

Review



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The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

September 2026

Raising the Standard

A proud final
parade for Brian

Inside:

Armed Forces Month
Meet our Ambassadors
Outdoor lighting for low vision



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss



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Contents

- 02 Contact details
- 04 Chief Executive’s Welcome
- 06 News
- 10 In your community
- 16 Farewell to Gary Lomas
- 18 Brian’s proud final parade
- 20 The Forgotten Torquay Annexe, part 2
- 23 Armed Forces Month
- 30 Meet our Ambassadors
- 28 Snow limits for Judi
- 33 Chance meeting for old friends
- 36 A new era of accessibility
- 42 Outdoor lighting for low vision
- 45 Member voice
- 48 National Creative Programme
- 51 Your crafting stories
- 52 Quiz time
- 53 Family news
- 55 In memory
- 59 Join a Virtual Interest Group

**North Wales Members
enjoyed a fantastic
buddies lunch club**

On the cover

Member Brian
Eldridge with his Blind
Veterans UK Standard

Passing the standard

By **Adrian Bell**, Chief Executive

Welcome to the latest edition of *Review*. As always, I hope you find within these pages a strong sense of the people, stories and shared purpose that make this such a special community.



Adrian Bell

I would like to begin by paying tribute to Brian Eldridge, who, after 18 years has stood down from his role as one of our Standard Bearers. Carrying the Standard is a hugely important duty. It represents not only the charity, but also the service, sacrifice and fellowship of our Members, past and present. It is a visible symbol of remembrance, pride and belonging, and it plays an important part in how Blind Veterans UK is represented at events across the country.

Brian has fulfilled that role with great pride and dignity, and I know many Members will want to join me in thanking him warmly for everything he has given over the years. You can read more about this on page 18.

Brian's decision follows not long after Alan Walker also stood down from the same role. Both men have helped uphold a proud tradition within Blind

“Looking ahead, we are also continuing to listen carefully to the voices of Members”

Veterans UK, and their commitment has been deeply appreciated. Roles such as these are often carried out quietly and without fuss, but they matter a great deal. They help connect today's charity with its history, and they remind us of the enduring links between our Members, the Armed Forces community and the public.

At the same time, it is heartening to see that tradition continuing. You can read on page 47 about the new wave of Standard Bearers now being trained up to take on this important responsibility for the future.

Looking ahead, we are also continuing to listen carefully to the voices of Members, as well as to those of families and carers. In recent weeks and months, we have been gathering a growing number of short video clips in which people share their experiences of the charity, the challenges of sight loss and what our support means to them.

These clips are already proving incredibly valuable. They are helping us check that the work we are doing is on the right track, grounded in real



Alan Walker, right, with Billy Baxter

experience and focused on what will make the greatest difference. When the time comes, they will also help us explain our work more clearly to the wider world, in the words of the people who know the charity best. That matters, because no strategy, plan or report can ever be as powerful as hearing directly from those whose lives have been touched by our charity.

We welcome more contributions, so if any Member, family member or carer reading this would be interested in sharing their experience in this way, please do let us know. It doesn't need to be polished or formal. What matters most is that it is genuine. Every voice helps us understand, improve and tell the story of Blind Veterans UK with honesty and confidence. 🇬🇧

News

Golf club charity day raises over £6,000

Sturminster Marshall Golf Club near Poole hosted a day of golfing competitions, stalls and challenges on Sunday, 5 July, to raise money for our charity as we support one of their club members, Tony.

After choosing us as their charity of the year for 2026, club owner Mike and team member Claire, organised the day

with Tony and his wife, Kozy, assisting with planning activities for the day.

The event brought together golf club members, staff, friends and families, sponsors and visitors. Kozy says: "At the first hole, Mike encouraged players to have a go at being blindfolded - with a prize for the person who managed to get nearest to the pin. Those taking part, who were really good golfers, were shocked at how challenging it was!"



Tony and Kozy Haskey, with Sarah Barnes at Sturminster Marshall Golf Club

Staff member Sarah brought along simulation spectacles which enable people to get an idea of the sight of those who are vision impaired. Players and visitors were able to have a go on the putting green while wearing them.

A raffle and an auction were also held during the event. Sarah says:

"I felt privileged attending the event with a stall providing information about the support Blind Veterans UK offers.

"Kozy and all those involved in putting the day together did a fantastic job and a total of £6,036 was raised for Blind Veterans UK."

Dennis receives award after decades of inspiring school children

A 94-year-old blind veteran and former teacher has won a Founder's Award after spending nearly two decades helping primary school children develop a love of reading.

Dennis Green, known affectionately by many pupils as "Mr George", received the award during an emotional farewell assembly at Haydn Primary School on what was his final visit as



Dennis at Haydn Primary School

a volunteer reader. More than 300 children gathered in the school's sports hall to celebrate his remarkable commitment, cheering and singing in recognition of the difference he has made to generations of pupils.

The award was presented by our Community Support Worker, Johnathan. During the assembly, children also presented Dennis with two specially-created books filled with letters, messages and memories as a heartfelt thank you for his years of dedication.



Dennis has been volunteering at Haydn Primary School for the past 19 years, listening to children read and sharing stories. A former secondary school teacher himself, he has drawn on decades of classroom experience to help countless young people improve their confidence and literacy skills.

His volunteering continued even after he developed sight loss caused by age-related macular degeneration.

He says: "When my sight started to fade, reading became very difficult. I used to take a magnifying glass into school to help me read. Sometimes I couldn't quite make out a word and the children would spell it out for me. In a way it helped them with their spelling as well."

Staff Member Christine Booth raises £825 running Barnsley 10k

Having seen the way that Blind Veterans UK changes lives, our Community Support Worker, Chris, decided to run Barnsley 10k to raise money for the charity. This was Chris' third time running this race for charity. She smashed her £300 target and finished with a big smile on her face.



Christine Booth

She says: "The day was sunny and warm - not as hot as it had been the previous few days, thankfully. What's more, luckily, there were children with water guns and a fire engine spraying water to help combat the heat. I'm not a fast runner but I completed the course in one hour, 25 minutes and 48 seconds - a little slower than last year."

Chris' partner, Andy, came to cheer her on with our staff. We are

immensely proud of Chris for this achievement and for the wonderful donations she has received.

Staff Member Glynis Gillam receives British Empire Medal

Congratulations to Glynis on receiving her British Empire Medal (BEM) - a richly deserved recognition of her outstanding service and dedication to the charity. Presented by the Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex in July, the award honours Glynis's remarkable contribution to Blind Veterans UK and the community over almost 30 years.

Throughout her career, Glynis has served in a variety of roles, always



Glynis after receiving her MBE

demonstrating an unwavering commitment to supporting our veterans. Many of you will have first-hand experience of her commitment.

Now Senior Outreach Manager, she continues to make a lasting difference to our Members. Everyone at Blind Veterans UK is immensely proud of Glynis and this well-earned achievement.

Good luck to our South Coast Ultra Team

We would like to send all the luck to our seven Members and their guides who are taking on the South Coast Ultra this month.

The team will be pushing their physical and mental limits as they set off from Eastbourne and make their way along the South Downs Way, each tackling distances of 25km, 57km or 100km.

Those attempting the full 100km will arrive in Arundel after approximately 24 hours.

■ **There's still time to show your support. You can read all about our team and visit their Just Giving pages at blindveterans.org.uk/news/south-coast-ultra-2026**

In your community

Just some of the fantastic social gatherings that have taken place across the country this summer, bringing together Members in their local areas

In North Wales

Members enjoyed a fantastic buddies lunch club with 20 attendees. The room was absolutely buzzing with conversation, warmth and comradeship.

We were delighted to welcome our guest speakers from North Wales Accessible Holidays for Blind and Visually Impaired, who shared the inspiring story of how their local grassroots charity was established.



North Wales

Members enjoyed finding out about the fully-adapted and accessible static caravan holidays on offer.

The holidays are subsidised and part-funded by the charity. Based in picturesque sites in beautiful North Wales, the holidays are available to anyone throughout the UK who is blind or vision impaired, and their friends/family.

It was a fascinating and informative presentation, highlighting the importance of accessible leisure

opportunities and the positive impact they can have on wellbeing and independence.

In Manchester

Our wonderful friends at Bureau Veritas held a fabulous afternoon tea for our Members in the community at their offices in Wythenshawe. Everyone had such a brilliant time, singing along with a vintage singer, dancing, laughing, enjoying beautiful afternoon teas and a quiz and →



Manchester

even trying out a land army jeep for size! What more could we ask for? This was all arranged by Michelle at Bureau Veritas and her amazing team of Bureau Veritas volunteers!

In Plymouth

It was a hot day in the veterans tent at an Armed Forces Day celebration in Plymouth - and it was also really busy, which was great. We exhibited Members' artworks from our National Creative Project, as well as

knitted soldiers, sailors and airmen made by volunteers - all of which went down really well and generated extra interest in our stall. We could have sold loads!

We were also joined by some of our Plymouth Members who spent time on our stand speaking to the public.

In Shrewsbury

Members took part in a fantastic Armed Forces Day at Shrewsbury



Armed Forces Day celebration in Plymouth...

Castle, where they enjoyed entertainment from the Shropshire Brass Band, and the Bligny Band and Bugles from the Cadet Force. We also had the privilege of seeing one of our Members dressed in historical uniform, demonstrating equipment from the Soldiers of Shropshire Museum.

In Hull

The sweltering temperatures didn't stop us getting out with our stand

on Armed Forces Day in Hull - and despite the heat, the event was very well attended.

Our staff had a great time soaking up the atmosphere, chatting to the general public - many of whom shared personal experiences of both sight loss and serving in the forces - and meeting potential new Members.

A huge thank you to the Members and volunteers who came out to support us.



The Blind Veterans UK stand in Hull

In Weymouth

A group of Members had the most relaxing trip along the Dorset coastline last month. We saw the cruise ship and warships moored in Portland Bay and could see across to the White Horse in Osmington, a depiction of King George III who regularly visited Weymouth.

Members enjoyed feeling the wind in their hair and the spray on their faces. They were even encouraged to take the Helm and steer the ship. A big thank you to Sarah Barnes for

accompanying us and making the trip so memorable for the Members. We also had two amazing volunteers, Phil and Stephen, without whom some of our Members would not have been able to attend.

In Lincolnshire

Members were invited to RAF Cranwell to observe the final rehearsal for the Officer Cadets' Passing Out Parade. The visit offered a unique opportunity to witness first-hand the precision, discipline and

professionalism of the cadets as they prepared for their graduation, while providing veterans with the chance to reconnect with military traditions and share in an important milestone for the next generation of service personnel.

As the rehearsal unfolded, attendees watched the carefully choreographed drills and ceremonial movements that remain such a significant part of military life. The occasion prompted many reflections on their own service experiences, with Members discussing the similarities

and differences between today's ceremonies and their own Passing Out Parades.

The day served as a reminder of the enduring values of service, commitment and pride that continue to unite generations of Armed Forces personnel. 🇬🇧

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.



Weymouth Members enjoying a trip along the Dorset coastline



Lincolnshire Members at RAF Cranwell

Farewell to Gary

It is with great sadness we write about the passing of War blinded Member **Gary Lomas**, 61, of Whalley, who passed away on 5 April 2026

Gary was born in Mosley in Manchester to a military family. His father was in the forces, so with his mother Jane and brother, Wayne, he travelled to many different countries including Hong Kong.

At the age of 20, Gary joined the Signals, later transferring to the Royal Marines, the Parachute Regiment and then on to the Bomb Disposal Unit. He travelled all over the world, from South America to Germany. He even survived an avalanche in Norway.

In 1991, aged 26, Gary was posted to Kuwait to serve in the Gulf War. During Operation Granby at the climax of the first Gulf War, he was broadcast across global news networks as he abseiled from a helicopter into the British embassy in Kuwait during its liberation.

Whilst serving, Gary was involved in making the area around a power station safe of landmines. Whilst on duty, a colleague placed a kit bag on

the ground activating a land mine. Gary was caught in the blast and sustained serious injuries. He lost the sight in his right eye and experienced trauma to his left eye. He also acquired a frontal-lobe brain injury from the shrapnel.

Following hospital treatment, Gary became a Member of St Dunstan's where he underwent rehabilitation training over a year long period.

With the support of his family, friends, and his long-time community support worker Audrey Gardener, Gary rebuilt his life and regained his independence, returning to Lancashire to be closer to his mum, whom he adored. He was a much loved and valued member of his community in Whalley village. Many villagers came out to pay their respects at his funeral.

His impressive military career equipped him with the determination and discipline to take on major

sporting challenges too such as running marathons, skiing, and achieving several sporting medals throughout his life. Through this, he served as an inspiration to others

Gary's achievements throughout truly reflected the values on which this organisation was founded. He showed that sight loss doesn't have to define a person's future. Through his courage, resilience, and determination, Gary demonstrated that barriers can be overcome, and it is these remarkable qualities, far more than his sight loss, that will form his legacy.

Gary was a big character within the Blind Veterans UK community, a well-liked friend and comrade who loved a laugh and a joke. He was a real gentleman, and a humble support to many other blind veterans. A special mention goes to his Community Support Worker Audrey Gardiner, whose commitment and dedication went above and beyond in her role to ensure Gary's needs were fully met.

Our deepest condolences go to Gary's family, friends, and to anyone within the Blind Veterans UK community who had the pleasure of knowing him. 🇬🇧



Gary with his mum Jayne, and during his service

A proud final parade for Brian

Armed Forces Day in June was particularly poignant for Member **Brian Eldridge** who performed his duty as Blind Veterans UK Standard Bearer for the last time



Andy Leitch and Brian Eldridge

Brian has shown a great deal of dedication and pride in his role of Standard Bearer, which he has carried out for 18 years.

He attended this year's national Armed Forces Day march in Aldershot alongside his wife, Margaret, who has been by his side as he has travelled the country to represent the charity. The event was especially significant for Brian as it was in Aldershot that Brian first carried out his Standard Bearer duties all those years ago.

He says: "I will miss being a Standard Bearer; I hope that those who take on the role after me give it as much attention to detail as I have. It's only right that at the age of 79, I now allow others to have the opportunities that I've had. Over the years, I've proudly displayed our Standard wherever and whenever I have had the opportunity to support the charity.

"I took over the role from Nigel Whitely, and every time I picked up the Standard, I thought of him. At this year's Armed Forces Day parade, the crowd was 15 people deep and they encouraged me every step of the way.

"When having the Standard in my possession, I've always invited Members to touch and feel it. It's been really good fun over the years; I will miss the role. It isn't just about carrying the Standard; it's about being an ambassador for Blind Veterans UK.

"Among my duties have been marching at the Cenotaph during Remembrance, attending the Sir Arthur Pearson Memorial every year and representing the charity during its 100th birthday celebrations. One memory that will always stay with me is Stirling Castle where we were surrounded by 1,400 pipers from all over the world. This journey will be one I never forget."

Brian joined the Army aged 19 in 1966, where he served in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC), training dogs. In 1968 he met and married his wife Margaret, who was also in the Army. After two and a half years of training, Brian was posted to Germany where he continued to train Army dogs. Then, after three years, he was posted to Hong Kong where he was attached to

the Dog Unit working for The Royal Military Police in Sek-Kong New Territories.

In 1975, Brian left the Army and went to work as an executive at a security company in Hong Kong. After a further three years he and Margaret returned to the UK where he took a job with Smiths Industries, an Aerospace Company working with electronics for military aircraft. He worked there until his retirement in 2001.

It was during his time at Smiths that Brian first became aware of problems with his eyesight. He noticed that once he put something down he would struggle to relocate it again.

He was diagnosed with the hereditary condition, retinitis pigmentosa. After initially coping with his deteriorating sight, he decided to retire in 2001 after a serious incident in the workplace and was registered blind.

Brian says: "When I first retired after being registered blind I had absolutely no confidence whatsoever and wasn't sure what lay ahead of me. Blind Veterans UK has given me back my confidence, which is very important to me. Since receiving support from the charity I've met some wonderful like-minded friends and enjoyed some great experiences with them." 🇬🇧

The soldier, the cat and the recovery of sight

The forgotten Torquay annexe of St Dunstan's, 1915 to 1918, part two

By Blind Veterans UK volunteer and amateur historian, **Andy Hayes**

In the previous issue, we explored the story of Torquay's wartime annexe and the care it provided to blinded servicemen during the First World War. Among those who passed through its doors was Rifleman Alfred Percy "Charles" Appleby, a man whose life story is as dramatic as it is unusual.

Born in Kingston upon Thames on 23 July 1883, Appleby grew up in a large family of modest means. Determined to serve, he enlisted first in the Royal Marines Light Infantry and later in the Royal Field Artillery. After further attempts to continue his military career despite ill health, he eventually joined the Royal Irish Rifles and returned to active service on the Western Front.

On 2 May 1915, during heavy fighting at Ypres, he was seriously wounded. A piece of shrapnel struck him over

the heart, smashing the watch he carried in his pocket. Soon afterwards, he was caught in a gas attack and left unconscious. As he lay in the trench, a shell exploded nearby, burying him beneath sandbags and debris.

He was presumed dead and left where he fell. Fifteen hours later, stretcher bearers discovered that he was still alive. He had been blinded by the gas, paralysed down one side, and severely injured to the head, hip, and abdomen.

What followed was a long and difficult recovery. Appleby underwent major surgery and spent months in hospital, while his family were officially informed that he had been killed in action. Even after his discharge, his condition remained unstable. He suffered periods of collapse, and on one occasion narrowly avoided stepping in front of a train.

“He suffered seizures and periods of collapse, and on one occasion narrowly avoided stepping in front of a train”

In October 1916, he was admitted to St Dunstan's and soon transferred to the annexe at Bournbrook in Torquay. At this stage, he had been blind for many months and was still recovering from his injuries. It was here that the most remarkable episode of his life occurred.

One Sunday in October 1916, Appleby was invited to dinner at a boarding house in St Marychurch as part of a local effort to support wounded servicemen. As he lifted a glass of stout, a large black Persian cat suddenly leapt from a nearby sofa onto his head.

Startled, he dropped both the glass and his plate, which shattered on the floor. When the cat was removed, he calmly remarked on the “lovely black Persian cat.” Those present quickly realised that something had changed. After around 19 months of blindness, he appeared to be able to see →



The St Dunstan's band with staff nurses

“While some details invite caution, there is no doubt that he endured extraordinary hardship and survived against overwhelming odds”

again. He went on to describe Miss Hunt’s clothing in detail, confirming that he had regained partial sight in one eye.

The incident was widely reported at the time and described in some accounts as remarkable. Miss Hunt later gave him the cat, which he took home as a companion.

Although this moment brought hope, Appleby’s later life remained unsettled. In 1917, he was involved in a violent dispute with his brother that led to a court case, where he was nevertheless described as a man of peaceful character.

In 1920, another unexpected event occurred when he fell into the River Thames. After being rescued, it was reported that the shock restored sight in his other eye. He later received treatment at Guy’s Hospital and was said to have regained the ability to read and write.

Records held by Blind Veterans UK note his case and refer to the unusual circumstances in which his sight returned. At the same time, there were indications that his later progress was not straightforward, reflecting the lasting effects of his injuries.

After, spending his later years in care at Kingsmead Nursing Home in Richmond, Alfred Percy “Charles” Appleby died on 27 February 1959 at the Royal Hospital there, aged 75. The cause was a pulmonary embolism following injuries sustained in a road accident.

His story sits at the boundary between documented history and wartime legend. While some details invite caution, there is no doubt that Appleby endured extraordinary hardship and survived against overwhelming odds.

For those connected with Blind Veterans UK, his story is a powerful reminder of the resilience of those supported by the organisation since its earliest days.

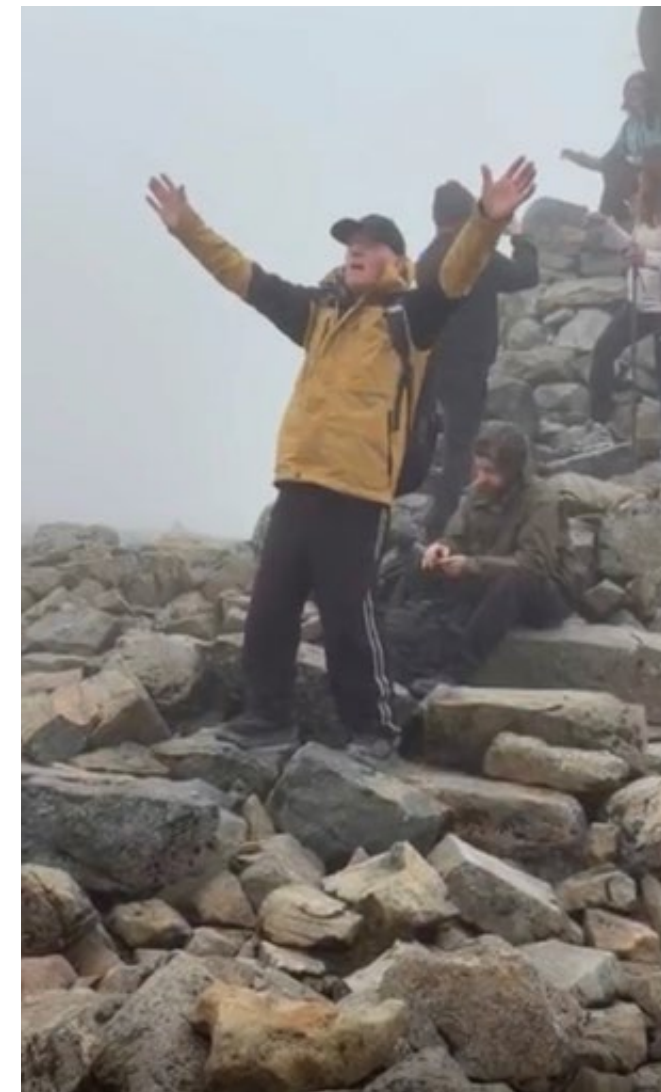
It also leaves us with one of its most unusual and memorable episodes, a moment when something as ordinary as a startled cat appeared to change a man’s life. 🐈



Listen
here

Action for our Armed Forces

Our Armed Forces Month campaign called on supporters to take on a challenge or organise an activity to commemorate key dates in the month of June



John Banfield scales Ben Nevis

The month of June is a significant time for our military community. Kicking off on 6 June with the anniversary of D-Day - a defining moment in history that changed the course of the Second World War, the month concludes with National Armed Forces Day on 27 June.

Members marking Armed Forces Month

From taking on challenges to bringing communities together, many of you marked Armed Forces Month by honouring your comrades and celebrating the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community.

John’s Ben Nevis challenge

87-year-old Member John Banfield successfully scaled the heights of Ben Nevis on Armed Forces Day. →

He says: "I've proved that age and sight loss are no barrier; if you set your mind on a challenge, you can conquer it."

It took John five and a half hours to reach the summit. He says: "It was much harder than when I did it 22 years ago. I followed the footsteps of my guide Gary who encouraged me throughout. I wouldn't have made it without the support of him and the lovely ladies who joined me from the BBC. When I reached the top, I was cheered by the other walkers who were there and I felt like a hero. There

were so many people out there backing me that I couldn't fail."

After completing National Service in the army with the Royal Engineers as a sapper between 1958 and 1960, John enlisted part-time with the National Service to serve on call for another three years.

John's legs gave way about half way back down the mountain and he was helped down from there. He says: "I thought I'd let everyone down, but I made it to the top so everyone says I did it. I celebrated afterwards with a large Bacardi and coke!"

Noeline's afternoon tea

Member Noeline, 74, and her husband John organised an Armed Forces Month Brew Up Cream Tea in Bedwas, South Wales.

Armed Forces Day is very important to them both. Noeline served for two years with the Women's Royal Army Corps as a laboratory technician, while her husband also served in the military for 22 years. Noeline says: "Armed Forces Day is an important date in the calendar each year as it stands as a reminder to people of those who have served and gained democracy for another generation and to show support to those currently serving and their families."

As well as taking donations in exchange for her host of tasty treats, additional funds were raised in exchange for some wonderful textile crafts made by Noeline and wood crafts, sent to her by another of our South Wales Member Colin, who wanted to play his part in raising vital funds.

Noeline says, "I was worried the hot weather may scupper our plans, but delighted when almost all those who were invited came to join us. Everyone was determined not to miss a chance to show their support for our forces and we were elated to raise over £200! I'm honoured to be able to do my small part to raise awareness of the Armed Services and also raise money for Blind Veterans UK. The charity is like one big family - they've supported me to continue with my crafting hobbies after losing my sight."

Ian's 'Blindfolded Bimble'

Another Member, Ian, organised his third 'Blindfolded Bimble' on 28 June - and this time made it even more challenging!

Ian tasked walkers to pair up and take it in turns to walk under blindfold while guided by their partner between Shanklin and Sandown on the Isle of Wight. Last year, supporters walked a



Ian's 'Blindfold Bimble'

combined distance of 102km along the promenade, but this year they completed loops taking them along the promenade but bringing them back to Shanklin via the main road.

Ian says: "The promenade is a very wide, pedestrianised footpath so I thought I'd add the extra challenge this year of navigating the main road, this meant participants had to guide each other up and down kerbs, crossing roads and sharing the space with cars. Hopefully this year's route helped us to raise awareness →



Noeline's afternoon tea

of the charity as cars were slowing down to read our T-shirts as they passed by.

“The Bimble is an opportunity to come together to celebrate the efforts of our Armed Forces and thank them for their sacrifice, and those of their families, as well as raise vital awareness and funds for Blind Veterans UK.”



Clive Jones celebrating at the Kings Arms in Market Drayton

Clive's Armed Forces Day party

Member Clive Jones worked with his local pub – The Kings Arms in Market Drayton – to organise a celebration of our Armed Forces.

There were activities for all the family including a DJ, live music, stalls, face painting, military vehicles and a raffle.

Clive says: “The weather might have been a bit warm - but so was the atmosphere! It was a brilliant day. The landlord and lady of The King's Arms made everyone feel welcome.

“Events like this are not only an opportunity to celebrate all those who have served past and present, they're a chance to bring the local community together and fundraise for charities like Blind Veterans UK.”

Our supporters

It wasn't only our blind veterans taking on fundraising challenges during Armed Forces Month. Our staff and supporters got involved too.

Linda's Normandy Beach Swim:

Supporter Linda took on the challenge of swimming a massive 47k during the month of June at her

local swimming pool in memory of D-Day. This distance is the combined equivalent of the Normandy Beaches - Utah at 5k, Omaha at 7k, Gold, Juno and Sword at 11.5k each.

She says, “In February of this year my 96-year-old dad passed away after a short illness. Dad was my hero and Blind Veterans UK was so helpful to him when his sight failed. He really enjoyed the contact of his support worker and the time he spent at the charity's Centre. To be able to raise money for Blind Veterans UK so they can help others would be a way to honour them and Dad.”

Linda managed to complete her first Beach – Gold Beach at 11.5k – on D-Day itself. Then, by the beginning of week four of her challenge, she had already swum 37k of her goal and had smashed her original fundraising target of £470 – raising over £1,000!

Judy's In Memory Fundraising

Judy wanted to fundraise for Blind Veterans UK following the death of her friend Gary Lomas who we had supported after he lost his sight in service (see page 16).

Wanting to keep Gary's memory alive and raise funds to support other veterans, Judy decided to hold a coffee



Linda Horwell with her late father Rupert

morning and raffle on 16 June - which raised over £350.

She says: “We had a lovely time, sharing memories of Gary, despite a rocky start - the tea urn kept tripping the electrics. Not what you need at a coffee morning, but I think Gary himself would have found that hilarious!”

If you've been inspired to take on your own fundraising event, it's not too early to start looking at a fundraising opportunity for Planning to Remember.

■ blindveterans.org.uk/planningtoremember 🎯

Snow limits!

Member **Judi Brown** reflects on her first trip with the Visually Impaired Veterans' Ski Club, an unforgettable adventure that exceeded all expectations

I have a very rare incurable eyesight condition which has caused my sight to deteriorate significantly over the past five years, such that I have had to gradually give up golf, road cycling and skiing as sight loss took hold of my life. In coming to terms with that, I have been determined to work around my limitations.

But replacing sports, where good eyesight is so important, has been much more of a challenge. Then fate stepped in when I was signposted to contact Blind Veterans UK. One of the first calls I received on joining was from a lovely woman called Jan, and everything changed. Let me explain.

Right from the get-go in our phone conversation, Jan enthused about the Visually Impaired Veterans Ski Club and implored that I join them on a structured guided ski trip to the Dolomites in January. She had not started skiing until she went blind, and was so eloquent and effusive about the good it had done for her

confidence that I had no hesitation at all in agreeing to join in.

So what was the experience like? I don't think I have ever met such an enthusiastic, inspiring and welcoming group of people, including blind veterans, guides, families and friends. All of them are amazing role models and some have achieved fantastic personal goals, both nationally and internationally.

Furthermore, with financial support from Blind Veterans UK, the cost of the guides was covered. And, as a first time participant, the ski club itself covered half the cost that I would previously have paid for such a ski trip.

But the real game changer was that each of us blind skiers (or Binkies as we are fondly known) was allocated our own individual guide for the whole week, not just for skiing but for helping us find our way around our hotel and the local town, including the many Apres Ski attractions.

Poggy, a serving British army officer, was assigned to me and became not only my guide, but my mentor and a dear friend. Full of energy and patience in equal measure, she was a real star.

Having skied before I lost my sight, I was conditioned to be able to scan the contours of the slope, create a visual map of the terrain ahead and spot my turns. Of course, I can no longer do this so, working together, I had to unlearn everything that had come before and learn to trust Poggy as she talked me down the slope on my headset. It was a truly liberating experience and has given me so much confidence in everything else I do.

“The real game changer was that each of us blind skiers was allocated our own individual guide for the whole week”

So thank you to everybody involved in planning and delivering this unique opportunity. Will I go again? Well, next year is the 50th anniversary of the club and wild horses wouldn't drag me from going! If you're a Member and are interested in experiencing something new and fun, no matter what your previous skiing experience, please join us. You are certain to have the adventure of your life. 🇬🇧



Guide Poggy with Judi

Meet our new Ambassadors

Meet the Members who have stepped up to represent the charity at events, starting with Jules and Margaret

Jules

Jules served with the Royal Military Police, including in the Special Investigations Branch, building a career defined by responsibility, teamwork and resilience. Later in life, his eyesight began to deteriorate rapidly while dealing with unresolved trauma; this led to isolation, depression and alcohol dependence. Today, with support from Blind Veterans UK, Jules has rebuilt his life and uses his experiences to support other veterans and inspire wider audiences.

While deployed in Northern Ireland, Jules experienced a devastating loss when his best friend was killed by a roadside bomb. Jules had been scheduled for the task his friend took on instead, and the shock left him carrying intense survivor's guilt. With little opportunity for counselling or support at the time, he continued

working, investigating the incident while struggling privately with the belief that it should have been him.

Two years later, while serving in Germany in 1987, Jules was called to assist after the disaster at the Belgian port of Zeebrugge, one of the UK's worst peacetime maritime tragedies. A car ferry capsized with hundreds on board, and Jules helped establish a temporary mortuary as the scale of the loss became clear. The experience added to the burden of trauma he had learned to push aside.

After leaving the army, Jules worked in civilian life, including in banking, but the camaraderie he had known was gone. In his late 40s, his vision began to fail and as he became severely vision impaired, he withdrew from others. He describes feeling as though his life was over, and his drinking escalated as his mental health declined.



Jules Lee

As his health worsened, Jules suffered a brain haemorrhage, an event he now sees as a turning point. It brought him to his senses, helped him stop drinking, and ultimately led him to Blind Veterans UK. He describes the charity as a positive force that gave him practical help to adapt to sight loss, alongside the confidence that comes from being understood by people who have been through similar challenges.

Jules talks of meeting other blind veterans and learning new skills for independence as being the real difference the charity has made for him. Hearing what others were achieving challenged his assumptions about what was possible and helped him move from surviving to living, reconnecting with purpose, routine and belonging for the first time since leaving the military.

Since then, Jules has become one of the charity's most active and dedicated Members. He has volunteered as a telephone befriender, serves as a peer support volunteer in his local area, and runs a monthly telephone group for veterans who are new to the charity, helping them feel welcome, sharing what to expect, and encouraging them to take the first steps towards rebuilding their own confidence.

Now an Ambassador for Blind Veterans UK, Jules will be speaking about his journey - his military service and the trauma, losing his sight, and his recovery and the support that changed his life. Through this, he'll help audiences understand the realities of living with sight loss and the impact of support, community and resilience.

Margaret

Margaret served as a Royal Navy Reservist based at HMS Graham in Glasgow from 1987 to 1990. Her service came before women were permitted to serve at sea (which began in the early 1990s), so her role was land based. She began experiencing vision and mobility problems during this period, which ultimately led to her leaving the reserves.

She then forged a career in nursing, qualifying as a registered nurse and later gaining an American nursing →



Margaret Buchanan-Geddes

licence in paediatric and neonatal intensive care. She worked in Arkansas for eight months around the time of the Gulf War. On returning to the UK, she continued in healthcare roles until her deteriorating health forced her to stop working earlier than expected. Despite this, she remained highly driven, completing two degrees, including a Master's during COVID under challenging conditions. She has since dedicated her time to volunteering, advocacy, and public service, including work with Deafblind UK and accessibility panels.

Margaret's sight loss is caused by an extremely rare genetic metabolic condition (involving TGFB1 and UBIAD1), affecting only a very small number of people worldwide. Although

likely present since childhood, it took decades to diagnose. The condition causes progressive vision loss, along with wider health complications including mobility challenges and heart issues. She has undergone a corneal transplant which failed and lives with severe visual impairment. Her vision is described as looking through a thick net curtain, with bright light worsening clarity. Sadly, she has experienced negative public reaction to her disabilities but continues to approach her condition with resilience and determination.

Margaret was encouraged to contact Blind Veterans UK by a veteran who served during the Blitz with the Ambulances. Margaret values the personal support she has received. The charity has supported her with equipment, mobility aids such as a long cane, and opportunities to attend events, including a visit to our Centre which inspired her to pursue further study.

Now an Ambassador for Blind Veterans UK, Margaret is keen to speak about her time as a reservist and her lived experience of sight loss. She'll be sharing her experiences at events and helping audiences to understand the importance of reservists, the realities of living with sight loss and the impact of the charity's support. 🇬🇧



Listen
here



Our BVUK Rustington Centre

Chance meeting for old friends

Former RAF colleagues, Kevin and John, never imagined they'd bump into each other at our Rustington Centre, but there they both were...

Standing by the reception desk at our Rustington Centre, Member Kevin Wise overheard a familiar name. It was one he hadn't heard for years, and he couldn't help but wonder if it belonged to his old RAF comrade.

Kevin said aloud to the fellow Member as he walked through the door, "Is that

former Warrant Officer John Hickson?"

John says: "You could have knocked me down with a feather! I was in total shock to discover Kevin had lost his sight too and was at Rustington. It was really quite surreal."

Kevin and John had last met 14





Kevin and John

years before, while both based at RAF High Wycombe. Their first meeting took place in 1996 when they served together at Zagreb in Croatia.

The pair spent their evenings reminiscing about their RAF days and mutual acquaintances over a pint.

Kevin, 69, served in the RAF for 24 years. He left with the rank of Sergeant in 1996 and returned a few years later as a full-time reservist for a further 14 years. His service included postings in the Outer Hebrides, Hong Kong, Sardinia, Germany and Belgium.

Kevin says: "I joined the RAF to travel. My wife and I have had a wonderful

life and I finally retired at 60-years-old in 2016.

"It was in April 2021 that I noticed something was wrong with my sight, but Covid delayed my referral. The following year I was diagnosed with advanced glaucoma and registered as severely sight impaired.

"I went into a very dark place. I was bitter. I didn't do much and I put on a lot of weight. But then on New Year's Eve, going into 2023, my wife Petra made me make my very first New Year's Resolution. I vowed to stop spending all my time thinking about what had happened and start looking forward to the future.

"The staff are very friendly and it's a great place to meet others"

"These days, my world is black and white; I can't see in colour and I only view ghostly images. But this no longer stops me. Life is different, of course, and it may take me a little longer to do things, but my sight loss doesn't stop me and Petra from living our lives."

Kevin discovered Blind Veterans UK at the end of 2022. He says, "I've had a few stays at Rustington; the staff are very friendly and it's a great place to meet others. And to bump into John there was lovely. It's nice to know someone whose been through a similar journey to mine."

John, 68, served in the RAF for 38 years before going on to work for the RAF Benevolent Fund. It was during this time that he started to find computer work, reading and case work more difficult. He found he was no longer able to continue in his role and was diagnosed with late onset retinal dystrophy.

John says: "Finding out it was genetic was a revelation as I never knew it existed. The genetic expert told me there was no available treatment and my sight couldn't be saved.

"So it's been a gradual decline; I no longer have any central vision and can't see details. It's like having massive grey net curtains across my eyes and some days they are thicker than others.

"I knew about Blind Veterans UK because of my work with the Benevolent Fund. In January 2025, my wife looked at the website and we got in touch. It all happened very quickly; I've been a Member now for a year and a half.

"In that time, I've already enjoyed three stays at Rustington - my welcome week, a rehabilitation week and a break in May when I discovered Kevin was also a Member.

"The charity has provided me with many activities and opportunities which have improved my quality of life. I attend monthly meetings in my local area, as well as telephone quizzes and the woodwork club. I've had cane training and received advice and guidance. The charity really opens your eyes to what's available to you."

Since their surprise reunion, Kevin and John hope to stay in touch despite living miles apart, and perhaps even enjoy another chance meeting at Rustington again in the future. 🌍



A new era of accessibility

How artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming daily life for blind and vision-impaired people

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the most significant technological developments of our time. It enables computers, smartphones, and other devices to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as recognising objects, understanding speech, analysing images, reading text, answering questions, and learning from experience. For blind and vision-impaired people, AI is becoming a powerful accessibility tool that is helping to increase independence, productivity, confidence and inclusion in everyday life.

Accessing information more easily

One of the most common ways people interact with AI is through smartphones. Modern smartphones include AI-powered features that help users access information quickly and

efficiently. Voice assistants such as Siri, Google Assistant, Alexa and Microsoft Copilot allow users to send messages, make phone calls, create appointments, search the internet, check the weather, and manage daily tasks using spoken commands rather than visual interfaces. This hands-free interaction makes technology more accessible and allows users to complete tasks quickly and independently.

AI has also revolutionised the way blind and vision-impaired people access visual information. Applications such as Seeing AI, Envision AI, and Be My AI use smartphone cameras and advanced AI models to identify objects, read printed text, describe scenes, recognise products, and interpret documents. A user can point their phone at a menu, letter, receipt, appliance, or sign and receive an

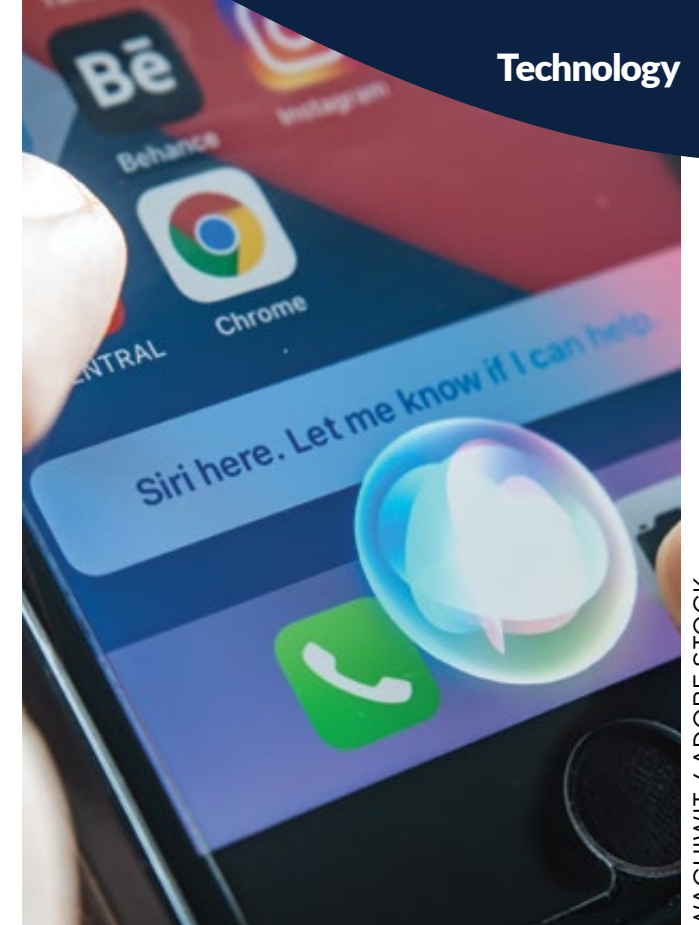
immediate audio description. Tasks that once required sighted assistance can now often be completed independently, saving time and increasing confidence.

Another important development is AI-powered Optical Character Recognition (OCR). OCR technology converts printed or handwritten text into digital text that can then be read aloud by a screen reader. Today's AI systems go beyond simply reading text. They can analyse the content and answer questions about it.

For example, after scanning a restaurant menu, a user can ask, "What vegetarian options are available?" or after scanning an invoice, "When is the payment due?" AI can identify key information, summarise lengthy documents, and extract relevant details. This helps users process information more efficiently and significantly improves productivity in both personal and professional environments.

AI and Navigation

Perhaps one of the most exciting areas of development is AI-powered navigation and mobility. Traditional mobility skills, guide dogs, and long canes remain essential tools, but AI is providing additional layers of information and support. New devices



WACHIWIT / ADOBE STOCK

Voice applications such as Siri can help with accessing information

and apps can identify obstacles, provide route guidance, describe surroundings, and help users orient themselves in unfamiliar locations.

A particularly promising development is Glide, a mobility device designed specifically for blind and vision impaired people. Glide combines robotics, sensors, and artificial intelligence to guide users through their environment in a way that has often been compared to the experience of working with a guide dog. The device is designed to help users navigate around obstacles, move confidently through complex environments, and travel more independently. While →

“These developments have the potential to save time, reduce effort, and make shopping more accessible and efficient”

still relatively new, Glide demonstrates how AI has the potential to transform independent mobility in the years ahead.

Alongside dedicated mobility devices, there is a growing range of navigation apps that provide real-time directions, identify landmarks, locate building entrances, assist with public transport journeys, and offer enhanced environmental awareness. Advances in AI are making these tools increasingly accurate and useful, helping users move through their communities with greater confidence and independence.

Everyday living and greater independence

While much attention is given to specialised accessibility technology, some of the most significant benefits of AI are being seen in everyday living tasks. AI is increasingly helping blind and vision-impaired people manage their homes, organise their daily routines, and carry out practical activities more independently.

Cooking is one area where AI can provide valuable assistance. Voice-controlled AI assistants can offer spoken recipes, guide users through cooking instructions step by step, convert measurements, answer questions about ingredients, and manage multiple timers simultaneously. This allows users to focus on the task at hand without needing to interact with a screen or printed recipe.

AI is also transforming online shopping. Emerging AI agents can learn from previous purchasing habits, suggest commonly ordered items, recommend products based on personal preferences, and automatically create shopping lists. Users may ask an AI assistant to suggest meals for the week, generate a shopping list based on those recipes, and even identify ingredients that are already available at home. These developments have the potential to save time, reduce effort, and make shopping more accessible and efficient.

Innovation driven by the blind and vision-impaired community

One of the most encouraging aspects of today's AI revolution is that it is enabling blind and vision-impaired people to become creators as well as users of technology. Modern AI development tools allow individuals with little or no previous programming

experience to create applications, automate tasks, and develop solutions to accessibility challenges they encounter in their own lives.

As a result, new accessibility-focused apps are being developed at an unprecedented rate, many created by blind and vision-impaired innovators who understand the challenges first-hand. AI-assisted coding platforms have lowered traditional barriers to software development, allowing people with lived experience of sight loss to bring their ideas to life and develop solutions that meet their needs.



Smart glasses can identify objects, read signs and describe scenes

Examples include applications being developed to automatically audio describe online video content, helping blind and vision-impaired users access videos on platforms such as YouTube and other social media channels. These emerging tools have the potential to make vast amounts of educational, informational, and entertainment content more accessible by providing meaningful descriptions of visual content that would otherwise be missed.

This democratisation of technology development means that accessibility solutions are increasingly being designed by the very people who use them, leading to more practical, relevant, and innovative outcomes.

Wearable technology and smart glasses

Wearable technology is another area where AI is creating new opportunities. Devices equipped with cameras and AI-powered software can identify objects, recognise faces, read signs, describe scenes, and provide spoken feedback about the surrounding environment.

While mainstream products such as Meta smart glasses have gained popularity and can offer useful accessibility features, they were not originally designed specifically



Smart speakers and everyday productivity

Smart speakers such as Amazon Echo and Google Nest have become valuable accessibility tools for many blind and vision-impaired people. In addition to providing hands-free access to information, they can play music, radio stations, podcasts, audiobooks, news bulletins, and other forms of entertainment through simple voice commands.

Recent advances in AI have made voice assistants significantly more conversational and responsive. Rather than relying on specific commands, users can increasingly interact using natural speech patterns, making conversations feel more intuitive and reducing the need to remember exact phrases. As these systems continue to evolve, they are becoming more capable of understanding context, maintaining longer conversations, and providing personalised assistance.

For many blind and vision-impaired people, smart speakers function as personal digital assistants that support daily routines, organisation, and independence. They can manage calendars, set reminders, create shopping lists, provide step-by-step instructions, answer questions, and assist with task management throughout the day. Because

interaction is entirely speech-based, users can often multitask more effectively while keeping their hands free. In both home and work environments, these devices can support communication, organisation, learning, and entertainment without requiring the user to navigate complex visual interfaces.

Challenges and considerations

Despite its many benefits, AI is not without limitations. AI systems can sometimes provide inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information. An application may incorrectly identify an object, misread text, or generate an inaccurate description of a scene. For this reason, important decisions involving safety, finances, healthcare, or legal matters should always be verified using reliable sources.

Privacy is another consideration, as many AI systems process information using cloud-based services. Users should understand how their information is collected, stored, and used. Cost can also be a barrier, as some advanced AI devices and subscription services may be expensive. It is also important to recognise that AI should complement, rather than replace, traditional rehabilitation skills, orientation and mobility training, assistive technology

skills, and human judgement. Technology works best when it forms part of a broader toolkit that enables independence.

The future of accessibility

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transforming the way blind and vision-impaired people access information, navigate their environments, manage their homes, and participate in society. From navigation systems to smart glasses, AI is helping to remove barriers that have traditionally limited independence.

Perhaps most importantly, AI is no longer simply a technology being developed for blind and vision-impaired people but is now being developed by this group themselves. As more innovators within the community bring their ideas to life, the future of accessibility looks brighter than ever.

While AI isn't perfect and should always be used thoughtfully, its potential to enhance accessibility is enormous. By converting visual information into accessible formats, supporting navigation, simplifying everyday tasks, and enabling greater participation in education, employment, and community life, AI is helping to create a world that is more inclusive, productive, and accessible for everyone. 🌍

Smart speakers can function as personal digital assistants

for blind and vision-impaired users. In contrast, products such as EchoVision smart glasses have been developed with accessibility at the heart of their design. These specialist devices aim to provide scene description, text reading, navigation assistance, and environmental awareness through an experience tailored to the needs of people with sight loss.

As AI continues to advance, wearable devices are becoming increasingly capable of providing real-time assistance, helping users travel more confidently and complete everyday tasks more independently.



Listen
here

JOÃO MACEDO / ADOBE STOCK



Many modern solar lights use LED technology

Outdoor lighting for low vision

How to choose and position outdoor lighting to reduce glare, highlight pathways and make steps easier to spot

Outdoor lighting can make a significant difference for people with sight loss, helping to improve safety, confidence and independence around the home. Good lighting can make paths, steps, and entrances easier to identify, reducing the risk of trips and falls.

By choosing the right lighting and positioning it carefully, people with sight loss can navigate their outdoor spaces with greater ease. So, whether you're making a few simple changes or planning a complete lighting update, these tips can help you get started.

Choosing the right type of lighting

As with all lighting, think about its purpose. Remember that a brightly lit area can make surrounding areas appear darker by comparison.

For outdoor use:

- Wide-angle lighting (often called flood lighting) is generally best. It provides more even illumination and reduces harsh contrasts.
- Many modern solar lights use LED technology, allowing small solar panels to charge an internal battery during the day.
- Some lights include motion sensors (PIR), meaning they only go to full brightness when movement is detected. This can help conserve energy.

Understanding brightness

- Brightness is measured in lumens (lm), not volts or watts (which measure power use). As a guide, typical indoor bulb produces around 800–1,000 lumens.
- The right brightness will depend on the area being lit and the individual's level of vision.

Positioning outdoor lighting safely

Careful positioning helps reduce glare and maximise effectiveness:

- Avoid placing lights at eye level.

- Angle lights downwards to reduce glare.
- For solar panels, position them facing south where possible to maximise daylight charging. North-facing panels are less effective.
- Some solar lights have separate panels with a cable (often around five metres), allowing you to position the panel in the best location for sunlight.

Front door lighting can help you:

- Locate and identify their doorway
- Insert a key into the lock
- See who is at the door

Garden and pathway lighting can:

- Highlight steps, slopes and trip hazards
- Improve orientation and wayfinding
- Increase confidence when moving around outdoors

Seasonal considerations

Solar charging can be limited during winter and poor weather - often when lighting is needed most. To conserve energy:

- Consider setting lights to activate only when motion is detected during darker months.
- In brighter months, a dim-to-bright setting can provide background lighting with increased brightness when triggered.
- If consistent lighting is





EDNURG / ADOBESTOCK

- be kept in a coat pocket for when needed

When choosing a torch:

- Look for a wide beam angle for more balanced, even lighting.
- Rechargeable options are convenient but remember to keep them charged.
- Head torches can provide hands-free lighting, which is especially useful when holding a mobility aid.
- Be mindful that while head torches reduce glare for the wearer, they can shine directly into others' eyes if not angled carefully.

Lighting for orientation and landmarks

Outdoor lighting can also support orientation and navigation:

- Low-level solar lights can act as visual landmarks.
- Decorative solar lights or fairy lights can highlight pathways and changes in direction.
- Reflectors and colour contrast can also help mark boundaries, paths and features. 🌈

Next steps

Get in touch with MeSH on 01273 391 447 for advice and support, or contact your local community team.

Head torches can provide hands-free lighting

required, wired LED lighting may be more reliable and remains energy efficient.

- Wired systems can be connected to switches, timers or smart home systems (such as voice-activated assistants).

Using torches and head torches

Torches or head torches can:

- provide focused light when needed
- leave the hands free for other things

Member voice

Registration is now open for the following events:

HMS Calliope Military Dinner

Date: 4 December 2026

Registration closes: 9 October

Time: 2pm-5pm

This is a fantastic opportunity to savour our military traditions at this relaxed dinner alongside serving members of the Royal Navy and our

supporters of Blind Veterans UK. HMS Calliope promises to be an afternoon of laughter, camaraderie and delicious food, in an absolutely fantastic location in central Newcastle.

- Register your interest at www.blindveterans.org.uk/events/military-dinner-hms-calliope-2026/ or call 0300 111 2233. →



A recent military dinner

RAF Honington Military Dinner

Date: 12 February 2027

Registration closes: 18 December

Time: 12.30pm-5pm

This military-themed dinner in RAF Honington Officers' Mess, promises to be an afternoon filled with warmth, laughter and delicious food. Catch up with friends and forces personnel as you enjoy our Founder's Day Awards presentations and tuck into a three-course meal.

■ Register your interest at www.blindveterans.org.uk/events/military-dinner-raf-honington-2027/ or call 0300 11 2233.

RMA Sandhurst Corporate Dinner

Date: 5 March 2027

Registration closes: 8 January

Time: 12.30pm-4.30pm

We are pleased to offer a special event at the Royal Military Academy

Sandhurst, home to the future leaders of the British Army. This event will celebrate our fabulous corporate partnerships and military representatives for an afternoon of inspiration and connection. The dinner offers a unique experience located within the prestigious Indian Army Memorial Room, overlooking RMA Sandhurst's stunning grounds and promises to be an afternoon filled with laughter, camaraderie and delicious food.

■ Register your interest at www.blindveterans.org.uk/events/rma-sandhurst-corporate-dinner-2027/ or call 0300 112233.

Ambassador Standard Bearing training

From 7-10 June, eight Ambassadors came together to learn the correct techniques for carrying, marching and performing static drill movements

“Training was led and delivered by Ambassador Wayne Perry, who did a fantastic job throughout the course”

required for ceremonial and memorial duties with Blind Veterans UK Standards.

Ambassadors in attendance were Simon Hannah, Chris Lee, Simmy Martin, Lee Whitfield, Wayne Perry, Rob Loseby, Nigel Smith and Dave Cole.

Training was led and delivered by Ambassador Wayne Perry, who did a fantastic job throughout the course. Striking the perfect balance between professional instruction and military humour, Wayne created an enjoyable, supportive and engaging environment. Despite managing his own sight loss, Wayne delivered the training with confidence, earning the respect and appreciation of all those in attendance.

A particularly memorable moment took place during the week, when all eight Standard Bearers attended St Michael's Church in Madeley, Telford, for a Service of Blessing. During the service, each Standard was formally blessed and dedicated into service by the vicar, Andy.

The occasion marked a significant milestone as it was the first time in the charity's history that a blessing ceremony of this scale had been conducted for its Standards, making it a truly proud moment for all involved.



BVUK standard bearers attending St Michael's Church, Telford

National Creative Programme

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

Here are the projects available from the NCP in September. To request a kit, you can leave a message on the NCP voicemail on **01273 391 447** or email us at ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk. You can also request a kit via the Member's area of the website and get in touch with us to add yourself to any of our

regular distribution lists for models, mosaics, art and crafts, so we can automatically send you new projects when they are ready.

Within each project type we will list the new projects and some leftover projects you may have missed. The leftovers will



Lobster painting by Member Evan Hughes

be available until stock runs out. We'll also list upcoming projects available for pre-order. These are scheduled to be sent later in the year, but you can put your name down to receive them when they are ready. You can request as many projects as you like.

Wooden models

All kits come with a step-by-step graphic guide and some hints and tips to help you build your model.

New:

■ **Peacock** – this is a 59-piece model to join the other nature themed models you may have built already. Many of these pieces are repeated pieces for the tail feathers, so this is a fairly straightforward model. (Suitable for beginners)

Leftover:

■ **Complex** – Campervan, Jeep, Tank
 ■ **Simple** – Locomotive, Deer Head, Mouse, Hedgehog, Squirrel.

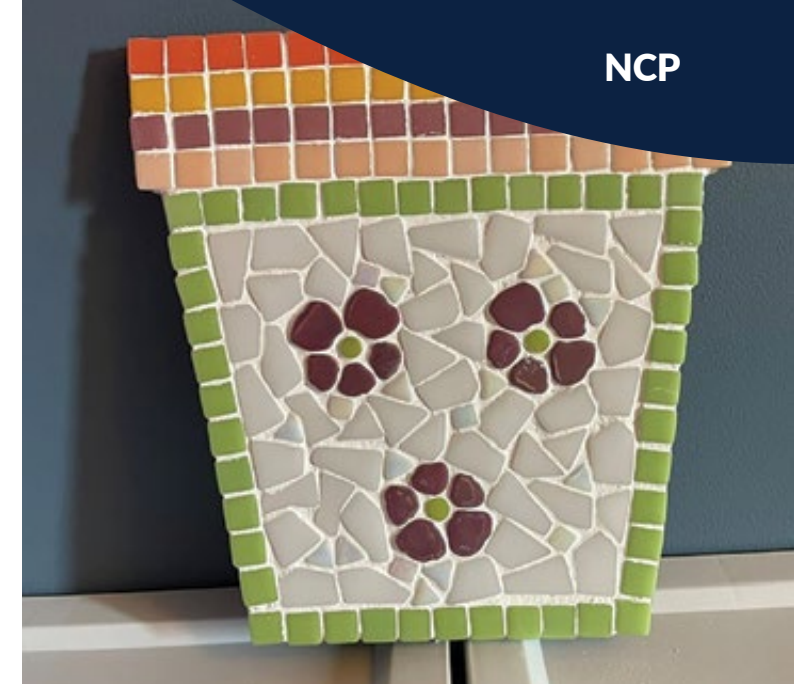
Upcoming:

■ **Knight's castle** – moderate difficulty, suitable for confident beginners.
 ■ **Carousel** – complex, previous modelling experience recommended.

Mosaics:

New:

■ Flowerpot mosaic – so many Members have shared that they use



Flowerpot

their mandala mosaics as flowerpot stands, which inspired this flowerpot design! This is an 8-step design which uses our snippet fill technique around flowers in the centre of the base. (Suitable for confident beginners)

■ Halloween mandala mosaic – this is similar to the older mandala style with lots of different tile styles in spooky colours. This mosaic will come with black grout for a striking contrast! (Some smaller pieces – suitable for confident beginners.)

Leftover:

■ Beginners mosaic
 ■ Ice cream mosaic
 ■ Butterfly mosaic (complex)

Upcoming:

■ Festive mandala mosaic (simple)
 ■ Christmas wreath mosaic (complex)





Listen
here

Your crafting stories

We're delighted to highlight the achievements of Member Evan Hughes from North Wales, whose artwork has been selected for display in a local art gallery

Evan was a keen artist in his younger years, with pastels being his preferred medium. As life grew busier, painting took a back seat and Evan spent many years serving in the Cheshire Police force, followed by time as a local councillor and eventually as Mayor of his local town. He had always hoped to return to painting later in life, but after losing his sight he wasn't sure how to begin again.

Seeking guidance, Evan contacted Blind Veterans UK for advice on how to get started again. He soon realised that although his methods might need to change, his artistic instincts and the images he holds in his mind's eye were still very much there. Focusing on enjoyment and experimentation, he began with designs in vivid colours to get used to putting paint to paper again. Within just six weeks, he had created three landscape paintings! Support from a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist helped him continue developing his skills and confidence.

Evan's work features bright, striking colours that add character and visual impact. With encouragement from his daughters, he applied to the gallery and was thrilled to hear back almost immediately. He shared that having a painting displayed in a gallery has always been one of his lifelong dreams.

■ **Evan's artwork will be exhibited at Plas Glyn y Weddw Art Gallery in North Wales between July and October 2026.** 🇬🇧



Evan in his studio



Peacock

Art

These projects are available year-round.

- **Pastels kit** – a beginner's kit to introduce you to this lovely medium – the pack contains a few hints, tips and creative prompts, a pack of pastels, blending stumps, pastel paper and a specialist eraser.
- **Botanical sketchbook** – a sketching kit with specially chosen materials for bold mark making. Suitable for beginners and more experienced artists.
- **Holiday landscapes** – watercolour painting pack suitable for all abilities, contains specialist paper, brushes, a tin of watercolour paints and some high contrast masking tape.

Craft:

New:

- **Clay modelling kit** – this kit contains a pack of airdrying terracotta clay, some tools and silicone moulds to get started with this great tactile craft. The possibilities are endless for what you make, but there are some creative prompts and technique guides in your instructions. This clay does not need to be fired or baked – it just dries out on a windowsill over a few days.

Leftover:

- Greetings cards papercraft

Upcoming:

- **Stained glass baubles** – special festive project using paint pens on Perspex bases. More information to come later in the year, but you can register interest now.

Christmas cards papercraft

A note about indoor gardening: We have been unable to source our usual indoor bulbs project this year due to supply issues. We know many of you enjoy this project and apologise for the disappointment. If you still have your pots from previous projects, you can repurpose them with other bulbs, or you may have been able to keep your previous bulbs healthy to bloom again this year.



Quiz time

Test your general knowledge

1. How many bones are there in the adult human body?

2. What is the largest desert in the world?

3. In which country is the city Timbuktu?

4. Which ancient civilisation built Machu Picchu?

5. Which novel begins with the opening line: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"?
6. What is the hardest natural substance on earth?

7. In which city was the Titanic built?

8. What does a praying mantis eat?

9. Rounded to the nearest whole number, how many different types of pasta are there in the world?

10. Who won Album of the Year at the Grammy's 2026?
- Answers on page 59



How many different kinds of pasta are there in the world?



Family news

Birthdays

- Graham Bezer who celebrated his 100th birthday on 18 August 2026.

Nancy Bowstead who celebrates her 105th birthday on 18 September 2026.

Mabel Boyle who celebrated her 100th birthday on 14 August 2026.

Walter Butler who celebrated his 103rd birthday on 31 August 2026.

Kathleen Davey who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 4 September 2026.

Leslie Fuller who celebrates his 101st birthday on 13 September 2026.

Robert Gravells who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 27 August 2026.
- Barbara Hart who celebrates her 105th birthday on 15 September 2026.

Ruth Hayes who celebrates his 101st birthday on 22 September 2026.

Raymond Jones who celebrates his 100th birthday on 2 September 2026.

Matthew Mackinnon-Pattison who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 14 August 2026.

Thomas Madge who celebrates his 100th birthday on 12 September 2026.

Joan Mirish who celebrates her 104th birthday on 1 September 2026.

Margaret Muskett who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 7 September 2026.



David Pierce who celebrates his 101st birthday on 11 September 2026.

Slazomir Posiell who celebrates his 100th birthday on 6 September 2026.

Norman Sims who celebrated his 100th birthday on 19 August 2026.

Jean Smith who celebrates her 100th birthday on 15 September 2026.

Grace Taylor who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 11 September 2026.

John White who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 25 August 2026.

Robert Williams who celebrates his 101st birthday on 21 September 2026.

Kenneth Windle who celebrates his 104th birthday on 30 September 2026.

Condolences

Jillian Campbell who died on 1 July 2026. She was the wife of Mick Campbell.

Gail Corbett who died on 1 June 2026. She was the wife of Colin Horton.

Ann Peel who died on 20 June 2026. She was the wife of Arnold Peel.

Anne Ricketts who died on 14 July 2026. She was the wife of Christopher Bernard.

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

James Ahearn of St Helens who died on 10 June 2026 aged 95. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

William Allardyce of Cumnock who died on 1 June 2026 aged 101. He served as a Acting Able Seaman in The Royal Navy.

Joseph Bans of Sleaford who died on 10 July 2026 aged 91. He served as a Flight Sergeant in The Royal Air Force.

Hugh Black of Wishaw who died on 17 July 2026 aged 84. He served in The Royal Navy.

Frank Bold of Warrington who died on 22 July 2026 aged 85. He served in The Lancashire Regiment.

Albert Braithwaite of Ruislip who died on 11 June 2026 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in The General Service Corps.

Raymond Brinsdon of Bath who died on 24 July 2026 aged 96. He served as a Craftsman in The General Service Corps.

Peter Brooke of Stowmarket who died on 23 July 2026 aged 98. He served as a Lieutenant in The Royal Navy.

David Burden of Ludlow who died on 21 June 2026 aged 98. He served in The Royal Air Force.

Roy Charlesworth of Birmingham who died on 1 June 2026 aged 83. He served as a Warrant Officer in The Royal Signals.

Richard Clegg of Wellingborough who died on 12 June 2026 aged 101. He served as an Acting Leading Airman in The Fleet Air Arm.

Gwilym Cochrane of Mold who died on 8 June 2026 aged 92. He served as a Private in The Royal Artillery.



Ronald Collins of Scunthorpe who died on 29 May 2026 aged 92. He served as a Sergeant in The Royal Artillery.

Thomas Cuthbert of Colchester who died on 13 July 2026 aged 100. He served as an Acting Leading Seaman in The Royal Navy.

Terriss Davies of Sheffield who died on 14 July 2026 aged 84. He served as a Driver in The Royal Navy.

William Davies of Cardiff who died on 10 June 2026 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Engineers.

Ralph Dines of Welwyn Garden City who died on 15 June 2026 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Signals.

Eric Drewett of Christchurch who died on 12 July 2026 aged 95. He served as an L.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

John Ellis of Grantham who died on 11 July 2026 aged 93. He served as a Sapper in The Royal Engineers.

Frederick Evans of Blackwood who died on 25 June 2026 aged 96. He served in The Royal Air Force.

David Forrester of Sheffield who died on 7 June 2026 aged 87. He served as a Gunner in The Royal Artillery.

Alfred Gibbons of Newport-On-Tay who died on 1 July 2026 aged 80. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in The Royal Navy.

Colin Holdom of Haverhill who died on 1 June 2026 aged 90. He served as a Trooper in The Royal Armoured Corps.

Kenneth Ivison of Middlesbrough who died on 27 July 2026 aged 92. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Green Horwards.

Peter Jack of Bradford who died on 30 June 2026 aged 92. He served as a signalman in The Army Reserve.

Phillip Jackson of Keighley who died on 16 July 2026 aged 101. He served in The Royal Army Service Corps.

Thomas Jones of Deganwy who died on 8 July 2026 aged 93. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Barbara Jones of Ryde who died on 14 June 2026 aged 103. She served as a Sergeant in The Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Neil Jordan of St. Ives who died on 16 June 2026 aged 64. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Air Force.

Leslie Leigh of Southsea who died on 14 July 2026 aged 94. He served in The Royal Navy.

Kenneth Lewis of Newtown who died on 30 June 2026 aged 97. He served as a Bombardier in The General Service Corps.

Charles Macpherson of Reading who died on 1 July 2026 aged 94. He served as a Private in The Highland Brigade.

Thomas Massey of Shrewsbury who died on 1 May 2026 aged 97. He served as a Private in The Queen's Own Hussars.

Gerard McCormick of Belfast who died on 9 June 2026 aged 85. He served in The Royal Air Force.

John McGovern of Newcastle Upon Tyne who died on 1 July 2026 aged 92. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Raymond Moore of Neston who died on 20 July 2026 aged 100. He served as a Chief Technician in The Royal Air Force.

Patrick Murphy of York who died on 13 July 2026 aged 96. He served as a Private in The General Service Corps.

John Nalepa of Doune who died on 5 June 2026 aged 79. He served as a Captain in The Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Richard O'brien of Weymouth who died on 14 June 2026 aged 91. He served as a Warrant Officer in The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Frank Osborn of London who died on 20 July 2026 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Army Medical Corps.

Frederick Passey of Southport who died on 12 July 2026 aged 98. He served as a Sergeant in The General Service Corps.

Eric Peters of Ruislip who died on 4 July 2026 aged 91. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Joyce Poolman of Yeovil who died on 10 June 2026 aged 106. She served as an L.A.C.W in The Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

John Rees of Southampton who died on 6 June 2026 aged 88. He served as a Private in The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment.



Roger Reeve of Stowmarket who died on 16 July 2026 aged 87. He served as a Signaller in The Royal Signals.

Maurice Robinson of Bolton who died on 1 July 2026 aged 91. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

John Russell of Maidstone who died on 20 July 2026 aged 93. He served as an L.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Roger Sargent of Rochdale who died on 12 July 2026 aged 89. He served as a Warrant Officer in The Intelligence Corps.

Brian Scales of Pevensey who died on 7 July 2026 aged 94. He served in The Royal Air Force.

Bryan Shelton of Nottingham who died on 10 June 2026 aged 92. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

William Taylor of Newhaven who died on 2 June 2026 aged 96. He served as a Private in The Royal Army Medical Corps.

Did you know that we can set up online Tribute Pages for the loved ones of staff, Members and Supporters? Find out more about setting up a Tribute Page here: blindveteransuk.muchloved.org

Shaun Taylor of Cleethorpes who died on 1 July 2026 aged 57. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Michael Tetley of St Albans who died on 6 July 2026 aged 96. He serves as a 2nd Lieutenant in The Kenya Regiment. A full obituary for Mike will appear in the next issue.

John Tidy of Nottingham who died on 1 June 2026 aged 91. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Engineers.

David Vincent of Evesham who died on 17 July 2026 aged 86. He served as a Private in The Royal Army Medical Corps.

Edward White of Leven who died on 1 July 2026 aged 85. He served as a Staff Sergeant in The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Marshall Wilkins of Swindon who died on 11 July 2026 aged 94. He served as a Private in The Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Joseph Williams of Colwyn Bay who died on 20 June 2026 aged 90. He served in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Glyndwr Williams of Cwmbran who died on 12 June 2026 aged 93. He served as a Gunner in The Royal Artillery.



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A dedicated community for those who support our blind veterans. Share advice, find reassurance, and connect with others who understand the unique challenges and rewards of caring for someone with sight loss.

To join a group visit www.blindveterans.org.uk/virtualgroup



Quiz answers – from page 49 1. 206 2. Antarctica 3. Mali 4. The Inca civilisation 5. A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens 6. Diamond 7. Belfast, Northern Ireland 8. Other insects 9. 600 10. Bad Bunny



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