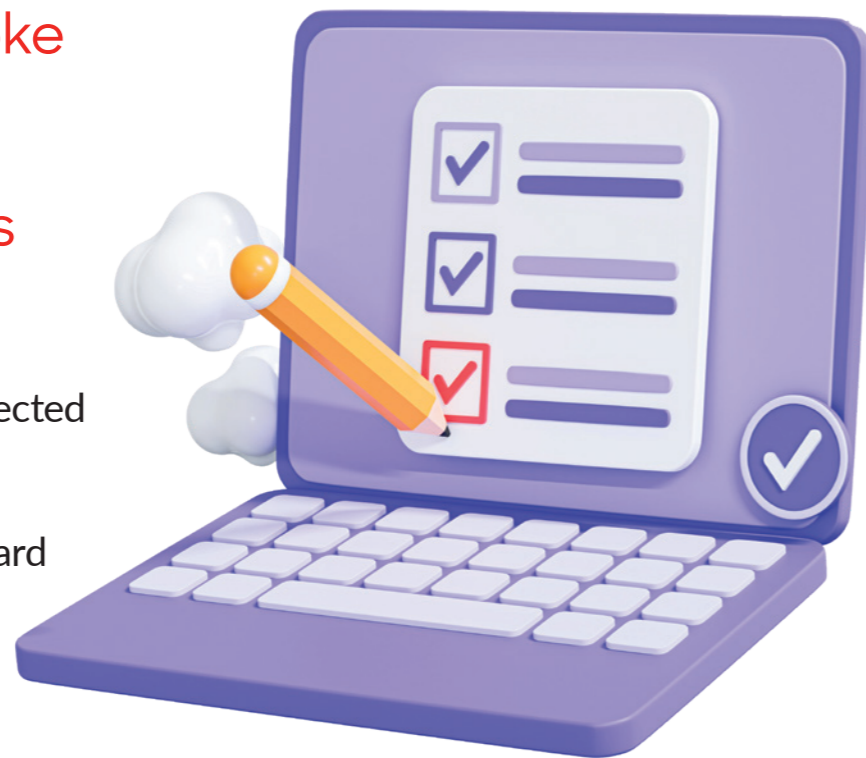
### What support makes the most difference?

Almost one third (395) of respondents said that being given physical equipment to aid their them made the most difference to their lives, while 238 also talked about the importance of companionship and the fact that the charity was always available for them.

Meanwhile, breaks and holidays with the ability to meet other Members was also mentioned by 125 and 97 respondents respectfully.

### What do Members value about being a Member?

By far the most popular answer from those who responded to this question - 597 Members - spoke about valuing the reassurance that support and help is available. The next



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largest group of 178 Members said that having a sense of belonging and valuable companionship was the thing they found most valuable. Having the opportunity to attend social events and visiting the centres were the next most valuable things mentioned. 🇬🇧



This is just a summary of the survey results. To find out more, you can watch and listen to a full presentation online at: [www.blindveterans.org.uk/surveyresults](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk/surveyresults)



Clive draws his bow



# Archery hits the spot

In September, the Blind Veterans UK Archery Club came together in Rustington for their bi-annual club championships and presentation

There are currently around 12 Members in the Blind Veterans UK Archery Club. Clive Jones, Chairman of Blind Veterans UK Bowmen, organises the activities.

Clive says: “It’s fantastic to be able to come to Rustington as a group and shoot together. We’ve got archers from all over the country, so these weeks are our opportunity to catch up and →



enjoy a bit of friendly competition.

“We’re a very welcoming and relaxed club. In fact archery is a very relaxing sport for any age, ability and disability. I have PTSD but once I get the bow in my hand, I relax.”

During the week, the group also enjoyed a team shoot against four RAF archers and another against the Worthing and Newhaven Archers. Sadly, victory escaped them on both occasions.

Members of the club spoke about what archery means to them and how they came to get involved. The group unanimously said they hoped to increase their membership and are ready and waiting to welcome those who want to try it out.

Peter Price, 75, from Peterborough, stayed at Rustington for the week with his wife Linda, who was acting as his spotter while he was shooting. Peter began being supported by the charity in 2010 and first tried archery during

his induction week. He is also a silver medal winner from the World Archery Para Championships.

Peter says: “When I joined the charity, I had a go at archery and decided to carry it on. Archery is now my life; it keeps me fit. I shoot in my garden four or five times a week all year round.

“The Blind Veterans UK Bowmen is great for the social aspect. We’re a family with military banter. It isn’t just about the shooting.

“There are local archery clubs all around the country that you can pop along to and have a taster session.”

Peter explained that there are different categories within the sport for those with sight loss: B1s can’t see anything, B2s and B3s use a tactile sight guide that they put the back of their hand up against to feel where they should hold the bow, and V1 open is for those who are able to use the bow sight. Peter uses a tactile sight guide. →

## Lesley Garven’s poem: Archery at St Dunstan’s/Blind Veterans UK



Poem in honour of our team presentation, September 2024, (recognising the move from Brighton to Rustington).

At St Dunstan’s, where  
it all began,  
A tradition strong, a  
steadfast clan.  
Through years of aim,  
through change of place,  
We gather still, with steady grace.

A new venue, yet the heart  
remains,  
Old traditions flow  
through fresh terrains.  
Bows are drawn, with

pride we stand, Each shot  
a mark of careful hand.

But none of this could come to be,  
Without the volunteers we see.  
Your guiding eyes, your  
helping hands,  
Lift every archer, as one we stand.

So here today, with medals gleam,  
We celebrate this mighty team.  
To every archer, to every guide,  
In victory and in heart – our pride.



Blind Veterans UK Archery Club at Rustington



He says: "We have adaptations in place but a lot of it is about muscle memory and practise, practise, practise. I can't see the lines of the target; it's like looking through a frosted bathroom window. Therefore, my wife Linda is my spotter, and she calls out where the arrow has gone. I then know if I need to adjust my shot. If I miss, it's her fault!"

Ron Jury, 71, from Bracknell, has been taking part in archery for around six years. He says: "I talk about archery all



**Carol Davies takes a shot**

the time and I'm very competitive. The great thing about it is how inclusive it is. I actually compete at my local club against fully-sighted people."

Carol Davies, 73, from Skegness, is the current secretary of British Blind Sport Archery. Carol discovered archery during her induction week with Blind Veterans UK and then went on to attend our Archery Week centre activity.

She says: "Archery is a challenging sport. I'm B2 class so I use a tactile sight guide attached to a tripod. There is a spirit level on my tripod to ensure the guide is straight. The tripod also has foot locaters so I can line my body up. The bow we use is exactly the same as fully sighted archers.

"I was in my 30s when I began to lose my sight. I can see shapes and movement, but no detail and I couldn't be without my cane.

"I would urge anyone to come and have a go at archery. The camaraderie is fantastic and it gets you out and about and keeps you fit. It's nice to have an interest to keep your mind active and we have a great laugh." 🍷

■ **To find out more about the Blind Veterans UK Bowmen, email Clive Jones at [dragoneye67@sky.com](mailto:dragoneye67@sky.com)**

## Clive hits the target... again!



**After a great week at Rustington, Clive Jones travelled to Lilleshall National Sports Centre to enter the British Blind Sport Outdoor National Championship**

"Having arrived at Lilleshall for 7.45am on Sunday, I knelt in the cold, wet and sandy grass to start preparing my equipment for the days' shoot. All set up, I caught up with old friends and new. The competition then opened and so did the rain clouds!

"The rain teemed down as the round consisting of 12 dozen arrows in sets of three dozen on a

60cm, 80cm and 122cm target face were shot. The target was situated 30 meters away from the shooting line. As the rain came down and archers collected their arrows, the paper faces became more and more disintegrated. Having shot three quarters of the competition, I needed to change my finger tab and my Blind Veterans UK Bowman shooting shirt to a dry one.

"The conclusion of the competition could not have come sooner; at around 3pm the final whistle blast sounded. I could've shot better if it wasn't for the rain, but I was still 79 points up at the three-quarter stage. By the final whistle, I'd extended my advantage to over 100 points.

"I'm very happy to, once again, become the BBS Outdoor National Champion. I received my trophy from the Worshipful Master of the Worshipful Company of Bowyers, Sir David Hugh Wootton.

"I would urge anyone to step out of their comfort zone and give archery a go."





# Finding light in words

Many of our veterans find that writing poetry can help them explore their feelings and memories

For many of you, poetry has become more than just a creative outlet; it's a way to navigate their experiences and emotions. Through the power of words, you might explore themes of bravery, resilience and companionship. Your poems offer a window into your world, revealing the strength and vulnerability that come with your unique journeys.

Whether recounting the silent guidance of a white cane or paying tribute to the unsung animal heroes of World War I, your verses may resonate with us all. This month, we share poems from Members Peter and Ron.

■ If you have a poem to share, please email it to our team at [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk)

## Peter Kay My new best friend

Hello, meet my new best friend.  
We go everywhere together.  
I worry when we're apart.  
But when we're together,  
we go on lots of adventures.  
Some scary and some not so.  
My new best friend doesn't say much.  
Just a tap, tap tap, or a rumble.  
But goes before me.  
To lead me safely along.  
For my best friend is a white cane.



ELYPSE/ADOBE STOCK

TONY CRADDOCK/ADOBE STOCK



## Ron Russell They did their bit: A tribute to WWI veterans

They went, they saw, they stayed,  
to do their bit, those boys and girls,  
just like the boys in khaki kit

Those brave boys and girls hauled  
the guns and pulled the carts, it  
was like a work of art, they did  
their bit, just like boys in khaki kit

They ran the trenches with medicals,  
messages and other supplies, they did  
their bit, just like the boys in khaki kit

They flew perilous missions  
through merciless skies, those  
brave boys and girls, they too do

their bit, like the boys in khaki kit

Some did from shot and shell,  
and where left lying where they  
fell, for there was no one to tell  
those brave boys and girls did their  
bit, just like the boys khaki kit

No mourners, no bugle calls, no music  
did play, they are still there to this  
day, those brave boys and girls, they  
did their bit, like the boys in khaki kit

They too you should recall, gave  
their all they should be remembered,  
they did their bit just like the  
boys did in kaki kit, we should  
not forget that they did their bit,  
like the boys in khaki bit. 🇬🇧





Members Arthur and Joe at our Llandudno Centre

# Arthur and Joe meet again

After serving together in Malaya decades ago, two Members were shocked to be reunited at our centre

When Member Arthur Symes decided to book a week's holiday at our Llandudno Centre, little did he know he would be reunited with former comrade, Joe Ingram – 70 years on.

The pair both served in the East Yorkshire Regiment as wireless operators as part of their National Service. They worked together in Kluang in the 50s during the Malaysian Emergency insurgency.

“At night we would go out on duty to a little tent that was just on the edge of the jungle”

Thanks to Member Jack Redfern they were re-introduced at the centre. After chatting to each of them separately, Jack realised that they had both served in the same regiment at the same time.

Arthur said, “I just couldn't believe it. I was in shock. I hadn't seen Joe in over 70 years and there we were. I joined the company just as Joe was leaving but we crossed over and did some patrols together as signalmen out in Malaya. It was very emotional. I've never felt anything like it in my life. It was a very nice feeling – I was so happy to see him again. We both couldn't believe it and just hugged each other in shock at first.”

Joe said, “I never expected to see Arthur or anyone from my company all these years later. It was brilliant to see him and great to talk about our time in Malaya and the other men we served with.”

The pair spent time catching up and reminisced about their time in Malaya as they remembered the comradery and the dangers of the jungle.

Arthur said, “We were out in Malaya trying to catch the Chinese communists who were burning down rubber plantations in the jungle. We came across them occasionally when we were on patrol but because the jungle was so dense, it was easy for them to escape. It was quite scary being on patrol, but we were all good pals and had one another's backs.”

Joe added, “At night we would go out on duty to a little tent that was just on the edge of the jungle. From there we'd take reports of what was happening and pass them over to the commanding officer.” →



Arthur in Malaya





### Arthur as a young signal operator

“I enjoyed my time in Malaya but part of that was probably because I didn’t have to go into the jungle where it was a bit hairier.”

Both men lost their sight in later life. Arthur has glaucoma and joined the charity last year. He says of his sight loss, “It’s been a gradual decline. The hardest thing for me was not being able to read anymore.

“Blind Veterans UK have been brilliant, though, and the Llandudno Centre is an amazing place to visit. I had a wonderful time.”

Meanwhile, Joe started to lose his

sight four years ago due to a retinal vessel occlusion in his right eye and epiretinal membrane in his left.

He says: “Losing my sight was extremely difficult because it happened around the same time that my wife passed away. I couldn’t drive anymore or even read.

“It can be lonely living by myself, but when I go to the charity’s centre in North Wales I’m surrounded by people and it’s so nice to have the company. The people you meet there have similar experiences so we have a lot in common and can help each other out.” 🐶



# Finding the funny side

Member **Jamie Weller**’s journey to stand-up comedy

Back in 2022, an unexpected email landed in my inbox – an invitation to join the Recovery Through Comedy programme organised by the Royal British Legion. I was already doing a lot of public speaking, and this felt like the ultimate challenge. So, I thought, why not? I signed up.

The course was a five-day event, and we were trained by two professional comics, including the brilliant Janice Connolly. There were around 13 of us veterans, and over the week each built and rehearsed our own five-minute set. By the end of it, we were ready to perform at a club in Birmingham, which was amazing.



**Jamie and Freddie on stage**

After that, we took the show on a mini-UK tour, performing at events like the Royal British Legion’s Annual Conference, Armed Forces Day in Falmouth, and the Edinburgh Fringe. It was incredible – we got to perform for new audiences all over the country, and our confidence as comedians grew with each show.

When the programme came to an end, a group of us weren’t quite ready to stop. So, in March of this year, we set up the Veterans Comedy Club. We →





**Jamie, centre, with other members of the Veterans Comedy Club**

expanded our individual five-minute sets to 15 minutes. Less comics, more time on stage. We then set out on tour, even selling out all our shows at the Fringe this year. We each offer something unique, and we're hoping to continue growing our sets and raising money for another course so that more veterans can experience the same stand-up comedy training.

I love getting up on stage and making people laugh. My set is all about storytelling and turning the awkward moments of life with sight loss into humour. Whether it's confusing a toy banknote for a real one in a shop or coming up with something I like to call

the "sniff test" – but you'll have to come to my show to find out what that means!

I share stories from my life that not only educate people about the realities of blindness, but make them laugh at the same time, even about topics they might normally feel uncomfortable laughing at. My guide dog Freddy is often part of the set, too. He comes on stage with me and is a big hit with the audience, especially when he decides to do something unscripted, like walking off stage mid-performance.

I've performed in front of crowds as big as 300 people, but whether it's a

small club or a huge stage, I get my feedback by listening to the audience. Being unable to see the audience's faces, I rely entirely on the sound of their laughter and claps to gauge their reactions. It's a skill I developed over years of public speaking, but stand-up comedy has really honed it.

Stand-up keeps my mind active and gives me a platform to challenge stereotypes about blindness. It's been amazing for my mental health and I just really like making people laugh so it's a win-win. I don't consider myself disabled, just someone who can't see, and I use comedy to show people that

**“Stand-up keeps my mind active and gives me a platform to challenge stereotypes about blindness”**

being blind doesn't limit what I can achieve. My mantra is, “I don't let my blindness manage me, I manage my blindness.”

Recently, I was shortlisted for the STARTS Award for comedy and spoken word, which is a really exciting opportunity. I'm also looking forward to what's next for the Veterans Comedy Club. We're growing, writing new material, and planning more shows – and hopefully another run at the Fringe next year.



**Jamie with staff member, Glynis**

If it hadn't been for Blind Veterans UK being there for me when I lost my sight over 30 years ago, I wouldn't have gained the skills and confidence I have today. Back then, they showed me that there's life after sight loss, and they helped me develop the can-do mindset that has shaped my life. It enabled me to grow, to push back on the barriers and boundaries of what blind people can achieve. It gave me the confidence to show that I could lead a fulfilling, independent life going forward. And that confidence is everything. 🇬🇧





Listen here

# Getting out and about in your local area

Navigating the streets can be a challenge with sight loss but there are plenty of apps to help you find your way around. Our Digital Inclusion team has the latest...

Being able to get ourselves out and about in our local communities contributes significantly to our physical and mental health. Not only do we get to the places we need to go, but we also enjoy the simple pleasure of walking out the front door and moving around just for the sake of it.

But this can be difficult when you have a vision impairment. Firstly, you need to somehow identify and avoid obstacles, trip hazards and general dangers and, secondly, you need to be able to find your way home again.

If getting around your local area is something you struggle with, we can help. When it comes to identifying obstacles, contact MeSH or speak to a Blind Veterans UK staff member as there are skills and techniques they can share with you. Meanwhile, read on to find out about technology to help you navigate unfamiliar areas.

## Navigation technology

If you have access to either an iPhone or a smartphone, applications in conjunction with the inbuilt GPS can be used to assist with navigation, particularly in areas that are less familiar to you. In fact, there are several applications designed to help blind and visually impaired

individuals navigate their surroundings more easily. Here are some of the top options to give you an idea of what's possible. If you'd like more information, please speak to MeSH or a staff Member who can refer you to our Digital Inclusion team.

### BlindSquare:



Blindsquare is an iOS app that offers accessible navigation outdoors through sound via their GPS app. Using a speech synthesizer, Blindsquare will describe the world around you. It will tell you points of interest, road junctions and user defined points as you travel. You can also shake your device to hear your current location address and information about places around you, for example: "Junction of Queen Street and Kings Road distance 50 meters at 10 o'clock." You can also mark your current position to help you navigate back to it at a later date.

### Seeing AI:



The app, Seeing AI, which is available on Apple and Android, doesn't have built in navigation but supports mobility in the community by being able to narrate the world around you. By harnessing the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI), it can read signage and

MOJAHID MOTTAKIN / ADOBE STOCK



### Google Maps gives you voice-guided turn-by-turn navigation

describe an image or the landmarks in front of you. This can help you work out where you are and what direction you need to go in.

### Google Maps and Apple Maps:

Both of these popular mainstream navigation apps offer great features for visually impaired users, such as voice-guided turn-by-turn navigation and detailed walking directions. They also have a number of pre-mapped indoor areas such as UK airports.

■ **These just some of the apps that can significantly enhance your sense of independence and confidence as you navigate the streets. If you need more information or have any specific questions, your Digital Inclusion team is always happy to help.** 🗺️



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**Applications with inbuilt GPS can be used with navigation**



# Getting the latest news and travel updates from Alexa

As many of you get ready to head out to Remembrance events this month, we give the lowdown on how Alexa can make your journey that bit easier and less stressful

Did you know that keeping up to date with current affairs is easy with Alexa? In fact, you can get all the latest news, weather, sports and travel updates through your smart speaker or phone. And if you add your address to your account profile in the Alexa app, you can even get personalised updates based on your location too.

## Latest news

To get the latest national news, simply say: “Alexa, what’s my news today?”, or “Alexa, what’s my news briefing?” You will then hear news from channels like the BBC and Sky News.

If you want to hear more personalised news, you can change your preferred news channel in the Alexa app. You can also enter your postcode to hear news from your local area.

## Weather updates

Don’t get drenched on your way to the parade. To hear the weather forecast for your area before you head out, just say: “Alexa, what’s the weather forecast?”

You can even get the weather for another location. So, if you’re going on holiday to New York, for example, you say: “Alexa, what’s the weather in New York?”

## Live travel information

Check for transport delays before you leave. To get live information on train and bus times from Alexa, you need to set up a few things in the Alexa app.

1. Add your location to the app. Simply input your home address, as well as any other locations you visit

regularly, such as where you work or a relative’s home.

2. Once you set this up, try saying, for example: “Alexa, how do I get to work?” Alexa will tell you the station and route you need, as well as the time of the next service and how long your journey will take.
3. You can even make the most of this feature when you go on holiday. Just input the address of where you’re staying so you can easily access all the local travel information.
4. You can find out more about navigating public transport with sight loss by visiting [blindveterans.org.uk/resources](http://blindveterans.org.uk/resources)

## Sports results

And if you’re staying for a chat after the ceremony, you might want to be up-to-date with the sports banter. For general updates, just say: “Alexa, what’s the sports news?”

To get more personalised information, go to the Alexa app, tap on sports settings and add your favourite sports teams. You will then hear tailored news about the teams and sports you follow.

■ **New to Alexa? Find out how to get started by calling MeSH on 01273 391 447 or visit our website: [blindveterans.org.uk/resources](http://blindveterans.org.uk/resources)**

JUANCHI STUDIO / ADOBE STOCK



Get live weather information from Alexa before stepping outdoors



# Member voice

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

## Regional Members Group

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

Last month, the Regional Members Group provided feedback on a new centre cancellation policy. The group's suggestions were implemented into the draft policy, which aims to ensure our Llandudno and Rustington Centres can operate as effectively as possible and provide opportunities for all.

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

## Give us your feedback

Have you attended a Blind Veterans UK event recently? We'd love to know what you thought of it so we can improve our services and offer more of what you like. Our Members, carers, and even our staff can now provide events feedback to us directly via the Blind Veterans UK website by using our simple online form at [blindveterans.org.uk/member](https://blindveterans.org.uk/member)



## The Veterans Art Project: VE80

The Veterans Art Project: VE80 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 Artwork and photography

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

### 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 a message on the NCWP voicemail at **01273 391 447**. If you leave your name and number and a member of the team will call you back.

## 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, or find out more, visit [blindveterans.org.uk/here](https://blindveterans.org.uk/here), or email [Tim.Eckersley@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:Tim.Eckersley@blindveterans.org.uk)

### Coming up

**Remembrance Weekend (London Cenotaph) – 9-10 November**  
**Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Military Dinner – 6 December**  
**For the latest information about these events, please visit [blindveterans.org.uk/member](https://blindveterans.org.uk/member)**





Listen here

# National Creative Wellbeing Programme

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

Our October programme of creative activities offers something for everyone. To request a project pack, simply leave a message for us on **01273 391447** or visit [blindveterans.org.uk/member](http://blindveterans.org.uk/member). 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 that we are currently experiencing some delays with our project dispatch. If you requested a kit in August, September or October, please be assured that a project kit has been allocated to you and will be dispatched in due course.**

**We thank you for your patience and ongoing support.**



**James Abercrombie and his 32 cm oxheart tomato...**



**...and Paul Robert's 250g example**



ALEXANDR/ ADOBE STOCK

**Amaryllis**

**Christmas leftovers mosaic:** For this project, you will receive three coaster bases along with the usual mosaic materials. Two of the bases will have Christmas coloured tile packs, labelled and separated for you.

A final base will come with a separate bag of mixed tiles for you to create your own random design with the leftover tiles you've been collecting from your kits over the year, as well as some of our leftovers, let's reduce waste and encourage sustainability! These coasters would be perfect to make for your loved

ones as gifts, or to add a festive touch to your home.

**Amaryllis:** Back by popular demand, this kit will include a decorative pot, growing medium and an amaryllis bulb to nurture your own fabulous flower. Easy to follow instructions for planting will be included and this project is suitable for indoor growing. There may be a delay on postage, but please be assured that there are enough for everyone, and they will be sent out in due course.

Thank you for continuing to return →





**Don and Ruth's tomatoe 'trees'**

your NCWP surveys. It's so helpful to read your views and enables us to shape the service going forward. Thank you too for all your suggestions for future projects – once we have greater capacity for dispatch, we'll be looking to make some of these projects a reality!

### Surprise seeds 2024: Your photographs

Thank you to everyone who has shared photographs of what's grown from your surprise seeds project earlier in the year. There have been some fantastic photographs shared. It has been great to keep the legacy of this project going, in memory of it's creator Jim Long who sadly passed away in August of 2024. Please do continue to share your photographs,

and stay tuned for news of Surprise Seeds 2025 next spring, where the positivity of Jim's ideas will continue.

James Abercrombie sent in a photo, on page 35, of one of his oxheart tomatoes with a 32cm (12 ½ inch) circumference! Meanwhile, also on page 35, Paul Roberts shared a picture of a tomato nearly 5 inches wide at its biggest point, weighing an incredible 250g!

And thanks also goes to Don and Ruth Palmer for sending us their photographs, including one of Don's beautiful dahlias (left), which didn't need bamboo stakes as they have been holding each other up! 🌸

## Send us your pics!

**We always love hearing from you, whether it's to share photographs, feedback or just to have a chat about your crafting activities. Please don't hesitate to get in touch via email at [ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk)**

**Our hobby circle groups are still running in gardening, knitting and woodwork. We are hoping to re-launch painting and drawing in the new year.**



# Quiz time

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

1. What sort of weapon is a cudgel?  
a) a sword  
b) a club  
c) a gun
2. In what sport can you get a duck?
3. What is the term for the study of birds?
4. What metal nickname was shared by Duke Wellington and Margaret Thatcher?
5. Who sang the 1984 pop hit, 'I Am What I Am'?
6. What was the nickname of the Second World War German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel?
7. What newspaper was nicknamed The Thunderer in the 19th century?
8. What is another name for a naked snail?
9. Who played Spartacus in the film of the same name?
10. What is a group of pandas known as?



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**Duke Wellington**

*Answers on Page 47*





Listen here

# Family news

**Cecil Gordon** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 5th November 2024.

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**Leonard Mayes** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 10th November 2024.

---

**Constance Evans** who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 18th November 2024.

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**Peter D'Arcy Champney** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 20th November 2024.

---

**Arthur Hammond** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 21st November 2024.

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**Bryan Wardell** who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 23rd November 2024.

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**Jean Rees** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 23rd November 2024.

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**Barbara Jones** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 26th November 2024.

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**Joseph Hinge** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 29th November 2024.

---

**Robert Dickman** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 1st December 2024.

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**Joan Harding** who celebrates her 104th birthday on 1st December 2024.

---

**Thomas McKenna** who celebrates his 105th birthday on 1st December 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.**

---

**Isabella Annie Gale** who died on 8th December 2023. She was the wife of Alfred Gale.

---

**Joan Magnall** who died on 16th March 2024. She was the wife of Brian Clayton Magnall.

---

**June Robinson** who died on 1st June 2024. She was the wife of Neil Robinson.

---

**Catherine Ford Grace** who died on 16th June 2024. She was the wife of Stanley Grace.

---

**Yvonne Lewis** who died on 19th June 2024. She was the wife of Peter Lewis.

---

**Kay Kay** who died on 6th July 2024. She was the wife of Peter Kay.

---

**Debbie King** who died on 5th August 2024. She was the wife of Chris King.

---

**Lilian May Deaney** who died on 10th September 2024. She was the wife of Geoff Deaney.

---

**Jacqueline Croxall** who died on 16th September 2024. She was the wife of Tony Croxall.

---

**Olive Mary Carter** who died on 24th September 2024. She was the wife of Donald Carter.

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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

**David Desmond Abraham** of Swansea died on 2 August 2024 aged 97. He served as a A.C.1 in the Royal Air Force.

**Beryl Maureen Atkinson** of Littlehampton, West Sussex died on 5 September 2024 aged 99. She served in the Voluntary Aid Detachment.

**Norman Barth** of Ashford, Kent died on 7 October 2024 aged 90. He served in the Queen's Regiment.

**Tony Birch** of Horncastle, Lincolnshire died on 22 September 2024 aged 86. He served as a Rifleman in the Rifle Brigade.

**Frances Muriel Blackwood** of Haslemere, Surrey died on 2 September aged 99. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

**Colin Roy Bowles** of Ramsgate, Kent died on 18 September 2024 aged 91. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Leonard Brettle** of Worthing, West Sussex died on 5 October 2024 aged 93. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**David Brownhill** of Birmingham died on 21 September 2024 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

**Joseph Chandler** of Flint, Flintshire died on 1 September 2024 aged 88. He served as a Fusilier in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

**Raymond Collings** of Torquay, Devon died on 9 September 2024 aged 87. He served as a S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Harry John Cook** of Andover, Hampshire died on 2 October 2024 aged 88. He served in the Royal Artillery.

**John Cunningham** of Hexham, Northumberland died on 1 October 2024 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

**John Bushby Cuthell** of Maryport, Cumbria died on 1 September 2024 aged 83. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

**Willoughby Hugh Dampier** of Paignton, Devon died on 1 July 2024 aged 95. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Anthony Greville Ditcham** of Knighton, Powys died on 2 October 2024 aged 102. He served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

**Robert Edward Dunn** of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire died on 1 September 2024 aged 93. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.





**Raymond Maxwell Edge** of The Wirral, Merseyside died on 6 October 2024 aged 92. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Brian Keith Flowers** of Hassocks, West Sussex died on 5 September 2024 aged 86. He served as a Junior Technician in the Royal Air Force.

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**Thomas Edward Fowler** of Whitehaven, Cumbria died on 17 September 2024 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps.

---

**David Francis** of Liverpool died on 25 September 2024 aged 69. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

---

**Cecil Paul Arthur Friedlander** of Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, Wrexham died on 1 September 2024 aged 100. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Engineers.

---

**Harry Garthwaite** of Birmingham died on 5 September 2024 aged 104. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Peter John Griffiths** of Cardiff died on 30 September 2024 aged 94. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

---

**Laurence Handley** of Ely, Cambridgeshire died on 1 September 2024 aged 86. He served as a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

---

**Trevor Hanson** of Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland died on 1 September 2024 aged 89. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

---

**Gerald Douglas Hopkins** of Swansea died on 30 September 2024 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

---

**Roy Horlock** of Gravesend, Kent died on 20 September 2024 aged 102. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Robert Irving** of Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire died on 14 September 2024 aged 85. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

---

**Arthur John James** of Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan died on 6 October 2024 aged 86. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

---

**Robert Kelly** of Salisbury died on 7 September 2024 aged 87. He served as a Sergeant in the Wessex Brigade.

---

**Francis Kirby** of Torquay, Devon died on 4 October 2024 aged 93. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

---

**Arthur Abraham Lawson** of Glasgow died on 1 September 2024 aged 102. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

---

**Dennis Lynch** of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 1 July 2024 aged 85. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Brenda Kathleen Rose McConaghey** of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 18 September 2024 aged 93. She served as a ACW1 in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

---

**Richard Edgar Norris** of Gillingham, Kent died on 20 September 2024 aged 88. He served as a Leading Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Melvin Norwood** of Immingham, Lincolnshire died on 26 August 2024 aged 88. He served as a Guardsman in the Army.

---

**Alan Outram** of Cumnock, Ayrshire died on 10 October 2024 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the Duke Of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment).

---



**David Franklin Owens** of Farnham, Hampshire died on 19 August 2024 aged 90. He served as a Major in the Royal Engineers.

---

**Arthur Henry Packer** of Cullompton, Devon died on 7 September 2024 aged 94. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

---

**James Park** of Whitehaven, Cumbria died on 1 September 2024 aged 96. He served as a Sick Berth Attendant in the Royal Navy.

---

**Kenneth James Parker** of Witham, Essex died on 7 September 2024 aged 95. He served as an A.C.1 in the Royal Air Force Police.

---

**William Patrick Philcox** of Winchelsea, East Sussex died on 9 September 2024 aged 100. He served as a Steward in the Merchant Navy.

---

**William Prior** of Liverpool died on 5 September 2024 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

---

**Patricia Anne Proctor** of Liverpool died on 7 September 2024 aged 90. She served as an Acting Sergeant in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

---

**Michael Norman Reynolds** of Nottingham died on 14 October 2024 aged 70. He served as a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

---

**Kenneth Rogers** of London died on 15 September 2024 aged 90. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

---

**John Richard Ryall** of Castle Cary, Somerset died on 19 August 2024 aged 90. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

---

**Terence Scollan** of East Boldon, Tyne and Wear died on 2 September 2024 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

---

**Edward Gordon Sharp** of Newhaven, East Sussex died on 7 October 2024 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment.

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**Martin Shaw** of Chorley, Lancashire died on 1 October 2024 aged 93. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

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**Albert Shepherd** of Manchester died on 12 July 2024 aged 82. He served as a Private in the Kings Liverpool Regiment.

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**Jeffrey Skelton** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 8 September 2024 aged 94. He served as a S.A.C in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Michael Taylor** of Southampton died on 23 September 2024 aged 86. He served in the Royal Navy.

---

**Alan Brough Taylor** of Newcastle Upon Tyne died on 25 September 2024 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

---

**James Thompson** of Liverpool died on 7 September 2024 aged 101. He served as a Leading Telegraphist in the Royal Navy.

---

**Betty Varley** of Nottingham died on 20 September 2024 aged 98. She served as a Sergeant in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

---

**Arthur Wallace** of Maidenhead, Berkshire died on 1 September 2024 aged 99. He served as a Leading Hand in the Royal Navy.

---



**John Keith Watson** of Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire died on 6 October 2024 aged 82. He served as a Chaplain in the Royal Navy.

**Kenneth Wightman** of Dorchester, Dorset died on 1 September 2024 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Douglas Will** of Tavistock, Devon died on 10 October 2024 aged 92. He served as a Sergeant in the Argyll And Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's).

**William Williams** of Cardiff died on 7 September 2024 aged 93. He served as in the Welsh Regiment.

**Gordon Alfred William Wright** of Wisbech, died on 1 October 2024 aged 101. He served as a Private in the Oxfordshire And Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

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

**Review Editor: 0300 111 22 33** or [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk)

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

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

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

### Quiz answers - from page 49

1. a) club 2. Cricket 3. Ornithology
4. Iron 5. Gloria Gaynor 6. Desert Fox
7. The Times 8. Slug 9. Kirk Douglas
10. An embarrassment

### A different format?

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



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



Listen  
here

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