



Review

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D-DAY 80
Special edition

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK
June 2024



**Honouring
our D-Day
heroes**

 Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

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here

Military Dinner at Petwood Hotel

We will be holding a Blind Veterans UK Military Dinner at Petwood House in Lincolnshire on 30 August 2024

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.



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

The event will include:

- Welcome drinks and canapes
 - Speeches and presentations
 - A three-course meal with complimentary wine and port.
- **If you would like to express your interest in attending, visit blindveterans.org.uk/petwood or contact our Supporter Services team on 0300 111 22 33.**



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Raymond Grose, D-Day portraits, page 18

On the cover

Portraits of our D-Day veterans taken by photographer, Richard Cannon.

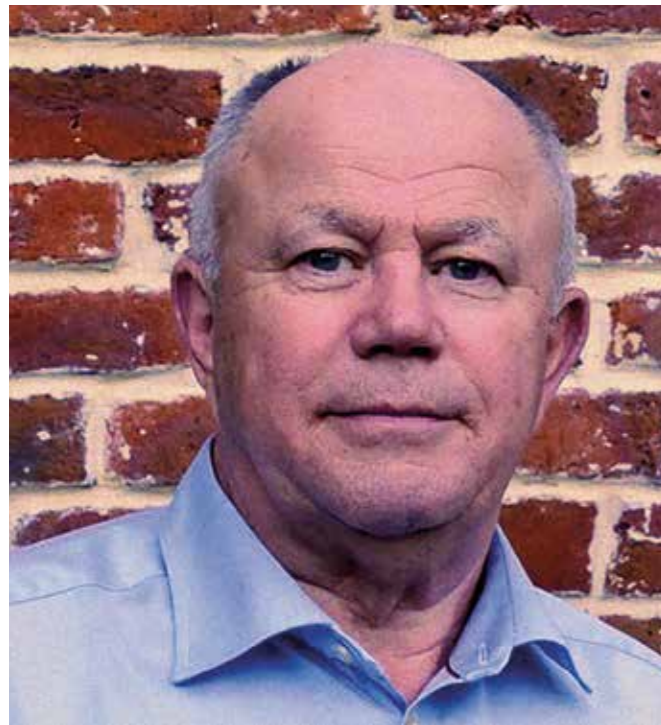


The spirit of D-Day

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

I was sorry to miss the Member conference last month, which I heard was a great success. Unfortunately, having spent several days knee-deep in the charity's governance review, I desperately needed to catch up on my day job.

For anyone else who missed it, the purpose of the conference was to garner the views of our membership on the future of the charity in light of our urgent need to balance the budget. Our Chief Executive, Adrian, is doing



Caption: Barry Coupe

an impressive job in spearheading this challenging work and I'm confident that he will take all your feedback and suggestions on board.

As Adrian is keen to understand the experiences of as many of you as possible, we are also shortly rolling out a Member survey. This is another opportunity for you to help inform our new financially sustainable strategy, so I really hope you take the time to complete it.

The journey ahead may be challenging but, as it turns out, we've been here before. As we approach the 80th anniversary of D-Day, I find myself turning to former Chairman Lord Fraser's memoir, *My Story of St Dunstan's*. Writing in 1961, he captures the indomitable spirit of D-Day perfectly when he reflects on the struggles of the Second World War.

Not only was our centre at Brighton requisitioned by the war office, forcing a move to Church Stretton - where my father stayed - but the charity was also very low on funds by the end of the war. Back then, the average age of

the membership was only 56 and they lacked the money necessary to provide adequate life-long support.

Fortunately for us all, Lord Fraser found a way through the obstacles to keep this fantastic charity going for future generations. He writes with characteristic passion, "The work is still not at an end and not likely to be for many, many years." Now it's up to us.

Over the years, our work has developed and, today, the average age of our membership is considerably older, at around 85. We are very fortunate to even have a number of centenarians in our midst, many of whom actually served on D-Day.

Sixteen of these veterans have generously allowed us to interview and photograph them as part of our commemorations. Some of them were just teenagers when they were shipped off to Normandy and yet their memories are crystal clear, not to mention incredibly moving.

They risked their lives for our freedom and saw many young comrades die on the battlefield. It's a huge privilege to have the opportunity to honour and thank them on this special anniversary and, of course, continue to provide them with all the sight loss support they need.



British troops landing on the beach in Normandy on D-Day

Over the summer, HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh will officially open our Rustington Centre. The centre has already become a wonderful, caring haven for rehabilitation, and I've heard fantastic feedback from many of you who have made a first visit.

When I think of this, I can't help but agree with Lord Fraser when he writes about the founding of our charity out of the horrors of war: "Some good things can come out of evil."

■ **You can read about our D-Day veterans on page 14 and find out more about their incredible first-hand experiences at blindveterans.org.uk/dday**

Have a great month. 🍷



News

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 inbox every month?

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



Our new Member e-newsletter

Armed Forces Cricket T20 at Lords

Last month, our Members, staff and volunteers attended the 2024 Inter-Services T20 cricket tournament at the home of cricket: Lords.

For the second year in a row, we were selected by the Armed Forces Cricket Board as their supported charity for the event. The tournament, which is sponsored by Raytheon UK, selects a military charity to support and that honour has gone to our charity.

In 2023, we received over £16,000 from the tournament and it's expected that this year's total will be even higher.



Lords cricket ground

Local blind veterans and their partners were able to attend the event with free tickets provided by the Board. Also, Member Simon Brown was there to take part in the ceremonial coin toss.

The Navy, Army and RAF all won one match each, so it came down to run rate to decide... and the Navy became the champions for the first time in 14 years.

Blind Veterans UK Bowls Championships returns to Rustington

The Bowls Championships will return to Rustington on 15-21 October. The championship welcomes bowlers of all levels and abilities and shoes and woods can be provided if you don't have your own.

To book, or for more information, please call the Rustington Centre on 01903 945301.

Volunteers' Week

As we reach the end of the financial year, we'd like to celebrate the significant contributions of our volunteers in the support they give to Members and the charity as a whole.



Volunteer Gavin Luke and Member Nick Barber

The last financial year has seen our volunteers generously give a total of 25,138 hours of their time for us - a significant achievement, especially as this is even more than last year's 20,000 hours.

This month, on 3-9 June, Blind Veterans UK will be celebrating Volunteer's Week. This is a national celebration to recognise the formidable efforts and impact volunteers give. To mark the →

occasion, all our volunteers will receive a card designed by Members to thank them personally for their continued support.

As a charity, we've been working hard to raise awareness about the volunteering opportunities available at the charity, and the incredible work our volunteers do.

We recently ran a social media campaign to attract more volunteers to our charity. This was a great success, reaching an audience of over 170,000

people new to our charity and resulting in 400 expressions of interest. We're still looking for new volunteers, so if you or someone you know is interested, please do get in touch at volunteer@blindveterans.org.uk or speak to your local community teams who will be happy to discuss the local volunteer opportunities available.

And to all our volunteers, we would like to extend our sincere thanks for all your incredible efforts and the time you give for our cause. Without you, we simply would not be able to do what we do.



The Member designed card

Iain Millard 1958-2024

We are very sad to let you know that Member and former staff member, Iain Millard, passed away in March, age 65.

Iain will be known to many of you as he worked as a massage and holistic therapist at our Brighton Centre for 15 years.

After serving in the RAF, Iain was discharged in 1990 after his eyesight had become affected by an uncommon genetic condition. Soon after this, he joined St Dunstan's and took on various forms of training until going back into education in the late 1990s. This is where he found an interest in massage and became proficient in many holistic techniques.

Iain took the opportunity to work at our Brighton Centre as an independent, self-employed therapist. He was a great support at the centre, providing treatments for staff, residents and holidaymakers alike.

He was also a very active runner and completed many marathons and half marathons in aid of Blind Veterans UK. In fact, in 2003, he was on the front cover of Review, having completed yet another London Marathon. He was also a keen golfer

“He was also a very active runner and completed many marathons and half marathons”

and bowls player, regularly competing in and winning competitions.

Iain was devoted to the charity and supported in many different ways, even helping to advise on equipment and the treatment room set-up at both Brighton and Rustington. →



Iain on the cover of Review

He also played a leading role in Member activities at the centre, such as pamper weeks, creating the programme himself and encouraging other Members who work as massage therapists to join him in providing treatments. He supported and mentored other Members who were interested in learning and working as

therapists, and helped to coordinate training and professional weekend studies together.

Happily, during his time working at the centre, Iain met Angie, who worked as a cashier. They married in 2018, and had a son, David.

All the staff at Blind Veterans UK would like to offer our sincere condolences to Angie, David and all their family. Iain was an asset to our charity and we are extremely grateful for everything he achieved. He will be missed. 🇬🇧



Colin Williamson at the Cenotaph in London, Remembrance 2023

D-Day 80 messages

As part of our D-Day 80 commemorations, our Chief Executive, Adrian Bell, and President of Blind Veterans UK, Colin Williamson, have recorded special messages which you can listen to by calling our freephone number 0800 160 1178.



Iain Millard



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

Welwyn Garden City lunch club

Welwyn Garden City lunch club is getting bigger by the month! Earlier in May, another three Members and friends/family joined the group. The lunch is mostly volunteer-led, but staff step in to help when needed. A few of the Members requested volunteer

leaflets and posters to distribute in their local venues and shops. They told staff at the event, "We tell everyone about Blind Veterans UK and really want to help raise more awareness of what you do and help get more volunteers to support lunches like this." It's great to be reminded that our Members are our best ambassadors! →



Welwyn Garden City lunch club



Welcome event

Welcome events in Reading and Portsmouth

It's been a busy time in the South! We recently had the privilege of running welcome events in Reading and Portsmouth, which was a great opportunity to bring new Members and their families into the fold. We enjoyed talks from external speakers and tips and stories were shared.

London lunch club

Members enjoyed a pub lunch in May, thanks largely to volunteer, Trevor,

who managed to bring Members to the event through some pretty grim East London traffic!



London Lunch club



Member Alex planting some seeds

Gardening in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, Members are getting involved in the Defence Garden Scheme's 10-week programme, which started this spring.

The scheme supports veterans and service leavers by aiming to help fill the gap in mental health support by increasing access to nature-based therapy. It's about creating the time and space for bespoke, holistic support. So far, Members have enjoyed digging potatoes at a nursing

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.



Hemel Hempstead lunch group

home, planting seeds from our very own National Wellbeing Creative Programme, and enjoying the sunshine while laying fresh bark chippings!

Great turnout in Hemel Hempstead

We had such an impressive turnout for Hemel Hempstead's monthly lunch group last week that we even needed an extra table! The group was joined by a representative from Hub Care Support West Hertfordshire, who brought along information flyers and freebies and chatted to everyone about the services they offer in the local areas. A great time was had by all.

Special thanks go to our brilliant volunteers whose support help make lunches like this possible. 🍷

We salute them

Our Chief Executive, Adrian Bell, talks about the remarkable planning and precision behind D-Day and the invaluable contributions of all the “small cogs” critical to its success.

When talking to our veterans about their experience of D-Day, many often dismiss or trivialise as unimportant the part they played. Many say that they were no more than a small cog in a huge enterprise.

However, when we take a step back and consider the scale and the ultimate success of that operation, it could not have succeeded without such commitment from so many people playing their part. This was an operation the like of which had never been done before and has never been done since.

In early 1944, Southwick House became the headquarters of the main allied commanders. Today, it still contains the original and unique Grade 1 listed, painted wooden map that fills an entire wall from floor to ceiling and side to side. It shows the south coast of Britain and the north coast of France, detailing ports of departure, landing beaches, convoy routes, minefields, tidal conditions, drop zones

and more. It was used both to monitor progress and to brief VIPs including King George, Churchill and de Gaulle.

It is said that the two carpenters who made the map in early 1944 were, on completion of their work, incarcerated benignly until after the invasion lest they spilled the secrets they had become so much a part of.

The coordination and control of all the activity was a huge task, and a very detailed and highly secret Operation Order was produced. This ran to some 700 pages and included details for all participants from tugboat skippers through landing craft coxswains to beach masters, who each received their own particular subsection detailing exactly what they had to do. These operation orders were collated, typed and dispatched by a small army of WRNS working under conditions of utmost secrecy.

On the day, 7,000 ships and landing craft and 198,000 naval personnel

supported by over 14,000 allied air sorties, were involved in landing some 156,000 troops on the five beaches in Normandy. Within a few days, 326,000 troops, 50,000 vehicles and 100,000 tonnes of stores and equipment had been landed.

But this was not without cost. There were over 10,000 casualties and 4,000 dead in the same period. By the end of June, over 850,000 men and 150,000 vehicles had been landed, my

grandfather among them.

Yes, many might consider themselves to be ‘just a small cog’, but without each and every one of them it’s likely that the eventual success would not have been forthcoming.

We salute them all and the part these brave men and women played not just in the invasion, but also in the ultimate defeat of Nazi Germany and the liberation of Europe. 🇬🇧

A message from our Royal Patron



Eighty years ago, the veterans featured in this magazine were the heroes of D-Day. Today, they are all supported by Blind Veterans UK, as they adapt to life with sight loss. These 15

men and one woman helped change the course of history, enduring the most terrifying of conditions with courage and dedication. We must never forget all they did.

Without the right support, sight loss would rob these brave Second World War veterans of their independence. Just as they worked together to make their mission a success, we can unite

to make sure they have the equipment and expert guidance they need.

As Patron of this charity, I see the wonderful ways lives are rebuilt. Thanks to our supporters, the blind veterans of D-Day and all our ex-Service men and women can win their battle with blindness.

HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh, GCOV

WIKIPEDIA CC

With love from the frontline

The letter from former St Dunstaner, Arthur Finney, which provides a glimpse into the horror of D-Day

With preparations for the 80th anniversary in full swing last month, we were delighted to receive an email to our archive by the niece of Lt. Arthur Finney, a blind veteran the charity started supporting in 1945.



Arthur Finney in Service

Arthur came to us after losing his sight at the end of the war and his niece shared with us some interesting information about him, including the letters he sent from the frontline in Normandy in June 1944.

Serving with the Royal Artillery, Lt. Finney joined up just a week before the outbreak of war in 1939. On 3 June 1944, he started writing a letter to his family at home and continued to add to it until 8 June.

He begins by saying, **“By the time you get this, I shall have landed on the other side.”** It seemed that life for Arthur was quite enjoyable at this stage. He even describes it as **“far too comfortable... but very boring.”**

He goes on: **“The ship is all American and the food terrific. Typically Yank: fried chicken and fruit juice and eggs and cranberry sauce.”**

“One thing I and all of us miss is tea. There isn’t an ounce on board! Though the coffee which we drink all day long is perfect and with real cream.”

By Monday 5 June, Arthur writes: **“On the move at last, I hope it won’t be long now. I’m treating this whole ‘do’ as a picnic. I hope I can keep it up... Au revoir for a spell.”**

He then writes: **“D-Day”** and describes the journey across the Channel, writing: **“sailing all night and it has been very rough. Lots of the chaps are sitting about with their ‘bags vomit’ clutched between their knees...wallowing in a wicked sea, waiting to go in.”**

The letter then jumps to 8 June: **“Well, here we are. It’s 48 hours since I’ve slept, fed or washed, but life and its preservation has been far too hectic. I’ve decided the ‘picnic’ is off... Somebody once said ‘war is hell’. That isn’t the half of it.”**

He describes occupying **“a deluxe fox hole, which keeps caving in on top of me”**. He adds, **“I’d far sooner wash than eat or sleep if I had the choice... I’ve sand in every pore.”**

He goes on to request the family send “cigarettes by the hundred” and “the

“I’ve decided the ‘picnic’ is off... Somebody once said ‘war is hell’. That isn’t the half of it”

overseas Daily Mirror” before ending the final instalment with the line: **“sorry I must away now. Work of a lethal nature to do. I’ll write again soon. Love to everyone. Don’t worry.”**

Arthur’s sight loss a year later was due to the most unusual cause. As his niece Sue tells it, his regiment had met the Russians in Germany and a celebration dinner was planned. The British were tasked with sourcing the food; the Russians, the drink.

Unfortunately, the Russian soldiers decided to make their own alcohol using V2 rocket fuel as the base. Many Russian soldiers died the following day and Arthur, who only drank a small amount to be polite in the toasts, woke the next day to discover he’d completely lost his sight.

He went on to train with St Dunstan’s in leatherwork and his shop was opened by the then Queen Elizabeth, later The Queen Mother. According to his obituary in the Review in 1979, he had a long association with Guide Dogs as an organiser in the North West. 🐕



Joe



Bob



Thomas



Peggy



Alec



George

Heroes of D-Day

For the 80th anniversary of D-Day, we commissioned portraits of 16 Members who served in the invasion, taken by photographer Richard Cannon. We share these over the following pages, starting with our Navy veterans.

Joe Turpin, 98

Joe was 19 when he was sent to protect the Mulberry harbour off Omaha Beach.

“It was a slaughterhouse... We couldn't do a thing for them... A lot of good men must have died that day. It's a shame. 6th June. I'll never forget it. What a waste of life. That's war.”

Bob Gravells, 99

At just 18, Bob served as a DEMS gunner, protecting soldiers. You can read his full story on page 26.

“The American soldiers were wonderful chaps, and the Dutch fellows as well... To this day, I never knew what did happen to them; whether they got back.”

Thomas Cuthbert, 98

Thomas, then 18, served on a landing barge oiler, tasked with refuelling landing craft off the French coast.

“The amount of ships going to France, and the amount of planes flying above... I wouldn't want any youngsters to go through that.”

Peggy Harding, 102

As a Royal Navy Linguist, Peggy, then 22, was on duty the night before D-Day in the direction-finding tower near Dover.

“It was very obvious something was going to happen. You could tell. It peeved me considerably that we were not told what was going on.”

Alec Penstone, 99

Serving as cover force, Alec, then 19, had the job of detecting enemy submarines and U-boats.

“If the invasion hadn't taken hold; if we hadn't managed to land our troops on the beaches there, this world would have been a very different place.”

George Chandler, 99

George was also 19 when he served as a gunner in an escort taking American soldiers to Omaha Beach.

“The Germans were using these young Americans as cannon fodder. I'll never forget those brave young men fighting and dying as they struggled to get off the beach.” 🇬🇧



Harry



John



Richard



Ken



George



Bill

Heroes of D-Day

A staggering 156,000 troops landed in Normandy in an unprecedented operation fraught with danger. These brave Members, all D-Day army veterans, were among them

Harry Howarth

Harry was 21 when he was in the first wave on Sword Beach. Very sadly he passed away not long after his portrait was taken, aged 102.

“All of us got off the beach unharmed, but then a German tank swept the beach so there were a lot killed.”

John McOwan, 103

Serving in the 7th Armoured Division of the famous Desert Rats, John, then 23, had to avoid snipers

and mines on Gold Beach. You can read his full story on page 28.

“We managed to get off the beach without any casualties. The troops had cleared several miles of the enemy, so we were able to get a few miles inland... Wars do no good to anybody. All they leave behind is misery and grief.”

Richard Aldred, 99

Serving with the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, tank driver Richard arrived in Normandy

after D-Day as reinforcement. His eldest brother died in the war.

“We lost a hell of a lot of good, good people, and the Jerries did as well. People go on about this and that, but had we been born in Germany we would have been in the German army.”

Ken Hobbs

Ken, then 21, served with the Royal Army Corps. Very sadly, he passed away soon after his portrait was taken, aged 101.

“You had to do it and we just did it; that was it... I was one of the lucky ones who got through, but we lost a lot of men.”

Raymond Grose, 100

Then 20, Raymond landed at Arromanches just after D-Day with

the Royal Army Ordnance Corps

“Bombs were going off everywhere around you, shells mostly. It was a bit hairy at times, but you get used to it.”

George Simpson, 100

At the age of 20, George was in the second flotilla and remembers the carnage on the beach.

“We had to carry the dead into the hospital. I think of it now - some of the boys I was with that never made it - and I feel fortunate.”

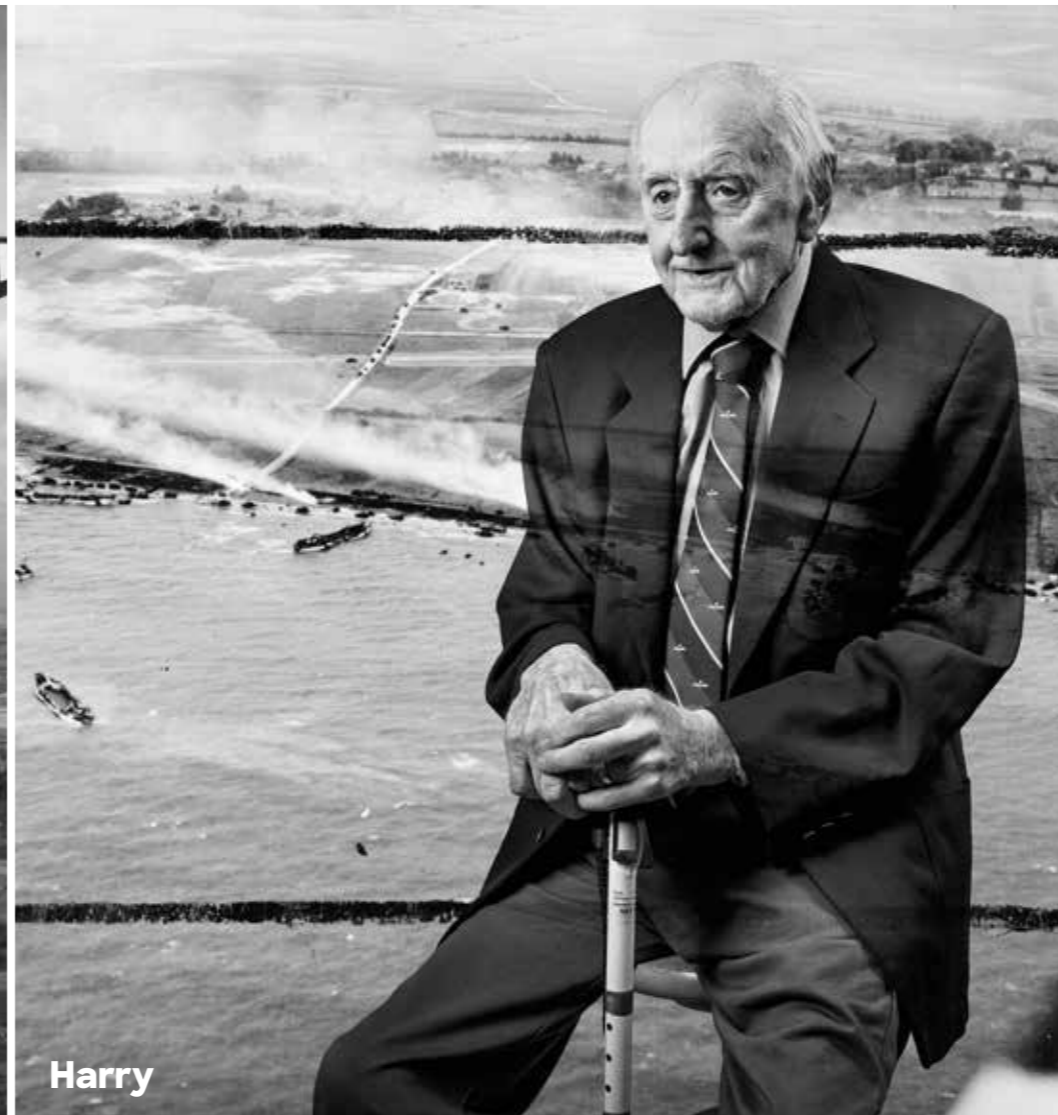
Bill Gann, 100

Bill, then 20, was a motorcyclist for the Royal Army Service Corps.

“When we landed, the beach was burning... We didn't have much time for emotion. We weren't prepared for it; we just took it as it comes.” 🍷



Syd



Harry



John

Heroes of D-Day

Eighty years ago, Members John, Syd and Harry served their country from the air, defending Allied ships from enemy attack and flying men into battle

Syd Podd, 101
Serving with 644 Squadron, Syd, then 21, flew Halifax Bombers and towed gliders into Normandy.

"The enormity of it is... well, I'm still amazed at it, to be honest. To think of the arranging and planning to get all that? It's out of this world really."

Harry Garthwaite, 103
Pilot Officer, Harry, then 24, had the job of flying military personnel to strategic locations. You can read his full story is over the page.

"For part of the day I was based at Down Ampney Airfield where I saw thousands of army men being launched towards France in sky tugs and gliders."

John Haddock, 101
At age 21, John was a navigator in a

Bristol Beaufighter, responsible for attacking German ships intent on destroying Allied forces.

"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." 🇬🇧

■ Listen to our special D-Day podcast at blindveterans.org.uk/ddaypodcast

Recollections of D-Day

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings, we share the extraordinary first-hand experiences of our Members Bob and Harry

Harry, 104, D-Day Pilot Officer

On 6 June 1944, Harry, a pilot officer, was at Hawkinge airfield getting prepared for early morning flights.



Harry Garthwaite

Flying officers to Normandy

He was to fly senior army officers to airfields near strategic points involved in the operation. In the plane waiting, they heard a station tannoy announcement.

He says, "We were starting to taxi out when the tannoy on the aerodrome went. One of the officers tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Cut your engines, please. I'd like to hear this announcement.'

"It was saying that the invasion had taken place and the landing had been achieved and everything was going satisfactorily."

Bringing back the wounded

He was then cleared to take off, and flew throughout the south of England, dropping the senior officers



Harry, aged 19, having just received his wings with his very proud Father

off at each location they went to.

Part of the day he was based at Down Ampney airfield where he saw thousands of army men being launched towards France in sky tugs and gliders.

Two days after D-Day, Harry flew to Normandy, taking more Army officers over and bringing walking wounded back to England. He used the landing strips that the Royal Engineers had built across the region.



Harry with a Blenheim at the Imperial War Museum factory, 2017

Witnessing a concentration camp at Belsen-Bergen

Over the next few months his base continued to follow the front down through France and then through Belgium, Holland and finally into Germany.

There, Harry entered the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp the day after liberation and saw first-hand hideously thin freed prisoners wandering around and mass graves being uncovered. It was incredibly →

D-DAY80

traumatic for him to experience. “It wasn’t very nice at all. Mass graves. The sergeants put up notices: ‘150,000 buried here and 80,000 in this grave.’”

Meeting celebrities

A happier story is that Harry and his crew met film stars during a trip to southern France. As they were swimming in the sea, a boat approached and the American men on board asked if they were enjoying themselves. Harry said he was.

It turned out to be Bob Hope, Frances Langford and Gail Patrick who were in the middle of their tour of the American forces in Europe.

A fear of heights

Harry reckons he flew 23 different aircraft (including a German one) for a total of 2,231 hours - of which 517 were operational - but he’s still afraid of heights.

He says, “I can’t stand heights. I’m terrified on the top of the ladder, but the first flight I took never worried me. As long as the plane’s moving, I’m moving.”

A special birthday

He celebrates his 104th birthday two days before the D-Day anniversary on 4 June. We wish him the happiest of days.



Bob Gravells

Bob, 99, D-Day Gunner

At 18, Bob was called up to serve his country. He opted for the Navy, trained as a gunner and served on DEMs (Defensively Equipped Merchant ships) as having gunners on board gave some protection to the crew.

The Merchant Navy had suffered terrible losses in the Battle of the Atlantic. Bob served in the Atlantic until May 1944, when he was assigned to a new ship for D-Day, sailing under the Dutch flag and sent to the south coast of England.

Meeting the Americans

He says, “Then 68 American soldiers

came on board and in the early hours of D-Day, we set off. There was a very, very big flotilla of ships. It was a very choppy, windy day and the sea was rough and, consequently, some of the poor soldiers were seasick.

“One I remember, while he was being ill, his helmet fell off and it went into the sea. He was a bit concerned because there was no spare for him and so we gave him one of ours.”

Having shot down an enemy aircraft flying overhead, Bob said good luck to his new friends as they disembarked.

“What worried me was that the chap with the English helmet on stood out a bit from the others. But it was too late to do anything about that. They just disappeared into the dawn light. Nothing else we could do for them. Just pray for them and hope they were alright.”

Seeing the battle

Bob’s crew returned to Cowes to transport a group of British soldiers who were obviously concerned about what lay ahead. This time they went to Sword Beach, the English beach near Arromanches.

He remembers going ashore and having a look around and watching a big British battleship fire volleys

of shells into France, which was a magnificent sight. He says, “I always remembered my days in the in the Navy. I learned a lot about life.”

A return to the beaches

Bob re-visited the beaches 10 years ago and is due to go again for the 80th anniversary with his daughter. His devoted family are also planning a 100th birthday party for him in August.

An avid Arsenal football fan, Bob is also a poet and his family all love their birthday poems he’s written. He says his writing has also helped him come to terms with all that he experienced during the war. 🇬🇧

■ **One of Bob’s poems appears in our commemorative magazine, D-Day: In their own words, which you can find on our website, at blindveterans.org.uk/dday**

Read about more D-Day veterans in our commemorative magazine at [blind veterans.org.uk/D-Day80](http://blindveterans.org.uk/D-Day80)

D-DAY 80



Member John today and when he was in service

A legacy shared

D-Day veteran, John, 103, relives the Landings in the hope that it will inspire others to support future veterans, as he has done, with a gift in their Will

In 1939, at the age of 18, John McOwan enlisted in the TA “naively not giving much thought to the imminence of war.”

But just months later the Second World War broke out and John soon found himself in the North African desert fighting for his country.

With experience of repairing clocks in his father’s jewellery shop, John was quickly transferred to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Corp as an instrument mechanic.

He maintained the equipment of the 7th Armoured Division of the famous Desert Rats until his unit was sent to join the D-Day invasion.

“The destination of the landing was kept secret. We were in sealed camps before we embarked at Felixstowe to sail the English Channel overnight. The only contact we had was getting rations in.

“We’d been waiting to go on the second front for years. When it did come, we realised we had to get a

foothold on D-Day itself.” They laid anchor off the beaches and waited for the order.

“Not all the troops could disembark on the first day, so some of us had to lay for some time before we could get ashore, which wasn’t very comfortable when we were under fire from the Luftwaffe.

“It was an epic sight actually, to see so many ships in one area, that one had the feeling you could almost walk from one ship to another - there were over 1,000 craft in the Channel at that time. Eventually we did embark on LCTs.”

Once they landed, John had to safely navigate his vehicle up the beach.

“We landed quite safely on what was known as Gold beach, although the beach was under fire from snipers and artillery further back.

“We had to drive off the ramp onto the beach in a marked lane that had been cleared of mines, being careful to keep the vehicles within the lines.

“We managed to get off the beach without any casualties. The troops had cleared several miles of the enemy, so we were able to get a few miles inland. We ended up at a place called Bayeux until there was a big battle at Falaise.

There, the Germans suffered a heavy defeat, and we were able to proceed from there and eventually out through Belgium and Holland and into Germany.”

After the war, John tried to put those memories behind him and get on with his life, but the 75th anniversary of D-Day brought it all back. He went back to Normandy with other D-Day veterans and kept a diary of his experience.

At the age of 101, spurred on by a passion to denounce war, John wrote and published his wartime memoirs - which quickly sold out. He gave part of the proceeds to Blind Veterans UK to say thank you for the support he’s received.

He says, “Everything the charity does makes a huge difference to our quality of life. That’s why I’m also pledging a gift in my Will to them, so that future veterans can receive the same outstanding help I have. I hope that others will join me in pledging a gift for future veterans too.” 🇬🇧

■ **If you’d like to join John in pledging a gift, request our Gifts in Wills guide by contacting Alice on 020 7616 7923, email us at giftsinwills@blindveterans.org.uk, or visit our website at blindveterans.org.uk/leaveagift**

From coronations to comedy

During a recent visit to our Rustington Centre, Member **Richard Holmes** spoke to Blind Veterans UK's Sheena Thomson about his remarkable musical career

Past visitors to Ovingdean may have had the pleasure of hearing Member and accomplished musician, Richard Holmes, play the piano. But perhaps they do not know the extent and success of his musical talent.

When Richard became a chorister at the age of six, he was taught the



Richard Holmes

piano and organ by his choirmaster. At 14, he started playing the piano in local hotel dance bands in Brighton, Worthing and Littlehampton. His route into uniform was, like so many at that time, via his national service obligation.

"I had to do national service and I thought at the time it would be better to join as a musician. I served from 1952 to 55 as a regular attached to the RAF Central Band. I was fortunate enough to be in one of the marching bands at the 1953 Coronation, for which I received a medal."

Unsurprisingly, this was the most iconic highlight of his service career. He says, "Every day we would do a route march around Uxbridge, where we were stationed. We were marching and playing to build up stamina for the 14 miles we would march on the actual day of the coronation.



NORMAN HARTNELL / WIKIPEDIA CC

Coronation portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, June 1953

"It was tough, but it was also a laugh as well. For instance, we immediately followed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for ten and a half miles, so as well as playing the trumpet in the pouring rain, we had to avoid the natural waste from the horses."

After the Coronation, Richard went on to perform in a band escorting members of the Royal Family in official UK tours, military tattoos, and The Royal Tournament. He was also a member of the RAF dance band.

When he left the RAF, he continued

his musical career by entering the world of entertainment.

"I went straight to the London West End playing in the nightclubs, theatres and hotels as a pianist/arranger. That gradually developed into conducting, writing, composing for television and arranging orchestra overtures.

"I spent 20 years developing my career from the nightclub scene to the theatre, then working consistently for the BBC and ITV."

Richard is very humble about his career, modestly chatting through →

“I was the orchestra pianist for all the BBC Morecambe and Wise shows”

his impressive career highlights, saying, “The Jack of Clubs in Brewer Street was my first night club, and my first theatre was the Victoria Palace. In the early 80s, I did a year as conductor on the Sound of Music at the Apollo Theatre with Petula Clark.

“I was the orchestra pianist for all the BBC Morecambe and Wise shows, including the Christmas specials. The only show I didn’t do was the famous sketch featuring Andre Previn ‘playing the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order’.

“I was, however, playing for the famous Angela Rippon dance sketch, and other well-known highlights, including the Shirley Bassey and Glenda Jackson sketches. It was fantastic working with Morcombe and Wise.”

Richard also performed across the world: “I toured America, Australia and the continent a lot, and worked with Andy Williams, Howard Keil and others. When I wasn’t touring, I was doing Abbey Road session recordings and shows like Top of the Pops.”

“In 1982, I conducted for the Royal Variety show at the Palladium and was presented to the Queen. Tim Rice was hosting and Elaine Page was on the bill with hits from the 60s, as well as the famous Folies Bergère dance girls.”

During the 80s and 90s, Richard moved to composing for drama and light entertainment. He’s credited with the theme tunes to the Fortunes of War (1987), winning Ivor Novello and BAFTA awards, and A Fine Romance (1981), starring Judy Dench, among many others.

These days, at the age of 89, Richard still maintains an active interest in music, within the limits of his sight issues which developed due to glaucoma.

Richard first experienced glaucoma in the 60s and 70s, but over the years it became more serious. He found out about Blind Veterans UK through fellow Member Tony Halliday, an old childhood music friend and Brighton Centre resident.

“Becoming a Member of Blind Veterans UK has had a very positive impact on my life. I can’t express enough enthusiasm; how helpful everyone has been and how good it has been for me. I’m so grateful to all those who have supported me.” 🇬🇧



Listen here



Member Billy Baxter using his laptop

Veteran ID card

Our Digital Inclusion team tells you how to apply for the new veteran ID card and how they can help

The HM Armed Forces Veteran Card is a way to prove that you served in the Armed Forces. The card can make it quicker and easier to apply for support as a veteran. It was officially launched by the government in early 2024 and is completely free.

Who can get a veteran ID card?
You can apply if you were in the

regulars or reserves for the:

- Royal Navy
- Army
- Royal Air Force
- Royal Marines

How do I apply?

Applications can be made online and you also have the option to complete and return a paper





A Member using a magnifier

application form. The Office for Veterans Affairs has advised online applications take eight weeks to process, whereas paper applications take four months.

To apply, you'll need:

- Your service number for your last period of service
- Your National insurance number
- The approximate year you started and ended your service – it doesn't need to be exact.
- A recent passport style photo

The online application form can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/veteran-card>

To order a paper application get in touch with the Veterans UK Helpline at veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk or by calling them on **0808 1914 218**.

Help with your online application

We know that doing tasks online can feel very daunting if you're not used to it, or if it's become increasingly difficult due to your sight loss.

Accessibility features

All computers, smart phones and tablets have built in accessibility features which may be helpful for people with sight loss.

- **Screen magnification** – enlarges the content
- **VoiceOver** – reads the content on the screen aloud
- **Shortcuts/gestures** – helps you find your way around

The Digital Inclusion team can help you access these features and help in other ways too. We can help you set up your device, provide training and help with troubleshooting. Just contact our MeSH Helpline on **01273 391447**.



HM Armed Forces Veteran ID card



Listen here

Meet Paul from our Digital Inclusion team

Technology Practitioner, Paul Twilley, gives you the lowdown on what the Digital Inclusion team can do for you

My journey began with experiences in public transport and private bus tours before a friend who worked for the charity when it was known as St Dunstan's, encouraged me to apply for an upcoming driver position.

I took the leap, and steadily progressed to end up as Manager of our transport team in Brighton.

During the pandemic, my responsibilities shifted to support our charity's evolving needs. One significant project involved establishing and operating a Covid-19 testing facility at our former centre in Brighton.

As we gradually moved away from the strict Covid-19 restrictions, I temporarily stepped into the role of a Community Support Worker within the Region 5 team. Reconnecting with our Members was truly rewarding.

Recently, I've joined the Digital Inclusion team, where I feel incredibly fortunate to be working as part

of a fantastic team alongside our wonderful Members.

I can assist you in the following ways:

- teach you to how to use iPhone magnification
- help you to access talking books via your phone or Alexa
- help you start using your computer
- conduct sessions on iPhone usage at Apple stores

Every interaction makes an impact. I still remember when I helped a Member read a letter independently using his phone. The difference it made to him was incredible as it was a milestone he hadn't achieved since losing his sight. It's a memory I'll hold onto forever.

If you're struggling to work your computer or smart phone, or need any kind of tech support, don't hesitate to reach out to your CSW or call the MeSH helpline on **01273 391 447**. We're here to provide the support you need.

Service spotlight

During a recent visit to the Rustington Centre, Member **George Connolly** spoke to Blind Veteran UK's Sheena Thomson about his time in service

Sheena: How did you end up joining the army and deciding to become an armourer?

George: "I went to the recruitment office in Liverpool because I hated my first job as an office boy and wanted something more. As I had been to grammar school and scored reasonable marks on the intelligence tests, I qualified for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) and joined at 17 years old.

"I joined the Army at a training camp in Blandford, Dorset. On one occasion, I went to the Armourers shop with a rifle that needed some attention. When I got there everyone was sat around a potbellied stove, and they started chatting to me about what I wanted to do. My original intention was to become something like a vehicle mechanic, but they advised me that as a regular soldier, a career as an armourer is ideal.

"I then went to St George's Barracks,



Gosport, and completed nine months trade training learning fitting skills; how to repair pistols, rifles and machine guns. This included original Lee Enfield rifles and 7.62 FN rifles; all small arms used by the army.

"After a promotion to Lance Corporal, I was posted to the Ulster Rifles who were serving at Iserlohn, near

Dortmund. Despite their name, they were never allowed to serve in the United Kingdom.

"I mainly did weapon repairs, but as an infantry regiment they exercised regularly, so I went with them too. They were in the transition, converting to using armoured cars.

"I was in HQ Company, mainly support staff, so it wasn't too arduous a tour. We didn't have to do guard duties. It was a good tour."

Sheena: You were diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy following a car accident and then registered blind a few years later in 2008 after injuring yourself in a fall. What difference has it made to your life being a Member of Blind Veterans UK?

George: "The main impact of my diagnosis was when I lost my driving licence and job. I had a well-paid job as a manager of a well-known car dealership. I was in my early 60s, so I just stopped working.

"My introduction to Blind Veterans UK was via my Eye Clinic Liaison Officer, Maria Pikulski-Hughes (Member and Vice President who sadly passed away in August 2022) at my eye clinic. She helped me fill out the forms and I then had to have an assessment in London.

"Rustington is just amazing. I'm so impressed with the centre and the people there are lovely"

I didn't think I would qualify to become a Member as I can still see; I just don't have peripheral vision.

"Luckily, I qualified. I then went to the old Sheffield Centre and I was introduced to a whole new world. Blind Veterans UK is a lovely community, full of nice people. You don't feel lost because you always have someone to speak to.

"I feel my eyesight is deteriorating now and being a Member makes me feel supported and not on my own."

Sheena: You've been a frequent visitor to both our Brighton and Llandudno Centres over the years and even celebrated your 50th wedding anniversary at Llandudno with your late wife in 2012. This is your first visit to Rustington. What do think of the town?

George: "Rustington is just amazing. I'm so impressed with the centre and the people there are lovely. I would love to return in the summer." 🍷

Watching TV with a vision impairment

Many of us rely on our television for information, entertainment and connection – and having sight loss doesn't need to mean missing out...

Thanks to smart TV technology, our television services are becoming increasingly accessible for everyone, including people who are blind or partially sighted.

New smart TVs

New 'smart TVs' come with a whole range of accessibility features. Alternatively, you can buy extra devices like, for example, a Sky TV box or Fire TV stick, which add smart accessibility features to the TV you already have.

We've listed the features we think you might find particularly useful. Some of these can be a little fiddly to set up, so you may find you need a bit of help to get started.

Accessibility features

Modern television sets are equipped with features designed to make them easier to use for those with low vision. For example, some models give you the option to change the size of the text and change the contrast on the menu.

Many modern TVs also have built-in 'screen readers', which convert on-screen text and menus into spoken

“Do your research online if you can and always ask the sales assistant about the accessibility features available”

ALEXTYPE / ADOBE STOCK



A television remote control

words. With these, you can use your remote control to navigate around and the voice to guide you.

How much information the TV will read depends on the make and model, so it's best to ask before you buy.

Audio description (AD)

Audio description, often referred to as AD, acts like a verbal storyteller, providing spoken narration of the visual elements happening on the screen.

Sadly, not all programmes have AD yet - by law, only 10 per cent of broadcast TV programmes are required to include it - but efforts are underway to make more widely available.

The hope is that the amount of AD on catch-up and on-demand TV (like BBC iPlayer and Netflix) will increase too, allowing everyone to enjoy a broader range of content.

Voice commands

Voice control features have become a game-changer for television accessibility.

Some modern remote controls support voice commands, enabling users to change channels, adjust volume, and navigate TV menus using spoken instructions.

For example:

■ Sky Q's remote control features 'Voice Control,' which allows →

users to speak into the remote and issue commands to the TV.

- Amazon's Fire TV stick enables you to use voice commands for things like opening particular apps or searching YouTube.

Choosing the right TV

It can be tricky to decide which TV to buy and which features you might find most useful.

Here are our tips:

- If possible, shop in person so you get a chance to try out the device



DANUT VIERU/ ADOBE STOCK

Fire TV stick

before you buy. It's also worth checking the remote control is going to be easy for you to use.

- Do your research online if you can and always ask the sales assistant about the accessibility features available.
- Use add-on technology on the TV you already have. With the Fire TV stick, for example, you can plug it into the back of your TV (with an HDMI connector) and use the voice control feature, as well as the 'Voice View' screen reader.

But before you rush out to the shops...

You might want to make sure you're making the best of the TV you've got!

For example, try asking yourself:

- Is the contrast or brightness too low?
- Would I benefit from moving the TV to avoid glare?
- Would a set of headphones or a speaker help me hear the TV better?
- Could I benefit from a bigger screen or moving my chair nearer to the TV?

Small tweaks like these can make all the difference to your experience. 🎧

- For more sight loss resources, go to blindveterans.org.uk/resources



Our Victory Over Blindness commemorative coins

Member voice

Tim Eckersley, our Member Engagement and Military Lead, shares the latest news and updates...

Monthly Member Engagement Survey

Every month we ask for your feedback on a specific area of our work. This month, we are seeking feedback from



Scan the QR code to take part online

beneficiaries who have joined the charity since April 2021 about our Membership application process.

You can submit your answers at blindveterans.org.uk/monthlysurvey or via email to the Member Engagement Team at MET@blindveterans.org.uk

Alternatively, you can tell us what you think over the phone by calling **01273 391447**. →



Fundraising at Manchester Piccadilly Station

Feedback from March's monthly survey

By Jess Wood, National Volunteering Lead

Thank you to all those who provided feedback on volunteering via the March monthly survey.

The aim of the questions was to understand the level of awareness of volunteering among the Membership.

Firstly, we are delighted that you rate our current volunteering service so highly, and that our volunteers are so valued by you.

However, it's clear that there's more we can do to let you

know about the volunteering opportunities available.

Based on your feedback, we will also explore the possibility of creating new volunteering roles which may be more appealing for Members, so you can support the charity in a variety of ways.

We will continue to work with colleagues across the charity to make sure that we celebrate our volunteers and share new opportunities with you.

Monthly survey: Membership application process since April 2021

How did you submit your Membership application form?

- Online
- Postal
- Email

How would you rate the clarity of the instructions provided during the application process?

- Very clear
- Clear
- Unclear
- Very unclear

Did you encounter any difficulties or challenges while completing the application form?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify:

How satisfied were you with the level of support and assistance provided by our team during the application process?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Very Unsatisfied

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for improving the application process to make it more user-friendly and efficient? →

Military Engagement Dinners

The Military Engagement Dinners celebrate our military heritage, strengthen our relationships with the Service community, and create an incredibly special and memorable event. If you would like to be involved, contact the Member Engagement Team by emailing MET@blindveterans.org.uk.

Date and Venue

- 21st June 2024 - HMS Sultan, Gosport
- 30th August 2024 - Petwood Hotel, Woodhall Spa
- 11th October 2024 - RAF Honington





Caption: Members Alwyn and Barry receiving Founder's Awards

HMS Drake, Plymouth Military Dinner

Our first Military Dinner this year was held on the 26 April 2024 at HMS Drake, Plymouth. This is the first of a series of Military Dinners taking place in 2024.

Fifty people attended the afternoon of celebrations, as we recognised the achievements of Members and volunteers through our Founder's Awards. For the winners, the day was made all the more special as each award was presented by a member of



HMS Drake's Command, and the Lord Mayor of Plymouth.

Blind Veterans UK has a long-standing history with HMS Drake. Plymouth-based sailors suffering sight loss in the First and Second World Wars were sent to St Dunstan's for aftercare after receiving initial treatment at Plymouth's Royal Navy and Military Hospitals.

In recognition of our history and enduring friendship, our Director of Operations, Gary Brunskill presented the Naval base Commander, Brigadier Mike Tanner, OBE Royal



Caption: Founder's Awards winners, including Lee (top right, middle)

Marines, with a limited-edition Blind Veterans UK sterling silver coin and an accompanying framed biography, commemorating one of the first 16 war-blinded veterans of 1915.

The Naval base was overjoyed to have us there and serving personnel and Members alike, shared stories. It was fantastic to bring everyone together.

“It was such a great experience and so nice to be back on a military base again”

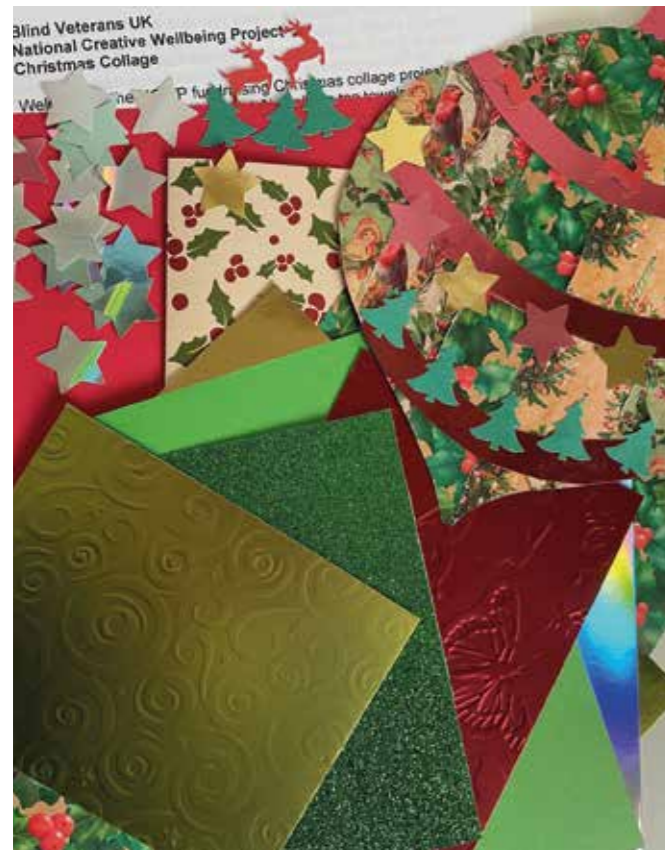


Member Barry Woon, 95, felt very emotional to be back on the base where he served. He said, “This has been a remarkable day; it's been over 40 years since I have been inside HMS Drake, I stood where I used to run Field Gun and actually ate dinner in what was the old Drill Shed, I will never forget it.”

Member Lee Whitfield, 48, was equally as thrilled, saying, “It was such a great experience and so nice to be back on a Military base again. All our Members should get involved in these dinners. Thank you for everything.” 🇬🇧

National Creative Wellbeing Programme

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



Christmas collage

To sign up to or find out more about the following creative activities or hobby circles, simply call the number **01273 391447**. You can leave a message on our answer machine if you'd just like to request an activity pack, or visit our Member area at

blindveterans.org.uk/activitykit

to sign up online. All our projects come with VI and reader-friendly instructions, as well as the option of audio on a USB stick if requested.

Art:

Watercolour Pencils: These pencils may look like ordinary colouring pencils, but when activated with a drop of water on a paintbrush they turn into watercolour paint! Being able to draw your shapes first and place the colour before painting makes it easier to plan out and contain the colours, while still being able to create expressive painted artwork. With this medium, you are drawing and painting at the same time. In your pack you will receive pencils, brushes and watercolour paper, as well as a high contrast tape alongside an instruction guide to get you started.

Collaborative Craft:

Christmas Collage: Following the success of the hot air balloon tea



Sketchbook

towels, this is an opportunity for you to create artwork for the charity's Christmas merchandise. It may seem a strange time of year for this, but we need plenty of time to prepare for the Festive period! You will receive a bauble template, glue and a variety of paper and card collage materials to make your own design, with some pre-cut shapes to use if you wish. Submission deadline is 1 August 2024 and everyone who takes part will receive a tea towel as a memento.

Mosaic:

Flower Moon Mosaic: We've chosen a cheerful "man in the moon" base for this mosaic. In celebration of the brighter summer months, the design contains special Sakura flower tiles. You'll receive a 20cm base, colour labelled and separated tiles, a step-by-step design guide and everything else you'll need for your mosaic.

■ **A note about mosaics:** If you can, please store any spare tiles from your mosaic kits somewhere safe along with a set of tweezers from the pack. At the end of 2024, we'll be offering a "Christmas Leftovers" mosaic pack to use up your spares and make a special coaster with your own unique design.

Drawing:

Seaside Sketchbook: This sketching kit is suitable for any drawing ability, even beginners. You will receive a variety of specially-chosen art materials for visually impaired artists, two sketchbooks and some →



Flower Moon Mosaic



Watercolour pencils

tactile prompts to get started with the basics of drawing and sketching.

We'd love to see what you create – if you'd like to share your work, or just want to get in touch, please email us at 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 NCWP staff and our member volunteers, Members meet monthly on the phone for a

chat about specific areas of shared interest. You can join the group via blindveterans.org.uk/virtualgroup

Painting & Drawing: For amateur and experienced artists to share tips and hints and talk about your current creative projects. We are looking for more members to join this group so it can be re-started from late summer. If you are interested, please get in touch. To be held on the second Tuesday of the month at 11am.

Wool work: For Members to chat about their latest knitting or crochet projects with wool. All abilities welcome, a friendly group to support and inspire! Held on the third Thursday of the month at 10am.

Woodwork: For those of you interested in woodwork, woodturning, wooden model making and more. This group offers peer support and encouragement with your wooden model projects. Held on the last Thursday of the month at 11am.

Gardening: For amateur gardeners and Members who have signed up for our gardening projects. This group aims to offer peer support with VI friendly gardening, no matter the size of your garden, greenhouse, or windowsill! Held on the first Tuesday of the month at 11am. 🌱



Quiz time

Answers on Page 55

Test your D-Day knowledge and learn more about one of the pivotal campaigns in World War II that not only helped liberate a continent, but eventually stopped the Nazi war machine

1. **D-Day was part of a large-scale operation. What was the code-name of this operation?**

2. **D-Day was the Allied invasion of which part of Europe?**

3. **The invasion launched on 6 June 1944, but what day was it actually planned for before being moved because of the weather?**

4. **What was the code name for the naval phase of the invasion?**

5. **Where did the Germans believe the Allies were going to land?**

6. **What factors were needed for a successful D-Day landing?**
a) Full moon and low tide
b) Overcast and high wind
c) New moon and high tide
d) Sun setting and low tide

7. **Who was the over all commander of the D-Day invasion?**

8. **Which country joined with the United States and Britain to provide a majority of the invasion troops?**

9. **Roughly how many Allied troops landed on the first day of the invasion?**
a) 10,000 b) 50,000 c) 150,000

10. **What group led the first wave of D-Day invaders?**



WAR OFFICE / WIKIPEDIA



Scan the QR code to take part online



Family news

Richard Aldred who celebrates his 100th birthday on 3 July 2024.

Geoffrey Ashman who celebrates his 100th birthday on 2 July 2024.

Evelyn Brooks who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 5 June 2024.

Peter Cresswell who celebrates his 100th birthday on 7 June 2024.

June Franks who celebrates her 100th birthday on 12 June 2024.

Harry Garthwaite who celebrates his 104th birthday on 4 June 2024.

Ronald Giles who celebrates his 100th birthday on 18 June 2024.

Joan Grocott who celebrates her 101st birthday on 13 June 2024.

Owen Hillier who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 5 April 2024

Joseph Jervis who celebrates his 101st birthday on 19 June 2024.

John Lacey who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 13 June 2024.

Raymond Roberts who celebrates his 100th birthday on 27 June 2024.

Jack Rothwell who celebrates his 101st birthday on 2 July 2024.

Edward Shipley who celebrates his 100th birthday on 10 June 2024.

William Simpson who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 2 July 2024.

Dennis Steer who celebrates his 100th birthday on 2 July 2024.

Condolences

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

Peggy Hillier who died on 1 April 2024. She was the wife of Owen Hillier.

Gillian Hopkins who died on 21 April 2024. She was the wife of Gerald Douglas Hopkins.

Sheila Sefton who died on 28 March 2024. She was the wife of Gordon Sefton.



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

Christopher Ansom of Leicester, Leicestershire died on 8 April 2024 aged 67. He served as a Driver in the Royal Corps of Transport.

Michael John Ashman of Epsom, Surrey died on 5 April 2024 aged 95. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Norfolk Regiment.

Donald Walter Ashurst of Sale, Cheshire died on 4 December 2023 aged 92. He served as a Leading Engineering Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

John Atkin of Gloucester, Gloucestershire died on 6 May 2024 aged 84. He served as a Leading Ordnance Electrical Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

Derek Malcom Baker of St. Neots, Cambridgeshire died on 30 March 2024 aged 97. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Keith Alfred Beames of Cirencester, Gloucestershire died on 10 April 2024 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

Robert Bell of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 1 April 2024 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

Kenneth Bissell of Skegness, Lincolnshire died on 26 March 2024 aged 92. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Leslie Blaney of Whitehaven, Cumbria died on 17 March 2024 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Anthony Bradley of Liverpool died on 26 April 2024 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Evelyn Margaret Brooks of Horsham, West Sussex died on 6 May 2024 aged 101. She served as a Leading Aircraftwoman in the Women's Royal Air Force.

Roy Brown of Nantwich, Cheshire died on 17 April 2024 aged 95. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Terence Clegg of Oldham died on 29 April 2024 aged 91. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Army Corps Tank Regiment. →

Joseph Cook of Manchester died on 1 June 2023 aged 87. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Derek Raymond Davies of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 1 February 2024 aged 89. He served as a Guardsman in the Welsh Guards.

Lionel Montague Denham of Newbury, Berkshire died on 5 April 2024 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Wiltshire Regiment (Duke of Edinburgh's).

Edwin Dibley of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire died on 20 April 2024 aged 98. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Phillip Ferris of Woodbridge, Suffolk died on 23 April 2024 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Navy.

Kenneth Stanley Fowler of Plymouth, Devon died on 14 April 2024 aged 88. He served as a Master-at-Arms in the Royal Navy.

Brian Dennis Fox of Coventry died on 11 April 2024 aged 88. He served in the Royal Air Force.

Raymond Gauler of Bournemouth, Dorset died on 19 April 2024 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Wessex Brigade.

Margaret Girvan of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 1 May 2024 aged 93. She served as a Lieutenant in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

Keith Gool of Sittingbourne, Kent died on 1 May 2024 aged 86. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

John Gorman of Prescott, Merseyside died on 1 April 2024 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

Kenneth Haigh of Holmfirth, West Yorkshire died on 1 April 2024 aged 99. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Peter Heusser of Seaford, East Sussex died on 19 April 2024 aged 82. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Kenneth Hobbs of Littlehampton, West Sussex died on 16 April 2024 aged 101. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Edwin Holton of Kenilworth, Warwickshire died on 16 April 2024 aged 96. He served as an Air Mechanic 1st Class in the Royal Navy Air Service.

Harry Howorth of Southport, Merseyside died on 17 April 2024 aged 102. He served in the Army.

David Hughes of Preston, Lancashire died on 22 April 2024 aged 92. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Kenneth Hughes of Seaford, East Sussex died on 31 March 2024 aged 90. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

George Stanley Jones of Llandudno Junction, Conwy died on 1 March 2024 aged 93. He served as a Driver in the Royal Artillery.

Georges Jurish of Bristol died on 15 April 2024 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Leslie Kemp of Castleford, West Yorkshire died on 22 April 2024 aged 96. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

Roy Langdale of Thetford, Norfolk died on 11 April 2024 aged 87. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

Diana Margaret Lidstone of Luton, Bedfordshire died on 5 April 2024 aged 99. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

Brian Lawrence Marshall of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 6 May 2024 aged 73. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

William James Marshall of York, North Yorkshire died on 20 April 2024 aged 85. He served as a Colonel in the Royal Corps of Transport.

Andrew McGhie of Bradford, West Yorkshire died on 3 April 2024 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders.

Elizabeth Murray McKay of London died on 29 April 2024 aged 97. She served as a Leading Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Albert Patrick Millington of Wick, Caithness died on 6 April 2024 aged 91. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

James Patrick Montgomery of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 8 January 2024 aged 85. He served as a Fusilier in the Royal Irish Fusiliers (Princess Victoria's 87th and 89th Foot).

Derek Munday of Brighton, East Sussex died on 29 April 2024 aged 95. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Walter Frederick Nixon of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 21 April 2024 aged 101. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

Alan Parr of Ormskirk, Lancashire died on 14 July 2023 aged 87. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Gerard Patrick Phillips of Wallasey, Merseyside died on 6 April 2024 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Cheshire Regiment.

Gordon Pottage of Scarborough, North Yorkshire died on 1 April 2024 aged 90. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

David Hume Poyner of Sale, Manchester died on 22 April 2024 aged 67. He served in the Royal Navy.

Robert Price of Menstrie, Clackmannanshire died on 1 May 2024 aged 89. He served as a Warrant Officer in the Scots Guards.

David Edward Pritchard of Llandeilo, Dyfed died on 14 March 2024 aged 86. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Procter of Huddersfield died on 9 April 2024 aged 96. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

Roy George Ramsay of Wembley, Middlesex died on 1 January 2024 aged 88. He served as a Sergeant in the Parachute Regiment.

Paul Andrew Ruffy of Sleaford, Lincolnshire died on 11 April 2024 aged 57. He served as a Marine Engineering Mechanic 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

Brian Leslie Salmon of Guernsey died on 23 April 2024 aged 88. He served as a Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Naval Reserve.

Kenneth Harry Simpson of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 2 May 2024 aged 100. He served as a Driver in the Royal Signals.

David Smale of Weston-Super-Mare, Avon died on 1 May 2024 aged 91. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Hedley Barrington Smith of Morpeth, Northumberland died on 18 April 2024 aged 89. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Roger Nicholas Thomas of Lynton, Devon died on 18 April 2024 aged 92. He served as a Captain in the Royal Tank Regiment.

Norman Thompson of Exeter, Devon died on 29 April 2024 aged 85. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

William Waddell of Dundee died on 1 April 2024 aged 88. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

James Wild of Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire died on 1 December 2023 aged 91. He served as a Flight Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Leslie Wilton of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 1 May 2024 aged 98. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Ivor Brian Wiltshire of Bristol died on 2 April 2024 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Gloucestershire Regiment.

Anthony Henry Witherstone of Birmingham died on 2 April 2024 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

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Quiz answers – from page 49

1. Overlord
2. Normandy, Northern France
3. 5 June 1944
4. Neptune
5. Pas de Calais
6. Full moon and low tide
7. Dwight D. Eisenhower
8. Canada
9. 150,000
10. Paratroopers

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