

The Bugle

Summer 2023



**Sight Scotland
Veterans**

Tackling vision loss together

sightscotlandveterans.org.uk

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Events and activities you might be interested in

August

Veterans' Sight Support Groups

- Carnoustie, Angus: Wed 2 August, 1:30–3:30pm
- Fife: Tues 17 August, 1:30–3:30pm
- Banff: Thurs 10 August, 11 am–12:30pm
- Perth: Wed 10 August, time TBC
- Hamilton: Wed 17 August, 11am–12:30pm
- Inverness: Mon 21 August, 11am–2pm
- Dundee: Tues 22 August, time TBC
- Seamill: Tues 22 August, time TBC
- Aberdeen: Tues 29 August, 2pm–4pm
- Inverurie: Wed 30 August, 11am–12:30pm
- Carnoustie: Wed 30 August, 1:30pm–3:30pm

Our Independent Living Workers and Rehabilitation Officers are hosting these events. Please call the Sight Loss Support Line on 0800 035 6409 if interested.

September

Veterans' Sight Support Groups

- Fife: Tues 5 September, 1:30–3.30pm
- Dumfries: Wed 6 September, 11am–1pm
- Hamilton: Thurs 14 September, 12:30pm–1.30pm
- Perth: Thurs 21 September, 10am–12 noon
- Carnoustie: Wed 27 September, 1:30pm–3:30pm
- Kirkcaldy: Thurs 28 September, 11am–12:30

For more details on these face-to-face meetings, please call 0800 035 6409. Our Independent Living Workers and Rehabilitation Officers are hosting these events.

October

Veterans' Sight Support Groups

- Fife: Tues 3 October, 1:30pm–3:30
- Hamilton: Thurs 12 October, time TBC
- Dumfries: Wed 18 October, 11am–1pm
- Carnoustie: Wed 25 October, 1:30pm–3:30

For more details on these face-to-face meetings, please call 0800 035 6409. Our Independent Living Workers and Rehabilitation Officers are hosting these events.

November

Veterans' Sight Support Groups

- Fife: Tues 7 November, 1:30pm–3:30pm
- Kirkcaldy: Thurs 7 November, 11am–12.30pm
- Hamilton: Thurs 7 November, 11am–12.30pm
- Perth: Thurs 16 November, 10am–12 noon
- Carnoustie: Wed 22 October, 1:30pm–3:30pm
- Dumfries, Wed 29 November, time TBC

For more details on these face-to-face meetings, please call 0800 035 6409. Our Independent Living Workers and Rehabilitation Officers are hosting these events.

Remembrance Day trip to the London Cenotaph

Fri 10 November to Mon 13 November

Join our Sight Scotland Veterans group journeying to London to attend Remembrance Day commemorations at the Cenotaph. Remembrance Day is a time to remember all those who have served and sacrificed, and to honour their memory. The London service is attended by thousands of veterans, as well as Members of the Cabinet, members of the Royal Family, and other representatives. For our group, a bus will depart from the Central Belt and accommodation will be arranged. Please call us on 0800 035 6409 if interested.

A message from Gillian McDonald, Head of Wellbeing

Hello and welcome to the Summer 2023 edition of The Bugle. This edition is packed with inspiring stories of hobbies and sports which veterans have been enjoying.

You'll read about late nights of jazz, about trekking to Loch Lomond in a kilt, and about a veteran constructing all sorts of vehicles and landscapes with Lego.

You'll also read about our new bowls team for veterans with vision loss. We are encouraging more veterans to join our team and any newcomers are welcome. And you don't have to travel across Scotland to play – you might be able to play in a visually impaired bowls league local to where you live. Just call us on the Sight Loss Information Line, 0800 064 6409, if interested.

For anyone who loves eating well, check out our Tips and Tricks section on page 26. We review three models of a kitchen appliance called an Air Fryer, which could be perfect for your kitchen. Air Fryers can cook meals safely, cleanly, and healthily – with minimal use of cooking oil. In our Creative Corner on page 36, we have a poem in Rabbin Burns style, sent in by RAF veteran David Innes.

For all you veterans who love a natter, read about our Hub telephone groups. We're holding at least 11 groups each week now, and we'd love for you to join. You can meet our group hosts on page 40.

Our policy team has been meeting with politicians and decision-makers, and impressing on them the urgent need for support and consideration of those living with sight loss. You can read about it on page 47.

And a last note, I wanted to let you know that Clair Bryan has moved to a new role within the organisation. We are currently recruiting a new Director of Operations for both Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans and we'll let you know when an appointment has been made.

I hope you enjoy this edition – Have a great summer.

Take care,

Gillian McDonald

Head of Wellbeing

Sight Scotland Veterans

Veterans' Stories

Jazz pianist loving new text-to-speech equipment

A jazz band pianist for decades, Fred Smith has always had an ear for the right note at the right moment. Now that his sight is deteriorating, Fred is taking note of a new piece of equipment called the Hark Reader.

The Hark Reader is a machine that reads aloud whatever text is placed in front of its camera. The text-to-speech machine speaks with an English accent and is smart enough to read out sentences with a natural rhythm, emphasising sentences in just the right places.

Fred, who has macular degeneration, has been using the Hark Reader to enjoy reading science fiction.

Fred said: "I can put a book under the camera, then sit back in my chair and relax I'd recommend it to anybody having trouble reading.

"I've just read Michael Crichton's book "Airframe" with the Hark Reader, and now I'm on to reading his novel called "Prey". It reads from the top left of the page and has certainly been a help."

Fred is an RAF veteran, having been called up in December 1945 at the age of 18. He trained in navigation, but with the war in Europe recently finished, he didn't see much action.

Fred said: "The most exciting thing I did was being put in charge of a bunch of ten German prisoners at a prisoner of war camp. It was near the RAF base in Northern Ireland.

"We got them to do manual work, as some were tradespeople. The prisoners were mostly happy to do the jobs they were assigned to around the camp. They didn't want to go back to a ruined Germany, in the late 1940s."

Following two and half years of service, Fred started working as a professional musician, playing piano at a dance hall near the RAF base. He moved to London and married. Fred spent the daytime working in the road haulage industry, then in Scotland as a salesman, and then for the Strathclyde local authority. His nights, though: they were spent on the keys. Throughout the 1950s, 1960, 1970s and 1980s, Fred played in traditional-style jazz at gigs across England and Scotland. For several years, he joined talented trumpeter Alex Dalglish and his band "Alex Dalglish's All Stars".

Fred said: "Alex named his band 'the All Stars', after 'Louis Armstrong and the All Stars'. We played two gigs a week pretty regularly around Glasgow in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. But we also played in Ayrshire and went as far as Inverness, playing in Aberdeen, Dundee, Dunoon, Paisley, Kilmarnock, and Irvine."

Alex Dalglish's All Stars gained a regular Sunday gig at the renowned Gleneagles Hotel near Perth for several years too.

Fred said: "I enjoyed many happy experiences with the band. Jazz is a creative process; it's not just playing a tune. You're adding and embellishing and building around it. You can play the original melody with slight variations here and there, or can even abandon the original melody.

"When I'd arranged a piece of music and I'd hear the band play it, it'd be a great feeling. When it came together, it felt good. I much preferred playing with company to playing solo."

Fred tells tales of his jazz band escapades in his own words in the next article: "Midges in the Gloaming". You can read it on the next page.

The Hark Reader: For information about the HARK reader, you can call our Sight Loss Information Line on 0800 035 6409 to arrange a call with our Rehabilitation team, who can discuss whether the reader could be right for you.

Veteran's feature: "Midges in the Gloaming"

Introduction

In this article, RAF veteran Fred Smith waxes lyrical about his days as a jazz musician, playing the piano across Britain. This article was first published in issue 32 of a fan magazine, 'Trap Door', in March 2016.

Fred Smith, an RAF veteran, writes:

When bebop appeared in the Forties many would-be jazz musicians found that its complexities and difficulties were too hard to understand, let alone execute, unless you were up there, or even near there, with Bird (Parker) or Dizzy (Gillespie).

So a groundswell started among average (or less than average!) but still enthusiastic jazz-loving amateur and semi-pro musicians to return to the "roots", the "traditional" stuff, as it were. Thus, inspired by the likes of the American Lu Watters Yerba Buena Band, the Muggsy Spanier Ragtimers and others, and the British George Webb Dixielanders (with Humphrey Lyttelton), the so-called "Trad" movement was born.

With the examples of the three "B"s, Kenny Ball, Chris Barber and Acker Bilk (who had some hit records), traditional jazz or "Trad" spread like wildfire (or a plague!) in the UK, rivalling even the onset of rock 'n' roll. Bands sprang up in every city, including Glasgow, which had at least five at one time.

Among these was the band I was invited to join. Alex Dalgleish was a trumpeter of some small talent, who had big ambitions to be a "name" bandleader and a rival to the best of the rest. A big fan of Louis Armstrong's, he even called his band the "Alex Dalgleish All-Stars", a six-piece combo like Louis'.

Only trouble was, he didn't have men like Trummy Young, Ed Hall or Billy Kyle, so had to make do with the local talent such as me. So I became an "All-Star" in spite of leaning more towards bebop and tending to sneer at the "mouldy figs" (i.e. the "trad" groups). Actually, Alex wasn't as bad as the purists who regarded anything later than 1920 as "modern"; he included some Ellington in the repertoire and even insisted that we rehearse weekly!

The band included trombone (not bad!), clarinet (dodgy!), bass (basic!), drums (okay!), plus Alex and me. Occasionally a guitar (anathema to "trads") doubling on banjo (wonderful!) was added just to give an authentic flavour and this sometimes gave us a slogging primitive beat, energising the dancers. So we continued on our merry way for several years with two regular weekly gigs plus other odd dates. Then one day Alex surprised us all by deciding that he wasn't going to become a "name" or make his fortune by carrying on with this semi-pro outfit so he upped sticks and set off for London where he joined Terry Lightfoot, a real "trad" clarinettist who also had his own band.

Not really downhearted by the loss of Alex, the rest of us found another trumpeter and carried on in our two regular gigs until the manager of one of these (a dyed-in-the-wool purist) decided we had become too "modern" (we were playing Thirties' tunes) and fired us. The bassist, Ian, and I joined Jim Galloway (clarinet and saxes) who left and formed his "Jazzmakers", also a six-piece. For a time this had some success; we did three radio broadcasts, one TV spot, a few concerts and some assorted gigs but "Trad" jazz as a mass, commercial proposition was dying. Jim then decided to break up the band and took himself off to Canada where he took up soprano sax, and then became an organiser of the Toronto Jazz Festival.

For myself, and taking Ian with me, I put together a piano/bass /drums trio plus a girl singer. We found regular gigs in two hotel lounge bars. The style was light jazz, mostly the Great American Songbook with the occasional current pop number. Although the "Trad" boom had ended, several pros and a couple of our local semi-pro bands carried on in a modified form; guitars and saxes were no longer taboo and, in fact, the whole jazz scene had settled down into a comfortable "mainstream" and/or Dixieland style.

Then, suddenly, into this milieu re-appeared Alex, back from his adventures in London and eager to re-form his "All-Stars". He had acquired an agent who secured him a regular weekly gig at the Gleneagles Hotel, southwest of Perth – certainly the most prestigious hotel in Scotland.

So Ian and I joined up again on the strength of that and found that we were the only original members of the band, the others (trombone, clarinet and drums) tending to vary during the subsequent three or four years that we lasted in this job.

The engagement at Gleneagles meant playing for a "jazz brunch" every Sunday and, since we were playing for diners, we had to be very quiet – horns muted all the time with Alex continually worrying that we were too loud. As a leader, he tended to the martinet style and could be completely obnoxious at times. During the three hours we played we were allowed hardly any time between numbers and no interval breaks in the music. When the band did get a break I would play solo piano till their return, before having a quick break myself.

I would pick up Ian (with his bass) from his home in Bearsden and drive us the 60 miles to the hotel. On the return trip, we fell into the routine of stopping for a couple of drinks at a pub in Blackford, a village just down the road from Gleneagles. Best part of the gig, as it happened, was improved by the presence of an attractive barmaid!

While I felt that we were largely ignored by the diners, Alex regarded them as his audience and behaved accordingly like a big "name" band leader. However, it turned out there was at least one couple who evidently liked us (God knows why!) and paid attention to what we played. This was a middle-aged, millionaire, wine merchant from London together with his classy, good-looking (although ageing!) wife. They drank nothing but champagne, seemed to have many free weekends to lunch at Gleneagles, and liked jazz, chatting with us at the end of each session. In the course of conversation this gentleman revealed that he was Chieftain of the nearby Highland Games and had a country house at Lochearnhead.

At the end of the Highland Games, it was his intention to throw a party at the country house and, to our surprise, proposed that the band play at his party. Alex was elated, of course, so, after settling on a suitable fee and arranging rooms for us at a nearby small hotel, it was agreed that we would entertain (hopefully!) the family and guests.

The plan was to play for the evening indoors if it was raining but out on the lawn, near the shore of the Loch, if the weather was dry. All well and good and, in the end, we were engaged to perform at the house parties for three successive years following the Games!

Knowing that we were in danger of playing out of doors, I took the precaution of packing a tube of insecticide ointment as protection against the dreaded MIDGE! This biting, bloodsucking creature is the bane of the Scottish Highlands, particularly in the West. The scenery is great but no joy if you're fighting off the attentions of this thing (which is not mentioned in tourist guides!). Now, the midge doesn't like sunlight or wind or dry ground but loves still twilight and damp grass, preferably near water. Although a small fly, only about 1-mm long, don't think that it can't be as bad as I make out. In the right conditions, it will attack in swarms like black clouds and, without protection of some kind the only recourse is to run!

As it happened the first year's party was in the house so, no problem but when we turned up the second year there was an upright piano sitting in lonely fashion near the edge of the Loch and well away from the house. Noted also that a tent (or some kind of canopy) had been set up as a bar about two hundred yards from the piano. Presumably, so that the drinkers wouldn't be disturbed by the music!

Before we could start, however, our host's son appeared with a bottle of whisky and glasses so those of us who were drinkers (all except Alex) poured a shot while getting ready. We started playing in our usual way – no time between numbers – till Bill, the clarinetist, called out, "Alex, give us a minute till I recharge my glass".

I added, "Recharge mine while you're at it". Alex went berserk and his face contorted, "You're not here to DRINK. You're here to WORK!"

Suitably chastened, if not mortified, we carried on playing till it became apparent that dusk was descending, the air was still and the midges were starting to appear. Not in swarms (so far) because Lochearnhead is not the worst place in the country for the beasties, but I felt it was time for the insecticide before conditions deteriorated. So I turned to our esteemed leader, "Give me a minute till I get my anti-midge stuff from the car".

This time in a jocular mood, Alex then had to announce to the audience (the couple of dozen people in the "drink tent"):
"There will now be a short break while our pianist goes for his midge ointment. Haw-haw". Of course, nobody took a blind bit of notice while I smeared the stuff on my face and hands. In turn, I offered it to Ian who recoiled, "Oh! No! No!" as if it was poison. It seemed he would rather be bitten than take the time to apply the ointment and risk upsetting Alex again! As an indifferent bassist, Ian might have been afraid that he would lose his place in the band but he was always very helpful to everybody and supportive of Alex. The irony was that some years later Ian died the same day as Alex, almost as if he was still following him off this mortal coil!

The three "Highland Games" gigs that we did for our millionaire jazz fan were not the end. He also hired us to play for his two children's 21st Birthday parties, the first in Goodwood House and the second on board the "Silver Barracuda", a pleasure cruiser on the Thames. That's another story but shows that we did get around in some quite rich circles in the Eighties!

By Fred Smith, RAF veteran.

Veterans' Stories

Submariner dons a kilt for 22 mile walk

Tom Smith, aged 34 from Renfrewshire, led his 'Daredevils' team on a 22.7-mile walk to say thanks for the life-changing support Sight Scotland Veterans provides.

Tom has Retinal Dystrophy, a group of rare, inherited diseases that damage the retina, causing progressive and severe loss of vision.

Tom is a former Submariner in the Royal Navy. He went for a routine eye test in 2020 and it highlighted a retinal degeneration problem. Further investigations throughout the year resulted in Tom being diagnosed with a genetic condition that would leave him blind in a few short years.

Since 2020, Tom has been medically discharged from the Navy, and lost his driving license due to his vision impairment – with that, a lot of his independence. Tom has been supported through all this change by our Sight Scotland Veterans teams.

To raise donations for Sight Scotland Veterans and show his thanks, the former Submariner got two friends and his wife on board to do the Glasgow Kiltwalk.

The fundraising event in late April had 14,000 fundraisers donning tartan and stretching out their legs for either a 3 mile, 14.4-mile, or 22.7-mile walk.

Image caption: Navy veteran Tom (first person on the left) is pictured at the Glasgow Kiltwalk, with his wife Katie in the middle and his two friends Jason and Joanne.



Tom and his 'Daredevils' faced down the longest challenge, the 22.7-mile Kiltwalk. They departed Glasgow Green to the city's east and spent a Sunday walking all the way out to the town of Balloch, beside Loch Lomond.

The Renfrewshire resident said: "Our team, the Daredevils, which is made up of myself, Katie and our friends Joanne and Jason Botterill, want as many people as possible to know about Sight Scotland Veterans and all the fantastic help they have given me."

Tom said: "None of us are big walkers, so it was quite a challenge and we managed to lose some weight with all the training, but it was all worth it."

Completing the challenge, Tom and the Daredevils raised over £1700 for Sight Scotland Veterans.

"We blew our initial target out the water," the former submariner said.

Image caption:

Former submariner
Tom Smith and
his wife Katie.



Veterans' Stories

Veteran keeping busy with a new hobby

An army veteran who served across the world is enjoying getting back to a constructive hobby.

Andrew Bruce, who lives in Falkirk, started experiencing macular degeneration in 2022.

As his sight worsened, the former Postal Engineer started a new hobby to keep his hands and mind busy.

Andrew said: "I've gone back to Lego. I find playing with Lego really good therapy and relaxing. The hours zoom away when I get into it. I make all sorts of things: scenes of Ancient Egypt, vehicles, and spaceships. There's no limit to what you can make. I find the pieces by touch, rather than looking. It's quite a good hobby for someone who has no sight, once you know the shape of the bricks."



He said, "I've now got stacks of boxes of Lego. My granddaughter used to do Lego, and I also went to car boot sales to buy Lego."

Andrew uses a device called a Colorino Talking Colour Identifier device, which we supplied for him.

"When I lost my sight, I couldn't tell what colour the Lego was. Sight Scotland Veterans came to the rescue with the Colorino device. You aim the Colorino at the Lego piece and it'll say, 'intense red' or 'light yellow'."

Andrew also follows instructions to build specific Lego scenes.

"You can find every kit that Lego has made on the Lego website. There's a catalogue of items and a recipe for the bricks for building it. I'd encourage others to give it a go."



Image caption: Clear plastic boxes full of Lego bricks, which Andrew has collected over time from car boot sales, and sorted into colours.



To get around outside the house safely, Andrew learned to navigate using a Long Cane. The 78-year-old took to learning the Long Cane after sustaining a number of injuries.

Andrew said: "I started having accidents, tripping on bins and falling when I stepped into a pothole. Because of this, I lost my confidence going out of the house."

Andrew said that the loss of independence was difficult to adapt to. As a Postal Engineer with the Royal Engineers, he had travelled the world.

Andrew explained: "With the Royal Engineers, I would get sent anywhere in the world to set up a permanent post office to serve the Army, Navy or Air Force. Over 16 years, I got to Borneo, Bangkok, Canada, Germany, Cyprus, and Malta, as well as Tobruk in Libya, and Masirah Island in Oman.

"But you can lose your confidence when you lose your sight. When you go blind, you realise all the things you used to do, that you can't do now. You have to rely on other people. Fortunately, there are ways to regain your independence after sight loss."



Image caption: An ancient Egyptian pyramid, built out of Lego by veteran Andrew Bruce.



Andrew received training on using a Long Cane from Sight Scotland Veterans' Rehabilitation Officer Audrey Johnstone. Since June 2022, the veteran has been safely navigating his home and his neighbourhood in Falkirk with a Long Cane.

Andrew said: "Since Audrey taught me to use the Long Cane, it's given me my life again. It gave me the confidence I didn't have anymore. I'm capable of going anywhere now: I've been to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling with my cane. It's opened up a whole new world to me.

"Without the long cane, I would feel lost. It changed my life, it really did."

- If you are finding it difficult to get around, or bumping into things more often, we'd love for you to contact our Sight Scotland Veterans Rehabilitation team. You can book a chat with the Rehab team by calling 0800 035 6409, our Sight Loss Information Line. Read more about our Rehabilitation team on the next page.

Tips and Tricks

The Rehab Team are here for you!

We have a specialist team who can help you learn the new skills needed to adapt to sight loss. Our Sight Scotland Veterans Rehabilitation team works throughout Scotland and we can visit you at home, or meet with you in the Hawkhead or Linburn Activity Hubs at our vision clinic days.

You may have seen a member of the Rehab team many moons ago. But would it benefit you to see us again?

With many degenerative conditions such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, or cataracts, your needs may change. That magnifier you have, which once was a godsend, is maybe now not cutting the mustard.

- Maybe you don't feel as confident when walking outside?
- Maybe you have tripped a few times or are finding the route to the shops a tad more difficult because of your eyesight?
- Has making meals using the cooker or microwave, or using the telephone become a little more taxing because of your sight?

We can do another review and assess your needs and look to offer other equipment, advise on other techniques or offer training.

It is very normal to see a vision Rehab Officer multiple times during points in your life, as and when there are changes in your vision. Don't struggle. We are here to help.

Contact the Sight Loss Information Line on 0800 035 6409 and ask to speak to a member of the Rehab Team.

Tips and Tricks

Product reviews: Air Fryers, for safe and easy cooking

Cooking safely in the kitchen can be challenging when you are experiencing sight loss. However, there is equipment that can help. An air fryer is a tabletop electric cooker that's become very popular in recent years.

An air fryer is similar to an electric oven in the sense that it bakes and roasts, but the difference is its heating elements are accompanied by a very powerful fan. Air fryers bake food at a high temperature and meals come out super crispy in no time — and, most notably, with less oil than pan-fried or deep-fried food.

The taste and texture of air fried food is comparable to deep-fried food: crispy on the outside, juicy on the inside. Because you only use a tiny amount of oil, it's healthier than oily pan frying and minimal cleanup is needed. Most air fryer baskets and racks are dishwasher safe.

Our Rehabilitation Officer Cheryl Hilton has been in touch with several veterans who use air fryers. Some models were reported to be more difficult to use than others, but all users said that the air fryers reduced the risk of scalding or leaving food on an element by mistake.

Below, we discuss the features of three different air fryers, and share feedback from veterans who've used them.

Review #1: Tower Compact 1.5 litre air fryer



Key features: The Tower Compact is a simple design with just the default air fry function. It has a 30-minute timer and a dial to set the temperature. It has a red light on the front to show when it is switched on.

Our reviewer says:

“I found the Tower Compact easy to use and didn’t need to read the instruction manual: I could work out what to do. It has enabled me to eat freshly-made meals, instead of just microwaved meals.

“I did notice that I often must restart the machine once the 30-minute timer is up, and the food isn’t as cooked as I would like. I have found it very easy to use and it has enabled me to eat freshly made meals instead of just microwaved meals. I would have liked the machine to be slightly bigger and have two baskets instead of one.”

Review #2: Ninja Six-in-One air fryer



The Ninja Six-in-One air fryer

Key features:

The Ninja Six-in-One has 6 different functions: Air fryer, Maxi Crisp, Roast, Bake, Re-heat, and Dehydrate.

The Ninja Six-in-One has a big bright digital screen, with easy-to-use dials for switching between functions. It comes with a recipe book. It is a healthier way to cook as uses up to 75 per cent less fat. It cooks up to 50 per cent quicker than fan ovens and reduces risk of burning.

Our reviewer says:

“I received the Ninja Six-in-One for Christmas and have used it to cook some meals. I did not find the instruction manual easy to follow, so have relied on family support to demonstrate the machine. I am sometimes reluctant to try new things with the machine in case I do it wrong.

“But, the more I use this air fryer, the better it is. I have used the ‘air fry’ function the most, along with the “maxi crisp” function for chicken and chips. I also use the roast function for potatoes and other meats. I haven’t tried baking yet or using the de-hydrate functions. I think it is well worth the money and is far better than my previous machine.”

Review #3: The Ninja Eleven-in-One air fryer



Key features: This machine has 11 different functions. There is an on/off button, and a dial for different functions. This machine has a bright digital display screen and the font is very large, size 40. When the machine is switched on, it defaults back to the most-used function. It has up and down arrows for temperature and up and down arrows for time.

When it has finished its cooking cycle, the lid stays locked until the internal temperature and steam is at a safe temperature. If the lid is left closed, the machine will automatically switch to keep warm mode. The machine does come with some accessory dishes, and others can be purchased online.

Our reviewer says:

“Before I got the Ninja 11-in-1 air fryer, I had given up cooking because I found it too stressful. I was constantly worried about fires or burning myself.

“Since having the 11-in-1 Ninja, I’m cooking with the air fryer again. I’ve cooked a roaster dinner with the air fryer, and I’ve been baking again after buying some extra accessories from the Ninja website.”

- If you are interested in learning more about an air fryer, and whether this could be right for you, please contact the Rehabilitation team by calling 0800 035 6409.

Get Involved

You can play in a bowls league for veterans with vision impairment

Veterans with sight loss, just like you, are playing in our new lawn bowls team that competes in Vision Impairment Bowling league matches all over Scotland.

Team members don't have to travel across the country: team members come together to play bowls games in their local area. The leagues we are playing in are specifically for people who experience sight loss, so you won't be out of your depth.



Pictured on the opposite page are veterans who recently played in Edinburgh at Jessfield Bowling Club in Portobello. The Edinburgh team was made up of Mike Britton, 74 from Danderhall, Jocky Elliot, 75 from Bonnyrigg, Bert Farrer, 91 from Edinburgh and Jan Gwyn, 78 from Edinburgh. The team played five round robin matches over two days.

Jan, who has macular degeneration, said she greatly enjoyed the day.

Jan (pictured in the middle of the previous photo) said: "I am not a great bowler, but everyone has been helping me, including players from the other teams, and I can feel myself getting better already. It has been great fun and it is just nice to be out in the fresh air, meeting new people and having fun."

We have 15 veterans on the team so far, and we'd love you to join too.

Jason Duncan, Veterans Community Lead at Sight Scotland Veterans, explains: "This is a great opportunity for all our veterans to become part of a competitive team. You don't need to be a fantastic bowler to join, as although it is competitive the matches are just as much about camaraderie, making new friends and getting out in the fresh air and enjoying yourself.

"We are looking for more bowlers to join from all over Scotland: currently our team is predominantly made up of players from the Edinburgh area and up in Dundee."

“Bowling is a fantastic sport for veterans with sight loss to get involved in, as all ages can play and enjoy it. It is great for independence, mobility, fitness and is very social.

“You can see already here at Jessfield Bowling Club that our players are meeting other people with vision impairment, who they are chatting with. They are helping each other and making friends. It is great for people’s mental health.

“Please, if anyone is interested in joining the team, you can call our helpline, and we will get you signed up.”

- You can call our Sight Loss Information Line on 0800 035 6409 if you are interested in playing in a Sight Scotland Veterans’ Bowling team. We can find upcoming matches that are the nearest to you and find a way for you to get involved.

Creative Corner

The Linburn Burns Big Thanks

By RAF veteran David Innes

Introduction

A've been to many a Burns Nicht, and the programme is usually the same, there's the address to the haggis and all the trimmings, speeches. A Burns song then mibe a game.

The haggis comes in many guises traditionally a sheep's stomach, but modern ones are synthetic skin but in Brazil they served our haggis sent from Scotland in a tin. But surely Linburn takes the prize for they hid haggis in wee Scotch pies.

But how can you address a haggis? When you canny see what's there, but from the wee hole in the top some of the contents seep, so I tasted it and aye it was haggis but mixed up wi tatties and neeps. A pie crust might be quite hard and I would surly look a fool if it broke ma knife when I stabbed the beast, so mibe we'll use a stronger tool. What Burns would say we do nit know, but with apologies to him Ill have a go,

So here goes...

Poem: The Linburn Burns Big Thanks

By David Innes

Fair fa yer honest wee pie face

Yer lack o size is no disgrace

But a canny call ye chieftan

And yer certainly no the puddin' race

With apologies to the national bard

I'll give it a go, so listen hard!

His ake see veterans raised up high and smash it doon oan that
wee pie,

He's made richt sure that haggis is deid while bits o pie fly our his
heid,

Then doon he sat with knife and fork, then gamely he set doon to
work

To clear the meal from off his plate, but had to admit that he was
beat — and left it for a hard bit underneath was just too much for
his new false teeth.

But then he was offered a nice wee treat, a choice wi yoghurt for
his sweet.

John sitting next covered his pie in tomato relish just in case the
taste was (not to his liking).

Somebuddy once wrote a song "The world has mony turns", but Derek kept reminding us "Ah dinnae like Burns".

We looked around when we heard bottles clink then Brian appeared wi the drinks,

But shouted "Folks just put away your lolly, for we have brought the Linburn trolley, and the drinks are free".

Then he and Lyndsey brought us a measure, tae hae a dram at lunchtime was an unexpected pleasure.

Then upspoke Lorna, "we are havin a quiz designed ti show just how much o' Scotland ye really don't know, so grab yer drinks and go next door while the staff that's left clean up this floor.

When settled doon it was agreed we'd have twa teams that the staff just made the first will go from here to there and the rest will need to think of a name, oh I know, 'The A team'.

But that raised a groan from the couch, this was from big Mike who said: "You've just said something I don't like".

"You said we were the first, so therefore, we must be Team A and the other gang can think again – then we'll start Lorna's game."

The questions and answers came thick and fast, but just in case there were some chancers, Eileen sat there with all the answers.

The fun and hilarity raged fast and furious, but this is where I find it curious, that at the end the scores didnae matter for we all enjoyed the laughs and patter.

It looks like the day is ended for you and me, so we'll go back through for our last cup o tea, then in rolled Big Steve:

"The time has come for you to leave, that's it there is no more and your transport's sitting at the door.

"It could just be we've had enough of your banter and cheek, but we still look forward to seeing you all next week".

But wait, there's lots o' folk I didnae mention and we're very grateful for their care and attention, they kid us on with smiles and chaff, I refer of course to our brilliant staff!

So this now gives an easy call, for we thank them, one and all.

Big thanks, from David.

Sight Scotland Veterans Updates

One telephone number for all our services: 0800 035 6409

Our freephone number, 0800 035 6409, is the number to dial for all our services. You can call for advice and information. You can call to reach your assigned Independent Living Worker. Or you can book a visit from an expert Rehabilitation Officer, who can advise on equipment that could help you.

You can call also our freephone number for additional services too, including:

- Telephone conversation groups, for entertainment and discussion – read more below.
- Sports activities for people with vision loss – read about bowls on page 33.
- Financial info and concessions you could receive – read more on page 43.

Telephone conversation groups for you to join

Across Scotland, veterans have been dialling in for great conversations over the phone, in our Hub telephone groups.

Our Hub telephone group sessions are free to all, and have all sorts of topics. You are invited to join the Hub sessions and can call us for more information on 0800 035 6409.

The Hub sessions are a way to come together, chat with others and enjoy the good vibe on the calls. It's being at home, yet still being able to meet and mix with friends.

Recent topics have been: Quizzes, current events, music from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and chats about history, such as World War II and other historical events. You could also listen to short stories, or learn about a sight condition.

We are all ears for ideas, so please give us a call and let us know what you're interested in.

Also: if you've got a computer, are you interested in joining us for an online activity session? We are working on ideas and would love to hear from people who would be interested. Our team are here to create activities that you enjoy.

Just call us on 0800 035 6409 and ask for our hub telephone team.

Meet the team running the Hub telephone groups

You might've been on a Quiz call, or you might've listened to a talk on a fascinating topic over the phone. But who are the genies behind the scenes, running the call?

Well, the genies running our telephone groups are Joe Ingram and Donna McIntyre, who we are delighted to introduce. Joe and Donna are our new Digital Activity Workers.

Joe Ingram:

Joe lives in Perthshire, but is originally from Coventry, which you might hear in his accent. A father of one, Joe has visual impairment himself. He has worked in I.T. and marketing and is passionate about the Japanese martial art of Judo. In fact, Joe competed on the world stage in the under 100-kilogram division, and won a silver medal in 2010, at the International Blind Sport Association's Judo World Championships in Turkey. He also competed at the London 2012 Paralympic Games and made it to a semifinal. Many congratulations to him for his efforts.

Joe said: "I think Judo for the visually impaired is an amazing sport. Judo is accessible to me – there's no kicking or punching. I became quite obsessed with it and so did my brother."

These days, Joe takes his son to Judo lessons.

"I go with my son every Saturday and we love it," he said.

Donna McIntyre:

Donna is from Barrhead and had worked at the Hawkhead Centre since 2018 as a Support Worker. She has previously helped people find employment, working at a Jobcentre. Donna loves to travel, and visited her granddaughter in Perth, Australia earlier this year.

Donna said: "We made a trip to Bali too and went to this town which had monkeys everywhere. The monkeys were climbing on everything and covered the roofs."

If you'd like to find out more about our groups, just give us a call on 0800 035 6409.

Sight Scotland Veterans Updates

Financial information and wellbeing

People's financial situations can change, particularly when conditions like sight loss have an impact. Sometimes, it's a good idea to ask for help. Our specialist Financial Wellbeing service is here to offer you information and guidance on financial matters. We can tell you about concessions you can access, too.

Our Financial Wellbeing Service is led by Sue McKay, Financial Wellbeing Lead (pictured below).



The Financial Wellbeing Service provides personalised advice on:

- Grants you may be eligible for (turn to the next page)
- Benefits you might be able to receive.
- Budgeting.
- Concessions you can access, such as travel cards that significantly reduce the cost of public transport, or a concession of 50 per cent of the cost of a TV licence.
- The tax-free Blind Person's Allowance. The Blind Person's Allowance is added to your yearly Personal Allowance – the amount of money you can earn before you start paying Income Tax.

You are very welcome to call our Financial Wellbeing service and speak with us, confidentially, about any of the above.

Just call 0800 035 6409 and we can arrange for Sue McKay, our Financial Wellbeing Lead, to get in touch

New grants you could receive

You might be eligible to receive financial assistance from us in the form of a grant. There are five types of grant available. These grants exist to help people impacted by sight loss, like you, so please give us a call if you'd like to learn more – you may be eligible to receive this support. Every grant will be considered on an individual basis, so the result of one application doesn't impact any future decisions.

Types of grant we are offering:

1. **Sight Loss Equipment Grant:**

For white goods and brown goods such as televisions or radios, or digital equipment that helps you do the things you love.

2. **Sight Loss Independence Grant:**

For house repairs or adaptations.

3. **Sight Loss Community Links:**

Support to engage with local community activities, such as sporting equipment or membership joining fees.

4. **Sight Loss Urgent Support Grant:**

Support to help veterans in urgent situations where no other option is available.

5. **Winter Warmer:**

Seasonal grants to help you stay warm at home. We'll be in contact about this Winter Warmer grant again closer to winter.

Examples of financial assistance making a difference

Here are three examples of how our Financial Wellbeing Service could help someone like you:

Mr A has always enjoyed chess, and when he moved to a new area, he found himself among fellow chess players. Due to his sight loss though, he was unable to see the board. Through our Financial Wellbeing service, we provided a grant for a chess set designed for people with visual impairments. This means Mr A is now able to pick up a much-loved hobby again and make connections with his new neighbours.

Mr B, an RAF veteran, has an electric stairlift in his home, but earlier this year, it broke down and was not repairable. His daughter approached us to ask for help, as this meant Mr B was unable to go upstairs to bed safely or use the bathroom. Our Financial Wellbeing service approved a grant for a new electric stairlift, which was quickly installed. Mr B is continuing to live at home and enjoy his independence.

Mr C, who served in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, uses a wheelchair to go out. Mr C's local authority supplied a manual wheelchair, but he lives at the top of a steep hill, which he can't traverse in the manual wheelchair. To help, our Financial Wellbeing service funded a powerpack to be used with the wheelchair, making it operate like an electric wheelchair. This makes it much easier for Mr C to maintain his independence and get out and about with his partner.

- Any questions about financial matters? Please don't hesitate to call 0800 035 6409 and ask to speak with our Financial Wellbeing Service.

Sight Scotland Veterans Updates

Policy team keeping vision impairment on decision-makers' minds

Sight Scotland Veterans' Policy team has been raising awareness of vision impairment issues with MSPs and decision-makers.

Meeting with MSPs and political parties is a key way of doing this. Face-to-face conversations and ongoing discussions help to remind policymakers of the impact that having a vision impairment has on access to public services. This keeps eye health issues in consideration when the Scottish Government and political parties are developing health policies.

We recently held information stalls at Scottish political party conferences. We spoke with MSPs, such as Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar and Shadow Health spokesperson for Scottish Labour, Jackie Baillie MSP, at the Scottish Labour Party conference in February. At the Scottish Conservative Party's conference in April, we spoke with MSPs such as Scottish Conservative Party MSP Miles Briggs, who is a member of the Cross-Party Group on Visual Impairment in the Scottish Parliament.

In June, we were pleased to be invited by Meghan Gallacher MSP to attend an event at the Scottish Parliament on protecting war memorials. Two veterans who we support attended, alongside our Policy Lead, our Head of Wellbeing, and a Centre Officer.

We will continue highlighting the issues facing people impacted by vision impairment and hope to work with many of these MSPs in the coming months.

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

**We promise to keep your information
safe and will never sell or swap your
details. If you change your mind about
receiving newsletters, please email**

**hello@sightscotlandveterans.org.uk
or call 0800 035 6409**



**Sight Scotland
Veterans**

Tackling vision loss together