

The Bugle

Autumn 2021



**Sight Scotland
Veterans**

Tackling vision loss together

sightscotlandveterans.org.uk

Welcome to the autumn edition of The Bugle, the seasonal newsletter from Sight Scotland Veterans. In this edition, we hear from two RAF veterans – a morse code operator and an air traffic controller. Read about their experiences on page 6 and page 10.

On page 14, we congratulate two veterans whose efforts were celebrated at the Scottish Veteran Awards.

The Tips and Tricks section on page 18 highlights the importance of regular free eye health checks. On page 20, we overview how to access audio descriptions on television and at the movies. On page 23, we discuss the new requirement that fire alarms be interlinked.

On page 26, we introduce a new virtual activity and information service we've been developing. We are passionate about making Scotland a fairer place for people with sight loss. On page 27, you can learn about our campaign to standardise free railway travel for people with sight loss, and their companions, on every rail journey in Scotland.

On page 29, we suggest several phone numbers for mental health support services. These services specialise in supporting veterans, and we encourage anyone who is distressed by recent news about Afghanistan to contact these services. We overview our Remembrance Day plans on page 30. Page 31 has information on attending sessions at our Hawkhead and Linburn activity centres.

Finally, if you're keen for a holiday, read about how to stay at the Gardener's Cottage at Linburn Estate in West Lothian on page 33.

We hope you enjoy this edition of The Bugle – have a great read!

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A message from Clair Bryan, Director of Services

I hope you all had a chance to enjoy some of the warmer weather over the last few months, and the opportunity to meet with loved ones again following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

During the summer, we contacted some of you to invite you to share your thoughts on the services which Sight Scotland Veterans offer, and about possible future services.



Clair Bryan

Thank you to all of you who took part in this survey – it is so important that we can listen to your views. We used your feedback, along with information and suggestions from our staff, to help shape our new strategy.

This strategy has now been published, and it sets out how Sight Scotland Veterans will work over the next three years. In many ways, we will continue with what we have always done since 1915: supporting veterans like you. But we also want to build on our rich history as an organisation, so that we can reach, and support, as many people as possible.

We've included a copy of the full strategy document with this issue of The Bugle for your information. I hope you find this useful, and we will keep you updated as we put our strategy into action.

Recently, we bid a fond farewell to our Chief Executive Mark O'Donnell, who has moved on to a new position. Mark worked with our colleagues and the Board of Trustees to achieve a great deal since 2017. Recruitment is underway for his successor.

Over the last few months, we have been delighted to welcome some of you back to our centres again. It has been wonderful to have you back enjoying our activities and reconnecting with each other.

We're now starting to increase the number of members who can visit the centres – so there will soon be even more familiar faces back once again.

While it is great to start to feel a little more normal again, we will of course continue to follow government guidance as our centres open up more – and throughout all the services we offer. Our top priority will always be to protect your health and safety, and that of our staff.

As we go into autumn, we are preparing for our commemoration of Remembrance Day. Your Outreach Worker or Centre Officer can give you more information about these plans—we'd love if you can get involved.

Best wishes,

Clair Bryan
Director of Services
Sight Scotland Veterans

Morse code operator stars in a new book

A new book about British women's efforts in World War Two features former morse code operator Catherine Drummond, who lives near Glenrothes and is supported by Sight Scotland Veterans.

The book is called 'Women in the War'. Written by Lucy Fisher and published in September, the book has ten first-hand accounts from women who made a crucial contribution during the conflict, whether overseas and or in Britain.

Catherine was 19 when she joined the Royal Air Force in 1941. She served as a morse code operator at an RAF base in Oban, northwest Scotland.

Catherine said: "When the planes were up in the sky, we would send messages in code and they would send them back. It was very interesting and very difficult to learn morse code, I can tell you."

Image shows
Catherine
Drummond



Catherine applied for the RAF after reading an advert in the daily newspaper.

“I was accepted and went to school from 8am to 5pm for six months learning morse code. I was later posted to Oban, and I spent most of my time there,” she said.

“In Oban, the armed services took over every hotel. The building where we worked was a big house that’s now an expensive hotel. When we were there, it was all blacked out and the rules were strict: you weren’t allowed to do this or do that.”

Catherine said she never knew the meaning of the messages she transcribed to and from morse code – the messages were in their own secret code.

“We would listen to the morse code, write it down and pass it on. It would go upstairs to be decoded. Then, they would give me a message and I would type it out and relay it to the plane,” she said.

“It was very interesting. People say, ‘you must’ve been very clever’. It wasn’t that: we were trained to do it.”

In Oban, Catherine met her husband John, who was also a wireless operator. The couple married in 1943 at the Scottish Episcopal Church in Stirling.

Soon after their marriage, Catherine was posted to Alness, near Invergordon and it was then John departed to serve as a Sergeant Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.

“When I was in Alness, I found out I was pregnant,” Catherine said.



Image shows
Catherine Drummond as a
young woman, wearing her
RAF uniform.

"When I informed my WAAF Officer she referred me to Invergordon Hospital for confirmation. I saw a Naval officer doctor and he confirmed I was pregnant. He tore me to bits and said, I had the cheek to get pregnant when the government had spent all this money training me.

"I said, 'I'm a married woman'. These things, you do not forget."

Ten months after his wedding to Catherine, John's plane crashed in the sea off the coast of Italy. Two bodies were recovered, but John's body was never found. A month later, Catherine gave birth to her daughter.

"John was a lovely man and my daughter missed so much not having her father or knowing him when she was growing up," Catherine said.

"When she was a wee girl and she heard a plane in the sky, she used to say: 'That's my daddy up there and he is coming home'."

Catherine returned to her hometown after being discharged from the Royal Air Force.

“When I came home life was hard,” she said. “I was issued with a ration book and coupons which you had to produce if you were buying furniture or buying clothes. And of course, food was all rationed then. Latterly I ended up working in an office, pricing whisky bottles.

“I think people just thought I was an unmarried mother. I joined the War Widows Association and they’ve kept me in contact with other people in the same situation and they have worked very hard to help all war widows”.

Before the Covid pandemic, Catherine would attend activities at Sight Scotland Veterans’ Linburn Centre.

“The woodworking at Linburn is out of this world. I’d go to the cookery class, painting or flower arranging. I go every fortnight now,” she said.

Hardcover copies of ‘Woman in the War’, can be purchased for £16 from Waterstones bookstores or ordered online from Amazon.co.uk. A digital version of the book with re-sizable text is available for Kindle users. Amazon.co.uk’s audiobook subscription service, Audible, has an audio version of the book for subscribers.



Landing aircraft on a desert island

For Patrick Wire, the Comradeship Circle phone groups run by Age Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans are a great idea. Having served on several RAF bases, including a remote island in the Arabian sea, Patrick enjoys a good conversation.

Patrick served in the RAF from 1966 until 1987, primarily as an air traffic controller. He served in Lincolnshire at RAF Waddington; at RAF Boulmer; in Northern Ireland, and at a base in Germany. He finished his service as a Flight Sergeant.

The 81-year-old, who lives in Turriff, Aberdeenshire, said Sight Scotland Veterans' dial-in conference calls were a great way to catch up with others.

Patrick said: "I love it. The idea is that we do not discuss our problems. We drag out a sandbag and talk about the old days."

Patrick has a few stories from his time at RAF Masirah, located on a barren seven-mile-wide island off the coast of Oman. The Middle Eastern island has a hot desert climate – in winter, the average daily high is 26 degrees Celsius.

Patrick said: "It was a lovely island. There were four of us at the airfield and we worked in six-hour shifts. One of us would act as the aircraft controller and the other would be the assistant, who would clear the runway with a Land Rover."

“Before any arrivals, you’d have to do a ‘donkey run’ along the runway because there were camels and donkeys wandering around.

“As the aircraft controller, you’d speak with the incoming aircraft on the RT and help them land.”

RAF Masirah provided refuelling and transit facilities to long-distance RAF flights passing through the Middle East.

“We’d get anything going down south towards Singapore or Hong Kong,” Patrick said.

“DC9s, DC10s, Vulcans, Lightning P1Bs. The most common were the Armstrong Whitford Argosy’s – you’d see them four times a week doing ration and mail runs. We called them ‘Whistling Wheelbarrows’ because they were like a pod suspended under a set of wings.”

Delivering suitcases of gold was another of Patrick’s responsibilities.

“The island was owned by a Sultan and the airbase land was rented by the British government,” he said.

“The Sultan would only take gold as payment, so we used to fly suitcases of gold to Muscat airfield to pay the lease. The Sultan’s guard would collect the suitcase and sign for it. We weren’t allowed off the aircraft.

“The Sultan was trying to hide that he was leasing the island to the military, so we weren’t allowed to fly any flags, or parade, or wear a beret.”

The main pastime at the island base was writing letters home to wives and family.

“We got in competitions to see who could write the heaviest letter – not the best, but the heaviest. My wife would tell me that most of it was rubbish – but you wrote it down anyway,” Patrick said

After RAF Masirah, Patrick served on several RAF bases, including the RAF Ascension Island, which was used as a staging airfield during the Falklands War. Patrick assisted with Operation Black Buck, which involved seven long-range ground attack missions against Argentine positions on the Falkland Islands.

The raids were the longest-ranged bombing raids in history at that time – the 6,600 nautical mile flights (12,200 km) were a 16-hour return journey.

Due to the distance, the Vulcan bombers needed to be refueled by Victor tanker aircraft while they were in the air. There were seven refuelling sessions on the outbound flight and once on the return flight, once the bombload had been dropped. The Victor tankers also needed to be refueled while enroute.

Patrick was involved in the Black Buck missions’ planning and coordination.

Patrick said: “I was in the Operations Rooms where the Vulcan bomber crews came to get their targets, their bomb load and their fuel load. My team did the planning for them. It was before computers were involved in that kind of work, so planning was done with a ruler, a map and the in-flight calculator.

“There were two Vulcans on each flight: the main mission and a reserve. We were always flying spares. If you broke a refuelling probe while in the air, you’d have to break off because you wouldn’t be able

to fly the distance.”

The reserve Vulcans were utilised twice: once because a refuelling probe broke and once because the primary Vulcan’s cabin failed to pressurise shortly after take-off.

The flight crews maintained radio silence for long stretches of the mission and waiting for the 16-hour flights to return was very stressful, Patrick said.

“They were very tense nights. We saved the drinking until after the missions,” Patrick said.

Five of the seven Black Buck missions delivered their bomb loads to the targets: the Falkland Island’s airport at Port Stanley and anti-aircraft radar positions. Two missions were cancelled due to inclement weather.

On 12 June 1982, two days after the final Black Buck mission, the Argentine ground forces surrendered.

“From that, I went into the civilian side of things and I produced and tested navigational flight systems for civilian aircraft,” Patrick said.

“I went from being a data in-putter to finishing up as a manager on the flight assurance side. Then we moved up to Scotland.”

These days, Patrick has swapped his air traffic controller headset for chatting with other veterans on Comradeship Circle calls.

He said the calls were easy to participate in.

“Normally, they dial you and all you have to do is pick up the phone and talk. We put it on speaker and I sit and talk on that quite happily. It’s a magic system.”

- Contact your Sight Scotland Veterans Outreach Worker for more information about joining Comradeship Circle calls.

Veterans’ stories

Veteran wins Role Model of the Year award

An elite rock climber who has sight loss has won the Role Model of the Year award at the Scottish Veteran Awards.

Garry Cowan won the award at a ceremony on 6 October. The announcement and the award ceremony had been delayed since 2020 due to the Covid pandemic.

The award celebrates Garry’s mentoring work with fellow veterans with sight loss.

Garry said: “I’m so humbled to have won this award; it hasn’t quite sunk in. I’m just in awe – there were so many powerful stories from veterans who were nominated for these awards and so many good deeds being done.”

A veteran who volunteers at the Hawkhead Centre as a driver, David Carruthers, was also recognised at the awards. David was named the bronze runner-up for the Volunteer of the Year category.



Image shows Garry Cowan in front of a rock climbing wall.

Garry said: "It's so nice for David to get the recognition he deserves for all that he does for the veterans at the Hawkhead Centre."

Garry, aged 40, lives in St Andrews. He served as an Avionics Engineer at RAF Leuchars. In 2003, Garry had a parachute accident and broke his back – but he taught himself to walk again.

In 2015, Garry lost his sight after contracting chickenpox. He became involved with Sight Scotland Veterans in 2016.

Garry was determined to keep living his life to the full and he took up paraclimbing. He rapidly became an elite climber and soon

competed in European and international competitions. From 2018 onwards, Garry mentored other veterans with sight loss. He introduced many to paraclimbing and coached and supported them to become confident climbers.

In 2019, Garry organised a Combined Veterans Climbing Week at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena. The event brought together veterans with sight loss from across Scotland, Wales and England for an intensive week of climbing activities and was supported by both Sight Scotland Veterans and Blind Veterans UK.

Garry said his fellow veterans' progress in climbing gave him a great deal of encouragement.

"From meeting them all on day one – and individuals saying they couldn't do it – to looking at all they've done now, it is really heart-warming," he said.

David, who was a finalist for the Volunteer of the Year award, regularly drives veterans with sight loss to and from Sight Scotland Veterans' Hawkhead centre.

David served with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders from 1972 to 1978.

David said: "I really enjoy the comradeship at the Hawkhead Centre – everybody gets on with everybody. I enjoy helping other folk and giving something back."

Image shows David Carruthers, dressed up to attend the Scottish Veteran Awards event.



Volunteer Development Manager James Whyte said he was delighted by David's success at the awards.

"David has had an enormous impact on so many of our members, and this prestigious award is well deserved," James said.

"In my experience, and as I repeatedly hear from members and other colleagues, nothing is too much trouble for David, and he will turn his hand to whatever is asked of him. This isn't just getting behind the wheel: he'll cover reception, offer a listening ear, help members in the workshop, or dish out the gravy in the canteen if that's what's needed. All with a happy smile!"

Get your free Healthy Eye Check

By Sandra Taylor, Lead Rehabilitation Officer

Why it is so important to regularly have healthy eye checks?

We often hear from veterans that they have been told by their eye specialist that nothing else can be done and they don't have to return to the eye department. We advise strongly that everyone (whether you have sight loss or not, wear spectacles or not) have a regular eye check at your local optician at least every two years.

There is no excuse...it's free!

An NHS-funded eye examination is also available every year to all those over 60 years old, people with diabetes and to all those registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired.

Having an eye test will not just tell you if you need new glasses or a change of prescription – it's also an important eye health check. An optician can spot many general health problems and early signs of eye conditions, such as glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy, before you're aware of any symptoms – many of which can be treated if found early enough.

Many people first learn they have serious health conditions – such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and even cancer – from a routine eye examination. Our eyes are often an effective window to our overall health.

During a comprehensive eye exam, your optician can observe and evaluate the health and condition of the blood vessels in your retina.

These are a good predictor of the health of blood vessels throughout your body. Conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol may be visible by changes in the appearance of the retinal blood supply and blood vessels.

Annual eye screening is so important for anyone with diabetes or who might be at risk from the disease. More than 4 million people in the UK who have diabetes and another 7 million who have prediabetes are at risk of developing diabetic eye disease – one of the leading causes of sight loss. In its early stages, diabetic eye disease has no visible symptoms – only an eye exam can detect signs of the disease so that treatment can begin soon enough to prevent vision loss.

We would encourage you and your loved ones and friends to have regular healthy eye checks and remember it is free. If you are housebound, you may be able to have a domiciliary visit from a local optician.

- For more information, speak with your optician or visit www.eyes.scot

This is Scotland's national website for eye care services and eye health information. Specific information can be requested by sending an email to eyecare@gov.scot

How to access Audio Description

Audio Description is an additional commentary on television shows and movies that describes the action being shown on the screen. Audio Description is available on all broadcast television and is often available at cinemas and at theatre performances.

Facial expressions, body language, and action are all described, as well as the setting or the location shown on the screen. The descriptions are given between lines of dialogue.

Audio Description is usually denoted by the letters "AD" on remote controls, TV guides and cinema session times.

We overview the following ways to access Audio Description:

- On your television
- At cinemas
- At plays and theatre performances
- When using BBC iPlayer on your computer or smartphone.
- Other Video on Demand providers

On your television:

For televisions, the most common way to activate Audio Description is by pushing a button on a remote control.

1. Find the Audio Description or AD button on your remote control.
2. Push the AD button to turn it on or off.
3. Putting a bump-on or a tactile marking or a colour contrast sticker on the AD button is a good way to find the button.

If your remote control does not have a designated AD button you may be able to access it through the "Menu" button on your TV remote.

If not, our Sight Scotland Veterans team may be able to help or advise on an accessible remote that is compatible with your television. However, it can depend on the age of your television, as older televisions may not offer this function.

If you are unsure or would like a hand, ask a family member, carer, or friend. Your Outreach Worker or Rehabilitation Officer at Sight Scotland Veterans might also be able to help, so please don't hesitate to get in touch with them.

At cinemas

Many cinemas will provide a headset that plays the audio description track, as well as the other sounds and music. When available, the headsets can be picked up when you arrive at the cinema.

Before booking tickets, it's best to check which film showings times have audio description available. Most cinemas will denote this by putting a small "AD" beside the session time. It can also be a good idea to contact the cinema in advance, so they can get the headset ready for you to pick up on arrival.

At plays and dramatic theatre

Many theatres offer one or two performances with audio descriptions. Like movie theatres, the audio description is provided via a headset. In advance of performances, theatres will sometimes send introductory notes that describe the visual world of the show, such as the characters' costumes and the set.

A programme of upcoming plays and theatre productions that have audio description available is provided at websites like accessscottishtheatre.com. Bookings can also be made on this website.

BBC iPlayer on computers and smartphones:

BBC iPlayer is an internet site and a smartphone app where you can watch BBC programmes.

To activate Audio Description on BBC iPlayer:

1. Go to the webpage where a programme is screening.
2. Below the description of the programme will be a line of text: "Audio Described".
3. Click "Audio Described".
4. Click the play button to continue watching the show with audio descriptions

Other Video on Demand providers:

Audio Description is provided by the main video streaming providers. You'll be able to activate AD in the 'Captions' menu or the 'Audio settings' menu, or using your remote control. Contact your Rehabilitation Officer or Outreach Worker if you would like some help accessing Audio Description on one of these services.

Netflix: AD is available on the Netflix website and via the Netflix app on connected TVs, smartphones and tablets.

Amazon Prime Video: AD is available on the Prime Video website and via the Prime Video app on connected TVs, smartphones and tablets.

ITV Hub: AD is available on the ITV Hub app on connected TVs, smartphones and tablets.

All4: AD is available on the All4 website and via the All4 app on connected TVs, smartphones and tablets.

My5: AD is available on the My5 website and via the My5 app on connected TVs, smartphones and tablets.

If you would like some help accessing Audio Description, contact your Outreach Worker or Rehabilitation Officer.

Tips and Tricks

Fire alarms upgrade

By February 2022, every home in Scotland is required by law to have interlinked fire alarms. Interlinked alarms are connected so that when one goes off, they all go off – you'll always hear the alarm, wherever you are in the home.

The new law has come about following the Grenfell Tower fire in London in 2017, and it applies to all Scottish homes.

It is property owners' responsibility to meet the new standard. Tenants are not responsible for upgrading alarms.

What every home needs:

By February 2022, every home must have:

- One smoke alarm in the room where you spend most of the day (usually the living room).
- One smoke alarm on every floor, either in the hallway or on the landing.
- One heat alarm in every kitchen.

All smoke and heat alarms should be mounted to the ceiling and interlinked. If you have a carbon-fuelled appliance in any room (such as a boiler, fire, heater or flue) you must also have a carbon monoxide detector in that room, but this does not need to be linked to the fire alarms.

In shared buildings like tenements and blocks of flats, there is no requirement that alarms in each flat be linked with other flats.

Two options for alarms

There are two types of alarms: sealed battery alarms and mains-wired alarms, which are installed by an electrician. Both types of alarm are interlinked by radio frequency and do not need a WiFi internet connection.

If you use battery alarms, they must be sealed tamper-proof units and have long-life lithium batteries that last up to 10 years. Alarms must be fixed to the ceiling though, so please consider if it would be safer to contact a tradesperson or to ask a family member to fix the alarms.

Mains-wired alarms are cheaper. They must be fitted by a qualified electrician and be replaced every 10 years.

Household insurance

Some home insurance policies on fire damage may not cover homes that do not fulfil the new alarm requirements after February 2022. If you are not sure how the new fire and smoke alarm requirements will affect your policy, get in touch with your insurer.

Is there any financial support available?

Care and Repair Scotland has funding to support eligible older and disabled homeowners.

To be eligible for support from Care & Repair Scotland, you must live in and own a home that has a Council Tax banding of A-C. You must also either be in receipt of guaranteed Pension Credit or have a disability and be in a support group for Employment and Support Allowance.

You can contact Care and Repair Scotland's main office by phone on 0141 221 9879.

For more information

For advice on fire safety or to request a Home Fire Safety Visit, call the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on 0800 0731 999

If you have any concerns about meeting housing standards, contact your local authority. If you need further information, you can call your Outreach Worker at Sight Scotland.

Sight Scotland Veterans update

New virtual activity and information service

We are pleased to announce our new virtual activity and information service will be launching in November this year.

Recently, we've been running quizzes, discussion groups, history groups, and book clubs with many veterans. In November, we are looking to expand this service to include information and support sessions that focus on topics such as eye conditions, equipment, health, and wellbeing.

The service is currently run on a telephone conference system and can reach other veterans with sight loss across the country. All you need is to pick up the phone when we call and we will dial you in for a session. We want to continue growing the service and seek your input to help us build the service you want. Please get in touch with your Outreach Worker or Centre Officer and let us know.

We are also looking to give the service a catchy name. Suggestions so far include Social Connections, Coms Z, Connecting Veterans, VIP connections. What do you think it could be called?

If you would like to pass on your suggestions or if you would like to be involved at an early stage, please get in touch. You can email us at social.connections@sightscotlandveterans.org.uk or contact your Outreach Worker or Centre Officer about it.

Our 'Fair Rail' campaign to make concessionary rail travel easier to access

We want people with sight loss to have equality of access to public transport, wherever they live in the Scotland.

Sight Scotland Veterans and Sight Scotland have launched a new campaign calling on the Scottish Government to work with local authorities to establish a national policy for free rail travel across Scotland for people with a National (Scotland) Concessionary Travel for Blind Persons card, as well as their companions.

Currently, the Scottish National Blind Persons Scheme is a voluntary arrangement between local authorities, COSLA and participating transport operators. This means only some local authorities provide free or discounted rail travel for blind and partially sighted people and their companions, while others don't.

We want to ensure that all people with visual impairment in Scotland can make safe journeys by rail and have equality of access to public transport, wherever they live in the country.

Image shows a person with visual impairment, and their companion, preparing to get on a train.



If you have personally experienced issues around rail travel, please contact our Policy, Public Affairs and Research team by emailing policy@sightscotland.org.uk or call us on 07718 486 323.

Sign your name in support of the Fair Rail campaign

We're encouraging everyone to support the campaign by adding their name to an open letter to the Minister for Transport, calling for a national scheme. If you have access to a computer, you can sign the letter online at the "Influencing Change" section of our website or go directly to sightscotland.org.uk/FairRail

If you'd like to post us your support, please fill in the form below, tear out this page, and post it to us in the pre-addressed freepost envelope that came with this edition of The Bugle. If you use another envelope, send it to: FAO Policy, Sight Scotland Veterans, 2a Robertson Avenue, Edinburgh EH11 1PZ.

-----FILL IN THIS SECTION AND POST THIS PAGE TO US -----

Dear Minister for Transport,

I _____ support Sight Scotland Veteran's and Sight Scotland's campaign for the Scottish Government to work with local authorities to establish a national policy for free rail travel across Scotland for those with a National (Scotland) Concessionary Travel for Blind Persons card, and their companions.

Signed _____

Date _____

Postcode _____

Events in Afghanistan and support for veterans

News of recent events in Afghanistan may be upsetting for some people. If you are struggling as a result of the recent events in Afghanistan, there is support available.

We are justifiably proud of our Armed Forces, and the brave people who step up to serve their nation, often at a great personal sacrifice. Those who served in Afghanistan over the past 20 years should be proud of their professionalism and what they helped achieve.

If you would like someone to talk to, here are some phone numbers for some excellent organisations:

- You can contact Samaritans by calling their free number if you require urgent and immediate support: 116 123
- Veterans First Point offers veteran-led mental health and welfare support. There are seven regional centres across Scotland with corresponding phone numbers.

Veterans First Point regional phone numbers:

Ayrshire & Arran centre: 01294 310400

Lothian: 01896 668551

Fife: 01383 565 128 or 07770 730 268

Lanarkshire: 0300 303 3051

Lothian: 0131 220 9920

Tayside: 01382 424029, 07811471443

- You could also contact the Veterans Gateway helpline for advice and signposting to further support.

Call the Veterans Gateway helpline on 0808 802 1212

The Veterans Support website is www.veteransgateway.org.uk

Remembrance Day events

We will be commemorating Remembrance Day on Thursday 11 November on our online channels this year, bringing the Sight Scotland Veterans community together in remembrance remotely.

Our website and the Sight Scotland Veterans Facebook page will be sharing messages and videos, including poetry and instrumental performances. If you have a computer or a smartphone, you can listen to these videos – even if you are not signed up to Facebook.

On Thursday 11 November, visit:

- www.Facebook.com/SightScotlandVeterans
- sightscotlandveterans.org.uk

Our activity centres are unable to host events currently due to Covid precautions. As such, there won't be any commemoration services this year.

If you would like to share how you are commemorating Remembrance at home, or with your fellow veterans, we'd encourage you or family to post photos, videos and messages and memories in our private Facebook group, which can be found using the search function on Facebook—just search for 'Members and friends of Sight Scotland Veterans'. Alternatively, email the messages, photos and videos to us at hello@sightscotlandveterans.co.uk

We look forward to running events for you and veterans like you in the future once the pandemic has passed. Until then, keep warm, keep safe and keep in touch with your Sight Scotland Veterans Outreach Worker.

Booking visits to our activity centres

Since May, the Hawkhead and Linburn activity centres have been running a number of activities for veterans.

It has been challenging to balance both the restrictions on our services and the wishes of many veterans to attend the centre. Overall, our top priority is ensuring veterans and our team members are safe, and that any risk is minimised as much as possible. We carry out risk assessments for all activities and have many measures in place to minimise the risks of transmission.

To ensure everyone's safety, the number of veterans we can run activities for each day is also limited.

Our team members have been getting in touch with veterans over the last few weeks about the possibility of booking in for a session at either Linburn or Hawkhead. You may have received a phone call about it – if you haven't, feel free to contact your Outreach Worker.

On the next page are our key pointers on what to expect before a visit to a centre, and what you can expect at centres.

We know that some of the changes may take some time to get used to, but ask that you please support our team by following the guidelines.

What to expect if attending the Hawkhead or Linburn centre:

Before your return to the centre:

- You will be contacted soon by telephone to be advised on the available weekday which we can offer attendance
- As part of our Covid-19 risk assessment, we will contact you on the afternoon before your scheduled visit to the Centre to carry out a short Covid questionnaire. If you have any symptoms, you need to let us know. You will be unable to attend the centre until you have been tested as negative for Covid.

At the centre:

You will find that there have been some changes to the usual routine, but don't worry, the team will be there to guide you through.

Some of the changes are:

- All staff and those members attending are required to wear PPE, either face masks or visors which we will supply. We have disposable visors available for those that are medically exempt from wearing a face mask.
- All attending members are required to be vaccinated against Covid-19.
- At the centre, the morning activity will be a longer one. We will then stop for a later lunch, with no afternoon activity.
- After lunch, transport will leave the centre from 1:30pm.

Holiday rental of the Gardener's Cottage at Linburn Estate

The Gardener's Cottage is located within the grounds of the Linburn Estate (postcode EH27 8DU) in a peaceful semi-rural setting close to the buzz of Edinburgh. It is available for holiday rental by Sight Scotland Veterans veterans and their families for up to two weeks at a time.

At present, veterans who stay at the cottage are not able to access the Linburn Centre during their stay due to ongoing Covid restrictions.

Accommodation

The cottage is fully accessible and on one level. It has one double bedroom, one single bedroom and a twin bedroom, an accessible wet floor bathroom, a spacious well-equipped kitchen and a large living and dining room which looks out onto a large garden. It is fully furnished and equipped to a high standard. Off-street parking is available.

Veterans and their guests can relax in the secure garden, which suits a guide dog, or explore the extensive grounds of the rural Linburn Estate and beyond.

The cottage can accommodate up to five people.

The Area

The cottage is in a semi-rural location with no shops within walking distance, so access to transport is highly advisable. There is a bus service to Edinburgh and Livingstone nearby with the bus stop only a short walk away.

Booking

Bookings are from Friday to Friday. The cost is £120 per week.

Veterans and their families can enquire about availability, booking and any other issues about the cottage by calling our administrator, Curtis Campbell, on 0141 370 8050.

Curlew Cottage located at Hawkhead is still being renovated and is not yet available.

Thanks for reading!

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of The Bugle. Best wishes for autumn and the coming winter.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the next edition, please contact Robert Steven.

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**Thank you for reading the latest edition of
The Bugle.**

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