

# Westminster Abbey



## A Service of Thanksgiving to mark the Centenary of Blind Veterans UK



Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Noon



# Historical Note

## The early years

Blind Veterans UK began life in January 1915 in response to the significant numbers already returning blinded from the battlefields of the First World War. Our founder and first Chairman, Arthur Pearson (later Sir Arthur Pearson GBE), had lost his sight through glaucoma but was determined that he and other blind people should continue to live an independent and fulfilling life. He envisaged that those who had lost their sight in the war should, after being discharged from hospital, come together to spend time in what Pearson described as ‘...a little world where the things which blind men cannot do were forgotten and where everyone was concerned with what blind men can do.’

Formed as the Blinded Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Care Committee, it soon became generally known as St Dunstan’s after moving to a large property of that name in Regent’s Park, London. The blind veterans were trained to read and write Braille, and to type, and were offered a variety of occupational training of their choosing, including mat-making, poultry farming, physiotherapy, and telephony. There was also ample opportunity for social activities, including talks, music, and dancing. Sport was another important part of rehabilitation for many, with rowing, running, and a form of football being amongst the most popular activities.

After spending what was usually several months in Regent’s Park, each blind veteran would typically then return to living with their family as they had done before the war, and to start work in the occupation for which they had been newly trained. This would not, however, be the end of their association with the charity: there would be regular contact through home visits, which ensured that ongoing support was provided to each person and their family. In addition, further training could be provided when necessary, and less formally there remained opportunities to join with the other blind veterans for social activities and sporting engagements. Pearson’s distinctive, holistic approach and commitment to lifelong support remains at the core of how Blind Veterans UK supports ex-service men and women today.

## Changes in leadership

Sir Arthur Pearson tragically died in a domestic accident in 1921, aged only fifty-five. His successor as Chairman was Captain Ian Fraser (later Lord Fraser of Lonsdale CH CBE), who had been blinded at the Battle of the Somme. Fraser had already been placed in charge of the charity's 'aftercare' (now welfare) work and he became Chairman at the age of only twenty-four years. He remained in this post for fifty-three years and was a huge influence on the charity. Fraser was particularly interested in technological innovation and, working with the Royal National Institute for the Blind, played a crucial role in the development of talking books. His leadership also saw the charity successfully navigate new challenges, including the influx of many new blind veterans from the Second World War and subsequent conflicts, the opening of a new centre at Brighton, and collaborating with other organisations to help the wider blind community, including internationally. He also encouraged the engagement of blind veterans with the work of the charity, both on a voluntary basis and as members of staff. Fraser's legacy can be seen in our work today: for example, international collaboration continues through our Project Gemini exchange programme, and there are several blind veterans amongst our staff.

## Brighton and the 'annexes'

The end of the First World War did not see an end to those joining as a consequence of serving in it: a decline in eyesight over time, the delayed effects of exposure to gas or a previous lack of awareness of the charity meant that an influx continued for many years. However, by 1927 incoming numbers were such that it was no longer necessary for the training to remain in London, and so it moved to Brighton, with Regent's Park remaining solely as the administrative headquarters. Brighton had already long been an important place for the charity: a house had been opened there only a few weeks after its founding, and from 1917 it occupied a larger property in the Kemp Town area of the city. This was one of a number of regional centres, or 'annexes' as they were then known, that Blind Veterans UK has used during the course of its history at places including Torquay, Blackpool, and North Berwick. In addition to providing training and social activities, they have variously served to provide holidays, a healthy (often seaside) environment for those needing longer-term rehabilitation, a permanent home for elderly blind veterans, and care for those who sadly have suffered with severe mental or physical health problems in addition to their loss of sight.

In the 1930s it became apparent that a larger and more modern building was needed, and this resulted in what is still our centre at Ovingdean, Brighton, opening in 1938. The work of architect Francis Lorne, it is believed to be unique in being purpose-built for blind people who themselves had input into its design and functions. A striking six-storey Art Deco building of steel and brick, from a distance it looked like an aeroplane. Each floor was almost identical, with straight passages and rounded corners, and the stairs had self-closing swing gates. A scale model of the building was produced, so that newcomers could learn the size, shape and relative positions of the rooms and corridors. Later extensions and redevelopments have expanded its scope and range of activities, including a large arts and crafts room, a swimming pool, and improved accommodation. Our two other current centres followed much later: Sheffield opened in 2005, and Llandudno in 2011.

### The Second World War and later conflicts

The new centre at Brighton had been open only for a short time when the Second World War broke out, and it soon became too dangerous to remain. In 1940, the existing blind veterans and the incomers from the new war went to the town of Church Stretton in Shropshire, remaining there until 1946. Many of the men from the First World War helped to teach the new men and women.

After the Second World War, further military engagements meant that blinded ex-service men and women continued to join us, including from Korea, Kenya, Suez, Northern Ireland, the Falklands, the Gulf War, the Balkans conflicts, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

### A change of constitution and a new name

In 2000 the decision was taken to widen the remit of the charity to take in all those who had served and lost their sight, irrespective of the cause. In 2012, our name changed to Blind Veterans UK, and a new campaign, No One Alone, was launched in order to reach out to more veterans. By 2015, the level of those newly entering the charity was at a record high. Over our 100 years, we have helped over 15,000 blind veterans and given assistance to more than 20,000 family members.

Members of the congregation are kindly requested to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are switched off.

The church is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The service is sung by the Westminster Abbey Special Service Choir, conducted by James O'Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers.

The organ is played by Daniel Cook, Sub-Organist.

Music before the service:

Martin Ford, Assistant Organist, plays music written by blind composers of the French Romantic school:

Mors et resurrectio Op 5 no 1	Jean Langlais (1907–91)
Lamento Op 7 no 2	Augustin Barié (1883–1915)
Etoile du soir Op 54 no 3	Louis Vierne (1870–1937)
Cathédrales Op 55 no 3	Louis Vierne

The Lord Mayor of Westminster is received and conducted to her place in Quire. All stand, and then sit.

Hymns covered by Christian Copyright Licensing (Europe) Ltd are reproduced under CCL no 1040271.

# Order of Service

All stand. The Choir sings

## The Introit

Exultate Deo, adjutori nostro: jubilate Deo Jacob.

Sumite psalmum, et date tympanum: psalterium jucundum, cum cithara.

Buccinate in neomenia tuba: insigni die solemnitatis vestrae.

Sing merrily to God our strength: shout for joy to the God of Jacob.

Take up the song and sound the timbrel: the tuneful lyre with the harp.

Blow the trumpet in the new moon: as at the full moon, upon your solemn feast day.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c 1525–94)

Psalm 81: 1–3

All remain standing. The Choir and Clergy move to their places in the Quire and Sacrarium, and standards are borne by representatives from the Blind Veterans UK centres in Brighton, Llandudno, and Sheffield, during which all sing

## The Hymn



Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty;  
hold me with thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven,  
feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain  
whence the healing stream doth flow;  
let the fiery cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through:  
strong Deliverer,  
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side:  
songs of praises  
I will ever give to thee.

Cwm Rhondda 368 NEH  
John Hughes (1873–1932)

William Williams (1717–91)  
translated by Peter Williams (1727–96)  
and others

All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster,  
says

## The Bidding

Westminster Abbey, this great church, here for over a thousand years, representing the beauty and power of almighty God at the heart of our national life, welcomes us to explore the goodness and love of God. Today we come to give thanks to God for a hundred years of loving care for veterans who have been blinded in a century of conflicts. We give thanks for the courage and strength of those for whom blindness is not a crippling disability but a condition of life and for the support that helps them triumph. On entering the Abbey we passed a sculpture depicting men newly blinded in battle making progress with a hand on the shoulder of the one in front. We listen now to a solo violin playing music written for this service entitled 'Reach your hand to my shoulder'.

Reach your hand to my shoulder

Alastair Caplin (b 1986)

The Dean continues:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ came to give sight to the blind, inner sight to those who lacked understanding and strength to the fearful, open our hearts to know and our minds to see the power of thy love, working over the past hundred years through Blind Veterans UK, and receive our thankful prayers for those who carry forward the work in our own generation, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit now and for ever. Amen.

All sit. David Dimbleby, broadcaster, introduces

## An Audio Collage of Testimonies

All remain seated. Billy Baxter, Rehabilitation Training Liaison Officer, Blind Veterans UK, reads

### Psalm 145: 1–16

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name for ever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and praise your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendour of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness. They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made. All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your faithful shall bless you. They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power, to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendour of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds. The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

The Choir sings

## The Anthem

O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord all the whole earth.  
Sing unto the Lord and praise his Name: be telling of his salvation from day  
to day.

For he cometh to judge the earth: and with righteousness to judge the world,  
and the people with his truth.

James MacMillan (b 1959)

Psalm 96: 1–2, 13

All remain seated. Barbara Windsor MBE, actor, reads

## Romans 8: 31–end

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All stand to sing

## The Hymn



I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,  
entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love:  
the love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,  
that lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;  
the love that never falters, the love that pays the price,  
the love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,  
most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;  
we may not count her armies, we may not see her King;  
her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;  
and soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,  
and her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.

Thaxted 295 AMNS  
Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

Cecil Spring-Rice (1859–1918)

## The Address

by

The Dean

All remain seated. The Choir sings

## The Anthem

Let all the world in every corner sing,  
my God and King!

The heavens are not too high,  
his praise may thither fly;  
the earth is not too low,  
his praises there may grow.  
Let all the world in every corner sing,  
my God and King!

The Church with psalms must shout,  
no door can keep them out;  
but above all the heart  
must bear the longest part.  
Let all the world in every corner sing,  
my God and King!

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)  
from Five Mystical Songs

George Herbert  
(1593–1633)

All kneel or remain seated. The Reverend Christopher Stoltz, Minor Canon  
and Precentor of Westminster, introduces

## The Prayers

In thanksgiving to almighty God for the work of Blind Veterans UK, and for  
all men and women who have served their country, let us pray.

Let us give thanks for the commitment of those who laid the foundations of  
Blind Veterans UK a century ago, and for those who support and direct its  
work today. Let us pray for God's wisdom and grace as the charity seeks  
to support future generations of service men and women.

Lord, in your mercy,  
hear our prayer.

Timothy Davis, Chairman, Blind Veterans UK, says:

Let us give thanks for the peace for which so many here today have paid such a heavy price. Let us pray for peace of the whole world and especially for the life of this nation: for Elizabeth our Queen, for her government, and for all who give themselves to public service.

Lord, in your mercy,  
hear our prayer.

Ben Smith, member, Blind Veterans UK, assisted by Christopher Smith, says:

Let us give thanks for individuals and organisations dedicated to supporting those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit, and especially as a result of violence and war. Let us pray for all whose vocations move them to consider the needs of others before their own in offering comfort, healing, and support.

Lord, in your mercy,  
hear our prayer.

Michael Maddox, volunteer, Blind Veterans UK, says:

Let us give thanks for the Church, and for the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation which we experience in fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us pray for the renewal of the Church in her witness to God's mercy, and in her mission to reveal Christ's generous heart of love.

Lord, in your mercy,  
hear our prayer.

Father Ian Evans QHC CF, Assistant Chaplain General & Corps Colonel Royal Army Chaplains' Department, says:

O God, our creator and our life, you have fashioned us as your people, and you love all that you have made. We thank you for the blessings you give us, for healing and wholeness, and for the invitation to share in your abundant life. Bless the work of Blind Veterans UK, its leaders, and all who find health and hope through its service, and finally draw us to yourself in that heavenly kingdom where death and crying are no more, and where we shall see you face to face; through him who is the resurrection and the life, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Blind Veterans UK Prayer

The Reverend Professor Vernon White, Canon in Residence, says:

Let us give thanks for all who have gone before us and who, by their life and example, have inspired us and strengthened us in our time of need, and as we remember them, let us also pray that God in his mercy would keep them.

Gwawr Edwards, soprano, sings:

Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis sempiternam requiem.

Holy Lord Jesu, grant them everlasting rest.

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)  
from Requiem in D minor Op 48

The Precentor concludes:

In joyful anticipation of Christ's promise to bring to perfection his whole creation, let us pray with confidence as he has taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

All stand to sing

## The Hymn

And did those feet in ancient time  
walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
on England's pleasant pastures seen?  
And did the countenance divine  
shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!  
I will not cease from mental fight,  
nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
till we have built Jerusalem  
in England's green and pleasant land.

Jerusalem 488 NEH  
Hubert Parry (1848–1918)

William Blake (1757–1827)

All remain standing. The Dean pronounces

### The Blessing

Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. The Lord bless and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

All sing

### The National Anthem

God save our gracious Queen,  
long live our noble Queen,  
God save The Queen.  
Send her victorious,  
happy, and glorious,  
long to reign over us:  
God save The Queen.

Music after the service:

All remain standing as the procession moves to the west end of the church.

Members of the congregation are requested to remain in their places until invited to move by the Stewards.

The bells of the Abbey Church are rung.









---

Printed by  
Barnard & Westwood Ltd  
23 Pakenham Street, London WC1X 0LB  
By Appointment to HM The Queen, Printers and Bookbinders  
& HRH The Prince of Wales, Printers  
Printers to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster

---