

IN THIS ISSUE

BRANCH NEWS	02
ACTIVITIES UPDATE	03
PROSTHETICS UPDATE	04
CONVALESCENCE BREAKS	06
ACTIVITIES WEEK	08
LIFE BEFORE MURRISON	09
LETTERS	12

Introduction



I am pleased to introduce the third Members' Bulletin. We keep refining and the feedback suggests we are meeting expectations more closely. Members would like more news, and by this I mean on how Blesma is hitting the news. I am glad to say we are, but not always in print or on a national level, more digital and regional, so we'll think how we can communicate the stories that are getting out there to you.

Trustees have concluded that a balanced composition for the Board is to be half Members and half Honorary Members. This will give the Board the right blend of experience, knowledge and expertise to fulfil all its responsibilities in the fast moving and challenging environment for Service charities. A continuing strong Board is very reassuring for the Association as a whole, including the Executive, of course. The Objects and Articles of the Association do not require any change; they cater for this.

Last week, before visiting the Blackpool Home, I spent the afternoon with Veterans UK, who administer all 'Defence'

related pensions and compensations for injury. Rather humbling was their high regard of Blesma. We have an almost unique and highly positive relationship with Veterans UK, at grass roots and higher levels. We know Members have issues and we pursue these. Please make use of our relationship by raising any difficulties you may have with Veterans UK with your BSO. The Blackpool Home was lively with widows enjoying their stay. There are some changes in staffing arrangements underway but the standard of care is not to be affected. I appreciate greatly the work of the staff and their openness to revised routines.

The Members' Weekend is on 16-18 May 2015 and will be in the Midlands (see the separate story below). It is taking shape so I hope you are reserving your diaries. As I write Soldier Ride UK involving Blesma and USA veterans is underway and HRH The Duke of Gloucester, our Patron, will greet the cyclists at the finish; the Tower of London. Our President, His Grace The Duke of Westminster has agreed to visit us next June, more details to follow, but please have your diaries on standby for the AGM.

Barry Le Gry

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Members' Weekend

The Members' Weekend will be held from 16-18 May 2015. We are trying something new in that we are looking at a venue in Warwickshire. The hotel details will be confirmed in the next Bulletin, but in the meantime another plea to hold the date in your diary!

Planning is well in hand, and following feedback from this year's gathering we have returned to running the event over two nights. The AGM will be held in London on Thursday 25 June 2015.

The Weekend will begin on the Saturday afternoon with an Act of Remembrance, followed by dinner and entertainment that evening. On Sunday morning, Members and staff will present reports about what has been happening over the past 12 months, including presentations on some of the exciting and challenging sporting achievements in which Members took part.

There'll be plenty of opportunity to find out about what's being planned for the



future and how you can get involved by talking to Members who've participated in our activities. There will also be a "drop-in clinic" during which you can meet the Support Officers and the Home Manager to discuss any issues concerned with your health and well-being, and to learn more about the Blackpool Home. There will also be a "recruiting fair" where you will be able to learn about our plans for increasing the volunteering opportunities within Blesma and how you can support fellow Members.

Lunch will be followed by an afternoon spent at local attractions and there will be opportunities to try out new activities.

Above all, there will be time to socialise with old friends and make new ones.

If any Members would like to showcase a hobby or sporting interest during the weekend please contact Dave Coulton on activities@blesma.org or 020 8548 3519 by 31 January 2015.

The cost of attendance will be covered by the Association for delegates qualifying as Ordinary or Associate Members, carers and those Honorary Members who hold Branch Office. More information will be sent to you shortly but please be aware that delegate spaces are limited to 100 so it is advisable to book early to avoid disappointment.

Branch Corner

CARDIFF AND DISTRICT BRANCH

Sadly, we have lost two of our Members in the last couple of months, namely Leslie Friend and Kath Dinham.

Elsewhere, as the number of Members attending Branch meetings decreases, and with Branch Officers wishing to retire, there is the possibility that the Branch faces closure. The younger Members do not seem to be interested in attending Branch meetings, which is understandable given that many are in employment and have family commitments – we do, of course, meet during the day.

We will soldier on until next year's AGM. However, if the Branch is to continue then we will need volunteers for the positions of Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary/Welfare Officer. If no one is willing to fulfil these roles then sadly the Branch will have to close and Members will transfer to Headquarters Branch.

Despite this uncertainty over the future of the Branch we enjoy meeting socially and will strive to continue our friendship by telephone calls and occasional lunches. Kind regards to you all.

Margaret White (Honorary Chairman)

MIDLANDS AREA VISIT TO THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

Members from Walsall, Leicester, Nottingham and Coventry Branches recently visited the Arboretum and were delighted to be met by Mike Gallagher, Walsall Branch Honorary Secretary and Blesma Trustee, who has also assumed the role of overseeing the maintenance of the Blesma Garden.

We were interested to hear Mike's brief on the new developments, including how the Arboretum's Assistant Curator, James Shallcross, had selected a group of volunteers from Rolls Royce to work on

our garden. We were free to wander around the Arboretum and took the opportunity to see the many memorials, including recent additions to the site such as the Gurkha Memorial which had only been dedicated the day before by The Princess Royal. Some 25 Members turned up and it was nice to see so many old friends again.

We were joined at lunch by our guest James Shallcross, and we took the opportunity to thank him and his team for all their hard work on our garden. Then it was back to visiting the memorials before finally gathering at the Blesma Garden for an apple-picking session.

In our garden there was a distinct shortage of apples on the trees, leaving everyone with the impression that Charley Streather had already been out scrumping, taking all the best apples! We learnt that whilst it hadn't been a good year for the Blesma harvest, the orchard behind our plot had produced an abundance of apples, so a few of our Members made a detour!

We then had several group photographs and gave a special thank you to Mike Gallagher and to Stephen and Diane Parslow, our photographers for the day.

We, as an Association, owe a big thank you to Mike Gallagher and to the staff and volunteers from Rolls Royce who have done so much to make the garden look better than it ever has.

The verdict is that the Arboretum is well worth a visit and that the many new memorials have only added to the unique atmosphere of the place. I would certainly recommend to all our Members that if you are passing near to the Arboretum do call in and see how our garden has progressed.

Thank you to all those who attended, and hopefully after our Branch Members read this article we may get more at the next visit! Our events are also for Headquarters Members so do come on our social events.

Keith Meakin, Area Chairman

ACTIVITIES UPDATE

GET READY FOR A YEAR OF FUN, FIRST TIMES AND FRIENDSHIPS



Give fishing a try next year and chances are, you'll be hooked!

The Activities Calendar in 2015 is looking very exciting! Not only have we got lots on offer, but we'll also be sending everyone a brochure in the December issue of Blesma Magazine which will contain much more information than the previous flyer, so that it can help you choose the activities that are right for you.

We've included many of the old favourites, such as winter sports in Austria and Colorado, scuba diving, golf, fishing and multi-activity weeks. We'll also be continuing with some of the newer events which have proved successful such as photography, skydiving, painting and Seniors' Weeks.

We'll be trying to get more people involved with cycling after a very successful Battlefield Bike Ride to Belgium and Intro to Cycling.

Finally, there will be several new events such as a trip to the Isle of Man, a canoeing and kayaking trip to the River Spey and a "glamping" trip which will be for Members and their families.

Please remember that the cost of all activities in the calendar is met by the Association. Why not try something new next year and meet other Blesma Members while you're at it?



Members from the Midlands visit the Blesma Garden



Photographs: Stephen and Diane Parslow, John Francis

Get your skates on for Ski-Bob Expedition

For anyone who might be interested in the **Solden Ski-Bob Expedition**, the annual Blesma Ski Bike event in the stunning Austrian Tyrol will take place next year from 26 February to 6 March. The sport is easily accessible by almost any amputee and is tremendous fun. If you are interested in going, your application needs to be in to Chadwell Heath by 01 December 2014.

The Trans4mers Project will be teaching another eight Blesma Members how to skydive. After completing a tandem jump in September, the lucky new team Members will conduct wind tunnel training over a weekend in February before flying out to California in April. Jumping will continue at various drop-zones around the country throughout the rest of the year. In order to take part, you must have completed a tandem skydive. You will need to register your interest before 01 December 2014 to stand the best chance of getting a place.

If you have any questions about any of our activities, please speak to Emily on 020 8548 7094 or email mea@blesma.org. Please note that our programme of activities is only open to Ordinary and Associate Members and Widow(er)s. However, Honorary Members may attend if they are supporting the running of the activity.



Diving expedition causes a splash for one Member

I am writing to say what a fantastic opportunity I was given to take part in the recent scuba diving expedition to the Red Sea.

Whilst I was there I got my qualifications in Open Water, Advanced Open Water and Deep Diving. The week was hard work but very enjoyable. Bob Monkhouse did an excellent job with admin, getting us all in the right place at the right time. The fact that no one got lost could have been due to the colour of our polo shirts, but we all had fun nevertheless, did well and got acquainted with a few more friends and Blesma Members.

Our instructors John, Sarah and Stuart had the patience of a saint. Even when I thought I could not do the task in hand they got me through. We all worked as a unit, helping each other to achieve our goals.

Thank you very much for the opportunity and I look forward to getting my next classifications. I'm sure other Members would benefit from the course as it breaks down walls and builds confidence in your ability.

Carole McNaghten



Blesma Members 'fly' the flag at the bottom of the Red Sea during their recent diving expedition

DON'T FORGET!
MEMBERS' WEEKEND 2015
SATURDAY 16 – MONDAY 18 MAY

Prosthetics update

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

As I face my own challenge in trying to think what to write in this Bulletin, my head scratching is put firmly into perspective as I am reminded of the real challenges many of you face every day. I witnessed some of those during the week I spent in Belgium on the first Blesma Battlefield cycle ride.

The cycling was organised and led by Alistair Cope and I was joined in the support team by two volunteers, Ian Jones and William 'Billy' Bowie. Ian will be familiar to many of you; he is a prosthetist who has his own company, and has had many years of experience at Headley Court. Billy recently completed his military career, leaving the REME in 2012 after more than 24 years. I am sure that the ride will be covered elsewhere but I wanted to make special mention of the prosthetics and technical aspect.

ACCESSIBLE TO MOST

Members taking part included two loss-of-use-of-limb and permanent wheelchair users, three single lower-limb amputees and two upper-limb amputees. It was striking to me to see the diverse range of prosthetic devices on show and adaptations that had been made to hand bikes and upright bikes that allowed the guys to take part in this event. It was particularly useful to have Ian along with his not-so-little bag of tricks (and copious amounts of WD-40).

He was able to make running repairs and also offer advice to those who were looking to maximise their ability. I am sure that this advice will, quite rightly, form part of future discussions with individual prosthetists. It was clear that, for many, no major changes in limb or prescription are needed to be able to cycle. So if you think you might wish to take to the road and literally get on your bike, talk to your prosthetist. I would be happy to help you if needed and to put you in touch with other Members of all abilities who already cycle. Cycling as a sport or recreational activity is hugely beneficial, as many of you clearly recognise!

I am sure most of you will have had some exposure to the Invictus Games. In fact, quite a few of you will not only have taken part but will have also won medals. I think it is safe to say that the whole event was a fantastic advert for the men and women of our Armed Forces, and the spirit they show



in pursuit of recovery is what we in Blesma see on a daily basis. From a prosthetics perspective it was an excellent vehicle for showing just how life changing some of the technology available is. That said, I hope the coverage and interviews made members of the public realise that prosthetic limbs, however good, are not replacement limbs. We saw some of the devices breaking, collapsing under extreme pounding and, for some events, not being worn at all. We also saw how some state-of-the-art limbs function, and this may prompt some of you to seek an upgrade in prescription.

I would encourage you to first discuss this with your prosthetist and if you feel you would like additional support in this then please contact your BSO. It was excellent to watch our British Armed Forces team competing with injured men and women from other Armed Forces in these games, and even better to see so many Blesma Members involved.

I haven't yet counted how many different prostheses were on show throughout the duration of the Games, but if anyone did, I would be very interested to know.

SERVICE SPECIFICATION AND MICRO PROCESSOR KNEES POLICY (ENGLAND ONLY)

NHS England has yet to complete the process for adopting the Service Specification for Prosthetics Services in England. The specification provides a benchmark to which contracts with providers will be awarded and maintained. It is likely that the specification will be adopted once feedback and responses to the earlier public consultation are published.

The Micro Processor Knee Policy was considered earlier this summer by the

NHS England Clinical Priorities Advisory Group (CPAG) and was returned to the Prosthetics Sub Group for further clarification and information. This was disappointing but a lot of subsequent work has been put in to re-submit this policy for consideration.

Until such time as this is adopted, or a decision made on individual funding arrangements, those patients not eligible for 'Murrison' funds via the VPP are left in a very unfortunate 'Catch 22' situation. We are working on this on your behalf.

JUST A REMINDER ABOUT PROSTHETICS PROVISION IN SCOTLAND AND WALES...

Amputee veterans in Scotland and Wales are able to receive clinically appropriate enhanced prostheses via their respective NHS service. The Scottish service has extended this offer to others injured in public service and this is generally accessed via the centres at Glasgow and Edinburgh.

In Wales, amputee veterans may receive clinically appropriate prostheses via any of the three centres based in Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham. There is currently no specific funding stream for this provision in Wales and Blesma has been invited to join the project team looking at the wider service specification and veteran policy.

....AND OVERSEAS

Provision overseas is a continuing issue, exacerbated by the reduction in resources in the British Embassies and Consulates which historically provided support to War Pensioners living overseas and we are working closely with Veterans UK to address individual cases. John Francis has been working closely with the team at Norcross, and we are confident that we can resolve these issues.

LEAVING THE SERVICES?

Blesma has worked with colleagues in the policy and delivery elements of the Defence Recovery Capability and has produced a transition pathway guide for those leaving the military. The pathway was produced with input and support from colleagues in the DRC and NHS England. A similar pathway document is in production for those who have decided to settle in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

A result of this work is a clear line of communication along the transition pathway which Blesma is able to monitor, and report where good practice is being seen or where improvement is suggested. MoD Clinical Facilitators routinely introduce amputee Service men and women to the appropriate NHS Limb Centre as per the pathway guide and this is working very well.

WHEELCHAIRS AND OTHER MEDICAL DEVICES

We are waiting for the outcome of the House of Commons Defence Select Committee to see what, if anything, is recommended in respect of the provision of wheelchairs and other devices. Rest assured that we will continue to seek an equitable and sustainable solution to the issue around wheelchair provision.

VETERANS PROSTHETIC PANEL (VPP) UPDATE

We are grateful for written assurance from the Health Minister, Dr Dan Poulter MP, to the Armed Forces Health Partnership Working Group (of which Blesma is a member) that £6 million per year of recurring funding for veterans prosthetics has been made available to NHS England for 2015/16 and beyond.

We are concerned that this funding is subject to the NHS England prioritisation process and any decision on allocation is unlikely to be until December. In simple terms, we are yet to be assured that it will be used to continue the work currently being undertaken to improve the provision of enhanced prosthetic devices and services for veterans. This is causing uncertainty within the Limb Service, our Membership, serving personnel and veterans, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Blister care and stump problems

It's almost inevitable that, at some point, amputees will experience skin breakdown problems on their stump. Treatment needs to be swift and effective to stop any further deterioration, especially when not wearing your leg is not an option!

Over the years, I've tried many types of dressing to try to get relief from the pain of blisters or chafing; Tegaderm, Melanin, sticking plasters, Micropore, plastic skin spray to name but a few. But by far the most effective method I have found is Comfeel and Comfeel Plus in the 5x7cm size, available on prescription or over the counter at pharmacists.

These dressings are chamfered at the edges, which makes them very low profile within a socket and reduces the chance of 'crumpling up' when worn for long periods of time. Comfeel is a thicker dressing than Comfeel

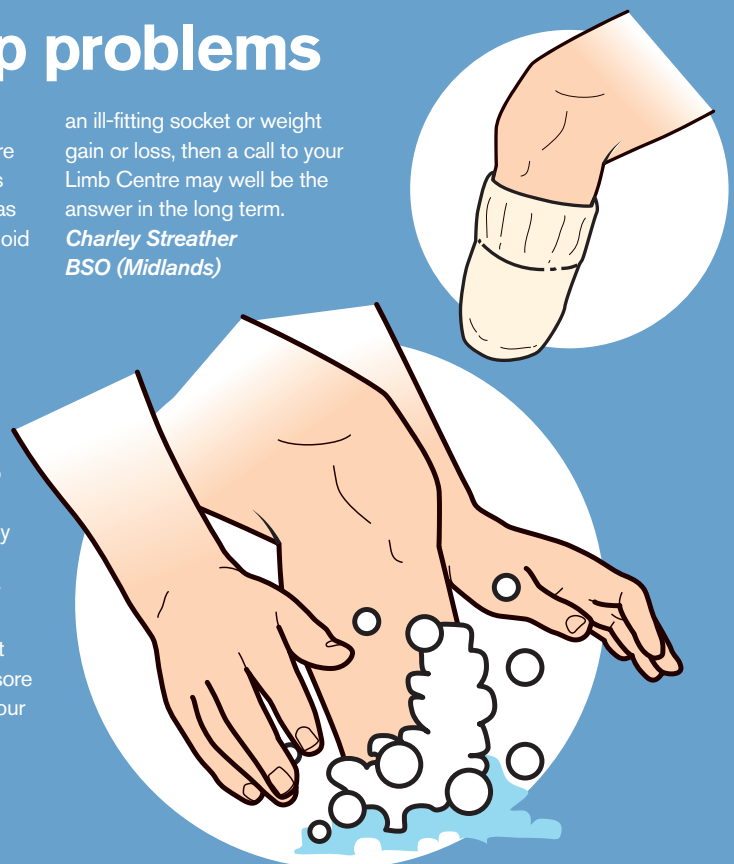
Plus and gives a 'second skin' type of protection when you are experiencing problems such as blistering. Originally designed as an ulcer dressing, its Hydrocolloid properties actually promote healing, they can also be left on for a number of days, which means you don't have to continually disturb the wound.

Prevention is always better than cure, and using a good moisturiser overnight on stump skin will help skin condition. I personally use Johnson's Baby Oil gel, but I've seen other amputees lather on Vaseline or Aloe Vera with good results.

Stump hygiene is paramount when experiencing blisters or sore spots, and regularly cleaning your stump and liner with a product such as nappy wipes as well as daily washing is vital. If you suspect the cause of your problem is associated with

an ill-fitting socket or weight gain or loss, then a call to your Limb Centre may well be the answer in the long term.

*Charley Streather
BSO (Midlands)*



Convalescence and respite breaks explained

Following several recent cases where Blesma Members had applications for convalescence breaks turned down, despite having previously had applications approved, we contacted Veterans UK to express our concerns and to ensure that we understand the current criteria so that we can brief Members.

For those unfamiliar with these breaks, “convalescence” in Veterans UK terms is intended to be the provision of short-term nursing care for severely disabled War Pensioners in need of a break and who are unable to stay in an ‘ordinary’ hotel as a result of their accepted disablement(s). Respite care, intended to provide a break for the War Pensioners’ regular carer, is also considered under this heading.

Convalescence breaks originated in the 1950s when, for War Pension purposes, convalescence meant admission to a hospital or suitable nursing home for a short period of time when a change of environment was considered to be beneficial to the pensioner or their carer.

CONVALESCENCE

To be considered for a convalescence break a severely disabled War Pensioner, whilst away from home, would require nursing care at the level provided by trained nursing staff in a registered nursing home, and the needs for that care would be wholly or mainly as a result of the pensioned disablement.

When Veterans UK receives a request for consideration of a convalescence break it requests the following information: When did the War Pensioner last have a break? Where did they go? What type of accommodation did they use? How did they cope? Were they accompanied? Did they encounter any problems? Why do they think they cannot now take a normal break?

When Veterans UK receives these details the claim is considered, with the principle factors being: whether the accepted disablements prevent the War Pensioner taking a holiday in a normal hotel, what regular care is needed by the Pensioner, whether the required care is of the type provided by trained nursing staff, and whether the need for care is related wholly or mainly to the accepted disablement(s).

CONSIDERATION AND REQUIREMENT FOR RESPITE BREAKS

The basic requirements of a respite break are that, due to the state of the carer’s health, it is necessary for the carer to have a break. To support a request for a respite break the War Pensioner must provide the age and general health of the carer and a medical certificate from the carer’s GP. It must be considered whether the extent of personal care required by the Pensioner living at home arises wholly or mainly from the AD. Medical input is required in the decision making process.

If a respite break is approved it is for a one-off period and ideally should be taken within a 50-mile radius of the Pensioner’s home address. The period of approval will depend on the needs of the carer, and is normally subject to a maximum of four weeks in a 12 month period.

SO WHAT’S CHANGED?

Veterans UK states: “With the advent of initiatives such as Tourism for All, the

National Accessible Scheme and legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act there is increasing availability of holiday accommodation suitable for disabled people, reducing the need for nursing homes being required for holidays.

“Some War Pensioners who gained approval for convalescence holidays

some years ago have not, by virtue of regular attendance, had their entitlement reviewed. Others who have had previous approval, but not attended recently or regularly, have had their entitlement reviewed on recent application which may have resulted in rejection. If this has happened it will be a reasoned decision based on information provided by the War Pensioner that clearly indicates they are able to take a holiday in an ordinary hotel.

“What has changed is that consideration, based on greater awareness of legislation and provision for the disabled, is resulting in rejection of claims that may, in the past, have gained approval following previous approval. Understanding is that ex-Service organisations have interpreted this as a change of policy. It is, in fact, the result of a more robust consideration.”

WHAT SHOULD MEMBERS DO?

If you are a War Pensioner and would like to make an application for a convalescence or a respite break, and you think that you meet the criteria described here, please contact your local Blesma Support Officer to discuss.

HOT TOPICS FOR OUR MEMBERS

You will no doubt be aware that Blesma is only one of a number of Service charities (such as The Royal British Legion, War Widows, Forces Pension Society) and Statutory Committees and other bodies (such as the Independent Medical Expert Group) that are pursuing the interests of the Armed Forces Community.

The following issues are just some that are currently being raised and discussed:

- Removing the disparity in the eligibility criteria for War Pensions Mobility Supplement (WPMS) and AFCS Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP) Mobility for lower limb amputees
- War Widows Pensions
- Mesothelioma
- The disabling effects and compensation for musculoskeletal conditions and injuries, and the functional and employability consequences of loss of limb compared with retention of a seriously damaged limb
- 2015 Review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

BUSINESS WORKSHOPS

X-Forces is a social enterprise supporting the UK military charity community to establish start-up businesses. This is achieved by offering business planning advice, access to loans of up to £25,000 and providing business mentors.

Since the social enterprise began in 2013 it has launched more than 200 businesses, lent more than £1.5M worth of seed-funding, and has hosted business workshops in major cities across the UK.

X-Forces is very keen to work with Blesma to help Members get back into employment, particularly self-employment.

We are planning on holding a business workshop in London on 22 January for Blesma Members who are interested in becoming self-employed.

If you are interested in attending, email Lisa Aston at Chadwell Heath on execasst@blesma.org before 10 December. Six to eight places are available and more details will follow.

REGISTER NOW

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

Photographs: Andy Bate, The Invictus Games



The Invictus Games was an incredible celebration

On Sunday 14 September the Invictus Games drew to a star-studded finale with a concert featuring The Foo Fighters and a memorable speech from HRH Prince Harry and GB Team Captain, and Blesma Member, Dave Henson.

The inaugural Games featured more than 400 competitors from 13 nations who competed in nine adapted sports including athletics, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, sitting volleyball, archery, swimming,

powerlifting, indoor rowing and road cycling. The 131-strong British team, led by Blesma Member Dave Henson, went on to win 139 medals; 71 of which were Gold!

With a stand at the opening and closing ceremonies, and a video shown during several events, Blesma had a key presence at the Games. Our t-shirts, hoodies and wristbands helped spread the Blesma word!

Congratulations to all of our Members who participated in the Games!

CALLING ALL BLESMA WIDOWS

Widows' Week Spring 2015

Ordinary and Associate Widows are invited to enjoy a week's break at the Blesma Home in Blackpool from 08 to 15 April 2015 where you will be able to sample the excellent hospitality of the Home and enjoy the wonderful sights of Lancashire. The week will have a full programme of events, so it is very important that the ladies who attend are fully mobile so that they can enjoy the holiday to the full.

Please note that the Widows' Weeks are open to Ordinary and Associate Widows only. Honorary Widows are welcome to enjoy the hospitality of the Blesma Home in Blackpool and can do so by booking holidays directly with the Home.

If you would like to be considered for the break, please complete the Response Form inserted into this issue of the Bulletin and return it to Membership Services by 01 December 2014.



CALLING ALL BLESMA SENIORS AND WIDOWS

Seniors' Week Spring 2015

Following the success of the first Seniors' Week, we will be running another break at the Blesma Home in Blackpool from 15 to 22 April 2015. During the week Members, their spouses and Blesma Widows will have the opportunity to enjoy the company of fellow Members, experience the excellent hospitality of the Home and enjoy a range of trips and activities.

The week will have a full programme of events, so it is very important that those who attend are fully mobile so that they can enjoy the holiday to the full.

Please note that the Seniors' Weeks are open to Ordinary and Associate Members (who can be accompanied by their spouses) and Blesma Widows who are aged over 65 years. If you would like to be considered for the week, please complete the Response Form inserted into this issue of the Bulletin and return it to Membership Services by 01 December 2014.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL BLESMA PARTICIPANTS

Steven Arnold Road Cycling
Jordan Beecher Indoor Rowing
Nick Beighton Indoor Rowing
Leigh Bland Archery
Josh Boggi Road Cycling and Cycling
Alexander Brewer Athletics and Swimming
Vinod Budhathoki Volleyball and Road Cycling
Terry Byrne Road Cycling
Nathan Cumberland Athletics and Powerlifting
James Cumming Road Cycling
Derek Deralagi Athletics
Annie Devine Powerlifting
Dean Dousfield Athletics
Ricky Ferguson Athletics
Craig Gadd Road Cycling and Cycling

Steven Gill Archery
Gareth Golightly Basketball
Michael Goody Swimming
Andrew Grant Athletics
Anil Gurung Sitting Volleyball
Simon Harmer Swimming
Anthony Harris Sitting Volleyball
Grant Harvey Wheelchair Rugby
Dave Henson Athletics
David Hubber Archery
Jonathan Le Galloudec Swimming
Kushal Limbu Athletics
Ray Lowrie Indoor Rowing
Corrie Mapp Sitting Volleyball
Scott Meenach Indoor Rowing
Adam Nixon Basketball
Andy Phillips Archery
Craig Preece Road Cycling and Cycling

Netra Rana Sitting Volleyball
Stuart Robinson Wheelchair Rugby
David Scott Basketball
Clive Smith Road Cycling
Ben Steele Wheelchair Rugby
Joseph Townsend Athletics, Powerlifting, Road Cycling
Jaco Van Gass Road Cycling
Spencer Vaughan Wheelchair Rugby
Charles Walker Wheelchair Rugby and Sitting Volleyball
Matthew Webb Swimming
Daniel Whittingham Wheelchair Rugby and Road Cycling
James Wilson Powerlifting
David Wiseman Swimming
Micky Yule Powerlifting
Ben Zissman Cycling

Apologies if we've missed your name off. Drop us a line at commslead@blesma.org and let us know.

From comedy nights to quad bikes...

Eleven Members, aged from 26 to 84, and two carers, spent an action-packed week in the North West in September. This Activities Week catered for the less able and older Members, and used to be called the Golden Oldies Week, although you would never have thought it, judging by the way they all threw themselves into each task!

Based at Blesma Blackpool, and to lull the team into a false sense of security, we started with a spot of coarse fishing. Many fish were caught that day with Les Charlton landing the most. Terri Hunt caught the smallest (about two inches long!) and Dave Pendry closed the proceedings by catching the biggest fish of the day which weighed in at about four pounds.

The real work started the following day with indoor and outdoor climbing and abseiling at the Bendrigg Trust. Everyone took part and some surpassed even their own expectations. Anthony Cooper, Dave Pendry, Spud O'Neil and Neil Robertson all abseiled down a quarry in wheelchairs. Anthony's Mum, Shelley, and Neil's carer, Wendy, then followed them down.

Challenge for Change in Manchester proved to the team that, despite their fears and disabilities, nothing is impossible and they were soon clambering over the aerial trek – a confidence course 30 feet off the ground. Everyone had a go, Terri overcame her fear of heights, and Anthony went around three times (although we think that might have been more to do with the woman in front of him rather than an act of bravery!) All this before an excellent evening at the Comedy Store in Manchester.

At Holmescales the next day there were a couple of accidents. Spud fell out of his chair before we even got into the venue



and was whisked off to hospital so missed the rest of the day (he was fine with just a sore neck). Anthony somehow did a wheelie on a quad bike and broke his only thumb! After receiving first aid, he was also taken to hospital and we didn't see him or his Mum until the last day.

Everyone else enjoyed their quad bike safari, archery and clay shooting. Baz Howland appeared to win the shooting but there was a question mark over the maths of the young man who was scoring (we can't have an RAF man beating the Army!)

This action-packed day was followed by a day at Burn Gliding Club in Yorkshire. Everyone got a chance to fly, but the star of the day was Les Goddard who, being the only Yorkshireman in the group, was filmed extensively for BBC Look North Yorkshire. Thanks to Tony, the Club

Chairman, for looking after us so well and to Terry for organising the event.

Finally, there was time on the last day for relaxing and buying those last-minute presents. In the evening we were surprised by Spud who had arranged for us to do a mass ice-bucket challenge. So after tea, we all trooped out to be doused in icy water. We collected £46 each for Blesma and MND. It was then time for our traditional wash up, certificate presentation and raffle which collected more than £100 for the Home staff Christmas Party.

All in all, it was an exhausting but very enjoyable week. The entire team worked very well together and, apart from the two accidents, the week ran very smoothly. Thanks to all those who attended for making the event so enjoyable.

Tom Ormiston, BSO (Eastern)



Calling all Members in the North West!



If you live in the North West Area and would like to get together with fellow Blesma Members and enjoy a **Christmas lunch**, please complete the Response Form inserted into this Bulletin and return it to Jacqui Longden at the Blackpool Home by 28 November.

North West Area Christmas Luncheon
 Sunday 07 December 2014
 Barcelo Blackpool Imperial Hotel
 North Promenade
 Blackpool FY1 2HB
 Tel: 01253 754604
 Lunch will commence at 1pm

Life well before Murrison

The following article was written by Dr Geoff Goss PhD, MA, MSc, BEng, MIMechE, LCGI Senior Lecturer Dynamics, Department of Engineering and Design, London South Bank University. The university has been carrying out a research project, partly funded by Blesma

Many Blesma Members will have contemplated and discussed the implications of the Murrison Report. That report set out the rationale and guidelines for the shift from centralised care at Headley Court to a service delivered in centres across the provinces. Since it signals a key change in service provision, the Murrison Report has a significance that will surely resonate through time.

It also has an echo from the past. Blesma Members may be interested to learn that a similar shift – from centralised care in dedicated military hospitals to provincial care – occurred more than 300 years ago.

It is encapsulated in the petition for a pension by William Humphreys to his local parish in Essex in 1658. Humphreys referred to himself as “a maymed Souldier” – one of the terms used at that time for an amputee.

Humphreys suffered his injuries in a bloody conflict, which historians refer to as the English Civil War. It raged throughout England and Wales, and spilled into Ireland intermittently from 1642 to 1651.

Humphreys was a Roundhead, fighting for the ‘cause of Parliament’ against Royalist forces under King Charles 1. He served for 12 years, eight of them in Ireland, and had received treatment for wounds at special military hospitals set up in London – Ely House and the Savoy (see Figures 1 and 2). The latter was on the same site as the hotel today. Those hospitals doubled up as distribution points for a pension scheme set up for wounded Roundheads and the widows of those slain.

Parliament announced its pension scheme the day after the first major pitched battle of the English Civil War, fought on the afternoon of 23 October 1642, at Edgehill, in Warwickshire. The King led an army of 14,000 musketeers, cavalry and pikemen against a similar force gathered in defence of Parliament. The outcome of that battle was inconclusive, though it is estimated that 1,000 men lost their lives and 2,000 to 3,000 were wounded.

Packed into horse-drawn carts and wagons, many of the wounded travelled from Edgehill to London, seeking the pension announced by Parliament and medical assistance; probably hoping for treatment in one of London’s five civilian

hospitals. However, the mass influx was too much for the capacity of those hospitals. Before long, sick and wounded Parliamentary soldiers were begging on the streets, sometimes intermingling with similarly afflicted Royalists.

In response to this crisis, Parliament established The Sick and Maimed Soldiers’ Committee. On 13 November 1642 that committee issued orders ‘to be proclaimed in all Parts of London, Westminster, and Suburbs, by beating of the Drums’, that all soldiers wounded in the cause of Parliament should assemble at the Savoy where ‘Surgeons shall be provided to look to their Cure’. The next day, the Committee founded a military hospital at Savoy, followed a few months later by another, at Ely House in Camden.

Between them, Ely House and Savoy housed 350 patients. They employed 29 full-time nurses, many of whom were widows of slain soldiers. The nurses were under strict instructions to keep the hospital clean and ‘sweet smelling’. They worked under strict rules governing their behaviour. One rule forbade nurses from ‘making a disturbance by scolding, brawling, or chiding’. And if either a nurse or patient used ‘profane language’ they were fined for the first offence, lost a week’s pay for the second and ‘expelled for the third’. If a nurse married a soldier then both were expelled on the spot.

At Ely House those patients able to walk were obliged to attend daily sermons in an adjacent chapel. They probably participated

enthusiastically, for most of the soldiers who volunteered for Parliament were Protestants and attached a religious aspect to their cause. William Whitefield, an officer of the New Model Army, who suffered limb loss himself, wrote a pamphlet for the encouragement of others who had lost their limbs for the Parliamentary cause. He declared that ‘many complain of the hardness of a souldier’s life... but if we be true souldiers of Christ; we must endure much hardness and not think it too much for the name of Jesus, but rejoice rather that the Lord hath counted us worthy to be souldiers of Christ’.

PATIENTS AT ELY HOUSE AND THE Savoy had beds equipped with rope hoists for repositioning and coping with bedsores. They received visits from qualified surgeons, apothecaries, and physicians – the three (male dominated) official professions of health care, with their headquarters in London then (as they are today).

However, during the English Civil War, traditional ‘unofficial medicine’ was widespread. Indeed, as armies moved around the countryside, they tended to billet sick and wounded soldiers in villagers’ households. A commanding officer issued a certificate to the householder, who could subsequently claim back money for the costs of looking after the sick and wounded men.

That traditional medicine, often practiced by women, who may even have been referred to as witches, could be compared to what many refer to today as ‘alternative medicine’; though 300 years ago it was home-grown rather than the sorts imported from overseas that people use today.

Whilst the governors of London’s hospitals



Figure 1: Ely House as it was in 1772, similar to descriptions of a century before

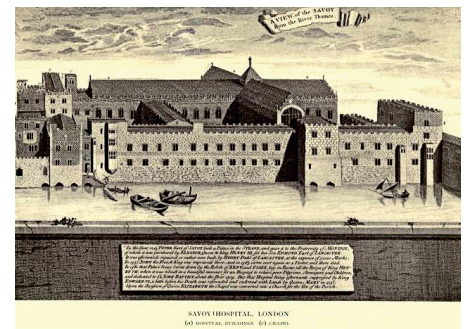


Figure 2: Savoy Hospital, opened in 1512 by Henry VII, but fell into disuse. During the Civil War, Parliament requisitioned it and used it as a hospital for its wounded soldiers. The chapel is still standing

prioritised ‘official medicine’, they appear to have conceded a degree of recognition to traditional forms, for example, permitting visits from a female ‘bone-setter’. What’s more, Ely house and Savoy organised trips to the springs at Bath, which were widely believed to assist healing.

THE MAIN BUILDINGS HAVE SINCE been demolished, though a small chapel at the edge of the Savoy site still stands today.

The military hospitals additionally provided prostheses for their maimed soldiers. Though few details of the design of those prostheses have survived, illustrations in contemporary journals depict wooden ‘peg-leg’ prostheses, (see Figure 3). Inspection of an extant handwritten invoice for the military hospitals indicates that a prosthesis for an above-knee amputee cost £3 3s 11d. The invoice specifies that the prosthesis was wooden, plated all over with iron and complete with swivels and pins. Another soldier received a wooden hand, costing 5s.

Patients in the hospitals received a weekly pension of 4 shillings. An insight into the importance attached to rank can be gauged when considering that what the wounded soldier received each week was the same amount the New Model Army paid to an able-bodied lieutenant per day. Able-bodied foot soldiers, on the other hand, were paid an average of 10d per day – roughly the same as a contemporary labourer’s wage. A colonel received one pound a day. Outpatients to the military hospitals and widows of those slain received pensions of 40s a year.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CIVIL war, Parliament printed and distributed posters calling upon its supporters to make contributions towards the costs of the relief scheme. As the conflict dragged on, Parliament imposed taxes upon the population under its control and introduced conscription – press-ganging.

However, it had trouble both in collecting and distributing the money. Consequently, the patients at Ely House and Savoy resorted to organising mass petitions demanding payment of their pensions. To give an idea of the scale of the problem, in May 1645 Parliament received a ‘humble petition’ from 200 ‘wounded and maimed Soldiers’ in the Savoy Hospital, and from 1,500 soldiers and widows receiving pensions at other hospitals in London.

Parliament acted quickly to divert funds to the hospitals, but was sufficiently alarmed at the problems over pensions as well as other issues to consider banning petitioning altogether. Whilst they



Figure 3 (Above): Contemporary depiction of an amputee, from the cover of a popular songbook of 1652

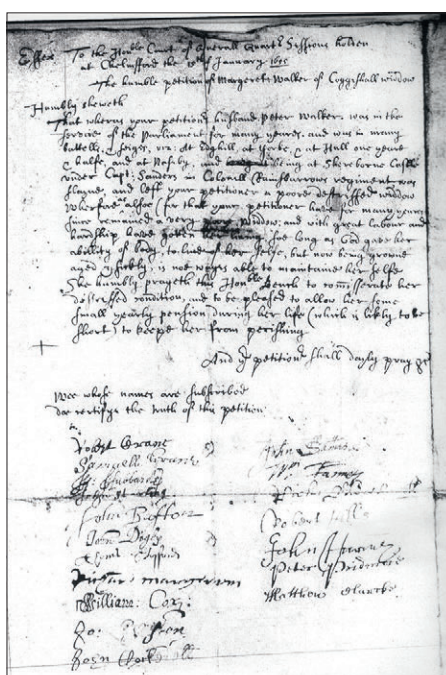


Figure 4: Margaret Walker’s petition, dated 15 January 1655

withdrew from such a draconian measure, the militancy displayed by the widows unsettled MPs. They issued instructions forbidding widows from ‘coming to the House and making Clamours here’.

By 1647, the Parliamentary forces, led by Oliver Cromwell, had stamped their authority across the provinces and restored order – at least for a while. That year Parliament passed an Act (reminiscent of the Murrison Report), that instructed each parish to take responsibility for collection and distribution of the pension scheme.

Parliament advised each maimed soldier to return ‘to the place where he was last settled when he took up Arms, with a Certificate of his service, and hurt received, under the hand of his Captain or other Commissionary Officer’. However, it took a while to implement the parish-based scheme. Parliament had to deal with insurrections by Royalists and sent its

New Model Army to Ireland, which supported the Royalist cause. However, some maimed soldiers viewed the new parish-based pension scheme with a certain degree of suspicion. They were concerned that they would lose the up-to-date service care available in the capital’s hospitals.

Able-bodied soldiers also voiced their concern over the future welfare of their maimed comrades. Anti-government factions exploited these worries. A pamphlet titled *The Souldiers Demand*, published in 1649, describes a pitiful scene:

And the poore Crippe which hath lost his Legs and Armes... We observe how Carts are loaded with them in the High-ways, in which they lie in miserably distressed in every respect, and when he comes to the place of his birth, or whether he is sent, we beleeve he finds his course entertainment there, unlesse it be curses and imprecations upon his soule and body, for the good service he has done his worthy Masters, and the money he had will scarcely buy him a paire of crutches.

As Parliament re-established its authority throughout the parishes, the sick and wounded trickled back to their parishes. However, the Savoy and Ely House continued to operate in their dual roles as military hospitals and distribution points for pensions. Thus, two pension schemes ran concurrently; one in London based around the hospitals and another in the parishes, administered by the parish Justices of the Peace (JPs). Of course, with two schemes running in parallel, the parish JPs realised that soldiers and widows may try to obtain two pensions.

Consequently, when the local JPs in Essex read Humphrey’s petition, they instructed him to “bring a Certificate from ...the Savoy and Ely House, London,” as evidence that he was not already receiving pensions from those hospitals. It seems that Humphreys could only provide documentation from Ely House; for on his second meeting the JPs insisted he produce a “Certificate from the Savoy as he now hath from Ely House that he hath noe pencion there”. On his third visit, in 1659, the JPs were finally convinced that he “had not any pencion allowed him either from the Hospitalls of the Savoy and Ely House” and they awarded him the standard pension for disabled servicemen of 40s per year.

In some cases, when a soldier or widow was unable to provide the right documentation, local residents rallied around. That was the case of Margaret Walker, from the village of Coggershall in Essex. Her husband, Peter Walker had been in ‘many battles and fights viz: at Edgehill, at Yorke, and at Hull one yeare and a halfe, and at Naseby and fighting at Sherbourne

Castle under Capt Sanders in Colonel Rainsburrow's regiment was slayed', (see *Figure 4*). Her petition additionally pleads that for many years she had 'remained a very poore widdow, and with great labour and hardship hath gotten her living, for long as God gave her ability of body ... but now being growne aged and fiebly, is not wayes able to maintaine her selfe.' Eighteen people – all men – signed her petition in support of her claim for a pension. The JPs subsequently granted her an annual pension of 40s, which was the same amount they awarded to maimed soldiers.

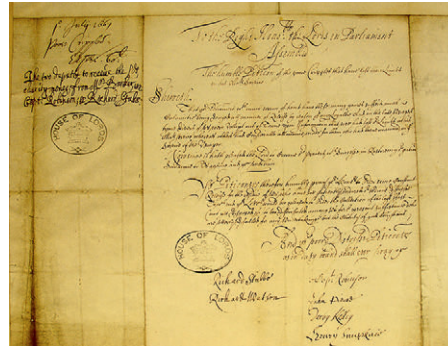


Figure 5: A petition by Cavaliers to the House of Lords after the Restoration

TOWARD THE END OF THE 1650S, THE conditions at Ely House and Savoy began to deteriorate. In April 1659, 2,500 maimed soldiers and 4,000 widows and orphans associated with those hospitals organised a petition. Their grievances were severe enough to be taken up by Lord Fairfax, the highest-ranking officer of the New Model Army, who presented them to Parliament. The MPs subsequently commissioned an investigation into the state of affairs in the hospitals. That investigation reported that both the pensioners and the patients receiving treatment in the hospitals were in great distress:

“.. some had starved; others have attempted to destroy themselves; and many are daily likely to perish, through imprisonment, Hunger, Cold and Nakedness. And the sick and maimed soldiers now under care in the said hospital are also ready to perish for want, being not able to stir out of their beds and having no pay for these four weeks.”

The deterioration of the hospitals reflected wider problems. England's experiment with a republic began to collapse. Upon the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the hospitals were cleared of all but four patients, who were bed-ridden. Those asked to leave, together with the widows and out-patients receiving pensions from the hospitals, were given 12 weeks pensions and ordered to return to their parishes.

Upon their arrival in their hometowns, the Roundheads who had sacrificed so much for the cause of Parliament found that they were no longer treated as heroes by the parish authorities. With their entitlement to a special pension gone, they had to rely upon standard poor relief. In the new regime, it was the turn of those on the other side. Cavaliers disabled fighting for the King began to come forward, seeking pensions under a new relief scheme that blocked Roundheads.

In a petition to the House of Lords shortly after the Restoration (see *Figure 5*), a group of Cavaliers complained that, during the Interregnum, they had been treated as vagabonds:

‘have for many years suffered calamity... had been whipped out of town upon Information that we had lost our limbes in his majesty's service whereas those had considerable allowance made for them who had been maimed in the service of the usurper’.

The King's new pension scheme operated at a parish level only. Interestingly, it was considerably less favourable to widows.

Although the military hospitals at Ely House and Savoy were closed down, the idea did not go away. Oliver Cromwell and the Parliamentarians had upheld the principle that the state was duty bound to its wounded servicemen and to the families of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Those principles coincided with the establishment of a centrally administered ‘newly modelled’ army whereby all ranks received a wage. Parliament's Ely House, the Savoy and its pension schemes are the forerunners of Headley Court and the prosthetic services that we find at the provincial centres today.

Geoff Goss, September 2014

Recommended reading:

Firth, Charles., Cromwell's Army (London, 1902)

Gruber von Arni, Eric., Justice to the Maimed Soldier (Aldershot, 2001)

HELP AND ADVICE

What happens if I need Blesma's help with the cost of a mobility or disability aid or home adaptation?

The first thing you should do is contact your local Blesma Support Officer or Branch Welfare Officer. He or she will ask you to provide at least two quotes and, if appropriate (if the request is for an aid that you haven't used before, for example) a report by an Occupational Therapist.

Your safety and well-being is always of paramount importance and the OT's report will ensure that the aid or adaptation you are asking for will not only meet your physical needs, but that you will be safe when using or operating it.

If the aid or home adaptation is going to cost in excess of £2,000 then an application will usually be made to the appropriate Regimental or Service Benevolent Fund to

supplement the Blesma grant. In these cases, if you have contacted your Branch Welfare Officer he or she will pass the case on to your local BSO who will arrange to visit you to explain the process and what paperwork is required.

The application must be supported by evidence not just of physical need, but also a financial one. Your BSO will, for example, need to complete Blesma Form 21 which provides evidence of your income and expenditure (for example, bank statements and utility bills); apply for permission from your landlord, where appropriate; apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant from your Local Authority, and for a House Adaptation Grant from Veterans UK if you are a War Pensioner; and arrange

for an OT to visit and assess your needs. You will need to provide at least two quotes so that we can be sure that you, and the Service charities who we are hoping will provide the financial assistance, are getting value for money.

We are aware that this process might seem overly bureaucratic. However, Service charities require evidence of physical need and financial need before they will consider a grant application and will only fund adaptations that are deemed essential for health needs. Nonetheless, we will do everything that we can to ensure that the process is as swift and as straightforward as possible. Please remember that if we are asking for what might seem like a mountain of paperwork it's only because it's required!

83-year-old's marathon fundraising stint

THE HUDDERSFIELD CONNECTION

Not having submitted an entry to Blesma magazine for some time, I feel I should let Members know that Huddersfield still manages to get a few Members and Widows together for a bite to eat and a natter. We have done this every month since the Branch closed in October 2006.

On a point of current interest, the wife of one of our Members, Valery France, was the main person involved in a World War I exhibition at Marsden Church and a service honouring the 147 local men from the village of Marsden who were killed. The service was preceded by a band that was led through the village, all of which was carried out with great respect and dignity.

On another note, on 03 August, just nine days after my 83rd birthday, I completed the York 10K with my grand-daughter Sarah (pictured right) raising £277 for "the firm". I had forgotten that I'd retired from running last year (!) but at least it took me to 25 years running for Blesma, my first race being the Barbados Marathon in December 1989. Since then I've run five London Marathons as well as two in Malta, one in Benidorm, Gozo and Leeds. I have also completed the Pennine Marathon, a London 10K, two Leeds 10Ks, 6 York 10Ks and a few other races.

Arnold Pickup



WHAT HAPPENED WHEN AN OLD FRIEND CAME FOR LUNCH

Recently, an old friend visited for lunch and I'd like to let you know about some of the topics that we discussed as I think they are worthy of a wider audience.

Arnold Pickup, at the age of 83, is my senior by two years, but in bodily fitness is my junior by light years. Whether his figure is kept trim by running or whether he keeps in trim so that he can keep on running is one of those questions that

is simple to pose and impossible to answer. What is easily answered is the question; what has his running brought over the last 25 years? He is always savvy enough to gather sponsors for his marathon efforts for the good of various charities. In the case of Blesma, he has raised very many £1000s.

Having served in the Merchant Navy, he is an Honorary Blesma Member, having been involved with the Huddersfield Branch from 1994 until its closure in 2006. Welfare contacts between Blesma and its Members in Arnold's area of Huddersfield have been zealously attended to with him conducting regular home visits. Stalwarts still meet for informal monthly lunches and Arnold remains the glue that keeps this social activity alive.

New Members are always welcome, just make your case known to Blesma HQ. There is no need to come with running kit Arnold assures me, and the lunches are always within easy travelling distance of Huddersfield centre, sometimes extending into *Last of the Summer Wine* country.

Whether Members have come to Blesma from their experiences in WWII or from the recent rash of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is people like Arnold who have brought, and continue to bring, the benefits of Blesma to those who have been disabled whilst serving this country.

Ray Barry

Paul Greene leaves the charity

We regret to inform you that BSO(SW) Paul Greene, has left the charity.

We are making every effort to ensure that there is minimum impact on our ability to support Members in the South West whilst we recruit Paul's replacement. Below is a reminder of the arrangements that have been put in place:

BOURNEMOUTH, ISLE OF WIGHT AND SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH MEMBERS

If you need advice or support please contact the following...

BOURNEMOUTH

Branch Welfare Officer

Peter Sherston-Baker 01202 523020

ISLE OF WIGHT

Branch Welfare Officer

Roy Augustus 01983 299814

SOUTHAMPTON

Branch Welfare Officer

Jacqueline Brodrick 02380 610715

Your Branch Welfare Officer will then contact the Membership Services Team at Chadwell Heath.

HQ AND CARDIFF BRANCH MEMBERS

Please call the Membership Services Team in Chadwell Heath on 020 8590 1124 or 020 8598 9459. If it becomes clear that you need a visit from a Blesma Support Officer then we will arrange for one of Paul's colleagues to visit you.

We look forward to announcing the arrival of Paul's successor in the next issue of Blesma magazine.

FOLLOW US:

 BLESMA IS ON FACEBOOK

 BLESMA IS ON TWITTER

CONTACT US:

PR AND MEDIA: PRSUPPORT@BLESMA.ORG OR CALL 020 8548 7090
MEMBERSHIP SERVICES: DOMS@BLESMA.ORG OR CALL 020 8548 3515