

May 2017

Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



On the cover: Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of our Ski Club. Guide Dave Wood, blind veteran Carl Williams, who is one of the organisers of the week, and ski guide Sam Legge. All Ski Club Week photos by Paul 'Jacko' Jackson.

Back page: The winners of the Founder's Day Awards are shown at the Llandudno centre and for Billy Baxter The Ted Higgs's Trophy. All Founder's Day photos by Erica Allison, IT Instructor Llandudno.

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Patron Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex GCVO.

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Contact telephone numbers.

The Brighton centre 01273 307811.

The Llandudno centre 01492 868700.

Harcourt Street (HQ) 020 7723 3392.

The Booking Office for the Brighton centre: To book accommodation at the Brighton centre telephone the Booking Office on 01273 391500.

The Booking Office for the Llandudno centre: To book accommodation at the Llandudno centre please telephone 01492 868700 and ask for the Booking Office.

ROVI IT Helpline: If you need to speak with the ROVI IT Helpdesk please telephone the staff at the Sheffield centre on 01273 391447 for ROVI and IT enquiries.

New members: If you know someone who could be eligible to join Blind Veterans UK they can phone our Membership Department on freephone number 0800 389 7979.

Blind Veterans UK Calendar

Activities from the Brighton centre.

May.

Photography Week 1st to 6th.

Jurassic Coast Walk 7th to 13th.

Women's Military Service Week 14th to 20th.

June.

Archery Club (first) 4th to 10th.

July.

Ex-PoW Week 2nd to 8th.

Homes & Gardens Week 16th to 22nd.

August.

Transport Week 6th to 12th.

Archery Club (second) 13th to 19th.

Activities Week 20th to 26th.

Widows' Week 27th August to 2nd September.

Activities from the Llandudno centre.

May/June.

Wood Week 14th to 20th.

Horse Riding Week 28th May to 3rd June.

June.

Sea Fishing Week 18th to 24th.

Potting & Planting Week 25th June to 1st July.

July/August.

Adventure Week 2nd to 8th.

Recreation Taster Week 16th to 22nd.

Cycling Week 30th July to 5th August.

August.

Water Week 13th to 19th.

To book Themed and Club Weeks at the Brighton centre.

For further information and to book your place at the Brighton centre please telephone the Booking Office on 01273 391500.

To book Themed and Club Weeks at the Llandudno centre.

For further information or to book your place please telephone: 01492 864590.

From the Chairman.

Your message from Tim Davis.

I always feel Spring is a time of year that breeds hope and lifts spirits. I certainly get that feeling when the weather starts to improve and the countryside around starts to breathe new life. It's also a time when we get to recognise the achievements of many blind veterans through our annual Founder's Day Awards. Reading and hearing about the achievements of so many inspires me and builds great hope for what can be achieved. This edition of Review features many stories of those of you who have made great strides and provides ideas and inspiration to all of us for how we can help others and help ourselves.

This edition shows the strength and importance of the community, the family, of Blind Veterans UK. Personal accounts highlight the importance of peer support, the friendships that are formed, and of course, the importance of learning new skills, perhaps for what initially started as a hobby, but went on to reaffirm your place in the world. Or through the training at the centres or in the community where you live.

Blind Veterans UK organises a wide variety of events, both social and commemorative, as well as clubs and activities that bring us together and help to create the necessary skills for independence. Through these events social networks are built and further developed; which is so important to gain the right help when you need it, not to mention building lasting friendships. Being of practical help, inspiring people to step out of their comfort zone, and encouraging friendship are core ingredients of what the charity does and something that I very much support and encourage. Andy Bull writes of how Ray Hazan gave him hope after he was wounded, as Ray's words conveyed a message of hope, and showed Andy what could be achieved.

Seeing the Ski Club celebrate its 40th Anniversary, and hearing from those blind veterans who take part, how skiing downhill and around slaloms has given them greater confidence is inspirational. As Gerry Jones said each year the Ski Club show the world what can be achieved. Gerry also cited skiing as the catalyst that gave him the confidence to walk independently along the road with a long cane and to once again enter fully into life.

Meeting blind veterans, young and old, who've made life-long friends and even met their future partner is really something special. Reading about those of you, who like Grace Bitten, have started using the wide range of equipment available and how you can once again read a morning paper or letters from friends, creates positive turning points for those involved.

Please enjoy reading and hearing the various features and stories, and I hope they inspire you for the year ahead. If you have something you'd like to share in the Review please do get in touch with the editor.



Picture: Blind veteran Derek Taylor with his Grandson Craig, as Derek proudly displays Craig's London Marathon medal. It was Craig's first marathon and he completed it in 3 hours, 33 minutes and 10 seconds, raising £2,000 for Blind Veterans UK. As Derek said, it was quite an achievement for a first time marathon runner. We are sure that you will join us in congratulating Craig on his outstanding time and commitment to our charity.

This demonstrates the importance of the family of Blind Veterans UK, as Craig wanted to do something for the charity that helps his Grandfather, as he has seen the difference that Blind Veterans UK has made to his life.

A Tribute to Ray Hazan OBE. By Andy Bull.

When I heard that our then President Ray Hazan was stepping down and reaching for the retirement door I was initially very shocked to say the least. Then someone quickly reminded me that even a donkey has to rest ha, ha, ha, not saying that you are a donkey Ray my old friend, far from it.

I first met Ray in 1984 when he came to visit me in hospital in London to tell me of this wonderful charity called St. Dunstan's, as it was then known. He explained to me how St. Dunstan's supported blinded servicemen and servicewomen. He said how St. Dunstan's had supported him when he was badly wounded in 1973 on active service. He explained about the specialist training he received, and the new skills he had been taught that enabled him to regain his confidence and independence. I could tell immediately that the words being conveyed to me by this kind, gentle, softly spoken man were being spoken truly straight from the heart. From that day on, and after Ray had said goodbye and left, he had given me for the very first time hope and a leg up. But more importantly he had opened the door from the room of despair to which I had become resigned.

When I returned home to Wales I would follow Ray's achievements with great fondness through St. Dunstan's Review magazine, to which he was heavily involved as a member of staff and finally rising to those dizzy heights and becoming editor. Ray was definitely not one for letting the grass grow beneath his feet, and he raised the bar once again, setting up the Walking and Computer Clubs. If that was not enough he then set up the Ski Club, to which once again, thanks to Ray's hard work and endeavours, we all benefit immensely to this day.

When Ray became President of our charity St. Dunstan's, and then under our new name of Blind Veterans UK, I could not hide my pleasure and I think I speak for all our members on that note. What far better person could you have as President of our charity than someone who has overcome such adversity, but who is so passionate for our charity to succeed and go from strength to strength. Ray's hard work and achievements were finally recognised and justly rewarded when he was called to Buckingham Palace by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth when she honoured Ray with an OBE. This must have been such a proud day in the Hazan household.

I know his successor Colin Williamson and as Colin himself said he has some big

boots to fill. However I have felt Colin's feet and he will fill Ray's big boots ha, ha, ha. I wish Colin all the very best and congratulate him in becoming our new President, and for our retiring President Ray, I wish all the very best to you and your family in your retirement and that the quiet years treat you kindly.

Andy Bull.



Picture: As we were unable to find any photos of Andy and Ray together, here is a super photograph of Andy with our Chairman Tim Davis during Project Gemini 2015, when Tim presented Andy with the Project Gemini badge.

A recording of After the Fall is included in the Talking Review. Produced by Alun Jones of ITV Cymru it was made as a documentary when Andy and Nicola Bull returned for the first time to Belfast and the spot where Andy was blinded.

I can see to ski through his voice. Blind Veterans UK's Ski Club celebrates its 40th Anniversary. By Catherine Goodier.

Go straight, let it run. Let it go, all clear. Touch left. Ready for a left. Left now. Ready for a good left, left now. Ready for a hard left, left now. Go left. Go straight. Go left. Sit down.

For more than 30 years blind veteran Charlie Daly has seen the mountains and slopes that he has skied along through Peter Zamudio's words as he guides him across the rich snow and safely down. Translating his instructions Peter, who each year travels from his home in Switzerland, said: "Go straight, let it run, means to keep skiing in a straight line and no braking. Let it go, all clear, is to keep Charlie going if he starts to break or is uncertain. Touch left, is a very fine touch to the left with no breaking, repeated until the direction is right. Ready for a left, left now, as most turns are started exactly where I want and with preparation, Charlie can enter the turn properly, a standard turn. Ready for a good left, left now, means it's getting steeper, I need a good turn here. Ready for a hard left, left now, means it's steep, get your edges in and turn sharply. Go left is repeated after the standard turns until it's time to stop turning. Go straight, stops the turning and gets Charlie in a traverse or going straight down. Go left without warning means go left now, danger is close. Sit down means you are going to hit something, sit, roll on your side and get your skis in front of you."

Asked how he became a guide with the Ski Club Peter continued: "In 1980 I was serving in 94 Locating Reg. Royal Artillery and was in the Regimental ski team when we were asked if we would act as ski guides with St. Dunstaners in Wertach, Bavaria. This is something that Ray Hazan had instigated in 1977. It was totally new to us all, but we were very lucky that most of the blind skiers were experienced and were very good at helping us to help them. It was in 1980 that I first skied with Ray Hazan and Gerry Jones. I later skied with Charlie in Méribel in France in 1986. Charlie had skied a bit on dry ski slopes, but it was his first time on snow. It went very well from the start and Charlie learned very fast. We are very well attuned to each other. I can always tell how he feels, even if he is struggling to hear me, and I know to ski closer. He always says he can see through my voice and he can tell if he is safe, and it's easy, or if it's getting tight and he must get his turns in.

“All the guides have to adapt to whoever they are with and depending how much vision that person has. Some guides just ski in front and they can talk about the view and other things. Charlie on the other hand is one of the few who is totally blind. We have built up a set of commands over the years that work in all situations. If you can imagine on steep slopes you need good braking turns and on long flat slopes we must keep our speed up so we don't end up walking. There is also the fact that Charlie turns better if he knows there is a turn coming and which way it will be. So that's when we use the list from going straight to sharp turns and emergency stops. The absolute highlight is to see a happy and relaxed Charlie after a run down that has gone well, as we're always in search of that perfect run.”



Picture: Skiing ace Charlie Daly with skiing ace and guide Peter Zamudio.

Charlie Daly, from Epping in Essex, who served in the Parachute Regiment, is a long time member of the Ski Club. Charlie said: “I first joined the Ski Club in 1985, but the year before, I completed a course over 12 months on the dry ski slopes in Harlow where I lived at the time. I had skied in 1968, but I still had my sight then. My first trip with the ski club was to Méribel in France. The training on the dry ski slope in England helped, but I still attended the nursery school as skiing on snow is faster. As I've got older I don't push it anymore and Peter Zamudio, who has been my guide since 1986, knows my capabilities and keeps

me well within the bounds of my abilities. The ski week is the one week a year that really gets me out of myself and gets me going and makes me get up and go. There are the blind veterans and guides who have been going for years and there are always new people to meet who are skiing for the first time or guiding for the first time. I've been to the weddings of three of the guides, but we're not a clique, as new people join all the time and they are made very welcome. This year there were 58 of us in Italy as we celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the Ski Club. Over the years three of my daughters, a grandson and a granddaughter have come out to ski as family is important. During the week we have a great time skiing and of course we enjoy the evenings too.

"Alan Walker was a first time skier this year and my message to other blind veterans who aren't sure whether to come along would be to just go for it. If you want to brighten up your life, go skiing. Being blind is not the best of things and life can become dull. We've all been there, going right back to our founder Sir Arthur Pearson and our second Chairman Ian Fraser, and I'd say just go skiing and get a life. You're travelling at speed on your own and you're free and you can really go for it at times. I'm 82 and I keep going and I'll be back next year. I enjoy the week as much as I did 31 years ago. You are with friends and you have the mountains and the sunshine and everyone's laughing. What's not to love?"

Blind Veterans UK's Ski Club was started in 1977 by our former President, Ray Hazan OBE, and this year as the group took to the slopes in Canazei, Canazei Val Fasse in the Italian Dolomites, it was to celebrate their 40th Anniversary. Staying at the Hotel El Ciasel where they have skied from for the last 13 years. It was a week of great skiing, for both the first time skier and the more professional skiers in the group. It was a week to catch up with friends, make new friends and perfect techniques for both skiing and guiding. It was a week when blind veterans who were skiing for the first time were welcomed along with new guides as the life changing impact of the Ski Club was celebrated.

As he recalled the start of the Ski Club Ray Hazan said: "When the chance of skiing came my way I thought 'Skiing no you're joking how on earth is that done?' Anyway my first trip was to Norway and very soon after that we had a trip to Italy where we were five blind skiers and only three guides. I thought, this is no good it's got to be one to one. So I said to Jock Carnochan, the mobility officer at the time, do you mind if I go and find some guides from somewhere. Well of course he wasn't going to say no. Every winter the forces based in Germany went down South to the skiing on Operation Snow Queen. As the first

Battalion of my Regiment were based in Germany at the time I wrote to ask if there was any chance they could lend us some of their ski guides. They did and that's what started our association with the Army. When they left Germany the Gunners took over and they're still skiing with us. Forty years later they wouldn't miss this week for all the tea in China. It's absolutely marvellous, as we've seen our guides start as maybe a Bombardier, and go through to achieve higher rank, and then finish their career after 22 years. Neil Graham, Mick Shepley and Cam are just some of the guides who come to mind as their teaching has helped to transform the lives of many blind veterans. The Ski Club is working very well and this year they had their largest group in Italy. At one stage I would visit potential new members in hospital, the young ones especially, and I'd say a little bit jokey 'I'll see you at the ski trip next year.' They'd say 'Oh come on don't have me on' and in a year's time you'd see them skiing. It's wonderful, it really gives you confidence. It's a wonderful sensation, absolutely scary as hell, but there we go, and the nightlife is all part of the fun. I know from speaking with Ken Facal, who was blinded in Afghanistan that he felt exactly the same when he skied with Mick Shepley, who has been a guide for 22 years, as it restored his confidence. The support from Shep and from the group on and off the slopes showed that he was still the same person that he was before the incident."



Picture: This photo was taken in Méribel in 1986. It includes Ray Hazan, Alan Wortley, Bill Shey, Gerry Jones, Charlie Daly and Peter and Maja Zamudio.

Gerry Jones first joined his fellow St Dunstaners on the slopes in 1979. He went on to run the ski club for 20 years, for many of them with his skiing guide Martin Blank. Here Gerry speaks of the importance of the week: "I read about the Ski Club in the Review and the first trip I went on was organised by Ray Hazan, now Ray Hazan OBE. I had joined Blind Veterans UK, then St Dunstan's, in 1973 and the ski trip was a turning point in my life. I was working by this time and using the tricks in my mobility training that I had been taught by Jock Carnochan, a former instructor at the Brighton centre, but, like most, I had got into a day to day humdrum way of life. On that first trip I met some memorable people, Ray Sheriff, Tiny Pointon, David Clark, Alan Wortley, Jack Fulling, and of course Ray himself. I don't think that I have ever laughed so much in one week before. Needless to say that on my return home my mobility improved, due mainly to the confidence I had acquired during that week. What hazards could there possibly be in a busy city high street compared to an icy Bavarian slope with barbed wire to mark the fringes? During that week I had passed under, over and through the latter, no Health and Safety in those days!

"The annual ski trip is now organised by Carl Williams and Mark Brewin who once again did an excellent job this year. It meant that Martin Blank and I were able to ski and then sit back, relax and have a drink and not worry about anything. It takes a lot of organisation and their hard work paid off. Looking back over past years some of the memories just make me cry as they're so hilarious. The first time I went I came off the junior slope and joined some people from our group who were laughing hysterically. I asked them what had happened and was told that Bill Shea, a veteran who was blinded at Montecassino had fallen, and as he careered down the slope on his back, he had passed between the legs of a woman wearing a fur coat and fur hat who was promptly knocked onto his lap and they both snowploughed down the slopes with her sitting on top of him. The stories go on and on, and all of us came away with new stories from this year's trip. And like our early days of skiing, new blind veterans to the group came away with new found confidence and we welcomed new sighted ski guides.

"One of the best decisions was made six years ago when I asked Louise Timms to become involved with the Ski Club and she came out to Italy to see what it was all about. She is now an integral part of the week, as she assesses if people are fit enough to take part and if they will enjoy the week, as the main focus is the skiing. Lou's a great asset and an unsung hero of the Ski Club.

“The week wouldn’t happen without the guides who know Europe backwards, as lots of them were downhill racers in the Army. In the past I would teach the guides how to work with the members, which meant I didn’t get a chance to improve, but when Martin Blank became my guide my skiing improved. His tactics were perhaps somewhat unorthodox, as in the bar one night he told me to stand at the bar, face the bar, put my hands on the bar. He said that behind the bar was the most gorgeous bar lady, he said you’re excited so bob up and down from your knees, she’s just walked past you so turn left, spin on your toe, but still facing the bar girl. That was the principle I learnt to ski by! Age does creep up, but we ski each day. We leave the hotel at 9am, get on the lifts and reach the top of the mountain at 10am, and off we go. The weather this year was superb with beautiful snow conditions. You couldn’t wish for anything better. I think it’s a very important aid to people who have lost their sight, as it really builds confidence and aids mobility. You think, if I can ski down that, then I can certainly walk down the high street with a long cane.

“When we ski Martin will say red run, it’s going to be sharp for the first six, and you say to yourself concentrate, concentrate, concentrate, and you really do have to concentrate. As soon as you relax you end up flat on your back and you think ‘Wake up Jones get a grip on yourself’ and you do. Everybody benefits from the Ski Club week. The family benefit because when you get back you’re more alive. It certainly sharpens me up. I come back and I’ve woken up again, otherwise I live in this lovely village and I don’t have to concentrate as I know it well and everyone is looking out for me as well. Living at home is not a problem. It’s everywhere else and this week sharpens you up for that.

“This year was so much more than our 40th Anniversary Year, as I thought about the significance of those years, as I tried to remember all the people I’d met, and sadly some of them have gone now. I thought of all the laughs we’ve had and thought what we’ve created as we’ve built up a great club and how special the bonds are that have been forged over time. And of the message that we give to the rest of the world as we show what’s happened and what you can achieve. I was proud for everybody. Everyone who has ever taken part in the ski club and all the guides we’ve met over the years. Martin in particular for his help, and my wife Marian who did the banking for years, as she did a great deal of work. I was just happy that we had all these people and all these family and friends with us and all you could hear was laughter and chatter. And I think that is incredible. It reaffirmed that you don’t take anything lying down. You say I can do that.

There's nothing like a challenge. For people to come skiing when they can't see that is a challenge and a half and they should all be proud of themselves. I can think of no other sport where it happens. I'm delighted the Ski Club is so successful. Long may it continue!"



Picture: More skiing aces Martin Blank and Gerry Jones.

Another member of the Royal Artillery to join as a ski guide and then stay for years is Martin Blank who said: "I started skiing with the Ski Club in 1984 when I was a soldier as Peter Zamudio and I used to race with different regiments. Peter sent a message to ask if I wanted to go skiing with blinded soldiers and I thought what a great challenge that would be. That year we skied in France and the first St Dunstaner I skied with was Ray Hazan, so you can imagine my thoughts when I met Ray who is totally blind, has hearing loss and also lost one hand. I thought 'How can I do this? How can I do that? What about this? What about that?' So much just rushed through my mind, but obviously Ray had skied before and he was fluent in French which came in handy when we had the odd collision with lovely young blonde ladies! After the first couple of hours Ray made me feel so much at ease and we just progressed at a great rate of knots and I guided Ray for between four to five years.

"We didn't use radios then so you have to take into consideration that you're

2,500 feet above sea level at the top of a mountain and a Force 7 wind is coming up the valley. Ray already can't hear much so I had to adjust my skiing style to make sure he was safe and he could hear what I was saying. We just attacked those challenges as they happened and worked around them. It was a fantastic four or five years with Ray. There were times with Ray that you'd say, turn right, and he'd turn left and go straight over the edge and I'd have to climb down, grab him and pick his skies up and get him out of the ditch or whatever. He'd say sorry Martin and I'd say no don't apologise. They understand you're in a position where you're going to get your left and rights mixed up.

"When you become a guide one of the first things you have to do is to ski blindfolded. All the guides have done that over the years, including the new guides this year. As my initiation was a long time ago they got the kids to guide us down and obviously the kids got their left and rights mixed up as well. So we can appreciate it from the blind veterans point of view, as you can't see anything and you don't realise that you're moving. They're saying left, but they mean right, and you're going right and they mean left. It's such a learning curve it's fantastic. I didn't think I would do it for this long but it's been great to ski with Gerry. I first met him in 1984 and as Gerry said we were talking in the bar one night and he said he was having a bit of trouble with certain things. It was about 12.30 and I said put your pint down and I told him to put his body in certain positions and like he said I taught him at the bar how his body should move when he's skiing. Next day when I saw him at about 3.30pm he said 'Martin it works' and I said of course it does. As he skied I watched from the lift and I just shouted down 'Next year you're with me G'. He said alright no problem and we've skied together for 27 years.

"There are times when I don't need to guide him I just have to watch out for people coming towards us. There were a couple of incidents when we were at the Bormio men's downhill ski slope in Italy and we'd been skiing for most of the day and stopped for a break. A couple stopped and started talking to Gerry and said 'You're a ski guide can you show us down the mountain?'. I was a couple of metres away from G and he called me over and we explained to them that G was blind, but they didn't believe it. He skied brilliantly so it wasn't a surprise. Another time we were skiing and I looked behind me and there were four or five snowboarders coming down and they were quite fast. They split and one was coming towards me and he was so fast that I pushed G forward and the snowboarder took me straight through the middle and I could hardly

talk or breathe for about three or four minutes. In that time G walked above me, he knew where I was as I was grunting to let him know that I was still alive. He put crossed skies up and basically kept talking to me to ensure that I was alright. The odd person stopped because when they see crossed skies it's a warning. They stopped and G said 'No he's ok' and after about four or five minutes I got my breath back, got up, albeit hardly able to move my left leg, and we skied down to the café. After a day and a half I had a bruise from my knee to my hip, but that didn't stop us skiing for the rest of the week.

"To see what blind veterans go through and the determination and the spirit they've got has taught me a lot. If you wake up with a bad knee that's nothing in comparison. The respect and admiration from all the guides is second to none. When you look at Gerry he's just unbelievable, as is Charlie Daly. Charlie still goes out and skis with Peter every day as do me and G. Gerry is now the President of the Ski Club but he organised the Ski Club for about 20 years and I was like his secretary. It's inspirational to be part of this week. I wouldn't change it for the world. It's been a fantastic experience and hopefully it will continue until Mr Jones decides to retire — that's if I can keep up with him!"

Sue Eyles returned for her second year in Canazei to find that it was as she remembered, the best week possible. "I am slowly coming down to earth after the fantastic high from Blind Veterans UK's Ski Club Week. To say thank you is an understatement, but one person whom I must thank is Danny Lee, who persuaded/challenged me to give this skiing lark a go. But seriously a massive thank you to everyone for letting me join in. The logistics of organising the week must have been a nightmare! Last year I was really nervous about the trip and the fact that the only sighted person I knew was Lou Timms. So to realise that I was going to have to trust a complete stranger with my life, and do something so alien to me was massive. But they paired me up with the lovely Jim who had the patience of a saint, not to mention the skill to ski backwards. Jim was amazing as he knew when to push me a little harder, and when to ease off to boost my confidence, and every day I learnt so much and always ended on a high. This year I came with the wish to learn more and it was just as great as last year. Skiing with everyone gave me a sense of freedom, and one of challenge, and the feeling of being free when gliding across the snow is indescribable. Thank you for allowing me to be part of an amazing week."



Picture: Skiing superstar Steve 'Sparky' Sparkes cited the Ski Club Week as life changing and said how grateful he is to his guide Cam and to Shep, another outstanding guide and one of the many heroes of the week.

And what did Mark Brewin and Carl Williams think, the organisers of this epic week, when blind veterans and guides show the world what they are made of. Exceptional was the verdict and they would like to make a very public thank you to Ray Hazan and Gerry Jones and to everyone who has taken part over the last 40 years. It was a massive thank you to Neil Graham and to all the guides, past and present, who make the week possible. Sir Arthur Pearson would be proud of everyone involved and this outstanding embodiment of his vision of Victory over Blindness.



Picture: Centre Ski Club organiser Carl Williams with Sam Legge and Dave Wood right.

St Dunstan's National Bowls Tournament, March 2017. By Alan Gibson, Chairman.

I would like to start with the sad news of the passing of Jim Booth, known to us all as Jimbo, who was 104 years old. Also Frank Newcombe who passed away recently and our thoughts are with their family and friends. We are all pleased that Joan Osborne is back with us for this Tournament after being unwell in October — welcome back Joan. At our meeting on the first night we were pleased to welcome two new members, Bill Pullen and Bernard Thomas, we hope you enjoyed the Tournament and will join us in October. That same evening we had to elect a Committee Member and when we voted Connie Appletree was duly elected. This was Joan Osborne's 30th year of organising St. Dunstan's National Bowls Club Tournament, of which she is President, and she will celebrate her 90th Birthday in June. Congratulations to Joan from the Committee and bowlers. I will tell you more about this later. We would like to thank Iris, Daphne, Louise Timms and her staff, and volunteers who called the games. Thanks also to Cathy, Shirley and Janet who helped on and off the green and Ann who helped Joan in the 'office' with the paperwork.

We had some very good bowling this fortnight. Some games were very funny and some very competitive. Well done to you all. The Committee overwhelmingly voted Len Pugsley as the most improved bowler. Well done Len.

The results of the Games were.

Singles winner: Peter Johns.

Runner up: Alan Gibson.

Group winners: Len Pugsley and Graham Johnson.

Pairs winners: Harry Murray and Ted Arnold.

Runners up: Paul Watson and John Russell.

Triples winners: Pete Bradshaw, John Russell and Alan Ballenger.

Runners up: Paul Watson, George Wrightson and Len Pugsley.

We always have a dinner on our last night and this year as we celebrated with Joan we enjoyed the dinner and presentations in the Winter Gardens. I would like to thank Sue Knevett and her staff of TnS Caterers for a super meal that everyone enjoyed, including me! We had a surprise for Joan when we presented her with a cake, which was provided by Blind Veterans UK and TnS Caterers. Joan was thrilled and there were a few tears and it was the first time we have known her to be speechless! Congratulations once again Joan from us all. A big thanks to Sue Philips, who is retiring from the bar, for the help she has given us over 14 years. Have a happy retirement and we will miss you. What would we do without Geraldine!

We also celebrated three birthdays Jim Glendenning, George Wrightson and Alan Cade. I hope you have all booked in for October when we will all meet again.



Picture: Joan Osborne, the Queen of St. Dunstan's, who celebrated 30 years with The St Dunstan's National Bowling Tournament.

The 2017 Founder's Day Awards Ceremony from the Llandudno centre. By Catherine Goodier.

It started with a roar from Billy Baxter's bugle as he called everyone into the 2017 Founder's Day Awards Ceremony at the Llandudno centre. As blind veterans who were nominated for these prestigious awards entered the grand dining room with their proposer it was as though they had walked into a State Room. Dining tables and chairs had been removed to reveal the grandeur of the wood panelled jewel, chairs were dressed with sashes, and balloons in the colours of Blind Veterans UK and of the Welsh flag rose from the floor. Befitting of so splendid a setting the 23rd March Founder's Day Awards Ceremony was moving, full of pathos, funny anecdotes and laughter and gratitude, pride and humility in equal measure.

The opening and closing address was made by Steve Boswell, Centre Manager and Nicky Shaw, Welfare Director (West), was a superb compère for Founder's Day, introducing each nominee, and when the proposer was not present, reading their citation. A tactile relief of Snowden fashioned from Welsh slate was presented by Colin Williamson, Blind Veterans UK's President, with the Founder's Day certificate. It was a moving day that celebrated our rich history and all that is great about Blind Veterans UK.

Each year Founder's Day is held on 26th March, or on a date as close to it as possible, to celebrate the day in 1915 when 16 war blinded soldiers crossed the threshold of our Regent's Park training centre with our founder Sir Arthur Pearson Bt, GBE. It is an important part of our heritage and this year, Hayley-Goldsmith-Williams, who organised the ceremony, would have made Sir Arthur Pearson of the thoughtful and faultless ceremony. Matt Lee arranged the audio visual, music and the video recording of the ceremony and Erica Allison took the photos that are included in this account. An audio recording of the ceremony is included in the Talking Review.

Creative Art Award.

Nicky Shaw, Operations Director (West), said: "Good afternoon everybody. I'm delighted to be announcing the nominees and winners at this year's Founder's Day Awards. This year we're going to do things a bit differently. In previous years we've just announced the winners, and this year we thought we'd take the opportunity to invite all of those who had kindly taken the time to nominate,

as well as, all of those who have been nominated. It's brilliant to see a larger group of people here today to enjoy this very special event. We've asked those who nominated to come up and read out their nomination and for those who can't be here I will do that and we've also asked everyone who is nominated to prepare a short acceptance speech in the event they are a winner. It will run a bit differently this year, but I think it will be a lot more personal because of that. I would also like to introduce Colin Williamson, who is our new President, as he will present the certificates and awards. Welcome Colin.

Introducing the first Award, Nicky Shaw said: "Moving straight into the awards the first is the Creative Arts Award. There are always a large amount of nominations and this award recognises endeavour in creative activity and encompasses, arts, handicraft, sculpture and music. This year there are five nominees and each nomination is supported by wonderful displays of artwork that are set out in the lounge. The nominees were Will Phillips, who was proposed by his Welfare Officer Hilary Brown. Joseph Hallett, known as Bird Box Bert, who was proposed by his fellow blind veteran John Cantwell. Geoff Stockwell who was proposed by Hattie Lockhart-Smith, Art & Craft Instructor at the Brighton centre. Rita Scarratt who was proposed by Dave Bryant, Art & Craft Instructor at the Brighton centre and Norman Perry, who was proposed by Kathryn Jones-Romain, Art & Craft Instructor at the Brighton centre."

Nicky Shaw read the nominations on behalf of Will Phillips, Geoff Stockwell and Rita Scarratt. John Cantwell introduced his nomination for Joseph Hallett, which was then read out by an ereader.

In a live satellite link to the Brighton centre, Katherine Bradley, Member Activities Manager, read the nomination for Norman Perry, the winner of the Creative Art Award, saying: "Norman has been a member of Blind Veterans UK for 75 years. He trained as a physiotherapist in his 20s and had a very successful career. He has been a resident at the Brighton centre for around 20 years when he has been very keen on creating and making things. When Norman came to the centre he trained in the workshop in chair cane weaving, a very skilled craft, which he learnt and excelled at. Norman took many cane chair commissions and a few years ago he decided to learn a new craft, and peg loom scarf making became his thing, even attending the workshop at weekends. Norman has recently suffered from ill health, but has made an amazing recovery and this craft work played a significant part in the process. Throughout his rehabilitation,

until his most recent setback, Norman persevered and made rugs and scarves for our shop and for private commissions, and he has continued to create fantastic pieces of work. Norman is a true inspiration to us all and soldiers on throughout everything that life has thrown at him.”

Speaking from the Brighton centre Norman said: “I would like to thank those who proposed me for this award and I’d like to thank the staff and the volunteers in the workshop, as they’ve had to cope with a lot with me. I would encourage all blind veterans to take up some form of hobby. I apologise for not being able to come to Wales and thank you for this award.”

In an act of technical wizardry Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson somehow managed to hand Norman’s Founder’s Day Award certificate and tactile model of Snowdon through the airwaves to Norman at the Brighton centre.



Picture: Norman Perry, who has been a St Dunstaner for 75 years, was the 2017 winner of the Founder’s Day Creative Art Award. He is shown making scarves on a peg loom at the Brighton centre.

The Community Award.

Nicky Shaw announced "The Community Award is for the best contribution of a member, spouse, widow or widower, to their local community or the family of Blind Veterans UK. This year we have five nominations for this award. They are Carol Knight who was proposed by Welfare Officer Alan Hay. Joe Elsander who was proposed by his fellow blind veteran Bill Mooney. Maria Pikulski who proposed her fellow blind veteran Alan Holderness. Ray East, Welfare Officer, who proposed Carol Davies and Harry Hitch who proposed Pat Mason."

After the nominations had been read Nicky Shaw introduced the winners. "This year the panel felt that there were two distinct nominations, one relating to best contribution to the family of Blind Veterans UK, and one relating to best contribution to their local community. Therefore we have two equally deserving recipients for this award. For the Community Award, serving the Blind Veterans UK family, the winner is Carol Davies. For the Community Award, serving the local community, the winner is Carol Knight."

In his proposal for Carol Davies, Welfare Officer Ray East, had written. 'In 2012 Carol, along with Chris Humphry, established the GOAL Group — that stands for Get Out and Live. The group is for blind veterans who are aged from 60 to 75 and who want to participate in more active social events and holidays. Over the last four years Carol has either, individually, or jointly, organised around 15 events for blind veterans across the UK to come together for a week to have fun, shared experiences and generally support each other in doing something 'a bit more challenging'. Activities have included zipwire, museum visits, steam train trips, prison visits and much more. She has also helped other members to develop confidence to organise their own events. I have several members who have been on GOAL Group events and they are full of praise of the way in which Carol inspires them, adapts the programme to meet their preferences, makes a big effort to include everyone and make everybody feel at ease. Carol has donated many hours of her time and her personal finances to make these events happen and be successful. I highly recommend her for the Community Award for the benefits she has extended to other blind veterans. She has definitely scored!"

Accepting her award Carol Davies said "Firstly I'd like to thank Ray for nominating me. Chris Humphrey had the idea of GOAL, as when he reached the age of 60 and had to leave the Working Age Members Group he felt there was nothing in the charity that catered for the members who were independent

and looking for a challenge. I was asked to join the committee, which I did, and Alison Bradley, who worked at head office, said that GOAL could be formed as a recognised club, but that we would first need to produce a business plan, a constitution and a budget. After that we were told that permission had been given to form GOAL and in 2013 we held our first official event, which was a great success. Since then Chris and I have organised many events at the centres and external venues. The GOAL Group has helped its members to grow in confidence and independence, as we all travel to the events by public transport and try plenty of new activities, with plenty of laughs and banter along the way. It is a unique club for members only, who are encouraged to think and make decisions, whilst being supported and encouraged by the group as a whole. Since the formation of the club I have carried out the role of Secretary and Treasurer. I am also the secretary for the British Blind Sport Archery section. As all of these jobs take up a lot of my time I was very grateful when John Brice, another GOAL Group member, agreed to take over the Secretary role. I have stayed on as Treasurer as I really enjoy being involved with the group. We are now considering lowering the joining age of GOAL to 50 to give more members the opportunity to Get Out and Live. We want to continue to promote independence and confidence and to support each other. Thank you."



Picture: Carol Davies accepts her Community Founder's Day Award from Blind Veterans UK's President Colin Williamson.

In his nomination for Carole Knight, Welfare Officer Alan Hay wrote: "Carol's husband is significantly vision impaired, and, as well as devoting herself to Trevor, she has over many years given her spare time to the running of a blind club. Carole has run this club for over 10 years, and the number of attendees has varied enormously week to week, with on average around 25 people attending. It's indicative of Carole's input, so much so, that when she retired from running the club it unfortunately stopped. Carole was the Chair. She was the Treasurer. She organised weekly meetings, activities for guests, and trips out, as well as doing all of the administration and the accounts. Carole's service to her community through running this local blind club has been truly inspiring and has taken huge personal commitment and care. She has without a doubt made a significant contribution to improving the lives of others who may have suffered from isolation without the support of the group and its members."



Picture: Carole Knight accepts her Community Founder's Day Award from Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson.

Receiving her Founder's Day Community Award for the difference she has made to her local community, Carole Knight said: "I feel very honoured to receive the Community Award and thank Welfare Officer Alan Hay who said some very flattering things. Winning this award is very special, as my husband Trevor is a blind veteran and we are both acutely aware how very privileged we are to be part of this incredible organisation that supports us in so many varied ways. Unfortunately all who have a vision impairment are not as fortunate and the

aim of the Monday Club for the Blind was to bring together vision impaired people and their carers to enjoy a varied programme of talks, music, games, exercises and days out. It was an opportunity to exchange views, information and chat in a relaxed atmosphere with a cup of tea. We celebrate and share members' family events, birthdays and anniversaries, and of course now the births of grandchildren and great grandchildren. We have had over the years as many as 14 blind veterans amongst our numbers. As age has caught up with us our evening events have become lunches, but we still enjoy visits from the local school choir and Christmas lunch with our favourite Bedfordshire entertainer.

"As so many of our members are ex-Londoners the highlight of our year is a day trip to Southend with fish and chip lunch and a trip to the end of the pier on the train. Looking back on photographs that I took of everyone seated on a bench at the end of the pier as we waited to load back on to the coach it wasn't until I got home and looked at it on the computer that I realised they were sitting under a notice that read 'If you would like to buy a plank please see someone.' In my early days with the club I told my son during a telephone conversation that we were going out for lunch followed by a mystery tour. There was a moment's silence while he suppressed a giggle, then he said, 'Mum if you are vision impaired every day is a mystery tour.' This may be so, but all of you blind veterans know that with support and encouragement what started out as a mystery tour can be a very exciting and very rewarding journey. Thank you again for this Award."

Training Achievement Award.

John Cantwell proposed fellow blind veteran Bryan Fountain and Vince Godber, ROVI at the Llandudno centre, proposed working age blind veteran Ben Shaw.

John's nomination for Bryan stated: "Bryan is a relatively new member, but it was quickly realised by the IT department that he had a gift with computers and IT. Over an 18 month period he fast tracked through extended training to become a member of the trouble shooting computing hotline. Bryan was also training to undertake a training role, both locally in the Oxford area, and as a roving trainer when required at the various centres. Bryan has also visited the Dolphin IT Centre to achieve a more in depth understanding of both Guide and Supernova programmes. He has also been involved with the training on the new tablet and synaptic programme. Bryan has always taken seriously this training function and has assisted many blind veterans in this area and other

parts of the country, in the use of all programmes and equipment. He has been involved in talking to members who were experiencing problems with equipment or who needed additional training. He has also been involved in P.A.C. testing electrical equipment at all centres. Bryan is a very active member on the social side of our Lunch Club, never failing to help any blind veteran who has needed help with IT."

Accepting his award Bryan Fountain said: "I'd like to thank John for my nomination as he has become a close and personal friend and he and his wife Elaine have made me feel very welcome. I'd also like to thank Anna Brownlie, an IT Instructor at the Brighton centre, as it was her idea about my training and becoming a volunteer for Blind Veterans UK. Without Anna this would never have been possible. Lastly I'd like to thank the staff and the trainers at the Sheffield centre who persevered with me and battled with me through my exams to get all of the qualifications. Thank you very much to everyone and thank you Blind Veterans UK."



Picture: Bryan Fountain accepts his Founder's Day Training Achievement Award and tactile model of Snowden that is fashioned from slate from President Colin Williamson.

Sports Person of the Year Award.

Introducing the award, Nicky Shaw, said "This award is to celebrate an exceptional sporting achievement during the award year. This year we have three proposals for the award. Mark Hollis, Activities Team Leader at the Llandudno centre has proposed Shaun Stocker. Rachel Jennings, Welfare Officer, has proposed Mark Abel and Lisa Bowen, Activity Team Instructor, has proposed Carl Adamson. The winner of the Sports Person of the Year Award is Mark Abel."

Rachel Jennings, Welfare Officer, spoke of why she proposed Mark. "I nominated Mark Abel for the Sports Person of the Year Award as I feel he embodies the definition of a good sportsman. Within 12 months Mark has achieved his goal to become a member of the Armed Forces Para Snow Sports who compete all over Europe. He is now able to slalom through gates at 58mph and has completed the Whistler Mountain Challenge. I believe this was due to the dedication of Mark to improve his fitness and overcome significant pain, together with attending a rigorous training programme, and the much needed support of his family. This last year Mark, wife Anita, son Sam and grandparents also attended the Invictus Games. Mark was the only blind team member to represent Great Britain and was kept busy swimming in four events over just a few days. In preparation for the Games Mark trained at the Worcester Swimming Club and competed with sighted club members in the men's Master's Relay Team, who together had a combined age of 208.

"But what I believe makes Mark a good sportsman, is not just his ability to adapt to his vision impairment and to push through pain barriers, but to take instruction and work hard, teamed with his willingness to utilise the opportunities that he's been afforded to help others. During 2016 Mark and Sam found time to fit in a charity abseil and a sky dive. With the help of Anita, Mark has talked about his Invictus Games experience and life with a vision impairment to school children around Worcestershire and attended other more formal events in an effort to dispel any negative preconceptions about sport and vision impairment. He has also kindly allowed Blind Veterans UK to use his story for fundraising purposes. He plans to wingwalk this coming year, for the purposes again of raising charitable funds. I know that Mark's looking to improve his skills and conquer other sports and I expect we'll be hearing more about his achievements, possibly, I believe, involving a tandem cycle ride in due course."



Picture: Colin Williamson presents Mark Abel with the Sports Person of the Year Award.

As he stood at the podium supported by Anita to accept his award, Mark Abel said "Thank you so much to Rachel Jennings for your nomination. I'm a bit emotional. Rachel you've been very helpful over the years that I've known you and you've been a great support and you'll be sadly missed. I'd like to wish you all the best for whatever you do in the future. You'll be sorely missed. I mentioned our son, who was 14 two months ago, his courage to explore things through activities last year saw us travelling back and forth to venues as Sam was my eyes with orientation, including sighted guiding. We actually got Sam on a tandem cycle, but his legs were a couple of inches too short to reach the pedals so we had to park that. This award means so much to me and to my family, but it's not just about me, as I only crossed the finish line because of everybody around me. So really this award goes out to all of my family and friends. Thank you very much. Thanks to the charity for all the support they have given us in the past. Sam is sorely missed. This awards means so much to me, but this award is not for me, it is for all the people who are around me who got me to the start line. So really this award is for my family, friends and people around me. Thank you."

Nominating Carl Adamson, Lisa Bowen, Activity Team Instructor, said “Carl had a brilliant year with the charity last year. He’s an absolute asset to our sports team, he literally is always helping out and volunteering. Carl set himself a challenge to complete the 100K walk last year and he trained hard prior to the event, helping and encouraging other blind veterans on the team. I think it’s only right that Carl be recognised for his achievement, as the grit and determination that he showed during the event was like nothing I have ever seen. His feet were in a terrible state and he still managed to spur on other members of the team and keep everyone’s spirits high. Carl, I don’t think that I would have completed it if it wasn’t for you. Carl was 100% out of his comfort zone and yet he still carried on. He’s taking part in the 100K again this year, I think he’s regretting it already, but I have faith in his ability. Carl is an inspiration and shows that anything is possible if people put their mind to it. It’s a joy to see Carl around the centre and I think he is a worthy candidate for this award.”



Picture: Carl Adamson with Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson and his Special Commendation Award for Overall Achievement.

Announcing a special winner Nicky Shaw said: “Again the panel deliberated for quite some time in relation to the award for Sports Person of the Year. Unusually we have decided to offer a special commendation award in addition to the winner’s award. So for the Special Commendation Award, whilst this blind veteran was nominated for Sports Person of the Year, the panel could also see his achievement in relation to training, specifically in the area of sport,

as well as the considerable personal progress that he's made in his life and since becoming a member of Blind Veterans UK. He is awarded a special commendation for his overall achievement and he is Carl Adamson."

Accepting his award Carl kept it brief but heartfelt when he said: "Thank you to Lisa for nominating me. It was 20 years ago on Monday that I had my accident. It's been a long journey and I'll keep smiling. Thank you."

Innovator of the Year Award.

Introducing the award Nicky Shaw said: "The award is for a person or organisation who successfully introduces a beneficial idea or device to Blind Veterans UK. This year we had just one proposer for this award, Matt Lee, Operations Manager, Llandudno, who proposed Apple. Now the panel did recognise the success of Apple (laughter from the audience) in the advance of software, but actually we felt there was another more worthy winner in this category, somebody who has already been nominated in another category. The winner of the Innovator of the Year Award is Joseph Hallett, Bird Box Bert.



Picture: Joseph Hallett, Bird Box Bert, Colin Williamson and and Joseph's Innovator of the Year Award.

He was nominated by John Cantwell who wrote: Mr Joseph Hallett, better known as Bird Box Bert, has worked quietly for several years behind the scenes promoting the awareness of the charity. He has done this in rather a unique

way. Sometime ago, Joseph attended a woodwork course at the Brighton centre where he was taught, with the aid of templates, how to manufacture small bird boxes using any available pieces of wood. He manufactures these boxes to a very high standard of finish and has developed the basic design to encompass insect hotels and feeding stations. His latest project is developing a large free standing plant holder. The unusual part about this, is that Joseph uses these bird boxes and insect hotels to promote the name and work of Blind Veterans UK. He does this by locating these units in some very unusual places.

So far these places include 10 Downing Street, where he presented a bird box and insect hotel to David Cameron, the then Prime Minister. Bagshot Park, where he presented a bird box and insect hotel to the Countess of Wessex. Buckingham Palace where he presented a bird box and insect hotel to the Head Gardener. This also resulted in bird boxes and insect hotels being placed in the Royal Parks of Sandringham, Balmoral and Frogmore House. His latest project is to supply a number of units to the National Memorial Arboretum. Joseph has also persuaded a local manufacturer in his village to place a table with Blind Veterans UK merchandising, including samples of Joseph's bird boxes, insect hotels, bird feeders and plant boxes to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK."

Accepting his award Joseph Hallett said "I'd like to thank John for nominating me and everyone here and at the Brighton centre for all they have done for me. Thank you very much."

Outstanding Achievement Award.

Introducing the Award Nicky Shaw said: "The Outstanding Achievement Award is for a member who has achieved an outstanding level of independence by their participation in activities provided or promoted through Blind Veterans UK. These individuals were nominated for an earlier award. They are John Cantwell for Joseph Hallett and Vince Godber for Ben Shaw. And the winner of The Outstanding Achievement Award goes to Ben Shaw.

The nomination that was submitted by Vince Godber, ROVI at the Llandudno centre, was read by Kate Pierce, Rehabilitation and Training Manager, as Vince was unable to attend. Kate read: "Ben is a young man who lost his sight whilst serving in Afghanistan. He is now married and has two young children, the youngest was only born in September last year. Ben's aim for training is to be able to fully participate in his children's lives and to be a good role model for his children and to support his wife. In recent month's Ben has undertaken long

cane mobility training, IT and independent living skills, both at home and in the centre. As a trainer I was overwhelmingly impressed by Ben's determination to succeed and his commitment to learning a new skill. Ben understands that in order to participate fully as a parent his skills will have to be of the highest level. I feel Ben is an excellent role model to his children and also to other younger blind veterans who are struggling with the psychological implications of using a long cane. There are also some comments from Sam Allfree, our Occupational Therapist who has worked with Ben. Sam has written. I found Ben to be a very kind and articulate man who was motivated to practice, learn and develop skills needed for everyday use. Ben is highly independent and seeks the highest of standards in all that he does. Ben is an excellent learner, meticulous with memory and practice, and he's a very good problem solver at finding new ways of doing things. Ben stands out because he seeks the normal in the most extraordinary circumstances."

Accepting his Award Ben Shaw said: "It's always interesting when blind people give a speech so I'm going to make this one up as I wasn't expecting this. I want to thank Vince, Kate and Matt. It's been an interesting year and I'm sure it will be interesting for a few more years to come!"



Picture: Ben Shaw, Outstanding Achievement winner with Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson.

And so another superb Founder's Day Awards Ceremony ended, but this year with a difference, as Joe Pedder of TnS Caterers, a student of the arts and a very talented actor, recited a superb poem that he had written for the occasion.

We went to hell and back, but Blind Veterans UK provided us with a Guardian Angel. Billy Baxter 2017 Ted Higgs's Trophy winner.

There could not have been a more worthy recipient than Billy Baxter for the Ted Higgs's Trophy at this year's Founder's Day Awards. It is a sentiment that was echoed by Ted's daughters, Valerie Shannon-Higgs and Pauline Edwards, as they said how proud they felt that it had gone to Billy and knew their late father would have approved. The trophy was first included in Founder's Day in 2012 at the Llandudno centre when it was presented to Norman Perry, a contemporary of Ted Higgs. Since then worthy recipients have included Reg Goding, Terry Bullingham, Frank Tinsley, Ken Facal and now Billy Baxter. The Ted Higgs's Trophy was donated by Ted's daughters, Valerie and Pauline, and his son Brian in memory of their father who was a member of our charity for 67 years after he lost his sight in action in 1944 whilst serving as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery. It is always a proud day for Pauline and Valerie who attend each year when Pauline wears their father's St Dunstan's badge and Valerie the marcasite brooch that was given by the charity to their mother.

Billy, who served in the Royal Artillery, was nominated by his Welfare Officer, Jennie Hammond, who said: "A lot of you will know Billy, and a lot of you will know his story as well, but I'm going to read it for those who don't. Billy lost his vision suddenly following his service in Bosnia. He was discharged from the Army when he lost his career, his home and his hope. In 2000 he joined Blind Veterans UK, then St Dunstan's, and his journey began. Initially what happened was that Billy threw himself into anything that he could to give something back to the organisation. But this was also to avoid having to really deal with the issues that sight loss brought. Billy broke the land speed record on a motorbike, but was unable to walk down the street, or to achieve any of the day to day activities without support.

"I became Billy's Welfare Officer in 2004 and met a young man, who on the surface, displayed all the bravado you would expect from a soldier. But underneath there was a very angry man who felt he had little to give, particularly to his family, and that he had no future. Billy wanted to work, but he had no idea what direction to go in, and clearly until he had worked through his anger and come to accept the loss of his vision, this was going to take some time. With some encouragement, and a few years down the road from when I first met him, he enrolled in a BTEC Performing Arts course. Attending college on a practical level was a major undertaking for him. Walking to the

bus. Negotiating his way around unfamiliar environments. Overcoming feelings of fear and rejection. Being accepted and working alongside people much younger than him. All of this was in addition to studying, producing written work and meeting targets and deadlines. Billy completed the course with flying colours and came out the other side a more rounded and calmer person. A man who could see a future. He applied for a post here at Blind Veterans UK in the Llandudno centre and the rest, as they say, is history.

“He has gone from strength to strength, encouraging others in a similar position, both young and old. In addition to this Billy is a wonderful Ambassador for the organisation and raises our profile at every opportunity. He has immersed himself into life in Llandudno, both on the work level and a personal level. He is Town Crier for Llandudno. He uses the events to raise awareness for our organisation. He has been involved in numerous events and more recently involved in the Pace Sticking World Championships with two other blind veterans. For that Billy won a special award that acknowledged the effort and hard work he had to undertake. However, Billy does not do things for reward. He does them to encourage others and to show everyone out there what the organisation has been able to do for him. This summary is far too short to reflect the amount of difficulties that Billy had to overcome since he joined Blind Veterans UK. There have been huge barriers and obstacles to climb, and Billy continues to have challenges, but now he has the skills to overcome them. If there is a barrier he never lets it get in the way. In my view Billy is a worthy candidate for The Ted Higgs’s Trophy.”

After a moment, as a shocked Billy composed himself, he walked to the podium, and addressing the audience, said: “It is with absolute humility that I’m standing here today in front of you. First may I thank Jennie Hammond for nominating me for this most outstanding of awards. I’m a product of two families. My first family, Karen my lovely wife and our children, with whom, when I came back from Bosnia we went through hell and back. I lost my sight. Lost my hope. Lost my direction. And most of all I lost the job that I dearly loved. To get someone here to receive an award takes a plethora of people to support them and I am so lucky that I had two Guardian Angels with me. I had a military wife that any soldier would only dream of, Karen, who stuck by me through thick and thin, and by God we’ve been through some rocky bits. Karen needed support and help as well, and not only did Blind Veterans UK support and help me, they provided us with a Guardian Angel in the form of Jennie Hammond. A Welfare

Officer the likes of which you just can't make them. You are an amazing lady Jennie. The support that Jennie and the whole charity gave Karen and I gave us our wings back.

"As Jennie said in her nominating speech I was running away from all of the normal things, mobility training and learning how to use a computer. I was doing the extraordinary: breaking a world land speed record. These things are great, sporting achievements are great, but it's the ordinary things that are extraordinary, being able to use a computer, to go about independently.

"You guys out there, and I'm talking to the blind veterans, every one of you inspires me. You are all my role models. Every single blind veteran in here, regardless of whether you have received an award, all of you inspire and encourage me. It makes me who I am. You not only support me, but you are my family. To work here is very special and as long as I have breathe in my body I will scream from the highest mountain what we do at Blind Veterans UK. Five years ago this week Karen moved from Cambridge to live with me here in Wales, where we've been welcomed by everybody, and that is amazing. We can't believe how quickly five years has gone by. I want to finish by thanking Karen and Jennie."

Billy presented Karen and Jennie each with a bouquet of flowers.

Steve Boswell, Llandudno Centre Manager, held everyone's attention as he spoke of Billy. "I would like to talk about the impact that Billy has, both in the centre, within this community, his family and the organisation as a whole. We all know that blind veterans are amazing people. You all have journeys. You all have stories to tell. You are all incredibly brave. You are all incredibly brilliant. But what I'd like to do in light of this nomination is to talk about the positive impact and influences that Billy brings.

"My first experience of Mr Baxter was not by sight, it was something that I'd heard about this very short, loud, strict, high standards admittedly, person who ran the Guard Room like something from Colditz at a camp in Tidworth some 20 years ago. So our paths actually crossed in around 1995 or 1996 in the military whilst I was serving in the Royal Army Physical Training Corps. I was the Physical Training Instructor sharing a camp with Billy's Regiment who ran the Guard Room. So if we had naughty boys we sent them to Billy and Billy squared

them away. It was as simple as that, but we never actually met. For those of you who served in the Armed Forces, and particularly in the Army, you will recognise and understand what is important in a gymnasium in a Regiment. It is run by someone like myself, Lisa, Lee, Paula, and one or two others in the room, and it is generally regarded as hallowed ground.

“The only thing that happens in that gymnasium is that you sweat. You certainly don’t, during a boxing match, ride a Harley Davidson through the middle of it, which is what Mr Baxter did. I swore out loud how dare he ride a motorbike through my gymnasium! I swore I would find that man. Sadly my Regiment was posted before I did, but it remained a quest to find him. The years went by, and although I never saw or met Billy, I did wonder from time to time who that person was and whether we would actually meet again.

“Then, six years ago, I turn up here in Llandudno at Blind Veterans UK, and this short, loud, very well organised man steps off a lorry with his kit in MFO boxes and says ‘Oh you alright?’ My response to him was quite simply ‘I told you I’d find you!’ When we talked about this sometime after, and I explained why I’d been looking for him for all those years, his words to me were ‘You were lucky mate I wanted to ride my horse’. I instantly liked him.

“And he cares, he genuinely cares about people. I was very proud to be the R&T Manager here, and between us, with the rest of the team, in that time we probably did over 100 intro courses with trainees. In that time Billy met, greeted and introduced people to the building and he has the ability to instantly gain trust and credibility. He has an ability to make people feel special. And if they feel special they grow exponentially. They start the week as very, very scared timid individuals, and I say it a lot, the extroverts are super extroverted and the introverts are super introverted and not liking their situation. What Billy does is to peel away those little coping strategies and by Thursday or Friday we have a different person and it is because he has this way that people trust.

“There’s a saying, which I’m not very proud of, but there is a saying in the medical world that it’s very easy to care for the nice ones, the easy ones. It’s very easy to look after those people. For Billy that doesn’t represent anything. It doesn’t even enter his head, because he doesn’t care any less for the not so nice ones. To him they are all the same. There was a situation when Billy was tapping down the corridor quite happily and he heard someone coming towards him

and he said 'Oh who's that then? Morning.' And the person said 'B****r off!' He didn't actually say b****r off, he said something else, I'm being polite. Now you could take instant offence, but Billy didn't. I was there, Billy didn't know I was there, and I went into the R&T meeting room and laughed my head off. But Billy just took that response as, I know who that person is and they just said those words to me, what does that mean? It doesn't mean he was meant to go away. It meant there was something wrong with that person and Billy didn't even walk into R&T he went round to the care room and said 'Guys there's something wrong with x maybe you should go and have a word'. And genuinely there was something wrong. How did he know that? It's because he takes people at face value and presents what he is for all to see. And that is something special.

"We've talked about Billy's achievements and he has achieved some wonderful things in his life. He was a soldier who led by example. And he led the troops that he took to war by example and by doing that he lost his sight. Even losing his sight, although that is of course a terrible, terrible thing for anyone to endure, he didn't let that stop him. I'm not even going to go into everything that Jennie covered — Guinness World Record Holder, fishermen, musician (said in inverted commas). He has a beautiful home and a beautiful family. He has wonderful children, who have wonderful children, who come to this building and bring laughter and joy to everybody. They really love him and they are affectionately known as the Weasleys. He's a public speaker, he's looked up to in the community as the Town Crier, and everybody, if they could, would grab Billy. As Jennie quite rightly said, as part of the Pace Sticking Team he beat the Guards at drill, and that is a phenomenal achievement.

"In 1915 Sir Arthur Pearson set out on a quest, one of Victory Over Blindness, to give blind veterans an opportunity to live their lives. I think Billy Baxter is a shining example of that legacy. What I've just described today is just the tip of an incredibly huge iceberg. From time to time I've said to Billy that if it was possible to have Sir Arthur Pearson standing here I think he would be very proud. I'm very proud to speak about Billy Baxter, my friend and colleague."



Picture: Pamela Edwards, Billy Baxter and Valerie Shannon-Higgs.



Picture: Welfare Officer Jennie Hammond with Billy and Karen Baxter.

Eyes Wide Open. By Grace Bittan.

It is said that during a person's life there are seven occasions when you reach a cross roads. Depending on which path you choose it will change your life forever. I have just had one of those occasions. With some trepidation I got on the bus that was to take me to Blind Veterans UK's centre in Brighton. I sat next to a very nice man who reassured me there was nothing to worry about, but I really didn't want to be there. But within the first hour of arriving I thought 'Why was I so worried? Why didn't I want to come?' Everyone was so friendly and we were all in the same boat.

I am registered as severely sight impaired with about 10% vision remaining. So when I got the call from Blind Veterans UK asking if I would like to attend the Introductory Week at their Brighton centre the answer was 'Yes why not?' But after accepting the offer I started to wonder if anyone could make this situation better. They obviously couldn't give my sight back. But how wrong I was.

From the moment I arrived at the Brighton centre I knew that something good was going to come from my stay. At first, the people on my course were as cautious and frightened as I was, but slowly we began to talk about our concerns and worries, fears and expectations. It was obvious that none of us had any expectations at all. We had all resigned ourselves to sitting at home waiting for visitors and living on 'I used to' 'I could have' and now 'I can't'. The staff there don't hear 'I can't' and won't let you say it. My ROVI, Lesley Styche, managed to rationalise my fears and provide a solution to each problem. I hadn't realised that I had so many issues, but when she showed me a reading device that would end my having to ask people to read my mail, I burst into floods of tears with sheer relief. At that moment I was at the cross roads and knew which way I had to go. I had to embrace everything that was on offer. I have to learn to use the equipment. Sight is not necessarily through the eyes.

I have never been sporty, but found myself enjoying team games, curling and dominos and was quite amazed at how competitive I was. I had previously used a rifle in the WRAF and was so pleased I was able to do this again, but in a very different way. The feelings of self achievement are still there, whether you see or feel, it makes no difference. We were all invited to taster sessions of what could be in the future, in the craft room we made mosaic tiles, with the gym instructor we learnt exercises and we explored gym equipment suited to our disability.

Mark from IT talked me through a variety of computers and introduced me to the Guide System that will undoubtedly change my life for the better and take it in another direction.

During the evenings we all talked a great deal about our lives. As the week went on the talk changed from what had been in the past to the difference this week had made to us all. There is some concern in my mind that when you reach the grand old age of 70 it is expected by others that your life slowly tapers down with a quiet acceptance. But I have news for all of you who are 69, this is not how it is supposed to be. However it happens, with whatever aids you need, you must and will contribute to life. Otherwise life does not contribute to you. I don't think I will ever be a dear, sweet old lady who just sits in an arm chair and waits. I will be the one who does. As so many of my fellow blind veterans already do, I too shall urge anyone with sight loss who thinks their life is over to reconsider and move on. Turn right at the cross roads and start a different life where sight isn't necessary or doesn't play a major part.

When I got home my daughter said "You have had your eyes opened. You've seen the light!" And she was right.

With thanks to Lesley Styche, Alex Tring, Mark Kingston, Leon Groombridge and the rest of the staff for pushing us all forward and continually encouraging us every step of the way.

The food is pretty good as well!

This was written by my granddaughter Molly, with thanks.

GOAL Group adventures from the Union Jack Club, London. By Dave Hazelgrove.

Ten GOAL Group members Diane Mountford, Lindy Elliott, John Cantwell, John Brice, Eddy Perry, Carole Sharpe (with guide dog Layla), Graham Walker, Chris Humphrey, John Bower and me, Dave Hazelgrove, met at the Union Jack Club (UJC), London on Monday 27th March.

We were staying at the UJC in central London, just over the road from Waterloo Station, our base of operations for the week. After our evening meal, we set out to walk over Waterloo Bridge to the Novello Theatre at the Aldwych for their evening performance of "Mamma Mia!". We were in the stalls (Row E – only the third row back as Rows A and B don't exist), so we had an excellent view and were certainly in a position to be deafened by the music. While we were being so royally entertained, Carole's guide dog Layla was being looked after by the theatre's staff elsewhere. I'm not going to comment on the white lycra and platform boots, so those of a nervous disposition will have to check the production out for themselves. They won't be sorry. Anyway, after the production most of us chose to walk back to the UJC where we retired to the bar.

Tuesday was an early(ish) start. We walked down to the Eye Pier to catch the Thames Clipper service down to Tower Pier. After the standard security checks at the entrance to the Tower of London we were escorted past Tower Green, where we were split into two groups. One group was escorted around the Jewel House by Craig and the other around the basement of the White Tower by Barry, both very able Tower personnel (not Beefeaters). The two groups swapped location and escort, so we all saw the Crown Jewels and the large cannon/mortars. While we were viewing the Crown Jewels, Craig was kind enough to get the local guards to stop the traveller so we could get clear views of the various items in their cases. Certain of the groups were making 'grabbies', but couldn't get through the glass. Barry was no less helpful in allowing us to get very 'hands on' with the various cannon and mortars. There were comments about being allowed to get 'hands-on' with the Crown Jewels, perhaps best glossed-over.

Following lunch in the café, we split up into smaller groups, with some wanting

to see the Chapel of St Peter Ad Vincula and others going for the 'round the Castle Walls' walk. We eventually met up on Tower Green and exited for a quick bus ride to Liverpool Street mainline station, where our various Oyster cards got some required attention. We then went by bus to St Paul's, where most of us wanted to walk across the Millennium Bridge and back to UJC via the South Bank. After our evening meal, we retired to the bar for refreshment and our now-traditional quiz night.

Wednesday began with a journey via the Underground (and Oyster Card). We were off to visit the Emirates Airline across the Thames at Greenwich. After a very high return trip by gondola across the Thames (apparently, the Thames Barrier and London City Airport can be seen from on-high) we took to the water again for a Thames Clipper ride around the O2 Arena to Greenwich. There, we walked to the Maritime Museum and the Queens House. We split into two groups for walks around the two buildings, before convening for lunch at the Maritime Museum.



Picture: On-board the Cutty Sark John Cantwell, John Brice, Lindy Elliott, Chris Humphry.

After lunch, we walked down to the Cutty Sark, where we were met by the Site Curator, Louise and her staff Tracey, Ryan and Mariana. We were taken down and allowed to stand under the hull, which was a very strange experience indeed. Only John Cantwell could actually touch the hull without the aid of his cane. We were then taken on-board and given a complete tour of both the cargo spaces and the accommodation on the main deck. Some of us were volunteered (by me) to climb the rigging, but this was declined by all — perhaps wisely. Just what exactly is a “Button Boy”? After a quick trip to the visitors shop we walked back to the Underground for our journey back to the UJC for our evening meal, libation and quiz.

Thursday began with a walk to the Imperial War Museum, where we were met by guides Alex and Tim. We split into two groups for an escorted tour around two sets of exhibits covering both First and Second World Wars. After lunch in the café, we walked a couple of streets to a bus stop for our bus to St Paul’s Cathedral. Here we split into small groups for a tour around the Cathedral before meeting in the café in the Crypt. No crêpes. We then caught the bus back to the UJC for our evening meal (local Italian restaurant) and quiz.



Picture: Chris Humphrey, John Brice, Lindy Elliott, John Cantwell, Diane Mountford and Carole Sharpe.

Friday morning saw us all packed and bidding farewell. Some of us went for a morning visit to see street performers at Covent Garden while others, due to other prior commitments elsewhere, went straight to their various railway stations for their journeys home.

The next GOAL visit is planned for York on Monday 22nd to Friday 26th May 2017.

G.O.A.L stands for "Get Out And Live". The group has been formed for active male and female members of Blind Veterans UK who are aged from the age of 50 to 76 and who want to join a group that strongly advocates independence within their day to day lives.

Is this you? If so, please get in touch.

For more information about the group, or the events, please contact any of the following committee members:

Chris Humphrey on email chrisandhazel3@gmail.com or telephone 01603 701402.

John Brice on email john.brice@tesco.net or telephone 01934 261783.

Carol Davies on email cdaviesgoalclub@gmail.com or telephone 01754 450714.

Dave Hazelgrove on email dhazelgrove@hotmail.com or telephone 01754 896617.

John Cantwell on email john.cantwell1947@gmail.com or telephone 01295 273105.

Family News.

Birthdays:

Ronald Tipple who celebrated his 103rd birthday on 13th May.

Lionel Marks who celebrated his 101st birthday on 13th May.

Roy Ludlam who celebrated his 100th birthday on 13th May.

Gordon Richards who celebrated his 100th birthday on 29th May.

Anniversaries:



Picture: Tom and Amy Bryden celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary at their local Blind Veterans UK Lunch Club in Newcastle.

The Newcastle Lunch Club was the first Lunch Club and it was started by Welfare Officer Elizabeth Dodds.

Platinum 70 years married.

John & Wendy Glover of Littlehampton, West Sussex on 5th April.

Peter & Sheila Warner of Thatcham, Berkshire on 24th May.

Blue Sapphire 65 years married.

Derek & Betty Bass of Old Coulsdon, Surrey on 17th May.

Brian & Elizabeth Gresham of Oswestry, Shropshire on 31st May.

Diamond Yellow 60 years married.

John & Bett Thomson of Spondon, Derby on 4th May.

Jim & Joan Lane of Yarmouth, Isle of Wight on 11th May.

Alan & Margaret Smith of Balerno, Midlothian on 11th May.

Golden 50 years married.

John & Carol Gasston of Worthing, West Sussex on 6th May.

Albert & Dany Dalley of Spalding, Lincolnshire on 27th May.

Ruby 40 years married.

John & Elaine Cantwell of Banbury, Oxfordshire on 7th May.

Andy & Shirley Stowe of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire on 7th May.

Keith & Joan Greenhaf of Newport, Gwent on 21st May.

It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of the following and we offer our heartfelt condolences to their widows, widowers, families and friends.

Maurice Chilman who died on 22nd March 2017. He was the husband of Doreen Chilman.

Anne 'Jane' Coates who died on 9th April 2017. She was the wife of Roderick Coates.

Sheila Corfield who died on 14th February 2017. She was the wife of Ronald Corfield.

Peg Edmonds who died in 2017. She was the widow of the late William Edmonds.

Jean Elliott who died on 23rd March 2017. She was the widow of the late Frederick Elliott.

Mary Fox who died on 21st March 2017. She was the widow of the late Arnold Fox.

Kathleen Letties who died on 26th February 2017. She was the wife of John Letties.

Mary Mead who died on 6th March 2017. She was the wife of Cyril Mead.

Catherine 'Kit' Milton who died on 11th March 2017. She was the wife of John Milton.

Meriel Rebbeck who died on 30th March 2017. She was the wife of Alan Rebbeck.

Audrey Thomas who died on 14th March 2017. She was the wife of Henry Thomas.

Florence White who died on 22nd February 2017. She was the widow of the late Victor White.

Welcome to

Blind Veterans UK.

Robert 'Bob' Ainsworth of Preston, Lancashire served in the Loyal Regiment and the Royal Engineers from 1953 to 1964.

George Andrews of Newtown, Powys served in the Royal Corps of Transport from 1951 to 1954.

Marie Ayres-Regan née Gahan of Marlow, Buckinghamshire served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1944 to 1949.

Ernest 'Ernie' Barford of Great Brington, Northampton served in the Royal Air Force from 1946 to 1948.

John Barker of Epsom, Surrey served in the Royal Signals from 1952 to 1954.

Reginald Beeson of Skegness, Lincolnshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

David 'Davie' Begbie of Dalkeith, Midlothian served in the Royal Air Force from 1956 to 1959.

John Bennett of St. Helens, Merseyside served in the East Lancashire Regiment from 1946 to 1948.

Norman Bennett of Wigan, Lancashire served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1959 to 1961.

David Bothwell of Lyminster, Hampshire served in the Royal Armoured Corps from 1953 to 1958.

Donald 'Don' Bourne of Halesowen, West Midlands served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Pay Corps from 1946 to 1948.

James Bowler of Uxbridge, Middlesex served in the Middlesex Regiment and the Royal Engineers from 1951 to 1956.

Margaret Buchanan-Geddes of Port Talbot, West Glamorgan served in the Royal Navy from 1987 to 1990.

Jack Carder of Yelverton, Devon served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Tank Regiment from 1946 to 1948.

Henry Chipperfield of Fakenham, Norfolk served in the Royal Navy from 1949 to 1951.

Kenneth 'Ken' Christian of Dalton-In-Furness, Cumbria served in the General Service Corps and Royal Army Service Corps from 1945 to 1948.

Leslie Clifton of Swindon, Wiltshire served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1955 to 1964.

James 'Jimmy' Collins of Milngavie, Glasgow served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1958 to 1960.

Irene Cray née Lewis of Worcester served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1944 to 1946.

Brian Crowley of Gorseinon, Swansea served in the Royal Marines from 1967 to 1990.

George Cushion of Conwy, Gwynedd served in the Royal Signals from 1953 to 1955.

Edward 'Eddie' Dickens of Andover, Hampshire served in the Army from 1954 to 1956.

Andrew Dougan of Bletchley, Milton Keynes served in the Scot's Guards from 1954 to 1957.

Peter Dyer of Elburton, Plymouth served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1956 to 1958.

Arthur Finch of Sudbury, Suffolk served in the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1947.

Barbara Gabrielczyk née Sadowska of Finchley, North London served in the Polish Army from 1942 to 1947.

Allan Gale of Hornsea, North Humberside served in the Royal Air Force from 1944 to 1951.

Ronald George of Skegness, Lincolnshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1953.

Colin Goddard of Erdington, Birmingham served in the Royal Corps of Transport from 1972 to 1973.

John Graham of Hyde, Cheshire served in the King's Regiment from 1966 to 1975.

Edgar 'Eddie' Greaves of Kings Heath, Birmingham served in the Royal Air Force from 1954 to 1956.

Raymond Greenway of Aldershot, Hampshire served in the Royal Artillery from 1948 to 1958.

Ian Harland of Woking, Surrey served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1967 to 1973.

Ernest 'Ernie' Harrop of Dukinfield, Cheshire served in the Border Regiment from 1946 to 1952.

William Haskell of Liverpool served in the Highland Brigade from 1952 to 1957.

Eric Henderson of Dinas Powys, South Glamorgan served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1949 to 1964.

Brian Hudson of Bedale, North Yorkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1954.

Norman Hughes of Ellesmere Port, Cheshire served in the Army Catering Corps from 1946 to 1949.

William Hughes of Liverpool served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946.

Alan Hurlbut of Kineton, Warwick served in the Royal Navy from 1952 to 1969.

Robert Irving of Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire served in the Royal Engineers from 1960 to 1962.

Derrick Jones of Tufnell Park, North London served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1952.

Eric Kimber of Eastleigh, Hampshire served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1952 to 1954.

Norman Kinvig of Wigan, Lancashire served in the Royal Signals from 1951 to 1953.

Gomer 'George' Latham of Pontyclun, Mid Glamorgan served in the 2nd Battalion Welsh Regiment from 1939 to 1945.

George 'Barry' Leddington of Hadnall, Shrewsbury served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1954.

Vincent 'Vince' Lobley of Scunthorpe, South Humberside served in the Royal Army Pay Corps from 1952 to 1954.

Brian Marshall of Doncaster, South Yorkshire served in the Royal Armoured Corps from 1966 to 1967.

Charles 'Chas' McCarthy of Wistaston, Crewe served in the General Service Corps and the Lancashire Fusiliers from 1944 to 1946.

Neil McIver of Liverpool, Merseyside served in the Royal Navy from 1973 to 1985.

Jack Mickleburgh of Lowestoft, Suffolk served in the Border Regiment, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the Fleet Air Arm from 1942 to 1946.

Raymond Milburn of Garstang, Preston served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1960 to 1963.

Kenneth 'Ken' Myles of Malvern, Worcestershire served in the Worcestershire Regiment from 1963 to 1972.

Donald Oseman of Paignton, Devon served in the Home Guard from 1940 to 1944.

Christopher O'Sullivan of Worksop, Nottinghamshire served in the Army Catering Corps from 1952 to 1953.

Roy Owen of Newhaven, East Sussex served in the Royal Sussex Regiment from 1954 to 1956.

Owen Pampling of Haverhill, Suffolk served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1946.

Betty Parry née Roy of Pwllheli, Gwynedd served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

Gordon Peck of King's Lynn, Norfolk served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1977.

Peter Petch of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk served in the Northamptonshire Regiment from 1953 to 1955.

Brian Portlock of Heywood, Lancashire served in the Royal Navy from 1961 to 1970.

William 'Stewart' Reid of Cambridge served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1946 to 1948.

Maurice Roberts of Fareham, Hampshire served in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment from 1952 to 1954.

Dennis Robson of Midsomer Norton, Radstock served in the Royal Air Force from 1954 to 1956.

Terence 'Terry' Rose of Harlow, Essex served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1952 to 1954.

Willis 'Mike' Sadler of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire served in the Northumberland Hussars and the Royal Artillery from 1940 to 1945.

Victor 'Vic' Savage of Weymouth, Dorset served in the Royal Engineers from 1955 to 1958.

Valerie 'Val' Shepherd née French of Seaford, East Sussex served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1942 to 1945.

Albert Stoddern of Camborne, Cornwall served in the Army Catering Corps from 1948 to 1950.

John 'Mick' Taylor of Pontefract, West Yorkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1952.

Marjorie Taylor née Sharp of Scunthorpe, South Humberside served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1944 to 1947.

Leslie Timmins of Maidenhead, Berkshire served in the Royal Navy from 1939 to 1967.

Anthony Tookey of Southport, Merseyside served in the Royal Engineers from 1943 to 1948.

Helen Tunley-Smith of Seaview, Isle Of Wight served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1953 to 1955.

Edwin Turpin of Crosby, Liverpool served in the Royal Signals from 1949 to 1951.

Eric Turford of Rhayader, Powys served in the Royal Signals from 1943 to 1947.

Richard Wardrop of Hungerford, Berkshire served in the Seaforth Highlanders from 1944 to 1946.

Fred Warhurst of Radcliffe, Manchester served in the Lancashire Fusiliers, the Green Jackets, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the North Staffordshire Regiment in Italy, Palastine, and Gibraltar. He was discharged in 1945 as a private soldier.

Ida Warhurst née Jackson of Radcliffe, Manchester served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in Italy and Austria from 1944 to 1949, discharging as a Sergeant.

Christopher 'John' Williams of Exeter served in the Royal Navy from 1969 to 1978.

Francis 'Frank' Williams of Walton-Le-Dale, Preston served in the Royal Marines from 1951 to 1961.

Derek Windsor of Chadderton, Oldham served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1965 to 1975.

Robert 'Bob' Wyeth of Northolt, Middlesex served in the Royal Signals from 1949 to 1951.

Review Format changes.

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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.

Arthur Ainsworth of Burnley, Lancashire died on 15th March 2017, aged 99. He served in the South Lancashire Regiment and the Royal Engineers from 1942 to 1946 in the UK and India, discharging as a Corporal.

Beatrice 'Mollie' Banks née Hopwood of Burnley, Lancashire died on 7th April 2017, aged 96. She served in the UK in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1943 to 1946, discharging as a Leading Aircraftwoman.

Denis Banks of Crewe, Cheshire died on 24th March 2017, aged 95. He served in the Royal Air Force in North Africa, England and Canada from 1940 to 1946, discharging as a Warrant Officer.

Gordon 'Bill' Bates Aintree, Merseyside died on 26th February 2017, aged 93. He served in the Merchant Navy from 1938 to 1949 in the Mediterranean, South Atlantic, Atlantic, Indian Ocean and the Middle East. He discharged as an Able Seaman.

John Bates of Heywood, Lancashire died on 13th March 2017, aged 90. He served in France in the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment from 1943 to 1945.

Cyril Beskaby of Billingham, Cleveland died on 31st March 2017, aged 94. He served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1943 to 1954, discharging as a Sergeant.

Stanley Binks of Saltburn-By-The-Sea, Cleveland died on 27th March 2017, aged 92. He served in the General Service Corps and the Green Howards in Germany from 1946 to 1954, discharging as a Private.

Ronald 'Ron' Bond of Poulton-Le-Fylde, Lancashire died on 5th April 2017, aged 90. He served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1966 in Australia, Far East and the Mediterranean, discharging as an Aircraft Artificer First Class.

Cyril 'Paddie' Breene of Felixstowe, Suffolk died on 6th April 2017, aged 89. He served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Artillery from 1946 to 1961, serving in Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Northern Ireland. He was discharged as a Captain.

Ronald Brendell of Kingsbridge, Devon died on 9th March 2017, aged 102. He served in the Royal Air Force in the UK from 1940 to 1945, discharging as a Leading Aircraftman.

Raymond Caffyn of Wolverhampton, West Midlands died on 18th March 2017, aged 87. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949 in the Middle East and England, discharging as an Aircraftman First Class.

Peggy 'Carey' Carey of Lewes, East Sussex died on 6th April 2017, aged 95. She served in the Royal Air Force in the UK from 1941 to 1945, discharging as a Leading Aircraftwoman.

Lilian 'Lily' Carrington née Baggaley of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire died on 4th April 2017, aged 92. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1942 to 1945, discharging as a Leading Aircraftwoman.

Ernest Castelow of Stockton On Tees, Cleveland died on 1st April 2017, aged 85. He served in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Germany, Korea and Japan from 1951 to 1954, discharging as a Lance Corporal.

Arthur Danks of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire died on 14th March 2017, aged 92. He served in the Royal Marines from 1945 to 1947, discharging as a Marine.

William 'Frank' Eglon of Bickley, Kent died on 2nd April 2017, aged 88. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949, discharging as a Corporal.

Doris Elsy née Lamb of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 11th March 2017, aged 95. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1940 to 1944, discharging as a Corporal.

Lewis Evans of Lampeter, Dyfed died on 26th December 2016, aged 86. From 1952 to 1959 he served in the Royal Engineers in the Middle East, discharging as a Sapper.

Ronald Foreman of Fulwood, Preston died on 12th April 2017, aged 100. He served in the Intelligence Corps in North Africa, Algeria, Italy and Yugoslavia from 1940 to 1946, discharging as a Warrant Officer.

Michael Forest of Maldon, Essex died on 15th March 2017, aged 98. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1943. Badly wounded in action he was discharged as a Sergeant.

Reginald Fry of Tunbridge Wells, Kent died on 15th March 2016, aged 88. He served in the Royal Air Force in the UK from 1946 to 1948, discharging as an Aircraftman.

Robert 'Bob' Glendinning of Brighton, East Sussex died on 7th April 2017, aged 73. He served in the Royal Navy in 1960, discharging as an Artificer.

Eric Green of Belper, Derbyshire died on 6th April 2017, aged 99. He served in the Sherwood Foresters from 1940 to 1946, discharging as a Corporal.

Wyndham Harris of Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan died on 15th December 2016, aged 98. He served in the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers from 1939 to 1947, discharging as a Lance Sergeant.

Derek Hibbert of Droylsden, Manchester died on 2nd February 2017, aged 84. He served in Malaya in the Manchester Regiment and the Lancastrian Brigade from 1950 to 1956, discharging as a Private.

Fred Hill of Bolton, Greater Manchester died on 7th April 2017, aged 90. He served in the Royal Navy in the UK from 1946 to 1948, discharging as a Naval Airman.

Nigel Hills of Frinton-On-Sea, Essex died on 29th March 2017, aged 93. He served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers in the UK and Germany from 1942 to 1947, discharging as a Corporal.

Cicely 'Sue' Holman née Ponder of Poplar, East London died on 6th March 2017, aged 95. She served in the South African Army from 1942 to 1944, discharging as a Bombardier.

John Jones of Usk, Gwent died on 27th February 2017, aged 95. He served in the Royal Air Force in the UK and Europe from 1938 to 1949, discharging as a Warrant Officer after he was injured in a parachute drop.

Stephen 'Steve' Jones of Ammanford, Dyfed died on 2nd April 2017, aged 95. He served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in the Middle East and Germany from 1942 to 1947.

Alexander Keen of Maidenhead, Berkshire died on 11th February 2017, aged 97. He served in England in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1939 to 1946, discharging as a Sergeant.

Ian Fraser Ker of Newhaven, East Sussex died on 22nd February 2017, aged 83. He served in the Royal Air Force in the UK from 1952 to 1956, discharging as a Flying Officer.

Kathleen Laplain of Downham Market, Norfolk died on 29th March 2017, aged 92. She served in the Royal Air Force 1943 to 1947, discharging as a Corporal.

Eric Lawton of Poulton-Le-Fylde, Lancashire died on 21st March 2017, aged 91. He served in the General Service Corps, Royal Air Force and the Royal Artillery, discharging as an Aircraftman Second Class and a Private.

James Luce of Swindon, Wiltshire died on 16th March 2017, aged 92. He served in the Royal Artillery in the UK from 1944 to 1948, discharging as a Gunner.

James McGuire of Loanhead, Midlothian died on 21st November 2016, aged 91. From 1943 to 1947 he served in the Royal Navy in the Far East and Malta, discharging as a Stoker.

Francis 'Hugh' Milton of Crewkerne, Somerset died in 2017, aged 95. He served in the Royal Fusiliers, Royal Scots Regiment and the Royal Air Force, discharging as a Major and then as a Squadron Leader.

Isabel 'Bunty' Misra née Crombie of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire died on 4th March 2017, aged 101. From 1941 to 1946 she served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in India and the UK, discharging as a Junior Commander.

Thomas 'Tom' Nowell of Rotherham, South Yorkshire died on 24th February 2017, aged 94. He served in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment in Egypt, France, Germany and Korea from 1948 to 1957, discharging as a Sergeant.

Joyce Paice née Willmer of Brighton, East Sussex died on 3rd April 2017, aged 96. From 1941 to 1945 she served in the UK in the Royal Air Force when she specialised as a Radar Operator until discharge as a Corporal.

Edward Palmer of Weston-Super-Mare, Avon died on 12th January 2017, aged 92. He served in the Royal Artillery from 1943 to 1947 in France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Palestine, discharging as a Bombardier.

Bernard Parker of Brighton, East Sussex died on 2nd April 2017, aged 82. From 1954 to 1960 he served in the Royal Engineers in Germany and Holland, discharging as a Lance Corporal.

Joseph Pickin of York, North Yorkshire died on 24th April, 2017, aged 99. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

Derek Pollard of Chelmsford, Essex died on 11th April 2017, aged 83. He served in the Canal Zone in the Royal Engineers from 1952 to 1957, discharging as a Lance Corporal.

Brian Pryce of Worthing, West Sussex died on 20th March 2017, aged 87. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1951, discharging as a Senior Aircraftman.

Donald 'Don' Pryce of Fareham, Hampshire died on 10th April 2017, aged 93. He served in the Fleet Air Arm from 1941 to 1973 in the USA, Northern Ireland and Malta, discharging as a Chief Aircraft Artificer.

James Randall of Haverhill, Suffolk died on 23rd April 2017, aged 87. He served in the Royal Military Police in 1948.

Stephen Robarts of Wirral, Merseyside died on 12th March 2017, aged 71. From 1963 to 1966 he served in the Royal Air Force in the UK and Middle East, discharging as a Senior Aircraftman.

Geoffrey 'Geoff' Rose of Portishead, Bristol died on 10th March 2017, aged 100. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps in Europe from 1939 to 1945, discharging as a Sergeant.

Mary 'Doreen' Russell of Bradford, West Yorkshire died on 8th February 2017, aged 92. From 1941 to 1944 she served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in the UK, discharging as a Private.

William 'Bill' Stallard of East Grinstead, West Sussex died on 4th April 2017, aged 86. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1948 to 1959, discharging as a Private.

Eunice 'Pat' Stone née Hanson of Canterbury, Kent died on 25th September 2016, aged 90. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1944 to 1947, discharging as a Temporary Corporal.

James 'Jim' Sutton of Ormskirk, Lancashire died on 19th April 2017, aged 102. He served in the Royal Signals in Egypt, Lebanon, Italy (Montecassino) and Ceylon from 1941 to 1946, discharging as a Corporal.

Peter Thatcher of Penzance, Cornwall died on 21st March 2017, aged 83. He served in the Royal Army Pay Corps from 1952 to 1957, discharging as a Lance Corporal.

George Theobald of Norwich, Norfolk died on 13th April 2017, aged 87. From 1947 to 1954 he served in the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean, Far East, Middle East and the Persian Gulf, discharging as an Able Seaman.

Mabel 'May' Wallace of Watford died on 25th March 2017, aged 96. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in the UK from 1941 to 1945, discharging as a Lance Corporal.

Jack Waterhouse of Minehead, Somerset died on 11th March 2017, aged 98. He served in the Royal Artillery in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and India from 1941 to 1948, discharging as a Sergeant.

Richard White of Burnham-On-Crouch, Essex died on 2nd April 2017, aged 80. He served in Germany in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1957 to 1959, discharging as a Driver.

Valerie 'Val' Williams née Powell of Hove, East Sussex died on 12th February 2017, aged 90. She served in the Princess Margaret's Royal Air Force Nursing Service in Aden from 1952 to 1955.

Ernest Wilson of Brighton, East Sussex died on 23rd April 2017, aged 90. He served in the Grenadier Guards from 1944 to 1948 in the UK, discharging as a Guardsman.

Alan Woods of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 29th March 2017, aged 91. He served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1947, discharging as an Able Seaman.

Edward Wynne of Holywell, Clwyd died on 1st April 2017, aged 92. He served in the Royal Navy in the Atlantic, Pacific Ocean, Far East, Australia, Africa and Indonesia from 1942 to 1946, discharging as an Acting Leading Torpedoman.

