Review

Listen here

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK
November 2026



Battling Back

Building confidence and forging friendships

Inside:

The people behind Remembrance

Veterans walk Somme frontline

Christmas gift guide

Blind Veterans UK

Rebuilding lives after sight loss

Listen here

Contact details

Contact address Blind Veterans UK, York House, Wetherby Road, York, YO26 7NH **0300 111 22 33**

Member Support Hub (MeSH): 01273 391 447

New Members: Anyone who may be eligible to join Blind Veterans UK, can phone our Membership Department on freephone **0800 389 7979.**

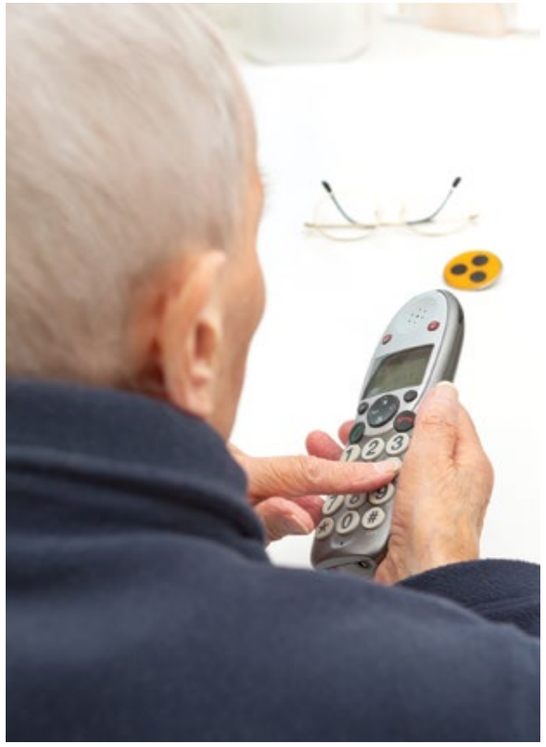
Rustington Centre: 01903 945 300

Review Editor: 0300 111 22 33 or **revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk**

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

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

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



AGENTURFOTOGRAFIN / ADOBE STOCK

A different format?

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



Members enjoying sailing around Poole Harbour in Dorset **(see page 13)**

Contents

02 Contact details
04 Chief Executive welcome
06 News
10 In your community
14 The people behind Remembrance
17 Veterans walk the Somme frontline
19 Michael return to the airwaves
22 Battling back
25 Fleet Air Arm connections
28 Meet our new Ambassadors
32 The tale of John the Blind
34 Gifts for people with sight loss
38 From tactile watches to talking books
46 National Creative Programme
49 Your crafting stories
50 Quiz time
51 Family news
52 In memory

On the cover

Jill Humphries, Carl Adamson and Mark Avery play basketball in Lilleshall



Listen here

Remember together

A message from CEO **Adrian Bell**

November is always a particularly important time for our community, as we come together to remember all those who have served and sacrificed. I'm looking forward to marching in London again this year and to meeting many of you the night before. That gathering is always a special opportunity to catch up, share stories and reflect together ahead of the march. Our new Chair, Giles Peel, and new President, Alan Holderness, will also be joining us in London over the weekend.



Adrian Bell

I'm also delighted that Remembrance events will be taking place in Manchester, Edinburgh and Rustington, giving Members in different parts of the country the opportunity to take part. Wherever you are marking Remembrance this November, I hope you feel connected to the wider Blind Veterans UK community and know that we will be remembering together.

Alongside these important commemorations, a number of pilot projects for Members have been running over the past few months.

"Thank you again to everyone who took part and helped make their voices heard"

These are helping us test new ideas, learn what works well and understand how we can provide even better support in the future.

One of these pilots is the programme of activity courses at the Royal British Legion's Battle Back Centre in Lilleshall. You can read more about it on page 22. It is a great example of the kind of partnership work we hope to do more of, bringing together the expertise and resources of like-minded organisations to create valuable opportunities for our Members.

Another pilot has focused particularly on the experiences of our female Members. I would like to thank the more than 100 women who recently completed our survey and shared your experiences, views and ideas so openly. Your responses have helped us better understand both the positive difference our services make and the areas where more support is needed.

In the survey, many of you highlighted the value of specialist equipment, rehabilitation, community support workers, volunteering, social activities and the friendships you have made through Blind Veterans UK. You also spoke honestly about loneliness, transport barriers and the need for more opportunities for female veterans to meet and build connections. In particular, there was strong interest in activities and events designed to bring women together.

This feedback is already helping us consider how we can improve support, strengthen connections and ensure female veterans feel represented, heard and valued across our community. Those who expressed an interest in joining a steering group will hear from us soon with more information about how to get involved. Thank you again to everyone who took part and helped make their voices heard.

These pilots are about listening, learning and working with others to develop services that respond to Members' lives. We are planning other pilot programmes and I look forward to sharing more about what we learn and how it will shape our work.

In the meantime, I wish you all well during the Remembrance period, whether at an official event or not, and hope you are able to mark the occasion in your own way.

News

Woodworking together

A shared love of woodworking is bringing veterans together in Community 10 and helping to build friendships along the way.

It began more than a year ago, when Member Bill Mooney was introduced to a local woodworking workshop at Community Ventures and Enterprise Centre in Newton Aycliffe. Bill had been recovering from some serious health issues and was feeling low, and the opportunity to get back to woodworking proved invaluable. As well as returning to a hobby he enjoyed, the sessions gave him the chance to meet and spend time with other woodworking enthusiasts.

Since then, the group has continued to grow. Six blind veterans now attend the workshop regularly, some of whom used to work as joiners and have been glad to put their skills to use once again. Most importantly, the sessions have brought the group together, creating new friendships that now extend beyond their time at Blind Veterans UK.



Bill and George at the woodwork workshop

Incredible London Marathon fundraising achievement

Supporter Julie Young ran her first London Marathon earlier this year and raised over £6,000, becoming one of the charity's highest ever London Marathon fundraisers.

"Running the London Marathon had been on my bucket list for over 30 years, and finally this year I was given the opportunity with a charity place. It is definitely a first and last for me but I'm incredibly proud to have ticked the achievement of running the London Marathon off my list and to have raised money for the charity that has done so much for my dad, Harold, who has been a Member since he lost his sight around 13 years ago."

Harold completed National Service with the Army between 1953 and 1956 and served with the Royal Army Service Corps, including a posting to the Suez Canal during the crisis. Later in life, Harold lost his sight due to glaucoma and macular degeneration.

He says: "I wouldn't be where I am today without the support of Blind Veterans UK. They have done so much for me by providing equipment and offering training. They have helped me to maintain my independence. I am so proud of Julie for completing a marathon and raising so much money in the process. It's a huge achievement."



Julie with her medal

Inspired by Julie? Why not visit the Blind Veterans UK website to find out how you can go about running the London Marathon for our charity. Visit blindveterans.org.uk/londonmarathon

Volunteer completes 160 mile fundraising cycle

Volunteer driver Eddy, rode across Ireland on his bicycle in two days to fundraise for our blind veterans.

Eddy, 74 and from Oxfordshire, set off from Dublin and travelled 160 miles to Galway with only a one-man bag shelter, a burner to boil water and a few food supplies.



Eddy during the cycle

As a volunteer for our charity, Eddy helps makes sure Members aren't isolated by transporting them to social events. By doing this, he's ensuring they can come together to share their stories and enjoy one another's company. He says:

"I've volunteered for Blind Veterans UK for around eight years now. I find it really enjoyable; not only am I supporting my fellow veterans, but I get to experience the military banter once again. And the veterans are such good company! I love interacting with them and hearing their stories all about their service history."

During the challenge, Eddy was completely solo and unsupported, but he was blown away by the kindness shown to him en route. He says:

"On my first night, I arrived in Lucan just as it was getting dark. I knocked on a door to ask for directions and was offered a barn to sleep in for the night. It was five-star straw and torrential rain, so I was very glad of the cover!

"The rain woke me at 1am and I was back on the road an hour later. I cycled all of that day before asking a man if he knew of anywhere I could camp. He offered me his motorhome, a cup of tea and a sausage butty!"

Listen here

The future of Review magazine

From the new year, Review will be published four times a year, replacing the monthly format.



The October 2026 issue of Review

We asked you about the future of Review as part of our recent Member survey. The response was clear; while Members told us how much they value and enjoy reading the Review, there was strong support for moving to quarterly editions if it would help Blind Veterans UK make significant financial savings.

We are pleased to be making this change based directly on your feedback, working together to secure a financially sustainable, and more innovative future for Blind Veterans UK.

This doesn't mean you'll hear from us less or be left out of the loop. We are working on new and improved ways of keeping Members informed and connected in-between editions, including more digital communications and accessible audio content. These changes will allow our communications to be more accessible, varied and tailored to what you want and need.

- **Thank you to everyone who shared their views through the Member survey and for your continued support as we make these changes for the better.**

In your community

Just some of the local social gatherings that have taken place across the country, bringing Members together

In the midlands

Two Members in the Midlands came together for a fun day out at the RAF Cosford Museum. Graham and Bill thoroughly enjoyed their day exploring the aircraft and learning about the history of each aeroplane, including those used during the Battle of Britain. Graham couldn't believe how small the space inside the Second World War bomber was for flight crew. The day could not have happened without the help of our volunteer Paul, who's pictured showing Bill around in his new wheelchair.



A fun day at the RAF Cosford Museum



A meet-up in Dronfield

In Dronfield

Four Members enjoyed the very first Dronfield meet-up to share stories and connect over coffee and a cake at Dronfield Hall Barn. Two of them realised they had met before but hadn't clocked at the time that they are both Blind Veterans UK Members. Within 30 minutes of sitting down together, they were already planning their next meet up.

In Staffordshire

Members of Community 12 and their partners came together for a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum, enjoying a meaningful, reflective and socially engaging day out.

Their visit began with a land train tour, offering the opportunity to explore a selection of the Arboretum's memorials, which commemorate the service and sacrifice of members of the armed forces, emergency services, and civilian heroes. Lasting approximately 45 minutes, the tour was delivered at a comfortable pace, allowing our Members time to appreciate each memorial and absorb its significance.

The engaging commentary brought the memorials to life, enabling Members to visualise their appearance and gain a deeper understanding of the history and stories behind them. We were also fortunate that the rain from earlier in the day had cleared, allowing everyone to enjoy the tour in comfort.

The visit encouraged Members to share memories and experiences, prompting meaningful conversations and moments of reminiscence throughout the afternoon. Following the tour, they concluded their visit with a cream



The National Memorial Arboretum



Lunch at the Arboretum

tea in the café, giving them the chance to relax, reminisce, catch up with one another, and enjoy time socialising together. As always, the opportunity to come together as a group was just as important as the visit itself, helping everyone maintain friendships, strengthen social connections and reduce feelings of isolation.

A special thank you goes to our wonderful volunteers, Michael and John, who kindly transported Members to and from the Arboretum and provided support throughout the day. Their dedication, assistance and willingness to give their time played a vital role in ensuring the visit was both enjoyable and accessible for everyone involved.

Overall, it was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon that combined remembrance, learning, companionship and reflection.

In Cornwall

"Being able to see is no advantage when it comes to acoustic shooting," says blind veteran Andy, a member of Cornwall Association of Blind Shooters (CABS) which proudly hosted the annual Acoustic shooting event for blind veterans in Helston this week.

"Learning new skills and developing new interests and hobbies is crucial as you get older. Just as importantly, it brings together like-minded people once a week who know how to have fun" Members and volunteers rounded off the day with a lively lunch together.

In Dorset

We were delighted to take a group of our Dorset Members on a sailing trip around Poole Harbour. The experience was made possible by the disability sailing organisation, Sailability, who generously donated their time and expertise free of charge.

Guided by the knowledgeable and supportive sailing team, Members not only enjoyed the trip but also had the opportunity to take the helm, and steer the boats themselves.



Member steers the boat

It was a beautiful, calm day and, as luck would have it, the sun was shining. Members had the stunning Dorset coastline on one side, and Brownsea island on the other. A special experience for everyone involved.

The Members thoroughly enjoyed their sail, and one Member left already making plans to join the Sailability Club next spring.



Acoustic shooting in Cornwall

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.

Listen here

The people behind Remembrance

From marching at the Cenotaph to tending military graves, we meet just some of the people who play a part in Remembrance each year

Every November, our Members take part in Remembrance events across the country. Some march at the Cenotaph, carry our Standard or lay wreaths. Others support them by guiding, driving or caring for military graves.

We spoke to some of the people involved about what they do, and what Remembrance means to them.

The grave restorer

Royal Green Jackets veteran Steve has cleaned and restored more than 1,300 military graves.

He began after finding the neglected grave of a young rifleman from his former regiment. Since then, Steve has cared for graves and memorials across the country, including headstones at our cemetery in Brighton and the grave of our founder, Sir Arthur Pearson.

"I look after those graves. I remember those graves. I just don't want them to be forgotten," he says.

The Standard Bearer

Blind veteran Wayne has carried our Standard for several years. He has since trained seven other blind veterans for the role, using a handbook he developed himself.

Among them is Simy, our first female standard bearer.

"I'm proud to be carrying the Standard. I'll be thinking of past and present blind veterans, all those who sacrificed their lives for us and relatives who were in the wars," she says.

The bugler

Blind veteran Rob began learning the bugle through our charity after spending time with veterans who had served during the Second World War, Korea, Malaya and other conflicts.

He wanted to honour them, as well as friends and colleagues he has lost through service. He now plays at commemorations and military funerals.

"We always show respect for the fallen because we know the sacrifices that they've made," he says.

The marcher

Second World War veteran Michael Woods, 102, has marched with our contingent at the Cenotaph.

Called up in 1943, Michael served in the Royal Air Force as a mechanic on Lancaster bombers.

"What an experience it was to march! I was so proud, and I will keep marching with Blind Veterans UK for as long as I'm able," he says.

The wreath layer

Last year, blind veteran Kelly was the first person ever to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall accompanied by a guide dog.

Her guide dog Archie was beside her as she laid the wreath. She says: "Leading the contingent and laying the wreath on behalf of Blind Veterans UK is a huge privilege."



CREATIVE / ADOBE STOCK

Marching to the Cenotaph

The guide

Our volunteer Bob served for 14 years in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. Having first guided blind veterans on the ski slopes, he now has the honour of marching alongside them at the Cenotaph.

He says every veteran he has escorted wants the same thing: to march in step and look their best.

"One thing I have learned about all the veterans I've guided, without fail, is they are all very proud ex-servicemen," he says. "It's a proud moment. I think that's why we all do it."

➜

The candle maker

Blind veteran Tony marks Remembrance in a unique way by handcrafting candles, each with space on the label for the name of a loved one or service person being remembered.

After losing his sight, Tony adapted his candle-making techniques using talking scales and magnifiers, enabling him to continue pursuing his passion independently. As well as helping others honour those they remember, his candles raise funds to support fellow blind veterans.

"Making candles helps me channel my thoughts and emotions into something beautiful," he says.

The cab driver

For some veterans, simply getting to the Cenotaph can be difficult.

In 2009, 14 London cab drivers offered veterans free journeys to the service. Hundreds now volunteer each year.

Mike Hughes, who now runs Cabs for veterans, says: "We believe that every veteran who wishes to pay their respects should have the opportunity to do so."

The cadet

Remembrance also helps pass the traditions of the Armed Forces on

"Making candles helps me focus my thoughts and emotions into something beautiful"

to the next generation. Since 2018, members of the 225 Brighton Royal Air Force Cadets have marched alongside blind veteran Tony at the Armistice Day service he organises at Brighton Station.

Flight Lieutenant Pat says: "It means everything to see the next generation taking part in Remembrance events. They may be young, but many reflect on their relatives who fought in past conflicts."

A tradition we carry forward

Our connection with Remembrance goes back more than a century. When the Armistice was announced in 1918, blind veterans at St Dunstan's joined people across London in marking the end of the First World War. In the years that followed, St Dunstaners laid wreaths at the Cenotaph and marched in Remembrance processions.

However you choose to mark Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day this year, whether by attending a service, spending time with family and friends or reflecting quietly in your own way, we hope you can take a moment to remember those important to you.

Listen here

Veterans walk the Somme frontline

A group of veterans commemorated the 110th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in July, undertaking a 30-kilometre walk along the historic British frontline

Organised by the Veterans Volunteer Service (VVS) from West Sussex, the initiative, Project Somme: Refill Your Boots, brought together approximately 15 veterans living with a range of visible and non-visible injuries.

The commemorative walk took place on Wednesday 1 July, the anniversary of the battle, when participants carried a 35kg memorial log along the route. The log was engraved with the name of Corporal Mark Wright GC, who was posthumously awarded the George Cross for his gallantry during operations in Afghanistan. VVS founder Gary Hart was alongside Corporal Wright during the incident in which he lost his life, making the tribute especially personal and significant to the group.

The route, which included both flat and hilly terrain, took over eight hours to complete and presented a significant challenge, particularly for veterans living with amputations and other injuries.

Among those that took part was Stu Rodd, who became the first blind veteran to undertake the challenge. His participation marked a major personal milestone, as well as a



The group at the Ulster Memorial tower

moment of deep personal reflection.

Stu joined the Royal Engineers at just 17, but his military career was cut short by a serious medical issue. After leaving the Army, he went on to build a successful career in IT, worked in the police, and later ran his own building company. A passionate sportsman, he also embraced outdoor life, particularly horse riding.

In his mid-40s, Stu's life changed dramatically following a series of serious health complications. After suffering a respiratory arrest, he was declared dead on arrival at hospital before being resuscitated. When he regained consciousness, he was blind, unable to speak and bedridden. He spent three years in hospital rebuilding his life.

Since leaving hospital in 2024, Stu has shown extraordinary resilience, relearning vital life skills and rediscovering purpose with our support.



Stu Rodd

He has returned to fitness, taken on long-distance endurance challenges, and now practises judo and Thai boxing. On the first anniversary of leaving hospital, he completed a 57-kilometre ultra challenge, raising £7,500 for our charity.

He says: "For me, it was an absolute honour to be invited to take part in the 110th anniversary commemorations. I felt very proud to represent Blind Veterans UK. My grandfather served in the Gordon Highlanders during the Second World War, while my great-grandfather had served in the same regiment during the First World War, when the Gordon Highlanders lost so many men at the Somme.

"Visiting the memorial and marching past was incredibly emotional. I feel like I did this for my grandfather and alongside him. He was the one who inspired me to join the military in the first place. Being there with the team, especially alongside people I have already built strong bonds with, meant a great deal to me. It was an amazing experience and I'm proud to have represented my family as well."

Veterans were supported throughout by trained volunteers and peers, including individuals who have served in conflicts from the Falklands to Iraq, reinforcing a strong sense of camaraderie and shared understanding.

Listen here

Michael returns to the airwaves with our support

Member **Michael Fairclough** thought his broadcasting days could be over after losing his sight, but he's back behind the microphone thanks to our support



CKYBE / ADOBE STOCK

When glaucoma robbed 67-year-old Michael, known to his listeners as Lenny, of the last of his remaining sight, he feared his days behind the microphone were over.

The presenter of Kemet FM's popular A-Z of Reggae show thought he would no longer be able to create and record the programme he loved. But with support from Blind Veterans UK, Michael has regained his independence and continues to share his passion for reggae music with audiences across Nottingham and beyond.

After gradually losing his sight to glaucoma, Michael reached the point where the computer software he relied on to produce his programmes was no longer accessible.



Michael with his DJ equipment

“Michael’s goal was always to continue producing his radio show independently”

“It got harder and harder,” he says. “I’d get so far and then get stuck. Somebody would have to come round and help me find files on the computer so I could finish the show.”

The Royal Engineers veteran had spent seven years building a library of more than 300 programmes and was determined to find a way to continue broadcasting independently.

Our Technology Practitioner Scott worked with Michael to find a practical solution that would allow him to do just that. Scott introduced Michael to equipment that could be operated through touch and sound. This meant Michael could compile complete radio programmes without needing assistance. In fact, within days of receiving the equipment and training, he had already recorded three new two-hour shows.

Michael said: “Before, I’d get so far and then need help. Now I can do everything myself. I put a USB in, listen to what’s on it, choose the tracks I want, record my links and put the whole programme together by myself. It has given me my confidence back and allowed me to carry on doing something I love.”

Scott said: “Michael’s goal was always to continue producing his radio show independently.

“As his sight deteriorated, we looked at different options and found a solution that worked for him using tactile controls rather than relying on computer screens. Once he became familiar with the equipment, he took to it incredibly quickly and has done really well.”

Michael joined the Royal Engineers in January 1976 and served for ten years. During his military career he was posted to various places around the world, including Germany and Canada, and was a keen footballer who represented both his regiment and corps teams.

“I loved every minute of it,” he said. “The camaraderie, the friendships and the experiences made it a great ten years.”

After leaving the Army, he worked as a heavy goods vehicle driver before gaining a teaching degree and spending 13 years teaching at a local college.

He was diagnosed with glaucoma at aged 40 and underwent numerous operations as doctors tried to slow the condition’s progression. Looking back, he says now that the moment that affected him most was losing his driving licence.

“That was the hardest thing,” he says. “I suddenly felt like I’d lost my independence. You don’t realise how much you rely on being able to get in the car and go where you want until it’s taken away from you.”

Michael was introduced to our charity around three years ago by former Army friends. Although we offered support from the outset, much of his focus at the time was on caring for his grandson, who had a rare mitochondrial disease and sadly died in April 2025, aged just two years and seven months.

Michael is now supporting fundraising efforts for mitochondrial disease research through a JustGiving appeal at justgiving.com/campaign/reiffsmitomission

Today, he’s once again doing what he loves, sharing music with listeners across Nottingham and beyond.

The A-Z of Reggae airs on Kemet FM every Thursday at 12am.

Battling back

Centre pilot course builds confidence and forges friendships

In September, a group of blind veterans travelled to the Royal British Legion's Battle Back Centre at Lilleshall in Shropshire for our very first pilot multi-activity course - and what a fantastic week it turned out to be!

For many of the Members, arriving at the centre brought understandable feelings of anxiety about trying unfamiliar activities and spending time away from home. But by the end of the week, those nerves had been replaced by confidence, accomplishment and a real sense of camaraderie as they stepped outside their comfort zones to try activities including wheelchair basketball, indoor climbing, golf, archery and tandem cycling.

The course was designed to challenge participants in a supportive and inclusive environment, helping Members discover what they're capable of while enjoying the company of others who understand the challenges of sight loss.

One of those taking part was Member Jill Humphries, who said the week exceeded all expectations. Jill said: "The magic was being together and sharing information. It felt like everyone was a team, in such a wholesome and natural way.

"What made the week so special was the support and camaraderie. When I was climbing the wall, I honestly didn't think I'd make it to the top. But everyone was cheering me on and that gave me the strength to keep going. I eventually reached the top, and later another Member told me I'd inspired him to have a go himself. That was probably the highlight of the week for me.

"I'd highly recommend it to anybody. If you're feeling nervous, just put your fears aside and give it a try because it really is such a positive experience."

Throughout the week, Members also praised the warm welcome from Battle Back Centre staff, the accessible approach to activities and the way adaptations were made to ensure everyone could take part. Whether it was using sound cues during wheelchair basketball or encouraging one another up the climbing wall, every activity demonstrated what can be achieved when the right support is in place.



Jill Humphries, Carl Adamson and Mark Avery play basketball



Blind Veteran takes on Archery



Carl Adamson at the climbing wall

Away from the activities, there was plenty of opportunity to socialise, share experiences and make new friendships. Group discussions, quizzes and informal conversations gave Members the chance to exchange advice, build connections and support each other's wellbeing.

A special thank you goes to Blind Veterans UK staff members Aaron Garratt and Anne Forsberg for supporting the week, and to the coaches and recovery support staff at the Battle Back Centre for making everyone feel so welcome.

Join us for the next Battle Back Centre course

Following the success of this pilot programme, we're delighted to be returning to the Battle Back Centre for another multi-activity course this November and for dates in 2027.

If you've ever looked at a course like this and wondered whether it's for you, you're not alone. Many of the Members who attended this first course felt exactly the same before they arrived. The week proved that you don't need to be particularly sporty or adventurous to take part. What matters is being willing to have a go.

The course offers an opportunity to try new activities, meet other Members, build confidence and enjoy a fun and supportive few days away. The activity weeks are completely free to veterans. However, you will need to be able to get to the centre independently, have no care needs, and be willing and able to participate in the activities during the course. If you have an assistance dog you are welcome to bring them, as long as you have the official paperwork.

For more information, please speak to your Community Support Worker.

Listen here

Our Fleet Air Arm connections

A history of friendship and camraderie

Blind veteran and staff member Jennie Fuller has spent the past few months researching the connections between Blind Veterans UK and military establishments, regiments, bases and Service communities. This is the first in a new series of articles exploring those relationships. It begins with one of our longest and warmest links - our connection with the Fleet Air Arm.



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS. / WIKIPEDIA CC

De Havilland Sea Venoms and Hawker Sea Hawks on the deck of HMS Albion in 1956

Blind Veterans UK's story has always been shaped by the friendship, loyalty and practical support of the Armed Forces community. Some of those links are formal, recorded through bases, regiments and events. Others are more personal, remembered through summer camps, volunteers who gave up their leave, and veterans who returned year after year because they felt among friends.

Few connections show that spirit more clearly than our relationship with the Fleet Air Arm, the flying branch of the Royal Navy. Its story takes us from the wartime airfields of the south coast to RNAS Yeovilton,



KEVIN LEGG / GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK / WIKIPEDIA CC

HMS Daedalus airfield as seen from above the Solent

and to a much-loved summer camp tradition that brought blind veterans and naval personnel together through companionship, activity and shared Service identity.

One of the strongest links was forged at HMS Daedalus, also known as RNAS Lee-on-Solent. Established as a naval seaplane training school in 1917, Daedalus became a major centre of British naval aviation. During the Second World War it played a vital role, and on D-Day in 1944 it was one of the busiest airfields in the country.

After the war, Daedalus remained an important naval air station, but for Blind Veterans UK, then St Dunstan's, it became known for something more personal. It was closely associated with the annual summer camp for blind and partially-sighted ex-Servicemen, a tradition that grew from a generous offer of support into a treasured part of the charity's calendar.

The camp is remembered for its warmth and good humour. Field Gunners, many of whom were serving in the Fleet Air Arm volunteered as guides, helping blind veterans take part in daily activities, outings and sporting competitions. They were affectionately known as "dogs", a nickname that reflected their guiding role as well as the trust and friendship that often developed during the week.

For the veterans, the camp offered far more than a break away. It was a chance to be active, try new experiences and spend time with people who understood Service life. Sailing and fishing trips on the Solent, social events and competitions all helped create a week in which sight loss was understood but never allowed to define what people could enjoy.

Archive accounts in Review show how the connection opened up new experiences. In 1977, St Dunstaner Jimmy Wright recalled that veterans from the Lee camp had glided with the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club at HMS Daedalus.

When Daedalus closed as a Royal Naval air station in 1996, the camp's story did not end. The tradition moved to HMS Sultan and continued through the support of the Field Gun Association and HMS Sultan. Veterans from all three Services have continued to attend, supported by former Field Gun Crew Members and other volunteers. Although the location changed, the spirit remained the same: comradeship, encouragement and shared Service identity.

The connection also continues through RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset, home to Royal Navy squadrons, training units, the Fleet Air Arm Museum and Navy Wings. These organisations preserve the aircraft and stories of naval aviation, giving Blind Veterans UK another important link with Fleet Air Arm heritage.

Jennie's research is helping to bring these stories together. By tracing the links between Blind Veterans UK and places such as Daedalus, Yeovilton and HMS Sultan, she is uncovering relationships built over decades. Some began through formal Service connections. Others began with a simple offer of help, a steady guiding arm, or a week of laughter by the coast.

One blind veteran whose story reflects the strength of this bond was Terry Bullingham. Terry served with the Fleet Air Arm and lost his sight during the Falklands conflict. He later became a much-loved member of the Blind Veterans UK community and a powerful example of courage, humour and determination after sight loss.

That connection was honoured recently when the Blind Veterans UK Bullingham Shield was awarded for the first time to Royal Navy Petty Officer Chloe Cherrington at HMS Sultan. Presented in Terry's memory, the award celebrates the Service values and personal qualities he represented. It also gives this long relationship a living symbol, linking today's Royal Navy personnel with the blind veterans who have been supported, encouraged and befriended by the Fleet Air Arm community over many decades.

As this series continues, we will explore more of the military relationships that have shaped Blind Veterans UK. The Fleet Air Arm is a fitting place to begin: from Daedalus and the summer camps to HMS Sultan, Yeovilton and the Bullingham Shield, it shows how comradeship can continue long after Service ends.

Listen here

Meet our new Ambassadors

This month, we introduce two more Members who have stepped up to represent the charity

Bob Potts

Bob served with the Royal Navy from 1962 to 1972 as a Leading Ordnance Electrical Mechanic, ensuring everything operated as it should onboard a fighting warship.

His military career was defined by responsibility, teamwork and the need for precision. Later in life, his eyesight began to deteriorate until he was eventually registered as severely sight impaired just two months after the loss of his wife. Adjusting to sight loss alongside personal loss was incredibly challenging, and Bob describes this as a time when his world fell apart. Today, with the support of Blind Veterans UK, Bob has rebuilt his life and uses his experience to encourage and support other veterans.

Bob spent ten years on a variety of ships, including HMS Brighton and HMS Lion. He worked on weapons systems, electrical circuits and heavy machinery and his service took him across the world, including deployments to the Far East and along the eastern seaboard of America. He also spent time based at HMS Neptune, which served nuclear submarines.

During his time in the Navy, Bob experienced moments that have stayed with him ever since. While serving with a NATO squadron, his ship was involved in the search for the missing USS Scorpion submarine, and on another occasion, helped recover survivors following a tragic RAF plane crash off the coast of Cornwall. These experiences, while difficult, were significant in shaping Bob's sense of duty, teamwork and resilience.

After leaving the Navy, Bob joined the prison service, where he spent 24 years working in a young offenders' institution. Supporting young people and helping them rebuild their futures. The strong camaraderie among colleagues, many of whom were also ex-service personnel, provided another sense of belonging and purpose following his military career.

Bob's sight loss journey began in the early 2000s when he was diagnosed with glaucoma. Over time, he lost sight in his left eye, and years later his right eye was also affected. Adjusting to sight loss alongside personal loss was incredibly challenging and Bob describes this as a time that was very difficult to navigate.

The turning point came when he first visited a Blind Veterans UK centre. Through the support of staff and fellow Members, he began to rebuild his confidence and outlook on life. He embraced the charity's ethos of acceptance, adaptability and achievement, discovering new opportunities and experiences he had never imagined possible. From adaptive sports to new skills, he found a renewed sense of independence and purpose.

With the help of Blind Veterans UK, Bob regained his independence in everyday life. From cooking safely to confidently navigating public transport,



Bob Potts

he has shown what can be achieved with determination and support.

Today, Bob is passionate about giving back to the charity that has helped him. As a volunteer, he offers regular companionship to fellow members and peer support, encouraging others to engage with the charity and take that first step forward.

As a Member Ambassador for Blind Veterans UK, Bob is committed to sharing his story to highlight the realities of sight loss and the life-changing support it provides.

Steve Powell

Steve, 66, joined the British Army in his late 20s in the 1980s, entering the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) after discovering an opportunity to pursue his interest in medicine. Trained at Keogh Barracks in Aldershot, he became a Combat Medical Technician and was later posted to 1 Armoured Field Ambulance in Germany.

His 12-year military career included a significant deployment to Bosnia (1996–1997), where he served as a corporal in charge of an ambulance station on the Croatian–Bosnian border. Responsible for a small team of fellow medics, he coordinated emergency responses and was part of a rapid-response helicopter team, attending incidents involving injured soldiers, road traffic collisions and traumatic civilian cases.

Bosnia left a lasting impression. Steve witnessed the devastation of war firsthand, yet he also experienced the resilience of its people. Alongside military duties, he helped set up clinics and assisted in training local healthcare workers.

Not all moments were routine: he was once caught in a situation where a bullet struck close to his ambulance, a stark reminder of the volatility of the environment.

While in Bosnia, Steve also discovered a passion for broadcasting, working with British Forces Broadcasting Service and reading news for a local radio station. This led to a long post-military career in media. He joined the BBC, presenting news, traffic and current affairs across several regional stations, before moving into commercial radio in South Wales, where he hosted drive-time, mid-morning and breakfast shows.

His broadcasting work spanned around 30 years and also included producing RNIB's Connect Radio and setting up a new radio station in the Vale of Glamorgan, which is still going strong today.

After becoming disillusioned with changes in the media industry, Steve returned to healthcare, joining the Welsh Ambulance Service as a Make Ready Operative, ensuring ambulances were ready for service. However, in 2022, his life changed dramatically.

While responding to an emergency call in Cardiff, he noticed unusual disturbances in his vision. Within hours, he found himself in the emergency eye clinic at the University Hospital of Wales. Overnight, he lost most of his sight. The cause was believed to be an "eye stroke", where cholesterol blocked the blood supply to his optic nerves. At the age of 62, he faced the sudden and traumatic transition to severe sight impairment. This meant relearning everyday skills, using assistive technology and mobility training to maintain his independence. Living alone, he continues to manage his home and daily life with determination and resilience.

Despite only joining Blind Veterans UK in 2025, Steve has found support, community and renewed purpose through the charity. Now an ambassador, he uses his confidence and broadcasting experience to campaign for greater accessibility and awareness of sight loss. Alongside this, he remains involved in community radio.

Steve's life has been marked by service, resilience, and reinvention - from soldier and medic to broadcaster, and now campaigner and ambassador. His grounded determination serves as an inspiration to us all.

"While responding to an emergency call in Cardiff, he noticed unusual disturbances in his vision"



Steve Powell

Listen here

The tale of John the Blind

Member and historian **Kay Godfrey** writes about the remarkable story of King John of Bohemia

Have you ever wondered what it must have been like to be a medieval knight during the Hundred Year's War? I certainly have. Now think of being at the most brutal battle. Imagine standing on the battlefield at Crécy on 26 August 1346 - the air thick with dust, cries of soldiers, arrows darkening the sky and the clash of steel ringing in your ears - without your sight. Impossible?

The Hundred Years' War was fought between England and France, between Edward III of England and Louis VI of France. One of Louis' allies was King John of Bohemia. Born in 1296 to Henry VII, Holy Roman Emperor, John was a popular leader known to be a strong warrior king who was astute politically and a favoured ally of the King of France.

After being crowned in 1311, he worked hard for years to build his reputation and expand the borders of Bohemia. In 1346, at the age of 50, he felt it was his duty to fight against the 'evil' English. However, in 1336, John contracted ophthalmia, and as he started to lose his eyesight, medieval physicians did everything in their power to avoid permanent and total loss. Their ministrations made things worse, and John became totally blind.

As a medieval warrior king, he would not miss a vital battle in the war. He instructed his commanders to tie the reins of his horse to theirs, and with them riding on either side, he led his men into the battle. He fought bravely until he was cut down.

"It's hard not to admire the sheer courage of his choice. Blindness did not define him or limit his resolve"



DOZURA / WIKIPEDIA CREATIVE COMMONS

John's tomb in the crypt of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Luxembourg City

It's hard not to admire the sheer courage of his choice. Blindness did not define him or limit his resolve.

Many people will have heard a different romantic tale: that Edward the Black Prince, son of Edward the third King of England, only 16 at the time, was so impressed by John's bravery that he adopted John's badge of three ostrich feathers and the German motto "Ich Dien" or "I serve." It's a good story, but it is just that. A story. There is no solid evidence from the time that it happened. In fact, that romantic version grew much later, especially in the Victorian era, when medieval battles were repackaged as tales of romantic chivalric valour.

The real John doesn't need that gloss. His courage speaks for itself - a leader who refused to be defined by blindness, who insisted on sharing the dangers of his men, and whose story still resonates today.

Listen here

Gifts for people with sight loss

How to ensure your gifts are accessible to your loved ones this holiday season

Finding the right gift for someone with sight loss can feel challenging. You want to find something thoughtful, practical and personal – while also being mindful of accessibility. In reality, the same principles apply as with any gift: think about the person's interests, preferences and personality. Sight loss is only one part of who they are.



TIANA LIMA / ADOBE STOCK

Christmas gifts should be chosen thoughtfully

Here are some helpful tips to make finding a gift easy.

Wrapping and packaging

Small adjustments to wrapping can make opening a gift easier and more enjoyable. When wrapping a gift, avoid using excessive tape and leave a clear starting point so it's easy to open. Steer clear of very thick or tightly wrapped paper, and consider using a gift bag as a simpler alternative. If the present comes in a box, remove or cut any internal tape before wrapping, or take the item out of the box entirely to make opening easier. Finally, if the gift needs batteries, fitting them in advance can ensure it's ready to use straight away.

Accessible greeting cards

Greeting cards can also be made more accessible by being bold with your choices. Choose bold, simple designs with good colour contrast, and keep your message concise - written in a thick dark pen. Braille Christmas cards are also available to purchase online. Audio cards, which might include a recordable message or a song, can add a personal touch. You can even handmake cards which is especially thoughtful, use tactile elements such as raised shapes or materials.

Sight loss-related gifts

There are practical items designed for people with sight loss, but these should be chosen thoughtfully. Some equipment, like magnifiers, ideally requires professional assessment to ensure it's suitable. If you're considering something accessible, organisations such as the RNIB have some useful options, from audio books to large-print puzzle books or daily living aids. They also sell accessible board games such as Braille or large print Scrabble and Super Big Boggle, as well as tactile draughts and cards, blind football kits and audible cricket balls.

"It's important to remember that a person is not defined by their sight loss, and focusing too heavily on this aspect may not always feel appropriate."
Bryan, Rehabilitation Officer at Blind Veterans UK



CATERINA TRIMARCHI / ADOBE STOCK

Wrapping can be made easier with small adjustments

Gift an experience

Spending time together can be the best gift there is, especially for someone who doesn't get out much. Ideas include:

Go out for a drink

Getting out of the house isn't easy for most people with sight loss, so simply going for a coffee, a drink or a meal out can feel far more special than a physical gift.

Take them to a show

Many theatres and galleries offer disability concessions and accessible features such as audio description. Ask what support is available when you book.



MELISSAMN / ADOBE STOCK

Scented candles make great gifts

Visit a local attraction

A trip to a local attraction or an event can be a wonderful gift, especially if you can organise the transport or even offer a lift there and back.

Practical gifts

Traditional-style gifts can work well, especially when they are useful. The following items can be both thoughtful and practical without focusing solely on sight loss. A few ideas include tactile ornaments such as die-cast models or artificial or silk flowers, which can be appreciated through touch as well as appearance. You might also consider a wide-brimmed hat, which is practical for reducing glare when outdoors, or a pair of good-quality non-slip slippers to help prevent falls. Another thoughtful option is a reliable torch or headlamp, which can be especially useful for navigating dim spaces.

Gifts for the other senses

Gifts that engage smell, taste, touch or sound can be both enjoyable and personal. Many popular gift ideas naturally suit someone with sight loss, including: Music, audio books or any other kind of audio entertainment can be a great gift for someone with sight loss. Something as simple as scented toiletries such as bubble bath or shower gel can make someone's day, as can a lovely candle. If your loved one is a foodie, speciality food, sweets, sauces or gourmet treats can be a welcome gift - as can a box of chocolates with a selection of different fillings.



MING / ADOBE STOCK

How about theatre tickets?

Technology gifts

Some people love gadgets, but not everyone. If you're considering an expensive tech gift, check if they actually want it and whether they have any necessary supporting equipment (such as a compatible smartphone).

Voice-controlled devices such as the Amazon Echo are popular because they are easy to use with simple spoken commands. They can play music, radio and audiobooks, and help with reminders and timers. Gift vouchers for services like Spotify or Audible can be a thoughtful addition.

Wearable technology, such as smartwatches and smartglasses, can also be a supportive tool, offering helpful features in a discreet format. In addition, good-quality headphones can be very useful, as long as they are compatible with the relevant device and comfortable to wear.

Final thoughts

Choosing a gift for someone with sight loss doesn't need to be complicated. Think about the person's interests and personality, plus ease of opening and using the gift, plus what's needed for set up.

Go to

Visit the RNIB shop for accessible cards and gifts. You can also contact our Member Support Hub on **01273 391447** for advice and support, or your community team.

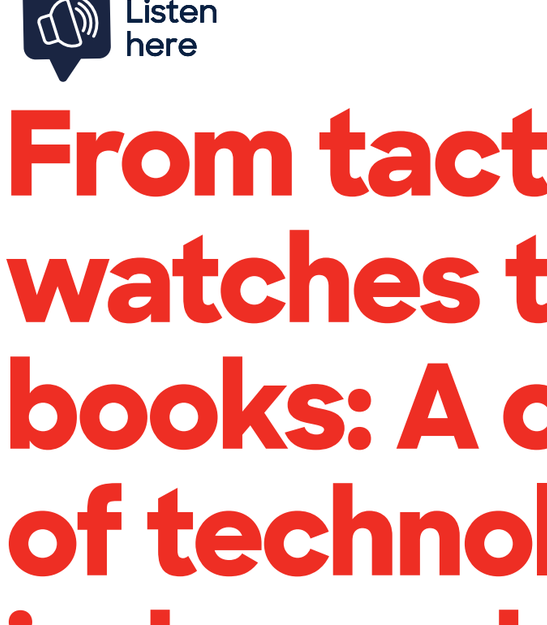
And remember

Just like with any gift, not every choice will be exactly right. What matters most is the care and consideration behind it. And if you're not sure, you can always ask.

Listen here

From tactile watches to talking books: A century of technology and independence

Andy Jones explores the evolution of accessible technology



JAMES H. RAWLINSON / WIKIPEDIA

Sir Arthur Pearson

When people hear the word "technology", they often think of smartphones, computers and artificial intelligence. Yet technology and innovation have been woven into the story of Blind Veterans UK almost from the very beginning.

In fact, to understand why technology matters so much to our Members today, we need to travel back more than 100 years.

Blind Veterans UK was founded in 1915 during the First World War by Sir Arthur Pearson, who had himself lost his sight due to glaucoma. The organisation was originally known as the Blinded Soldiers and Sailors Care Committee, although it soon became better known as St Dunstan's, named after its headquarters in Regent's Park, London.

What made Pearson remarkable was his outlook. He did not believe that men who had lost their sight should simply be cared for. He believed they should be equipped to rebuild their lives, regain their confidence and find new ways to achieve the things that sight loss had suddenly made more difficult.

Technology became one of the tools that helped make that possible.



PANITAN / ADOBE STOCK

A tactile watch

One of my favourite examples is something most of us take completely for granted today: a watch.

When blinded servicemen returned from the First World War, Pearson would often visit them in hospital carrying tactile watches. These watches had hinged covers that opened to reveal raised markings and exposed hands that could be felt with the fingers, allowing the wearer to tell the time independently. For some men, especially those adjusting to life without sight, this was far more significant than simply knowing the time. Many had only recently lost their vision and were coming to terms with a future that seemed uncertain. Something as ordinary as checking the time may have felt impossible. Then suddenly, with a simple device placed in their hands, they discovered something important.

The method had changed, but the outcome remained achievable. For many veterans, that realisation represented the beginning of a new chapter. A few years later, another St Dunstan's veteran helped inspire a development that would go on to transform the lives of millions

→

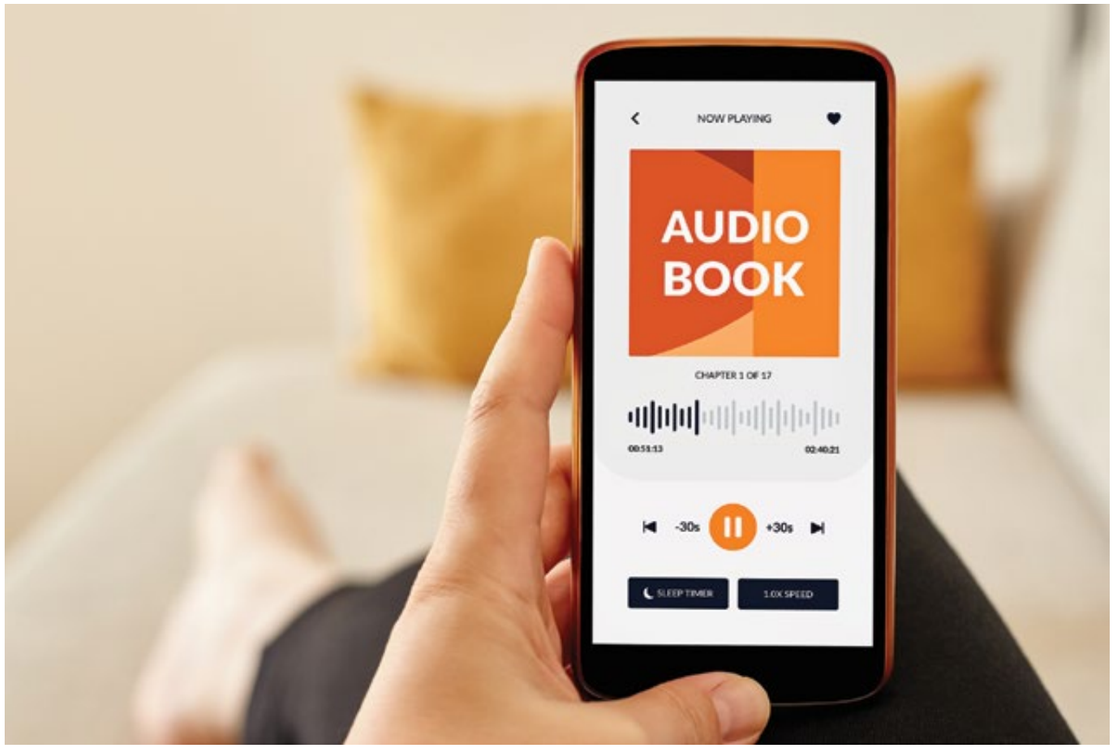
of blind and partially sighted people around the world.

Captain Ian Fraser lost his sight during the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and later came to St Dunstan's, where he learned Braille. Although he became a capable Braille reader, he reportedly found reading books frustratingly slow compared with the speed at which he had once enjoyed them.

The story goes that Fraser once remarked: "If books could only talk." It was an idea that seemed impossible at the time.

Yet advances in sound recording technology eventually made it achievable. By experimenting with longer-playing recordings and narrower grooves, pioneers in accessible reading created recordings capable of holding meaningful amounts of spoken content. In 1935, the first Talking Books were distributed to blind readers.

Today, many of us listen to audiobooks through smartphones, smart speakers, computers and digital assistants without giving it a second thought. Yet the roots of that technology can be



MAICASAA / ADOBE STOCK

Many of us listen to audiobooks

"Today, many of us listen to audiobooks through smartphones, smart speakers, computers and digital assistants"

traced back to veterans who refused to accept that there was only one way to read.

That same spirit of innovation appears throughout the history of Blind Veterans UK.

Veterans were trained to use typewriters and telephone switchboards so that sight loss did not automatically mean the end of employment opportunities. The organisation also played an important role in promoting the use of white canes in Britain during the 1930s, helping to transform independent mobility for blind people.

Fast forward to today and the technology may look very different, but the principle remains much the same.

Technology might now mean an iPhone running VoiceOver, a Windows computer using Narrator, a smart speaker such as Alexa, an electronic magnifier, a talking watch, or an app that can read printed text aloud using



PIXEL-SHOT / ADOBE STOCK

Veterans were trained to use typewriters

a smartphone camera. But technology is not really about devices. It is about solving problems.

A white cane is technology. A tactile watch is technology. A typewriter is technology. A smartphone is technology.

The device itself is only part of the story. What really matters is what a person wants to achieve.

As technology practitioners, that is where our work begins. We do not →

start with a piece of equipment and ask, “Who can use this?” Instead, we begin with a much simpler question:

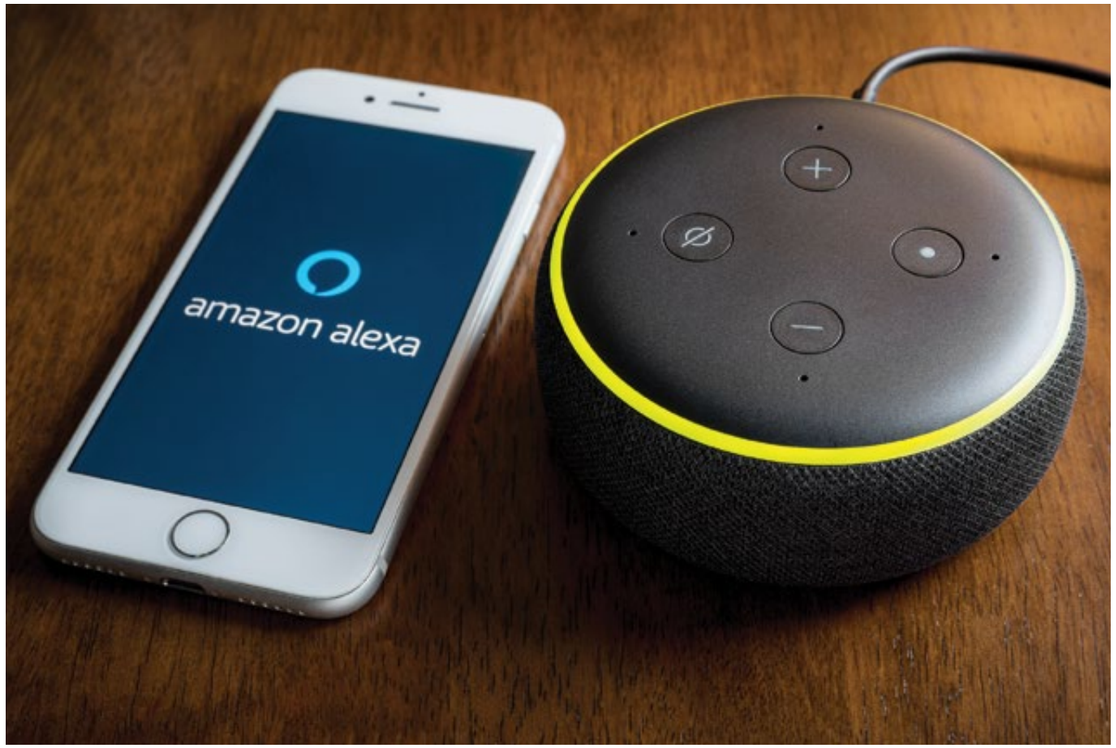
“What is it that you want to be able to do?”

For one Member, that might be reading and replying to emails independently. For another, it could be listening to talking books, contacting family members, reading their own post, keeping track of appointments, shopping for their groceries online or making telephone calls without assistance.

Once we understand the goal, we can explore the technology, accessibility features, adaptations, and training that might help make it possible.

Sometimes the solution is surprisingly simple.

It might involve increasing text size and contrast on a computer screen. It could be learning how to use VoiceOver on an iPhone. It may involve setting up Alexa to play Talking Books or teaching someone how to use their smartphone camera to read a letter that has just arrived through the front door.



ANTHONY BROWN ANTHONY BROWN / ADOBE STOCK

Alexa can help with many household tasks

“Typewriters became computers, tablets and smartphones. No doubt tomorrow’s technology will eventually replace devices we use today”

These may seem like small achievements. However, when somebody has depended on others for access to information, communication or everyday tasks, regaining even one area of independence can have a profound impact on confidence and wellbeing.

Technology can help reduce isolation. It can help people stay connected with family and friends. It can support hobbies, education and employment. Most importantly, it can give people more choice and control over how they live their lives.

The technology itself will continue to evolve.

The tactile watch became the talking watch. The gramophone record became the Talking Book, then the cassette, CD, digital download and smart speaker. Typewriters became computers, tablets and smartphones. No doubt tomorrow’s technology will eventually replace some of the devices we use today. But the purpose behind it remains remarkably consistent.

More than a century after Sir Arthur Pearson handed those first tactile watches to blinded servicemen, Blind Veterans UK continues to follow the same guiding principle.

It is not really about technology at all.

It is about using the right tools, together with the right support and training, to help people achieve the things that matter to them. In other words, it is about independence.

And that is something that never goes out of date.

Need a hand with technology?

If you’d like support, speak to your Community Support Worker or contact the Member Support Hub on 01273 391447.

Whether it’s a smartphone, tablet, computer, Talking Books, Alexa, email or other assistive technology, the team can help you access the support and training that’s right for you.

Listen here

Member voice

Get ahead of the new year by registering for our 2027 military events and marking key dates in your diary

The 2027 Birmingham International Tattoo

We invite you to join us at Britain's biggest indoor tattoo for an experience unlike any other.

The Birmingham International Tattoo brings together marching bands, pipes and drums, field gun racing and much more. There will also be a spectacular Grand Finale featuring over 1,000 performers.



IAN G COLLINS / WIKIPEDIA

The Birmingham International Tattoo Grand Finale 2010

Tickets cost £10 per person and due to popular demand we can only offer up to four tickets per blind veteran. Tickets are non refundable.

When: The tattoo takes place on Saturday, 20 February 2027 and begins at 6.00pm.

Where: Resorts World Arena – Travel to the venue and accommodation is not included and these tickets are not wheelchair accessible.

- **We have a limited number of subsidised platinum tickets for blind veterans who book through our website at www.blindveterans.org.uk/events/the-2027-birmingham-international-tattoo/ or call 03001112233.**

RMA Sandhurst Military Dinner 2027

We are pleased to offer a special event at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, home to the future leaders of the British Army.

Set within the prestigious Indian Army Memorial Room, overlooking RMA Sandhurst's stunning grounds, the event promises to be an afternoon filled with laughter, camaraderie and delicious food.



A recent military dinner

Date: 5 March 2027
Time: 12:30-16:30
Registration closes: 8 January 2027

Due to the expected high level of interest for this event, Members expressing their interest to attend will be chosen via a random ballot.

- **Register at www.blindveterans.org.uk/events/rma-sandhurst-military-dinner-2027/ or call 0300 111 2233.**

Listen here

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 November. You can take part in as many as you like. To request a kit, simply leave a message on the NCP voicemail on **01273 391 447**, email **ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk** or visit the Members' area of the website.

Wooden models:

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

- **Carousel** – This model will suit those of you who enjoy a challenge! It has 148 pieces and some parts require a bit of patience. But it's well worth it for this beautiful model. Thank you to member Gary Stevenson for supporting us by testing this model!
- **Knight's castle** – Many of you have asked for models of buildings and we hope you enjoy this 96 piece Knight's castle complete with two knights and a moving drawbridge! This model is moderately difficult with some small but repeated pieces.

Leftovers:

- peacock, deer head, locomotive.

Mosaics:

These are bespoke designs with a step- by-step pattern. The tiles are pre-sorted into labelled bags.

- **Wreath mosaic** – This is a special Christmas mosaic which is slightly larger than usual, with an engraved wreath base. It's a little more complex if you're new to mosaics, but would make a lovely afternoon activity with family and friends to support making it.
- **Festive mandala** – A mosaic in our scallop edge mandala design. This one has six stages of larger tiles and is suitable for beginners.



Carousel



Knight's castle



Stained glass baubles

Art:

These projects are available year-round.

- **Pastels kit** – 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** – contains specialist paper, brushes, a tin of watercolour paints and some high contrast masking tape.

Page 46 Review

Review **Page 47**

Craft:

- **Stained glass baubles** – This is a new project type for the NCP, using acrylic paint pens on Perspex bases. You'll receive four mixed acrylic pens, two clear Perspex bauble bases and some ribbon to hang up your decorations. These pens can be used on many surfaces and your pack contains instructions on how to use them for your own crafts.

We'd love to hear how you get on with this project as we're hoping to do a similar one in the spring. We may have some bauble bases left over in December so if you've enjoyed this, let us know and we will send you any spares we have.

- **Christmas cards papercraft** – Our annual papercraft project contains blank greetings cards, gift tags and a variety of festive paper and card to create your own designs.

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 members 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.



Wreath mosaic



Flower pot mosaic

Listen here

Your crafting stories

This month, we celebrate the achievements of Members Alfred and Dennis

Alfred lives in a care home with his beloved wife, Maureen. Following a stroke, Maureen moved to the nursing wing of the home. The couple missed each other dearly, and after further health concerns, it was decided that Alfred would also move so they could continue to be together.

Determined to keep his mind active, Alfred asked to take up model making two years ago. With the support of the care home's activities coordinator, he has gone on to successfully complete five NCP model projects, demonstrating remarkable commitment and skill.



Alfred and his NCP models, with his wife Maureen



Dennis shows off his finished tank model, which his wife Doreen has painted in khaki and black.

Dennis, meanwhile, was completely new to model making and embraced the hobby by tackling one of the most challenging projects available – the tank model. With help from his wife Doreen and a visiting friend, he worked through the tricky bits and successfully completed it. Dennis's perseverance paid off and he's already looking forward to taking on more projects.

Listen here

Quiz time

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

1. **What is celebrated on 2 February and is also a movie?**
2. **What year did Margaret Thatcher die?**
3. **From what grain is the Japanese spirit Sake made?**
4. **What was the old name for a Snickers bar before it changed in 1990?**
5. **How many human players are there on each side in a polo match?**
6. **How many times has England won the men's football World Cup?**
7. **Name the coffee shop in the US sitcom Friends**
8. **Street artist Banksy is originally associated with which British city?**
9. **What is a group of pugs called?**
10. **What's longer, a nautical mile or a mile?**

Answers on Page 56



HELGAQ / ADOBE STOCK

Snickers bars

Listen here

Family news

Birthdays

William Newton who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 5 November 2026.

Audrey Taylor who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 10 November 2026.

Peter Mullins who celebrates his 101st birthday on 10 November 2026.

Peter D'Arcy Champney who celebrates his 104th birthday on 20 November 2026.

Arthur Hammond who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 21 November 2026.

Jean Rees who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 23 November 2026.

Joseph Hinge who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 29 November 2026.

Condolences

Winifred Soanes who died on 7 September 2026. She was the wife of Arthur Soanes.

Joan Robinson who died on 19 August 2026. She was the wife of John Robinson.

All birthday information was correct at the time of going to press





Listen here

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

Bernard Ballard of Cardiff who died on 28 September 2026 aged 92. He served as an L.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Malcom Batten of Saltash who died on 30 September 2026 aged 94. He served in The Royal Air Force.

Frank Birkett of Blackpool who died on 1 September 2026 aged 95. He served as a Gunner in The Royal Artillery.

Arnold Bradbury of Wetherby who died on 1 October 2026 aged 102. He served as a Petty Officer in The Fleet Air Arm.

Bryan Broadhurst of Devizes who died on 1 October 2026 aged 85. He served as a Lieutenant in The Royal Armoured Corps.

Richard Broadleday of Burnley who died on 30 July 2026 aged 88. He served as a Private in The Kings Own Scottish Regiment.

Maxwell Brown of Hailsham who died on 20 September 2026 aged 102. He served as a Private in The Royal Navy.

Rona Brown of Romsey who died on 1 September 2026 aged 88. She served in The Womens Royal Air Force.

Hugh Campbell of Swansea who died on 1 September 2026 aged 98. He served as an Able Seaman in The Royal Navy.

Lynn Chapman of Ammanford who died on 25 September 2026 aged 91. He served as a Leading Airman in The Royal Air Force.

Cecil Collins of Dorking who died on 11 July 2026 aged 93. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Thomas Crowe of Johnstone who died on 15 July 2026 aged 76. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Geoffrey Dorey of Croydon who died on 20 September 2026 aged 98. He served in The General Service Corps.

Christine Ellis of Burton-On-Trent who died on 23 September 2026 aged 93. She served as a Private in The Queen Alexandra's Regiment.

Philip Evans of Fareham who died on 1 September 2026 aged 98. He served in The Royal Marines.

Clifford Gray of Great Yarmouth who died on 7 September 2026 aged 91. He served as a Private in The Royal Navy.

Jeffrey Guyton of Saffron Walden who died on 17 September 2026 aged 99. He served as a Corporal in The General Service Corps.

Stephen Hipkin of Sandhurst who died on 22 September 2026 aged 72. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in The Royal Air Force.

➜

Henry Kemp of Frome who died on 22 August 2026 aged 92. He served in The Royal Navy.

George Kennedy of Oldham who died on 28 August 2026 aged 82. He served as an S.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

Ronald Kingsbury of Pontyclun who died on 30 September 2026 aged 92. He served as a Private in The Welsh Regiment.

Geoffrey Mitchell of Lytham St Annes who died on 1 October 2026 aged 95. He served as a Lance Corporal in The Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Ian Mitchell of Whitehaven who died on 26 September 2026 aged 82. He served as a Gunner in The Royal Artillery.

Adrian Neat of Cwmbran who died on 12 September 2026 aged 60. He served as a Corporal in The Royal Engineers.

Kenneth Neil of Llanelli who died on 23 September 2026 aged 105. He served in The Royal Air Force.

William O'Brien of Coventry who died on 7 July 2026 aged 87. He served in The Gordon Highlanders.

Robert Osborn of Dartford who died on 29 September 2026 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in The Mobile Defence Corps.

Derek Palmer of Orpington who died on 7 October 2026 aged 93. He served as a Sergeant in The Royal Air Force.

David Perfect of Walton on Thames who died on 8 September 2026 aged 77. He served as a Commander in The Royal Navy.

John Robinson of Deeside who died on 22 September 2026 aged 60. He served as a Corporal in The Parachute Regiment.

Christopher Russell of Portsmouth who died on 6 October 2026 aged 83. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in The Royal Navy.

John Russell of Sudbury who died on 22 September 2026 aged 84. He served as a Sergeant in The Royal Air Force.

Peter Stenning of Worthing who died on 1 July 2026 aged 90. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in The Royal Air Force.

Cyril Surman of Bracknell who died on 13 September 2026 aged 101. He served as a Private in General Service Corps.

George Tucker of Nantwich who died on 16 September 2026 aged 92. He served as a Sapper in The Royal Engineers.

Leonard Turner of Prudhoe who died on 2 September 2026 aged 91. He served as a Fusilier in The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers.

Rodney Westecott of Wareham, who died on 1 October 2026 aged 91. He served as a Colour Sergeant in The Royal Marines.

Barrie Williams of Barry who died on 18 September 2026 aged 93. He served as an L.A.C in The Royal Air Force.

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



Listen here

A time to remember

This Remembrance, we come together to honour all those who have served and sacrificed, and to remember those who are no longer with us.

For many in our Blind Veterans UK community, this time of year holds deeply personal significance. It is an opportunity to remember friends, loved ones and comrades, and to reflect on the experience and memories that connect generations of service.

However you choose to mark Remembrance this year, we wish you a peaceful time of reflection.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.



Quiz answers – from page 44 **1.** Groundhog day **2.** 2013 **3.** Rice **4.** Marathon **5.** Four **6.** Once **7.** Central Perk **8.** Bristol **9.** A grumble **10.** Nautical mile