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The Duke of Westminster (right) presents Alex Stringer (left) with his sculpture by Frances Segelman (centre)



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Busts, boasts and business as usual at Blesma's AGM

This year's AGM was held in London on 28 June. As well as the 'usual' business of the Trustees' Annual and Strategic Report 2014, Members and distinguished guests were told that challenges still remain to maintain progress and keep public support.

The Chairman told the audience that the end of combat operations in Afghanistan in 2014 had encouraged a feeling of 'job done' among sections of the public. But, he stressed, it was vital for Blesma to maintain public engagement and goodwill. He added that Blesma would always be characterised by the comradeship of shared experiences and the drive towards maximum self-sufficiency by helping one another.

There were presentations from Members. Dave Henson spoke about how he rebuilt his life, captaining the Great Britain team at last year's Invictus Games, and studying for a PhD in Biomedical Engineering at Imperial College, London, where he is studying advanced developments in

prosthetic limbs. Owen Pick spoke about his snowboarding career and thanked Blesma for the crucial support that has seen him rise up the rankings in just two years to be on target for a place competing in the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. "If I'm going, I'm coming back with gold," he pledged.

In an impassioned speech, Blesma's National President, the Duke of Westminster, outlined his vision for the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall. Further details of the ambitious project will be announced in September, but the Duke's commitment to creating a legacy shone through in his address.

The Duke also made several presentations at the AGM (see separate story on p09) including a bust of Alex Stringer sculpted by Frances Segelman which he presented to the 24-year-old former Royal Logistic Corps soldier who lost three limbs in an IED explosion when just 20 years old.

Introduction



When I last wrote, we were looking forward to the Members' Weekend. Since then, it has happened, we had no rooms left and the reports are mostly positive. The dates are set for next year; 04-06 June 2016. It will have a similar format and will once again take place in the Midlands. We are going to book more rooms but I suggest you register early. The current issue of Blesma Magazine gives you the full flavour.

Please let us know what you think of the *Living With Limb Loss* leaflets, especially thinking back to when you first joined Blesma. We will look to evolve the series with your help. Another development is the NHS Limb Centre Survey. We have more to do on this but the results will influence our business, both for individual Member advocacy and for provision more widely. We can only help those who let us know they need it, so please get in touch if the Service is not getting it right for you.

We have a new Support Officer for London and Kent, Paul Findlay, a younger Member, and recruiting is underway for a Support Officer in the north; this gives us the capacity to build ever closer relationships across Blesma and with other parties, such as the national health services.

Blesma Week was very successful and lots of Members got involved. Wouldn't it be great to have 100 Blesma BBQs next year! This was followed by our AGM in London, and the Duke of Westminster, our National President, kindly joined us and spoke about his plans for the new Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall. The development of this Centre will be vital to Blesma and we will help where we can add value. The Duke also presented the Hambro Award to Sam Gallop for his long-standing commitment to improving the lives of the disabled.

Enjoy the Summer and do think about attending Members' Weekend 2016.

Barry Le Grys, Chief Executive

Blesma Week 2015 was a great success!

The second Blesma Week, which took place from 01-07 June, was a towering success, with more than 100 events being run across the UK, raising more than £30,000 for the Association.

Activities included cake sales, football matches, gruelling sponsored runs and much, much more. The second annual Blesma Week highlighted the lengths that the public, as well as Members and their friends and families, will go to to support the Association.

JUST SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS

Member David Wild organised a family fun day at the Anchor Hotel in Darwen, Lancashire, that attracted more than 300 locals and raised £780. Elsewhere, a barbecue hosted by Member and Welfare Rep Steven Beasley at the Nag's Head in Hulland Ward, Derbyshire, raised £625.

Chief Executive Barry Le Grys found himself in an altogether much harsher environment on the Three Peaks Challenge which saw him climb the three highest mountains in the UK – Ben Nevis in Scotland, Scafell Pike in England, and Snowdon in Wales – in just 24 hours.

More than 200 people attended the annual garden party at the Blackpool Home including distinguished guests such as the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire and Home Patron, Lord Shuttleworth, who was accompanied by Lady Shuttleworth. Former England and Blackpool footballer-turned-radio commentator Jimmy Armfield was also there.

BSO (Prosthetics) Brian Chenier, Member Jez Scarratt and a team from Opcare even cycled 100 miles in a day, from Exeter to Bristol, raising more than £2,500.

Thank you to everyone who took part!

Chief Executive Barry Le Grys on his way to completing the Three Peaks Challenge



BLACKPOOL HOME

Home is where the art (and much more!) is

“Blackpool remains a hub of activity in 2015, having so far hosted Widows’ Weeks, Watercolour Painting courses, and all sorts of other activities for Members of all ages,” says Blackpool Home Manager, Jacqui Longden. “All the organised weeks have been thoroughly enjoyed by the membership and we have enjoyed meeting Members who have visited us for the first time.

“We have also provided accommodation for the various fundraising events that have taken place in the North West.”

Accommodation at Blackpool is available for all Members, whether for residential or nursing care, permanent or respite breaks, or for a holiday with your family in our fully adapted self-contained bungalow. We are now delighted to offer permanent residence to the Widows of Members.

The Blackpool Home continues to be represented throughout the North West at both social and military events, and our new fleet of transport is widely admired and easily identified nationally.

All the staff remain fully committed to providing quality care for the membership and can always be seen going the extra mile to help to ensure the extended family feeling is felt throughout.

For information about a stay at Blackpool contact Lesley or Caroline on 01253 343313. Blesma Widows seeking information about taking up permanent residence at the Home should contact their Area BSO or Jacqui Longden on 01253 343313

A giant leap for Blesma!

Mandi Grant, the daughter of a Blesma Member, has taken a 'leap of faith' with her first ever skydive to raise vital funds for Blesma and the Alzheimer's Society. Mandi has raised an incredible £500 for each of her chosen charities – far exceeding her target of £250 for each.

"My husband gave me the skydive as a gift for my birthday in February," said Mandi. "I have got to say that it was one of the best presents ever! I thought that it would be a great opportunity to raise some money for several charities. I wanted to raise funds for Blesma as my father is a Member. I also chose to fundraise for the Alzheimer's Society in memory of my very good friend, whose mother passed away before Christmas."

Blesma is now looking for people to take part in our next skydiving event, Fall for the Fallen, which will take place from 28-30 August at the Army Parachute Association in Wiltshire. Anyone interested in taking part should contact a member of the Fundraising Team on 020 8548 7089 or by emailing events@blesma.org

Nuclear Rush raises £11,000 for Association

On Saturday 16 May, 200 daredevils braved mountains of mud and more than 50 obstacles – including the world's longest monkey bars and the ominously named 'Death Slide' – on behalf of Blesma. The event has raised more than £11,000, with the Nuclear Races team making an additional donation of £5 per Blesma entry.

Nick Hart, Chief Executive of Nick's Tyres, who entered a team and raised more than £5,000 said; "My wife and daughter completed the Nuclear Race last year with our neighbours Julie and Rob Rusz. Rob mentioned what a great idea it would be to get a Blesma team together. Everyone we contacted agreed what a great cause it was and donated generously. Now we're looking forward to next year – I think!"

Competitor Nathan Jenner, who entered a team from SMB Engineering said; "SMB



Group's support for Blesma is a small token of appreciation for the sacrifice our Service men and women make for our country."

The next Nuclear Rush event takes place on Saturday 14 May 2016 at Kelvedon Hatch, Essex. Heavily loaded with more than 50 man-made and natural obstacles, there are two race distances available to run on the day: 12km and 6km. Whether you enter as an individual or a team, you won't be alone, with more than 300 Blesma supporters of all ages, backgrounds and athletic abilities taking part. No man (or, indeed, woman) will be left behind on this exhilarating, challenging and fun course!

Anyone interested in taking part in Nuclear Rush 2016 should contact Laura in the Fundraising Team on 020 8548 7089 or at events@blesma.org. Our thanks go to everyone who entered the event, and to the Nuclear Races team for supporting Blesma.



Get your ducks in a row for a serious race this Summer!

One thousand plastic ducks will race on the River Avon on Monday 31 August in support of Blesma. Organised by Blesma Member Andy Derry, the annual Great Amesbury Duck Race is a major event on the Blesma calendar, and is set to be a great day out for all the family.

"The event is open to members of the public and is free to attend," says Andy. "It will only cost £3 to sponsor a duck in the race and there are some fantastic prizes up for grabs!"

To sponsor a duck, simply send a cheque made payable to Blesma (£3 per duck) along with your name and contact number to; The Duck Race, Blesma Fundraising Team, 185-187 High Road, Chadwell Heath, Essex RM6 6NA. The first duck to cross the finish line will win a cash prize, and winners will be announced on the day.

The event is being held on the banks of the River Avon in Amesbury, Wiltshire, and ducks will 'set sail' at 3pm. For more information, please contact Laura in the Fundraising Team on 020 8548 7089.

CALLING ALL MEMBERS!

GOT A STORY YOU WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE IN THE NEXT BULLETIN?

PLEASE EMAIL: doms@blesma.org

The latest news in prosthetics

Brian Chenier is BSO (Prosthetics). Here, he updates us on his work over the last few months...

WHEELCHAIR CAMPAIGN UPDATE

In the Spring Edition, I wrote about the National Wheelchair Leadership Alliance and the work of the group continues. In January, the Wheelchair Leadership Alliance held its inaugural meeting, chaired by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson.

This group is focused on building the “Right Chair, Right Time, Right Now” campaign, creating a wheelchair charter and calling for concerted action by the different stakeholder groups across England to make a difference to the experience of people who use wheelchairs.

You can get involved in the work and share your ideas by contacting the Alliance via email at wheelchairs@nhs.uk or on twitter via @rightwheelchair or @Tanni_GT using #MyWheelchair.

BLESMA LEAFLETS

In the Spring Bulletin I also mentioned that Blesma had been working on a series of information leaflets for Members. The leaflets are available to read and download on the website at www.blesma.org/leaflets, while hard copies can be requested by contacting Membership Services at Chadwell Heath on 020 8590 1124 or by emailing memberadmin@blesma.org.

There are currently six leaflets covering; Introduction and General Information about Blesma, Amputation Explained, NHS Limb Service and Prosthetic Information, Phantom Limb Pain, Stump Care, and Wellbeing. The leaflets provide general information and will be updated or added to as required.

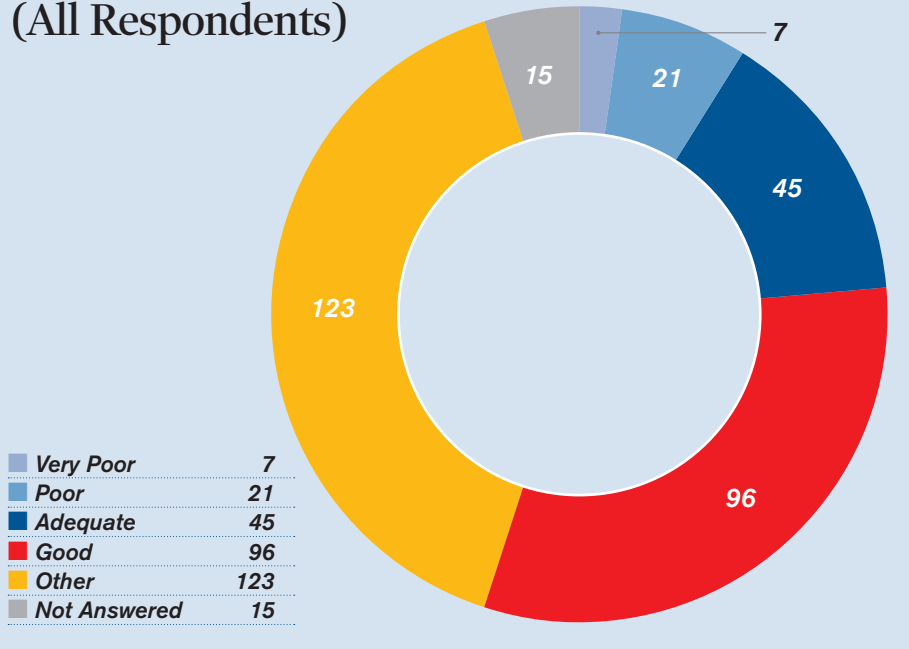
NHS LIMB CENTRE SURVEY

In Spring, a hard copy survey was sent to amputee Members to establish some baseline feedback on the NHS Limb Service. We would like to thank everyone who completed the survey and, from the 307 responses (19% return rate), we were able to gather some interesting data.

The majority of those who responded to the survey were 70 years of age or over (61%). The survey responses show an almost even split between amputation caused by Service and those whose amputations were caused by non-military related injury or illness.

In summary, the data collected tends to indicate that, for the majority of Blesma

How would you rate the service you receive from your Limb Centre? (All Respondents)



Members, the NHS Limb Service is providing them with a good to very good service, with prosthetic limbs following a similar trend. That said, nearly 10% felt that the NHS Limb Service was poor or very poor, and 15% felt that the prosthetic limb(s) they had were poor or very poor. If one were to map these figure across the amputee membership it might look like this example:

163 (10%) Members rated the Limb Service as poor or very poor and 244 (15%) Members rated their prosthetics as poor or very poor.

Getting it right for these Members will remain our focus. Meanwhile, feedback from some Members has shown that the use of digital media and the internet to distribute and complete the survey may help to broaden the respondents. With this in mind, and having seen that the survey in its current form is a useful gauge, an electronic version has been emailed to those for whom we hold an email address and it is now also available via social media.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Don't forget that I am here to assist and advise you on prosthetic, orthotic and mobility matters and, where necessary, provide direct support in your dealings with the NHS Limb Service. My role often requires me to be out of the office visiting

Limb Centres and attending meetings and conferences, so if you can't get hold of me directly please contact your Blesma Support Officer or the Membership Services Team at Chadwell Heath who will pass on any details.

I can be contacted directly on 020 8548 7080 or 07796 715908. Alternatively, you can email me at bsoprosthetics@blesma.org

NHS ENGLAND SPECIALISED COMMISSIONING OUTCOMES

As part of the Prosthetic Sub Group to the Complex Disability Equipment Clinical Commissioning Group, Blesma helped with the production of three policies for consideration by NHS England. The policies covered the proposed prescribing and funding of Micro Processor Controlled Knees, Multi-Function Hands and Hi Definition Silicone Cosmesis for NHS patients in England.

These policies were considered alongside many other competing priorities and, unfortunately, the three prosthetic related submissions were not adopted by the NHS England board. This means that NHS Limb Centres in England will not be able to routinely prescribe a Micro Processor knee, or Multi-Function hand or Hi Definition Silicone Cosmesis. Although this is disappointing, we understand that

PROSTHETICS

in individual cases, where there is a clinical need, an Individual Funding Request (IFR) can now be made for such items, as was the case prior to April 2013. This avenue to funding had become effectively closed during the period policies were being written. It is important to understand that for an IFR to be considered the case must be deemed as 'exceptional'. This means that your clinician must be able to show that either you or the outcomes you will achieve are an exception when considered against the needs and outcomes of others.

As part of the Prosthetic Sub Group, Blesma will continue to work with others to re-work the policies ready for a possible review in the Autumn for implementation this Winter if subsequently adopted.

If you have any questions about this please contact me using the details on the previous page.



USER GROUPS TELL US HOW PROUD THEY ARE

In previous editions of this Bulletin we have talked about the role and impact of

User Groups or Patient Led Groups. Quite rightly, that has prompted some to make us aware of their achievements.

Nottingham Mobility Centre User Group is justifiably proud to have been awarded The Limbless Association 'User or Support Group Award 2014'. The award was presented in December last year by Stuart Holt, a Blesma Member and Co-Chair of the Limbless Association. The award was accepted by Angela Knifton.

On another note, Blesma Member Colin Fry is standing down as the Blesma Rep for the Harold Wood LTCC User Group. Colin has served on the group for nearly 10 years and will be difficult to replace. Everyone at the group wishes him well and will miss his no-nonsense approach. Colin remains a great advocate in the area for Blesma and he will no doubt continue to support the group in other ways.

NEWS ROUND-UP

Armed Forces Day is a great success

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to represent Blesma on Armed Forces Day. We had stalls across the country, including at the National Memorial Arboretum (pictured below) where Members and volunteers raised funds and awareness to support our work.

The main event, which was held in Guildford on Saturday 27 June, attracted nearly 30,000 people, who enjoyed thrilling displays and live entertainment throughout the day. The main attraction on the Blesma stand was our wonderful face painter Claire Guest, as well as Mike Hollis with his Army Tribute Bike.

"We were delighted that so many people got involved and we hope to build on the success of this year's Armed Forces Day in 2016," said Frank Garside, National Volunteer Officer, who coordinated this year's activities.

A special thank you to the volunteer team from Irwin Mitchell who helped to make the Guildford event such a success!



Vodafone gives its support to the Armed Forces community

As part of their "Giving Something Back" initiative, Vodafone signed up to the Corporate Covenant – a voluntary pledge businesses make to show support for the Armed Forces community. As part of the initiative, employees are encouraged to give three days' volunteering a year to causes close to their hearts, to raise funds on behalf of Forces and ex-Forces charities and to join a Give As You Earn scheme.

National Volunteer Officer Frank Garside, along with Members John Phillips, John Reeves and Brendan West were invited to Vodafone's Bracknell Headquarters to give a talk to staff and raise funds through a raffle and cake sale.

Thanks go to Shaun Phillips, Vodafone Field Services Manager, and all those who helped on the day, especially his wife Carole in her QARANC uniform who persuaded staff to buy cakes and raffle tickets. Their efforts raised £1,500 on the day and, just as importantly, the awareness of our charity.

A seriously good idea to make you smile

"My name is Allan Green and I am an amputee of 30 years' standing – if you will pardon the pun!

"I am compiling a book of anecdotes relating to amputees and I really need your help. Like me, you may have had amusing experiences because of your amputation and, if so, I would love to hear your stories.

"My aim is to share that humour and use it to help prospective and new amputees, as well as their families, to hopefully see the future in a better light.

"Should the book be successful all profits will go to charities such as Blesma and Help for Heroes. I am also looking for someone to draw the cartoons to illustrate the anecdotes. Any offers?

"I really want this book to be by amputees, about amputees and for amputees and their families. Your help would be greatly appreciated."

Get in touch with Allan by email at allangreen372@hotmail.co.uk or by calling him on 01895 713316 or 07852 741895

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE BULLETIN?

Do you find this issue of the Bulletin interesting and useful? Is there a particular type of story you would like to see in future issues? Email doms@blesma.org and let us know

Action-packed weeks for all

WIDOWS' WEEK

08-14 APRIL 2015

To those who attend it might only be one week in the Spring, but for the Blesma Support Officers who run the event planning starts weeks in advance, in the depths of Winter!

This year was no exception since Peter Shields, BSO (NE and Scotland) and Steve Fraser, BSO (SW) held their planning meeting and recce way back in February.

“Our main aim during the recce was to plan a week with a variety of activities and trips that would appeal to the ladies,” said Peter. “This can prove tricky given the number of years that we have been organising these events, as the ladies have seen, shopped and eaten in most of the attractions within striking distance of Blackpool! However, I think we achieved our aim, which was to provide the ladies with an interesting and varied programme that was both stimulating and enjoyable.”

The week's programme got off to a sociable start during the first evening with a small libation (for medicinal purposes, of course!) and nibbles in the Home as the ladies renewed old friendships and welcomed new friends. The socialising continued the following day when the ladies enjoyed a cup of coffee at the Home coffee morning, organised by Blesma widow and stalwart Beatrice Law, followed by a post-lunch trip to the Barton Grange Garden Centre before returning to the Home in time to get 'glammed up' for a night at the Grand Theatre Blackpool to see Sunset Boulevard.

The following five days were a blur of trips, retail therapy and relaxing in the Home. The first trip was to Port Sunlight Village, the brainchild of William Lever, a self-made man, who built a village around his factory for his workers. A hospital, school and other facilities soon followed, and although two thirds of the site is now in private ownership, the village remains the same in layout and is a joy to behold.

This was followed by a lazy start to Saturday before heading off for another old favourite – Botany Bay Mill – where some retail therapy, followed by lunch, was undertaken before returning to the Home for the in-house cabaret organised by the girls in the office. Sunday morning's time off was followed by an evening's trip to Seniors Fish and Chip restaurant before returning to the Home via the Farmers Pub (another medicinal libation).

The highlight of the week for some of



the ladies (and Steve Fraser!) was the visit to Blackpool Tower and Ballroom. Before they were allowed to retire for afternoon tea in the Ballroom, the ladies took a trip to the top of the Tower, where the brave ones amongst them ventured onto the glass-floored viewing area.

Having enjoyed their refreshments, the ladies decided to join the throng out on the floor, gliding effortlessly around the room to the strains of the famous Blackpool Tower Ballroom organ. However, there was a further surprise to come as Steve Fraser (or was it Anton Du Beke having a break from *Strictly!*?) decided that he was going to break a few moves on the dance floor and very soon his dance card was full.

Peter was very disappointed that he was unable to join them, but someone had to take the photos and he is pleased to report that those ladies who danced with Steve have now recovered from the experience!

For the ladies who are fans of *Coronation Street*, the last trip of the week was the highlight – a tour of the *Corrie* studio. Even the BSO who is most decidedly not a soap fan enjoyed it, particularly the pint pulled

for him by Ros in *The Rovers!* On returning to the Home, the ladies freshened up in preparation for the final evening traditional Raffle and Buffet and, for this year only, a quiz. The evening was a great success and the proceeds of the raffle, on this occasion £180, were donated to the Blesma Home staff fund.

A big thank you to all the ladies for their kind donations and support, and special thanks to Ros for organising it and acting as bingo caller throughout the week.

“Special thanks must go to Jacqui and all the staff at the Home for the support they gave to the Widows' Week,” said Peter. “Without their support, the week would not have been the success it was. A big thank you also to the residents for allowing us to share your Home and I hope you enjoyed our company as much as we enjoyed yours.”

SENIORS' WEEK

15-22 APRIL 2015

In the words of Charley Streater; “This was my first Seniors' Week (*Ed. As the organiser rather than a participant!*), and as I awaited the arrival of our 17 attendees I wondered how the 'quiet' programme I'd arranged would be received!

“The new minibus had been delivered to the Blackpool Home and, as it's a 16-seater, I knew there were going to be some logistical problems as 11 of the group required either wheelchairs or scooters!

“Not one to be put off easily, I made arrangements with Nigel and Dave, the drivers at the Home, to remove all the seats

WANT TO KEEP UP TO DATE?

Any Member who has not registered their email address with Blesma, and who would like to receive the monthly Activities Update email, should get in touch with Emily on mea@blesma.org

ACTIVITIES

from the new bus to allow for the scooters and wheelchairs, and everyone else who could transfer to a seat was allocated to the older minibus; we were going in convoy!

“The tempo of the week was pitched at a much more leisurely pace than other activities I’ve run in the past. There was more time allowed for relaxation and just enjoying being at the Blackpool Home, with day trips to various places of interest. Everyone quickly settled into the warm and friendly atmosphere of the Home and the week got underway.

“The programme was varied and hopefully proved interesting. We had a coffee morning at the Blackpool Home, which is always enjoyable and a good way to introduce the visiting group to the residents. Once again, Beatrice and her ladies did us proud by doing the organising and hosting. A day in Southport followed to do some sightseeing and shopping, although it must be said that the weather wasn’t too kind to us, the wind added several miles per hour to the wheelchairs and scooters!

“We also visited Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve, a particular favourite of mine and one of last year’s *Springwatch* venues. I was pleasantly surprised at how much our little group enjoyed getting out into the bird hides and observing the Springtime antics of the wildlife. It was a scorching hot day, too! A guided tour of the Imperial War Museum of the North the following day was quite an experience, the whole building is designed to look and feel like the deck of a warship, and moves under your feet.

“I hadn’t realised this until I got a queasy feeling as I went up in the lift to the tower, where views across Manchester and down into the *Coronation Street* set were fabulous. Our guide took us around the WWI exhibits, both audio and visual, which brought back many memories for some of our group.

“The evening cabaret and meal at the Sands Theatre were excellent, there was a *Carpenters* tribute band playing and we all had a good sing-a-long. This was repeated later in the week when we had singer Helen-Jayne come to the home to perform for us, both residents and visitors alike joined in with her set of old-time favourites.

“Sadly, on the shore of Lake Windermere, where we were due to board a boat to tour the lake, one of our ladies, Agnes Frew, suffered a broken leg. An ambulance had to be called to get her to hospital in Barrow in Furness, where she had an operation the following day. All the group wish Agnes well with her recovery and hope to see her again soon!

“Once again, our thanks must go to all



the staff at the Blackpool Home for making us feel so welcome and for looking after everyone so well, it was really appreciated by all. Nothing was too much trouble!”

INTRODUCTION TO CYCLING COURSE MAY BANK HOLIDAY 2015

On the May Bank Holiday weekend, a group of Members travelled to York to take part in Blesma’s “Introduction to Cycling” weekend. The aim of the course was to get Members back out on the road with the most suitable equipment for their needs.

The team at Get Cycling in York provided all manner of weird and wonderful bikes for people to try out, and we also had the benefit of two experienced Members, Martin Ketrick and Simon Khan, who gave advice on how best to use the kit on offer.

On the Saturday, all the participants were given the opportunity to try the different types of bikes that were appropriate to their needs, including hand bikes, recumbent cycles and trikes. As always, there was plenty of time for socialising in the evening, as well as the opportunity to look around the city of York. Families were welcomed on the course in an effort to encourage participants to continue cycling when they

returned home. “Cycling is a day-to-day sport, and while we want to bring Members together, on a daily basis they’ll be cycling with their friends and family, so why not get them involved from the start?” said Activities Manager Dave Coulton.

The weekend culminated in a gentle but fun group ride around the city on Sunday morning, and everyone went away with a keen desire, and the right information, to do more cycling. One Member said it was; “a superb weekend which has restored my confidence in using a bike, and I would recommend others to give it a try.”

The course will be running again next year, so look out for the Activities Brochure in the Winter issue of Blesma Magazine for more information on how to apply.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES SNOW SPORTS TRY-OUT DAY 11 AUGUST 2015

On 11 August, Blesma and Disability Snowsport UK will be running sessions for Blesma Members who would like to try a number of adaptive snow sports.

Regardless of your disability, the instructors at the Chill Factor indoor Snowdome in Manchester will have the right kit and know-how to get you on the slopes. Accommodation can be made available for those who need it.

For more information visit the Disability Snowsport UK and Chill Factor websites at www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk and www.chillfactor.com

ANY QUESTIONS?

Please note that these activities are open only to Ordinary and Associate Members and Widow(er)s.

However, Honorary Members may attend if they are supporting the running of the activity.

If you have any questions, speak to Emily Mizon on 020 8548 7094 or email her at mea@blesma.org

To take part in the snow sports day, or for more information about other Blesma Activities, contact Emily Mizon, Membership Engagement Assistant, on 020 8548 7094 or at mea@blesma.org

The news from the Branches

BOURNEMOUTH BRANCH

Brendan Snoddy, Branch Honorary Secretary gave this report at the AGM.

During the last year, our Branch has attended or held various events. On Friday 13 June, we hosted a speaker from the Mary Rose Trust and provided a buffet lunch. We invited the residents of the Memorial Homes as our guests as a gesture of thanks to them for the use of these premises, it proved to be a successful venture and planning is underway for a similar event in the coming year.

On 22 June, we manned a Blesma awareness and fundraising stall on Weymouth seafront as part of Weymouth Veterans Week. Again, this was a successful event – we raised £521.

On 17 July, some of us attended the Solent Lunch hosted by Portsmouth at Emsworth. We travelled by minibus with the help of the Royal Engineers from Wyke Regis Bridging Camp and we hope to be able to do the same to Otterbourne where the hosts will be Southampton and Winchester.

On 11 November, a group from our Branch attended the Armistice Day Remembrance Service at Holdinhurst village church as guests of the Memorial Homes. The service was an excellent reminder of the comradeship which brings us together and was rounded off with an excellent buffet in the Village Hall.

On 3 December, we held our Christmas Lunch at the Hotel Mirimar. It was an excellent get-together with fine food and good service. I believe that Hazel has booked again for this year.

During the last year, for various reasons, we have had our little pops at HQ and at some of the changes taking place there. I feel that, except for the 11 November, we as a Branch have applied for and received financial assistance from HQ in order that we could subsidise or pay in full so we could attend or organise these events.

I am not saying that HQ is perfect, and I agree that we have every right to complain when we feel that things are wrong. However, credit where it's due, we have asked and received, and I feel that this should not be taken for granted or overlooked when we are having our little moans and discussions.

WALSALL BRANCH

The highlight of our Summer so far has been our Branch Summer Lunch held in early June at the Shropshire Golf Centre.

A total of 36 Members and guests enjoyed an excellent lunch in lovely surroundings. We were delighted to welcome Frank Garside and Emily Mizon from Chadwell Heath, and Members enjoyed hearing all the news from Head Office. Our other official guests were Barrie and Daryl Taylor – Barrie is running a quiz in aid of Blesma and we felt he deserved a free lunch for his efforts on behalf of our Members.

We manned a stand at the National Memorial Arboretum with Charley Streather, our BSO, to mark Armed Forces Day. This is now a major event in the local calendar and provides an excellent opportunity to promote Blesma.

At our AGM in March, all Members of the Committee stood for re-election and no time was lost in accepting their offers. The Branch continues to function well in looking after our Members and we are very fortunate to have an excellent Committee. Our Welfare Officers Jim Keating and Gerry Crossland work tirelessly, and our Treasurer Bill Madeley is a dab hand at raising money to keep the Branch solvent. He even recently talked his local branch of Asda into making a donation of £200 to the Branch. Unfortunately, the cheque was made payable to "Walsall BOBSMA" We haven't yet been able to work out what that stands for, but the money is very welcome.

Four of our Members were very fortunate to receive invitations to a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, and haven't stopped talking about it since! The invitations were arranged through other Service organisations, but that didn't stop our Members promoting Blesma!

A number of our Members also enjoyed the Members' Weekend in Daventry. It was a superb weekend with two excellent dinners, some very moving presentations by Members who have achieved amazing feats (including our own Martin Kettrick who is fast becoming the new Bradley Wiggins!), and a very enjoyable outing to Althorp House. If you couldn't make it this time do try to get there next year. Enjoy your Summer.

Mike Gallagher, Secretary

ISLE OF WIGHT BRANCH SUMMER LUNCH

Frank Garside, National Volunteer Officer, was delighted to accept an invitation to attend the Branch Lunch held at the New Holmwood Hotel, West Cowes on 04 July.

On a beautiful sunny day Members, Widows and guests were treated to an excellent three-course lunch in the conservatory with wonderful views across the Solent to the mainland. A large number of vessels were out on the water taking advantage of super sailing conditions and moored outside the hotel were the Danish and Norwegian Royal Yachts.

The guests included Blesma's previous Chief Executive, Jerome Church OBE, and his wife Jane. Frank was asked to update the attendees on recent activities and forthcoming events within the Association, and to outline his new role, after which came the obligatory raffle.

NORTH WEST AREA MEMBERS DAY, SOUTHPORT

Blesma Member Neil Rowbottom writes; Some 60 Members and guests from the North West had the pleasure of each other's company at The Royal Clifton Hotel, Southport on 07 June for The Members Day Lunch.

Frank Garside represented Chadwell Heath and I am sure he enjoyed the food and drink, as did the rest of us. Frank gave a short talk about his new position as Blesma's first National Volunteer Officer, he updated those attending on recent activities within the Association and gave notice about forthcoming events.

We had guests from both the North West and North East, but the Members who travelled the furthest must have been Kenneth and Winifred Gash, who travelled all the way from Gretna in Scotland.

The Blackpool Home showed great support for the lunch and had to use both of their buses to transport everyone who wished to attend. Two faces I had not seen for a while brought a tear to my eye as they are two "Grand Old Duchesses" of Blesma, namely Margaret Carmichael and Beatrice Law. Thanks to you both for attending and making my day!

Thanks must also go to Henry and Edna Collins for bringing the customary teddy bear as well as other prizes for the raffle. Arnold and Gill Pickup gave a very expensive bottle of Remy Martin to be auctioned and, in total, the raffle and auction raised £157. Thanks to all for your support.

I do hope Southport will continue to be a date on the calendar every year as so many people enjoyed meeting with old friends and spending time together.

Sam Gallop given the Hambro Award

Blesma's National President, The Duke of Westminster (pictured below right), presented the Hambro Award for 2014 to Sam Gallop CBE at the AGM in London on 28 June. The citation reads as follows:

“Sam Gallop was serving in the Royal Air Force when, in April 1944, returning to base in his damaged aircraft, he sustained serious injuries including the amputation of both legs, third degree burns, a spinal crush fracture, maxilla-facial injuries and both arms broken. He became a patient of Sir Archibald McIndoe at Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead and a member of The Guinea Pig Club.

“Throughout his life, Sam has fought tirelessly for the rights of disabled people. He successfully campaigned for improved access to employment and has enhanced the lives of innumerable disabled people through his charitable work. Even in his tenth decade he remains a passionate advocate who is greatly respected for his wisdom, energy and pragmatism.

“When you consider the life-changing

injuries that Sam suffered more than 70 years ago, and the challenges that he faced, his achievements are even more incredible. His enduring commitment and determination to ensure that disabled

people have equal opportunities to lead independent and fulfilling lives is humbling, and Blesma recognises his life-long work by the presentation of the Hambro Award.”



Sam Gallop (left) receives the award from the Duke of Westminster

The Jack Trigg Memorial Award

The Chairman presented the Jack Trigg Memorial Award to two Members of the Blesma Channel Swim Team, Stephen White (right) and Jamie Gillespie, during the Members' Weekend. The citation reads as follows:

“On 05 September 2014, four Blesma Members became the first all-amputee team to successfully swim the English Channel.

“Stephen White, Jamie Gillespie, Conrad Thorpe and Craig Howarth, who are all single leg amputees, swam as a relay in far from ideal conditions. They adhered to the official Channel Swimming Association rules, which included not wearing wetsuits in water temperatures that average 18°C for September and, out of choice, did not wear their prosthetic limbs.

“Stephen, Jamie, Conrad and Craig worked tremendously hard over many months to make the swim a record success. They trained in lakes and the sea to get their bodies used to the colder temperatures, and participated in open water swimming events in order to prepare themselves for their record attempt in what turned out to be poor weather and deteriorating sea conditions. They supported one another to overcome the challenges that training brought, which epitomises the Blesma ethos of Member helping Member.

“The team has shown true grit and fighting spirit in achieving their record-breaking swim and they are truly deserving of the Jack Trigg Memorial Award.”





The view from the Inniskillings' position, with La Belle Alliance in the distance. The road is on the right, and behind the trees are La Haye Saint and the Sand Pit. It was down this slope that the Union Brigade, and the Household Brigade, pushed back the main attack of D'Erlon's Corps

Waterloo: 1815 to 2015

by Peter Sherston-Baker

I recently visited the battlefield at Mont St Jean, or as the Duke himself named it Waterloo. It has undergone many changes since 18 June 1815; the ridge is much lower having been scraped away to create the Butte de Lion, a tribute to the Dutch. The elm tree under which the Duke of Wellington made his Headquarters has long gone, there is a lime tree in its place in the corner of the car park.

Taking your life in your hands crossing the road from Brussels to Quatre Bras, and the battlefield is a bit more original. In this corner there are two small memorials; one to Sir Thomas Picton, and the other to the 1st Battalion 27th The Inniskillings who died in a square at the top of the slope. When I visited, the incline where the main attack by D'Erlon's Corps was made was plainly visible, the crops having been partially harvested in preparation for the grandstands for the re-enactment this June.

Behind us, on the reverse slope, there is a shallow valley where the Union Brigade was hidden from view. In the distance, the Belle Alliance was visible beside the road that cuts the battlefield in two. Walk down the cycle path and the picnic spot is the site of the old "sand pit" held by the 95th Rifles, and opposite is La Haye Saint, still a farmhouse, the walls decorated with plaques to the Regiments who fought there.

It is worth remembering at this point that the whole battlefield is relatively small,

some 4,000 metres by 4,000 metres, and held, at one stage, some 200,000 men, 60,000 horses, and 537 guns. The Duke of Wellington had 73,000 men and 157 guns, Napoleon 77,000 men and 240 guns.

So, as usual, we were outnumbered, but the Duke did have Marshal Blucher "Old Varwants" and the Prussian Army, some 12 kilometres away, marching to his aid.

It was, as the Duke stated in his usual way, "a close run thing". It was tough and go all day, and had it not been for Blucher it would have been a disaster. However, we won and the French are still not happy about it!

It was in the closing moments that Henry Paget, Lord Uxbridge, qualified to become a Blesma Member. A round shot passed below the neck of Copenhagen, the Duke's horse, and smashed Milord's knee, close to where the above photograph was taken. He was carried back to Mont St Jean, to his Headquarters (the farm of Maison Tremblant just across the road from the inn being used by the Duke (The Wellington Museum today) and had his leg amputated (AK) by Dr Hume, the Duke of Wellington's personal surgeon.

The remains were buried in the orchard with full military honours, and a stone was erected. It was a tourist attraction for many years but, after a long dispute, the farmer put it on a bonfire. The stone can be seen across the road in the Wellington Museum.

Lord Uxbridge suffered prolonged pain from the stump, and the wound did not heal until 1816. The limb itself was a finely crafted product, the "Genium" of its day. It was made by James Watts of Chelsea and patented as the "Anglesey Leg". Carved from fruitwood and limb articulated, it was controlled by prepared kangaroo tendon strips, so as the knee bent the foot flexed up at the ankle thus preventing the toes catching on London's cobbled streets.

It was commercially advertised until 1914. Under AFCS, The Marquis of Anglesey (as he became after the battle) had three legs made and there is one in London in the Household Cavalry Museum in Whitehall.

The total casualty figures for the Battle of Waterloo on both sides were estimated at 70,000 killed or wounded. It would be fair to assume that many of the wounded would have been amputees.

Great changes have been made to the battlefield; all new infrastructure, a brand new visitors' centre (underground, built into the ridge), Hougoumont has been restored and is to be opened for the first time in years, and the buildings used by the Allies as a hospital are being transformed into a brewery/ restaurant and hotel. All the old "attractions", which were pretty poor, are being replaced, and the panorama has been restored. But love it or hate it the Butte de Lion remains!

Motability explained

It might be helpful to remind Members about Motability, which works with the UK motor trade to provide vehicles for those individuals in receipt of certain disability allowances, namely the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement (WPMS), Armed Forces Independence Payment (mobility) (AFIP), DLA Mobility (Higher Rate) or PIP Mobility (Enhanced).

Motability is, in fact, two organisations that work closely together to deliver the Motability Scheme. 'Motability' is a registered charity responsible for oversight and Scheme policy, and 'Motability Operations Ltd' is a private company that operates the Scheme under contract to Motability. The Scheme allows individuals to lease a car, wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV), scooter or powered wheelchair, with insurance, maintenance and breakdown included in the price. The standard lease is three years and relevant payments are deducted from the mobility allowance every four weeks and paid direct to Motability by the DWP. The following comes as standard with every car lease package:

- Insurance for two named drivers
- Full RAC breakdown cover, including home and roadside assistance
- All servicing, repairs, tyre and windscreen replacement, and road tax
- 60,000 miles allowance over three years

If you are in need of adaptations to make travelling easier, help is offered with things like driving, accessing the car or storing a wheelchair. Many adaptations are fitted at no extra cost at the start of the lease, and in most cases adaptations are fitted in such a way that named drivers can continue to use the standard controls. Examples include:

- If you have limited mobility or control in your legs
ASK ABOUT: electronic accelerators, left foot accelerators, mechanical hand controls, steering aids and pedal guards
- If you have limited upper body strength
ASK ABOUT: steering aids, remote control devices, electronic accelerators
- If your wheelchair or scooter is too heavy to lift into the car
ASK ABOUT: car boot and roof hoists
- If you find it difficult to transfer from your wheelchair into your car
ASK ABOUT: person hoists, swivel seats and transfer plates

The scheme has a number of vehicles that allows for some of the benefit to be retained. However, if the mobility allowance from the MOD/DWP does not quite meet the cost of the lease, individuals may have

to pay an "advance payment". Blesma Members can get help with this payment – and should approach their Blesma Support Officer in the first instance. There is further assistance for War Pensioners in that Veterans UK has a series of adaptation grants (eg for hand controls) if the War Pensioner needs this type of adaptation.

SPECIALISED VEHICLES FUND (SVF)

Motability also receives a Government Grant, currently £17M a year, for their Specialised Vehicles Fund, which provides high worth vehicles for Drive from Wheelchair cases (costing about £70,000) and wheelchair passenger vehicles.

Only about five per cent drive from wheelchairs, the remainder use wheelchair passenger vehicles. These are much cheaper. Generally, the leases are for five years, but they can be extended for another two or five years depending on the usage/mileage. However, the annual mileage is quite low for most.

The number of vehicles on the SVF has increased markedly from some 20 a year in 2000, to almost 400 a year today. Because of the costs of the Drive from Wheelchair vehicles, lease extensions are more common. It is an emotive area for some disabled people, who have gone public. However, Motability are aware of the "complaints" and are putting some effort into explaining their reasoning.

Heather Nicholson, Director of Membership Services, and Brian Chenier, BSO Prosthetics, recently met with the Director of Motability to get an update on their Specialised Vehicle Fund following press coverage detailing a number of concerns about changes in the Fund's eligibility criteria. During the meeting, the Director agreed to provide an update for this Bulletin:

"Motability has always recognised that there would be disabled people who had insufficient resources of their own, apart from their mobility allowance, to use the Scheme. From the start of its operations, Motability therefore began to raise funds in order to make grants for this purpose.

"Without these grants for i) the advance payment for a vehicle and ii) the cost of any adaptations required, many disabled people would have been unable to achieve personal mobility. Originally, the only source of grants was Motability's own charitable fund. This was not, however, able to provide for people who needed exceptionally expensive vehicles and/or

adaptations; such people have been able to receive help from funds provided by Government since 1991, originally under the Mobility Equipment Fund and the Drivers' Fund, since combined into today's Specialised Vehicles Fund (SVF) which Motability administers on behalf of DWP.

"In 2014/15, more than 4,000 grants were awarded from Motability's charitable funds and some 3,400 grants, amounting to £17 million, were provided from the SVF.

"The high cost of specialised vehicles, especially Drive from Wheelchair vehicles, has always required Motability to prioritise applications, for example by seeing whether in some cases mobility could be achieved at a lower cost by travelling as a passenger in a suitable (less expensive) vehicle, if driving from a wheelchair was not essential.

"Applicants for grants funding are asked to complete an application form, giving information about their impairments, their physical measurements, the vehicle and any adaptations required, and their household and financial circumstances. Applications are reviewed by Motability grants staff who decide on the amount of any grant in line with relevant policies and with their own judgement and experience. Once a grant is awarded, the disabled person leases the relevant vehicle and adaptations from Motability Operations under the scheme.

"Motability's priority is to help as many disabled people as possible with the available funds. At the end of a five-year lease facilitated by a grant from the SVF, the customer has no automatic right to a grant for another new vehicle. Motability considers any application for a further grant based on their policies and available funding at that time. However, where the existing vehicle is still suitable and reliable, retaining the current vehicle for a longer period is the preferred solution.

"It allows Motability to help more people than would otherwise be possible while the customer remains in a suitable and reliable vehicle. It is for the customer to choose if they wish to enter into an extended lease but, in the interests of supporting as many disabled people as possible with the available funding, Motability would not provide grants for a new vehicle where the current vehicle was still suitable for the customer's needs."

For more information contact Brian on 020 8548 7080 or bsoprosthetics@blesma.org or go to www.motability.co.uk NEXT TIME: Blesma Grants

PHOTOGRAPHY

You could star in Blesma's first photography exhibition

You may be aware that we have a growing group of aspiring photographers within Blesma who have attended the various Basic Photography and Wildlife and Landscape courses run by the Association.

Rather than consign the results of their efforts to a data stick in an unused drawer, it is hoped to exhibit some of their work to a wider audience, possibly in London, to showcase their talents which, we're sure you'll agree, is quite an exciting prospect!

Entries for the exhibition will be curated by our new photography Ambassador Marcus Lyon and an independent panel of experts before being professionally printed and shown.

- Entries must be limited to **THREE per Member**
- All entries must be the original work of the Member
- Permission for Blesma to use the pictures elsewhere will be assumed upon receipt
- The panel's decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into
- If you have any photographs you would like to be considered for this exciting project, whether you've taken part in one of our photography courses or not, please send them to Sue Stokes at Chadwell Heath by **30 September**. Entries received after this date will not be considered. Please mark the photographs Photography Exhibition.



- Entries should be printed on A4 photographic paper with your name written clearly on the back

CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!

We know Members were delighted to receive the 2015 Blesma calendar because many of you told us so! Since it proved so popular there will be a 2016 edition and we are asking you, the Members, to provide us with photographs for inclusion.

If you would like to submit photographs for consideration, please print them on A4 photographic paper with your name written clearly on the back and send to Sue Stokes at Chadwell Heath by **31 August**. Please mark the photographs Calendar 2016.

OSSEOINTEGRATION

AN IMPORTANT WARNING FOR ALL

We are aware that a small number of Blesma Members have been fitted with Bone Anchored Prosthesis (also known as Osseointegration) by the Osseointegration Group of Australia.

It has been confirmed that if such a procedure has been funded privately then all associated ongoing costs (including the prosthetic components) remains a private matter and will not be supported by the NHS in England.

For those who have already had, or who are currently undergoing the procedure, which was originally commissioned by the MOD, it is not yet clear who pays for ongoing care post discharge. This is because the operation is not currently available on the NHS, although we understand that a military surgeon here in the UK is being trained to carry it out.

This is something we are looking at closely as we are aware that a number of Members may wish to pursue this procedure. We would offer a cautionary note at this stage as we wait to see what develops. Blesma will continue to monitor developments and report findings as appropriate. We have written to the Surgeon General and NHS England to seek clarity, and confirmation on what will happen when patients become the responsibility of the NHS. If you have any questions on this procedure or any other prosthetic matter, please speak to your BSO or to BSO Prosthetics at Chadwell Heath.

TRAVELEYES

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Traveleyes is a company that believes that travel is more than just the seeing of sights. It is a world of new experiences which cannot be captured in a single picture.

Since 2004, Traveleyes has been taking groups of blind and sighted travellers around the world together, to enjoy sociable holidays in a new way. Whether you are a solo traveller who doesn't want to travel alone, or you holiday with friends or

a partner, Traveleyes groups are renowned for their warm and friendly nature. For a sociable travel experience that awakens all the senses, finding the perfect holiday has never been easier; simply browse Traveleyes website or audio brochure, book, and go!

Find out more about Traveleyes at www.traveleyes-international.com or you can call them on 0113 887 4275

CALLING ALL "RADIO HAMS"

Everyone knows that it's good to talk, but perhaps none more so than Blesma Member Patrick Murphy. Patrick (call sign GO-PAT) is a keen Ham radio enthusiast and would like to hear from other radio fans. So, if you're interested in catching up over the airwaves, give Patrick a call on 07790 238346.

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