

Your impact on the lives of blind veterans

Debrief

Summer 2026



Your support. Their success.



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

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Dear Supporter,

As the new President of Blind Veterans UK, I am proud to welcome you to the Summer edition of Debrief magazine.

You will read how your generosity and kindness sit at the heart of everything we do, creating opportunities for blind veterans to regain their independence and confidence – and succeed after sight loss. Just like the blind veterans on the cover, who were able to triumph at this year's London Marathon.

I would also like to highlight the article on page 3 about my predecessor as President, Colin Williamson. Colin has been a huge support to me personally and will prove to be the toughest act to follow in the role.

Just like Colin, I am a blind veteran. I was medically discharged from the Royal Marines due to the hereditary eye disease retinitis pigmentosa. Having been supported by Blind Veterans UK for more than 20 years, I know first-hand just how vital your kindness and commitment are.

It is a real privilege to give something back and to serve my fellow blind veterans as the next President of this remarkable organisation.

Thank you for everything.

Alan Holderness JP
President

A life of Service

After almost 10 years, Colin Williamson is standing down as President of Blind Veterans UK. It is the end of a remarkable chapter – one defined by humour, resilience and commitment to his fellow veterans.

Colin joined the Army, aged 15, as a junior soldier before serving in Germany and Northern Ireland with the 25th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery. Later, Colin had a 27-year career with what became British Telecom.

Colin's life changed dramatically following an unprovoked assault. He sustained five skull fractures, immediately lost the sight in his right eye, and over the following year lost peripheral vision in his left.

The loss of independence was significant. His career ended, along with the ability to drive. **But, Colin refused to define himself by what he could no longer do.**

In 2003, Colin attended an introductory week at our Centre. He says, "I realised there were people in a similar position who were managing. It gave me a new lease of life." That moment marked the start of a lifelong relationship with the charity.

He led the Cadet Challenge before moving on to be Contributing Editor for the Members' magazine. Then came Project Gemini, what Colin calls his "proudest achievement" with the charity. The international exchange programme linked blind veterans in the UK, United States and South Africa. It brought together younger blind veterans to share experiences, skills and coping strategies.

Colin played a central role in establishing partnerships, organising exchanges and persuading international charities to participate. The project expanded into something deeper: a sense of international brotherhood.



Colin at a dinner event

"It's always been an honour and a privilege to serve this charity." – Colin Williamson

Colin succeeded Ray Hazan OBE as President in 2016. His presidency coincided with COVID-19 and significant organisational change.

He describes the role as "a cross between an agony aunt and a regimental sergeant major", fielding calls from blind veterans with concerns and ideas. **"I got the chance to give the blind veterans a voice," he says.**

Colin sets a high standard for those who follow him in the role; he also leaves with the grateful thanks of all in the Blind Veterans UK family.

Op Telic: A life changed forever in Iraq

In May, we marked the 15th anniversary of the final withdrawal of British forces in Iraq, known as Operation Telic. For Ben, a veteran of the 3rd Battalion Rifles, life would never be the same.

Ben, now 43, was deployed twice to Iraq – first during the invasion phase and later in what became Op Telic. His role was to patrol and protect bases, communities and key infrastructure.

Five days before he was due home from his second tour, in February 2007, Ben's patrol was attacked. The threat had been growing: the days felt calmer, but the nights were dangerous. As dusk fell, his convoy moved along the Basra river. **"Just as we were coming up to a slip road, they detonated the IED, and it hit our vehicle,"** Ben recalls. "I was driving the lead vehicle."

Despite critical injuries, he kept driving, gripped by the fear of a second attack. "They would work out where we'd go after a first explosion, what our actions would be and set up a second ambush. **It was very clear in my mind there could be a secondary or tertiary attack...** You just have to drive and get out of the kill zone."

He drove until the vehicle finally crashed. His arm and leg were shredded. Shrapnel had torn into his skull. One eye was destroyed immediately, and the other was severely damaged.



Ben while he was in Service

A colleague ran to help him, stunned by what he saw. "My head was resting against the glass, and there was a lot of blood. He thought I must be dead. But then he said that I looked up at him and said, 'You right, mate?' They just yanked me out of the wagon as quick as they could."

Ben remembers touching his own face, and realising the full extent of his injuries. Medics tried to seal his remaining eye to stop the fluid from leaking out.

He was taken to an American hospital in Iraq, then Germany, and eventually home. Surgeons saved his arm and removed the shrapnel from his skull. In Selly Oak Hospital, Ben finally asked the question weighing on him.

"Will I see again?"

The doctor told him gently, **'No, we had to remove both of your eyes, Ben.'**

Ben describes the moment calmly. For 20 seconds, Ben says he thought about the things he'd no longer do – drive, play computer games. Then he told himself, "There's nothing you can do about it now. It's just the way it is." He refused to be overwhelmed. **"It's part of the job," he says.**



Ben today

Ben always knew the risks. "If it hadn't been me, it would've been one of my mates. And there's no way I would ever have wanted them to go through what I did. **I was glad it was me and not them.**"

Back home, Ben received early support from other charities before turning to Blind Veterans UK. With a baby on the way, he was desperate to master cooking and independent living skills.

At our Centre he learned practical skills for everyday living. He used equipment he didn't know existed, like talking scales, which he says made a huge difference.

The time away also gave him and his wife space. For a couple used to enforced time apart, their new life was very different. When Ben was at the Centre, his wife knew he was safe and could relax.

Ben's rehabilitation was so successful that he returned to snowboarding in early 2018. By 2020, he had won Gold at the European equivalent of the Paralympic Games in the blind gated slalom. He even returned to computer gaming and is now helping companies to improve accessibility for players with sight loss.

It's staggering how far he's come in 15 years: from being presumed dead to becoming an independent, ambitious father, athlete and advocate. **Ben's story is a powerful reminder of what determination can achieve – especially when veterans have the support they need behind them.**

To hear Ben tell his story of Iraq, go to blindveterans.org.uk/optelic



Celebrating Service and support at Sandhurst

Earlier this year, we had a wonderful opportunity to honour blind veterans and valued corporate partners at the prestigious Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

The event celebrated the achievements of our blind veterans and gave us the chance to thank the corporate partners whose support makes such a difference. For our sponsors, Amazon and Corps Security, it was a wonderful opportunity to meet the people whose lives their generosity has helped to transform.

Guests were welcomed by blind veteran Alan, who you can read about on page 16. They were then given a history of Sandhurst by Brigadier Nick Wight-Boycott OBE.

Blind veteran Bryan presented the Sandhurst Commander with a specially created painting. Bryan served in the Royal Navy and later the Royal Naval Reserve. He credits a Blind Veterans UK watercolour kit with helping him regain the confidence to paint again. "They gave me the inspiration to pick my hobby back up and get re-skilled," he says.



Everyone gathered on the steps of RMA Sandhurst

The afternoon also featured two deeply moving presentations of our Founder's Awards, the charity's highest honour. Stu received the Life Beyond Sight Loss Award. He came to us in 2024 after losing his sight, his business, his home and his animals. Over the past year, he has rebuilt his life with extraordinary determination and courage.



Stu receiving his Life Beyond Sight Loss Award, presented by Josh Vause, Amazon

We also presented the Volunteer Founder's Award to Paddy for his unwavering support. The moment was made even more special for Paddy because the award was presented by a current Sandhurst Officer Cadet – Paddy's son, Matthew.

Our CEO Adrian Bell concluded the day, saying: "This was a special opportunity to gather our blind veterans with our current – and future – corporate partners. My congratulations to Stu and Paddy, and my sincere thanks to Amazon, Corps Security and The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for making this celebration possible."

How corporate partnerships power change

Corporate partners play a vital role in helping us reach more struggling veterans, fund our services, and create ways that really help our blind veterans thrive.

And when a company gets involved, it isn't just good for blind veterans – it's good for their teams too. People value working for an organisation that backs a meaningful cause.

Here are just some of the ways businesses support us:



Sponsor special events

Companies like Amazon and Corps Security support events such as our recent Sandhurst gathering. Their support helps us bring veterans together while giving their staff the chance to champion a cause they care about.



Team volunteering

Groups of employees regularly take part in hands-on volunteering days. Teams from SUEZ have helped with recycling at our Rustington Centre, while British Gas volunteers have supported our military dinners.



Workplace fundraising

Corporate teams run their own creative fundraising challenges – like Knight Frank's office cycling event last year.



Sharing skills and time

Employees often lend their expertise, whether through digital support, befriending, or helping run local clubs. Their specialist skills can make an enormous difference.



Vital service funding

Companies whose values align with ours can also provide major support for our services. Sopra Steria, for example, has helped fund our work over the past two years.



Could you help open doors?

Do you, or someone you know, work for a business that might want to partner with Blind Veterans UK? We'd love to hear from you. Introductions make a real, lasting impact.

Please contact **Hope Walker**, Corporate Partnerships Manager

Email: hope.walker@blindveterans.org.uk or Phone: 07387 140596

Climbing for a cause

Taking on a challenge isn't easy but it can be incredibly rewarding. Supporter Anna shares her experience of tackling the Three Peaks with her mum.

On 27 April, Anna set out to complete the Three Peaks Challenge, aiming to summit the UK's three highest mountains - Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon - within just 24 hours.



Anna and Rebecca, bottom of Llanberis Path



Rebecca and Anna, Ben Nevis summit

Anna's motivation was deeply personal. Her dad lost his sight suddenly in December 2023.

"Blind Veterans UK stepped in during one of the most difficult times of Dad's life, helping him to rebuild his confidence and rediscover his sense of purpose. He was very athletic in his prime – Arctic Warfare trained, with years spent hiking in the mountains, training and pushing himself. In honour of his achievements, I decided to do something I'd never done before and truly challenge myself.

"This challenge gave me the opportunity to thank Blind Veterans UK and help ensure others like my dad can receive life-changing support."

Anna was joined by her mum, Rebecca, creating memories they say will stay with them for life.

"The first 12 hours went smoothly, with clear weather on both Ben Nevis and Scafell Pike. We started to feel the fatigue after the second climb, but with friends driving us between each peak, we were able to rest, stay focused and keep our energy up.

"Snowdon, however, brought a very different test. By the time we arrived, it was dark and conditions had worsened. Winds reached 40 mph and visibility was poor."

Despite the harsh weather, Anna still found moments of beauty, including the moon lighting their path. They managed to climb around a third of the Llanberis route before facing a difficult decision.

“Around a third of the way up, we knew we had to turn around. It would have been unsafe - not just for us, but for anyone who might have needed to rescue us if we continued.

“We may not have finished the final climb, but we raised over £5,200, which means so much! I’d love to go back and complete Snowdon in the future. I’d absolutely do it all again - it’s made me excited to explore what other challenges I could take on.”



Rebecca and Anna, Scafell Pike

Read more about our supporters’ challenges at blindveterans.org.uk/anna

And if you’re feeling inspired, why not take on your own? Take a look at our challenge ideas. blindveterans.org.uk/challenge



Anna’s challenge tips

Practice makes perfect

“Proper training is essential.

To prepare, Mum and I did endurance walks and hill sprints.”

Teamwork makes the dream work

“Having friends as drivers meant we could rest between climbs. They also kept our spirits high.”

Pack plenty of snacks

“And eat them regularly. Fuel your body before you feel hungry - I recommend jellybeans!

Ask the experts

“The team at Blind Veterans UK gave me incredible support with fundraising.

They provided resources, helped me share my story and offered tips for using social media. Thanks to them, I received donations not only from friends and family, but also from complete strangers who wanted to show their support.”

Be bold enough to begin

“The hardest part is taking that first step and putting yourself out there. Challenges give you the chance to try things you may have never considered otherwise. Trust your instincts, know your limits and remember – a challenge should push you, but should never put you or others in danger.”

Making every penny count



Blind veteran John with his bottles

Donations from supporters like you help blind veterans rebuild their confidence and independence. But did you know your generosity can go even further with Gift Aid? For every £1 you donate, we may be able to claim an extra 25p from the government at no extra cost to you. Those extra pennies quickly add up – as blind veteran John knows well.

RAF veteran John lost his sight in 2006 due to age-related macular degeneration. He remembers standing outside the hospital thinking, “How the devil will I survive this?” But with support from Blind Veterans UK, he rebuilt his confidence. “I realised I could still do a million and one things,” he says.

Grateful for the support he has received, John wanted to give something back. That’s when he created his “Every Penny Counts” idea: saving old plastic bottles, filling them with loose change, and donating the contents. His first bottle contained £80 – **which turned into £100 with Gift Aid**. Another held £12, which became £15. Those extra pounds help fund equipment, training and life-changing support for blind veterans.

John now encourages others to join him, inspired by a memory from his RAF days of watching tiny ants working together to carry a grasshopper up a 12-foot column. “Just look at what they achieved by working together,” he says. Find out more at blindveterans.org.uk/epc

John’s attitude is inspiring and also a reminder that Gift Aid matters. When you tick the Gift Aid box, your generosity grows. You’re eligible for Gift Aid if you are a UK taxpayer and have paid enough Income or Capital Gains Tax to cover the amount we claim from your donation. Many people are still eligible even if they’re retired or receiving a pension. It’s one of the simplest ways to increase the impact of your support, helping blind veterans like John continue to live full, independent lives.

To make a Gift Aid declaration, go to blindveterans.org.uk/aid
Or you can tick the box on the donation form enclosed with your copy of Debrief and return it to us in the prepaid envelope.



26.2 miles, powered by you

This edition's cover stars are the five blind veterans who conquered this year's London Marathon. For them, the 26.2 miles are about more than distance: each step is a triumph over the challenges of sight loss. Their achievement is thanks to sheer determination — and your support.



Blind veteran Wayne and his guide Matt

Royal Navy veteran **Wayne**, 44, took part in the London Marathon for the first time alongside his guide Matt. Wayne slipped on discarded bottles and had near misses with runners who stopped to take selfies but nothing could stop him. He says: "I'm still trying to process what I've achieved. It was absolutely amazing. None of it would have been possible without the charity."

Andy spent 19 years with the Royal Logistics Corps. Now 51, this was his 11th marathon! "I'm so passionate about giving back by supporting the charity and helping them to make a difference for others, just like they did for my family."

Adjutant General's Corp veteran **Kelly**, 44, ran her first London Marathon in 2015 and was excited to get back out there to do it again this year. She says: "The crowd were fantastic and were shouting out my name. I am so proud to be a blind veteran; I wouldn't be who I am today if I wasn't. Blind Veterans UK saved my life."

This was Royal Navy veteran **Alan's** 15th London Marathon. Together with his guide Helen, they powered on through the course, despite the very warm conditions. Read more about how far Alan has come on page 16.

Territorial Army veteran **Chris**, 65, took on his first ever marathon on Sunday alongside Phoebe who works for our charity. Just two weeks before the Marathon, Chris's guide was injured and Phoebe volunteered to run with Chris.

Phoebe said, "Working at Blind Veterans UK, I know how much good the charity does and so I was really keen to help out."



Blind veteran Chris and Phoebe

The fab five raised an amazing £7,500 to support their fellow blind veterans.

Places are open for the London Marathon 2027! If you have been inspired or someone you know might want to run for blind veterans, visit blindveterans.org.uk/team2027

A Will made simple: With support you can trust

Writing your Will is one of the most thoughtful ways to look after the people and causes that matter most. When blind veteran Sue decided it was time to put her plans in place, she found the experience reassuring from start to finish.

We referred Sue to our trusted Free Wills Service, and she was sent an information pack. Sue says the information was clear and easy to follow, and she found the solicitor they put her in touch with very helpful.



Signing a Will

"I wasn't sure where to start," she says, "but everything was explained in plain English. I came away feeling relieved and pleased that it was all sorted, and at no cost to me. I'd urge anyone to just get it done – it was so easy and painless."

We can offer support to help you navigate the process, to make it as clear and reassuring as possible – because we know how important writing your Will is.

Supporter Margaret, who recently used the service, agrees: "I knew I needed to write a Will but thought it would be a lot harder than it was. Thank you, Blind Veterans UK, for the help and advice and for introducing me to a solicitor who made the whole procedure easy to understand."



If you're ready to write your Will, or aren't sure what is involved, here are three simple steps you can follow:

Step 1: Decide what you want to include

Start by thinking about what matters most to you and those you care about. This is your opportunity to reflect on the people, priorities and values that have shaped your life.

Consider the people and causes you'd like to support, and how you'd like your wishes to be honoured. Take some time to understand the value of your estate - your home, savings, possessions and any investments, and think about who you'd like to give to, and what.

This is also a good moment to record any other wishes or preferences. Taking time now makes things easier later, giving you clarity and confidence in the plans you're putting in place.

Step 2: Appoint key roles

The next step is choosing the people who will make sure your wishes are carried out. Executors can be family, friends or professionals – whoever you feel is right for the responsibility. Talking to them beforehand helps them feel prepared and reassured.

Step 3: Choose a service or solicitor that feels right for you

Once you've set out your wishes, the final step is putting them into a legally valid document. You can do this with any qualified solicitor (for example, through www.solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk), or you can use our trusted Free Wills Service to make the process even simpler.

Some people prefer meeting a solicitor in person; others prefer completing their Will online. Blind Veterans UK offers both options through its Free Wills Service.

After your Will is drafted, you'll sign it in front of two independent witnesses who aren't related to you or beneficiaries of your Will. You can then review it every few years to keep it up to date – and our Free Wills Service will be here if ever you need it again.

There is no obligation to leave a gift to Blind Veterans UK when using the Free Wills Service.

Your Will is personal, and your loved ones always come first. However, many supporters kindly choose to leave a percentage to the charity once their family is provided for, helping blind veterans rebuild their lives through rehabilitation, training and lifelong support.

As supporter Chris shared: "I now have a Will that ensures my partner is secure, my beneficiaries are looked after, and Blind Veterans UK will receive a gift to continue supporting ex-servicemen and women in the future."



Chris smiling with a cup of tea

Take the next step whenever you're ready.

A Will is a way to make sure your wishes are known. Whether you're thinking about it now or simply gathering information for later, information and support are available whenever you feel ready.



To find out more or use our Free Wills Service offer, go to blindveterans.org.uk/freewills or call 0300 111 2233.

Dark times: Finding hope after sight loss and cancer

Some of you may recognise Andy from our Spring Raffle campaign, but you won't know the full extent of his extraordinary journey. **Andy's story reveals just how much strength – and how much support – it takes for someone to really rebuild their life after sight loss.**

Andy served in the Royal Air Force for 24 years, with postings at RAF Kinloss and RAF Akrotiri, before building a very successful civilian career. He never expected to retire early at 61. But glaucoma left him with severely restricted vision, forcing him to step away from the work and responsibility that had defined him.



Blind veteran Andy outside with his long white cane



Blind veteran Andy and his wife, Julie

Your support has helped Andy adjust. Training with a long cane restored his freedom, while regular contact from our team, including visits from rehabilitation specialists, helped him rebuild confidence and independence.

But just as Andy began his sight loss journey, he faced another life-changing challenge: a cancer diagnosis.

Treatment became his priority, and he describes the experience as physically and mentally exhausting, marked by a relentless cycle of treatment, worry and waiting between scans. Through it all, he and his wife took each day as it came, holding onto small moments of hope and focusing on the next step forward.

Despite everything, Andy's resilience and characteristic humour shone through. During one hospital visit, he was asked to sit in a blue chair to receive his cannula, but because of his sight, he accidentally sat on a nurse dressed in blue, making everyone laugh. Now the treatment is over, he's looking ahead again with the same determination that defined his military career. Taking on the London Marathon is more than a race; it's a statement that he's still moving forward, still fighting, and still reclaiming the life he's worked so hard to build.

Andy's strength is his own, but rediscovering it wasn't something he had to do alone. Your support was there when he needed it most, helping him rebuild confidence, independence and hope. Thank you.

A community that feels like family

When blind veteran Nadine turned 100, she never imagined she'd soon be spending an afternoon dancing with a handsome man but that's exactly what happened at her birthday party earlier this year.

The Weymouth community support team transformed their regular social gathering into a surprise celebration, planned over many months and kept secret by friends, family and our staff.

Blind veterans and their families enjoyed a cream tea at the Weymouth Pavilion, along with cake and music. Nadine delighted in every moment, especially dancing with fellow blind veteran Jerry, 61, who arrived suited and booted for the occasion. The pair took to the dance floor, spinning to Elvis's classics.

Nadine enlisted in the Women's Royal Army Corps in 1946, serving as a Steward in the Officers' Mess until her discharge in 1948 to marry. More recently, she was diagnosed with glaucoma in both eyes and wet macular degeneration in her left eye. Although she joined the charity less than two years ago, she's already built strong friendships with people who wanted to make her milestone birthday truly special.

Nadine's daughter, Sally, thanked the team for the celebration and shared how much the support and assistive equipment have meant to her mum.

What touched her most was hearing Nadine say she now thinks of the Weymouth group as family. Sally said, "Mum had an amazing time. The cakes and flowers were beautiful, and a special dance with Jerry made it even more memorable. Thank you for all the hard work and effort that went into making it a special occasion for Mum."



Nadine with her 100th birthday cake

Across the country, our community groups meet regularly thanks to your support. These gatherings mean so much to blind veterans, who often form close bonds with others who truly understand their experiences. They offer a strong sense of belonging, something many miss after leaving the Forces, and are a powerful way to reduce isolation. As Weymouth group co-ordinator Nikki says, "It's truly wonderful to watch."

We hope Nadine and the Weymouth group continue to enjoy many more happy gatherings. We're certain they will!

The tech giving Alan his most meaningful moments



Alan reading to his daughter thanks to OrCam glasses

Technology has taken Alan around the world but nothing compares to the difference it has made in his life at home.

Alan joined the Navy in 2002. Just three years later, while completing his training as a nuclear submarine engineer, he lost his sight due to a rare genetic condition. At just 25, he was forced to retire from the Armed Forces. **"I was full of worry and uncertainty for my future," Alan says. "The Royal Navy was what I expected to do for life."**

With his career went his fitness too. He credits Blind Veterans UK with helping him find employment and with rediscovering running, with a guide and independently using a running machine. **"They gave me my mojo back."**

Since then, Alan has completed three ultramarathons – including the Marathon des Sables – and 24 marathons! He also has two world records under his belt: the first visually impaired person to row across the Atlantic and the first to ski from the coast of Antarctica to the South Pole. **Yet despite these remarkable achievements, one moment of renewed hope stands above them all – made possible by your support.**

Sight loss affects every part of Alan's life, including being a dad: "I was really aware it was going to be different for me." Some things many parents take for granted simply weren't possible. "I've never properly seen my daughter's face, which is heartbreaking."

Determined to be the best father he could be, Alan focused on moments that mattered most to him. "It was really important for me to do some of the key Dad things, like reading her a bedtime story, but I knew I wouldn't be able to read."

He turned to our tech team, who introduced him to OrCam glasses. The device scans text and reads it into an earpiece, allowing Alan to repeat the words to his daughter.

"I felt like a real dad," he says. "I was doing something other dads do. I've had incredible opportunities around the world, but sensing the smile on her face – **that was the best feeling of all.**"

How AI helps Richard live independently

Artificial Intelligence can feel daunting to many of us. Blind veteran Richard shares how it can be a powerful tool for people living with sight loss.

A life in the Services was all I'd ever wanted. So when I left school and joined the Royal Navy, I was full of excitement about the 22 years ahead of me. Then, aged 19, my eyesight disappeared overnight. I was medically discharged, and my world fell apart.

I was taken to St Dunstan's, now Blind Veterans UK. I won't dwell on the nights I cried myself to sleep, but it was there that I began a journey that would eventually take my life and career far beyond anything I could have imagined.

Mobility training gave me back my confidence. Technology showed me what was possible. Everyday tasks that had become daunting and dangerous, gradually became manageable again. Just as importantly, the spirit of the charity and the people within it rekindled that military mindset in me: the belief that nothing was going to beat me. And it hasn't.

Artificial intelligence is often talked about in terms of business or the future of work. **But for people with sight loss, it's already making a real difference in everyday life.** The key thing to understand is that it isn't difficult to use.



Blind veteran Richard

Live video in apps such as Google Gemini and ChatGPT uses your smartphone's back camera, allowing AI to describe what's in front of you as you talk to it. There's no typing involved.

When I set the oven, for example, I point the camera at the temperature knob and use my finger to show the AI exactly which dial I mean. I ask where 200°C is and get it to describe the position using a clock face. As I turn the knob, I ask again: "Is that now pointing to 200?" It tells me whether I need to adjust it slightly up or down.

Whether at home or at work, AI can identify the colour of clothes, describe rooms, read signs or menus and explain what's around me. AI gives me so much more independence.

Of course, AI is no replacement for human support, rehabilitation or good judgement. But I've found it can be truly transformative. Most importantly of all, you don't need to be a technology expert – you just need to be willing to give it a try.

Giving time makes a difference

For many supporters, helping means a making donation. For others, their gift is their time. Volunteers like Deborah and Ian show just how transformative that gift can be – not only for the blind veterans they support, but for themselves too. Their stories prove that when you give your time, you often receive far more in return.



Volunteer Ian at the start of London Revolution Bike Ride

Deborah first discovered Blind Veterans UK in 2019: “I was inspired to get involved. I knew I wanted to help,” she says. She became a Home Visitor, offering companionship to veterans experiencing loneliness and isolation.

Over the years, Deborah has supported three veterans. Today, she visits Brian, “a young 94”, who completed National Service with the Royal Army Service Corps in the 1950s. Their weekly visits might include lunch out or simply enjoying each other’s company. “He is warm, caring, funny, and has so many stories to share. We laugh a heck of a lot!” she says.

Volunteering has strengthened Deborah’s sense of purpose and her belief in kindness and community. She encourages others to take that first step. **“You might be surprised by how much you gain.”**

Ian’s connection to the charity stretches back nearly six decades. As a young Royal Navy Artificer apprentice in 1967, he saw blind veterans attend summer camps on HMS Daedalus. Years later, after leaving the Navy, he began fundraising – from marathons to long-distance cycling events.

After retiring, Ian became a volunteer Home Visitor. He applied through our website, completed training and began visiting veterans at home. Sometimes, they head out together; other times, they simply share a few hours of conversation.

Ian says a shared Forces background helps. “You can engage in some Forces banter.” But what matters most is being there. Offering a steady arm and an even steadier presence, he has seen how meaningful these visits are to blind veterans.

Together, Deborah and Ian remind us that volunteering is a powerful act of generosity, one that brings hope and connection to everyone involved.

To find out more about volunteering, go to blindveterans.org.uk/volunteer or call Supporter Services on **0300 111 2233**.



Blind veteran Richard and a staff member at the Rustington Centre

Your support means Richard can stand tall

Richard, now in his 80s, has lived an extraordinary life. He served for 23 years in the Royal Navy, much of it spent in submarines, travelling the world – even forming a steel band while stationed in the West Indies. But nothing in that remarkable life prepared him for the slow, disorientating loss of his sight.

“The right eye had been going for years,” he explains. When a cataract developed in his left eye, Richard hoped surgery would restore his vision. Instead, he says, “the next day, I just had a mist in front of my eye. Something wasn’t right.” A specialist soon confirmed the devastating news: his condition had progressed from dry to wet macular degeneration. Eight months of injections followed, but the degeneration was inevitable.

Losing his sight meant losing far more than vision. A lifelong brass band musician, Richard suddenly couldn’t read music. “I could still play, but not being able to read the parts, I was lost. That was the hardest thing.” Then, a year ago, there was another blow. Leaving a doctor’s appointment, Richard was hit by a car. Already recovering from knee surgery, the accident put him back on two sticks and shattered his confidence. “It felt like a big step backwards.”

Everything changed when he connected with our charity and finally received the specialist support he needed. “The physiotherapy, the cane training, the kitchen skills – it’s all about helping you to stay as independent as possible for as long as possible, and that’s all I want.”

With support from staff like Lizzie, he soared. “I was a different man,” he says.

Today, Richard walks with one stick, uses adapted technology to stay connected, and has proudly completed his white cane training. Of our staff and volunteers, he says, “They couldn’t be more helpful. They just get it – nothing is too much for them.”

Your support powers the life-changing rehabilitation delivered by our experts. Thanks to you, Richard has overcome immense challenges, reclaimed his independence, and stepped forward with renewed purpose and hope.

You could win £1,000 every week!

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