

# BLESMA

Magazine

The magazine for limbless veterans

## RACE2RECOVERY

The BLESMA Members who took on the world's toughest 'road' race



**ALSO INSIDE...**  
**ROW2RECOVERY**  
The amazing tale of four men, one boat and 48 days at sea

### A bit special!

Nelson, Monty and a chap who bit off his own fingers. The men who would have been Members **p26**



### Trans4ming people's lives

Preparing for a leap of faith with the charity's Trans4mers skydive club **p28**

### Bluetooth and the bionic knee

A BLESMA Member is the first person in the UK to be fitted with a truly ground-breaking prosthesis **p18**



## Guy Disney

UK Team Member

Congratulations to all of the Walking With The Wounded teams on their successful trek to Antarctica. We have been inspired by the adventures of each intrepid individual and proud to have been a sponsor and that endolite feet, made here in Britain, stood up to the extreme conditions of the ice bound continent.



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Images: Gaucho Productions, James Winspear, Andy Bate, Getty images



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Did you miss the  
**Activities Calendar**  
for 2014 that was  
inserted into the  
last issue? Turn to  
p13 to find out how  
to get involved...

**Special thanks to:** Andy Bate, Dave Coulton, Frank Garside, Annette Hall, Aureen Jones, Nick Moore, Heather Nicholson, Prarthana Rao, Bryony Stevens, Ian Waller, Jon White. BLESMA Magazine is published on behalf of the **British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association (BLESMA)** by **Scratch Publishing**. Contact Scratch Publishing at [scratchpublishing@gmail.com](mailto:scratchpublishing@gmail.com). Printed by Wyndeham Grange. This publication may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form, in whole or in part, without the prior permission of the publishers. All prices and addresses are correct at the time of going to press. Every care has been taken in the preparation of this magazine to ensure the contents is fully accurate, but neither Scratch Publishing nor BLESMA can be held responsible for the accuracy of the information herein, any omissions or errors, or any consequence arising from it. The views expressed by contributors, customers and Members might not reflect the views of Scratch Publishing or BLESMA. Publication date: Spring 2014. © Scratch Publishing 2014.

## BLESMA Members finish world's toughest land race



Images (and cover image): Copyright Gaucho Productions

**T**he Race2Recovery team of injured soldiers and civilians – featuring three BLESMA Members – finished the Dakar Rally for the second year running. Billed as the world's toughest land race, the 9,100km course sees competitors driving across the Atacama Desert and Andes mountains over two weeks, with an average drop out rate of 50 per cent.

The R2R team's achievement was made more impressive by the fact that no special allowances are made to disabled competitors. "It's not like there is a Paralympic style version of the rally," says Tony Harris, 32, a BLESMA trustee who founded the R2R team and took part in the race for the first time last year. "It's a level playing field and that's the way we like it, we faced the same challenges as some of the top rallying guys."

Sponsored by Land Rover, BLESMA Members Tony – a former Captain in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers – along with Daniel Whittingham and Philip Gillespie endured treacherous conditions. "It felt great to be part of a team, because when



(Above l-r) Capt Tony Harris, Cpl 'Baz' Whittingham, Cpl Philip 'Barney' Gillespie

you're going through rehabilitation, the only person that can really get you better is yourself," says Tony, who was injured in Sangin in 2009. "This is a real test of endurance, a massive drive."

One of the team's vehicles finished in 2013, and this year, the team's truck battled to the end after Tony's car, navigated by Dakar veteran Quin Evans, was damaged in a dramatic crash. "It's a fine line between keeping your speed up and staying wary," says Tony. "During huge sections of the race, the real challenge is staying focused. We were going over some knife-edge dunes, which are very hard to judge at certain sun angles – like skiing in a white out. I crested it going a shade too fast and the vehicle rolled. We landed on the wheels and carried on to complete the day. We were doing well, lying in 65th position, way ahead of our target, but unfortunately the roll cage was cracked so we couldn't carry on."

The onus shifted to getting to the finish in the team truck. "It was frustrating, but we went for a switch of tactic and the guys

## Pulling power

Two BLESMA Members spent 48 days rowing across the Atlantic Ocean. Read their story on p20



The Race2Recovery team celebrate completing the Dakar Rally

in the support team stepped up. The spirit and unity were incredible,” says Tony.

The team, including Baz and Philip, ploughed on for two more days, getting just a couple of hours of sleep a night. “We went from a support role to having the weight of the team on us, which was unexpected, but we enjoyed every minute of it,” says Baz, who was serving in 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal in 2009 when he lost his leg to a missile strike. “The Dakar Rally was one of the best things I’ve ever done, and it shows everyone that you’re not just an injury, and that you can achieve whatever you put your mind to. BLESMA has been superb for that, getting me doing so many activities, and helping me adapt to my amputation.”

Race2Recovery are seeking BLESMA Members to get involved in next year’s race. “A military background really helps at Dakar, and the guys and girls new to amputation see it is a challenge that they can physically overcome,” says Tony. “Physically you’ve lost something, but mentally you can gain so much.”



**If you are interested in taking part in next year’s event contact the team on [tiff@race2recovery.com](mailto:tiff@race2recovery.com)**

# welcome

May I take the opportunity, in this first edition of BLESMA Magazine of 2014, to wish you all a very belated Happy New Year. The air of expectation has reached BLESMA Headquarters as Barry Le Grys MBE has very recently joined us at the helm as the new Chief Executive and General Secretary. Barry becomes only the seventh holder of the office in 80 years and we wish him well in these exciting times for the Association.

With a new leader there is no doubt that the theme of change, as BLESMA regenerates and develops, will continue, particularly as we strive to widen the breadth and depth of membership. We will continue to campaign with élan on issues that lead to a better deal for Members from all our constituent parts, and in the process build our reputation and push for wider national awareness and recognition of our work.

In a submission to the House of Commons Defence Select Committee in February we highlighted, amongst other issues, disparities within the Armed Forces Independence Payments scheme to the disadvantage of a number of our attributable amputees with War Pensions. We also showed the inconsistent provision across the nine selected Disablement Services Centres that undermines confidence in NHS prosthetic services amongst our younger amputees. We will work tirelessly with the government and other stakeholders on these and other issues affecting the membership in usual BLESMA style.

Since the retirement of Jerome Church in December I have had the honour to stand in as acting Chief Executive during a period of intense activity for a number of BLESMA adventurers. I have watched with great respect as some of our young men and women have challenged themselves to extremes. You will read in the pages to follow of the exploits of Cayle Royce and Scott Blaney as they successfully rowed the Atlantic; of the trials and tribulations of Duncan Slater, Ibrar Ali MC, Kate Philp and Guy Disney as they reached the South Pole; and the disappointments and ultimate success of Tony Harris, Philip Gillespie and Daniel Whittingham, in completing the 2014 Dakar Rally in Argentina and Chile (story left).

As always, our Members’ exploits are an inspiration to us all and increasingly these adventures lead to tangible outcomes for all of the participants in the form of real opportunities for advancement whether in skills or employment. It is the planned lasting legacy of activities, over and above the hugely important confidence, self-belief and fellowship aspects, that continues to attract BLESMA to endeavours that “push the envelope”.

Over the coming months we will continue to keep you updated on the challenges our people undertake. For those who don’t want to wait for the next edition of the magazine follow BLESMA on social media and at [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)

**Ian Waller**  
Acting Chief Executive  
and Operations Director





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## The power of the pixel

The knee that uses computer game technology on p18



Nick Beighton rowed for GB in the London 2012 Paralympics

## From A to B avoiding... absolutely nothing!

Numerous people have made the journey from Land's End to John O'Groats for charity – but we're not sure if anyone has ever tried to do it as the crow flies – until now. Beeline Britain, which is the brainchild of RAF crewman Ian O'Grady and kayak coach Adam Harmer, will see a team of four attempt to travel in a straight line between the two locations this May, using kayaks, bikes and hiking over mountainous regions – and a BLESMA Member is taking part.

Nick Beighton (pictured above) is a Captain in the Royal Engineers. He lost both legs above the knee in 2009 from an IED in Afghanistan. Along with Tori James – the first Welsh woman to climb Everest – the three men will spend a month traversing coastal, mountain and urban environments. They're expecting to travel more than 600 miles – 300 nautical miles by kayak, 325 miles by bike and 15 hiking.

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to find new, compelling journeys to complete, especially on home soil," explains Ian O'Grady. "Our route is as audacious and committed as is possible in the UK, and serves as a new way to complete this iconic journey." Nick is up for the challenge. "It's something really different – one of those

ideas that you have in the pub, but we're actually doing it," he laughs. "A friend of mine knows Adam, and she suggested me as someone crazy enough to do it."

It certainly won't be simple. "When I'm in the boat, the fact that I don't have legs won't be a huge issue, but it'll be tough using my upper body all the time," he says.

"I won't get a rest during the cycling, because I'll be using a hand bike – and I'll be hiking on crutches."

All the funds raised will be donated to BLESMA, and Nick hopes they will raise at least £20,000. "BLESMA have been important to me since my injury – they were one of the first charities that came to see me," he says.

"They brought me into the fold and gave me lots of information. BLESMA are there right from the start, and help you out until you pop your clogs!"

He's certainly got the willpower to do the job: a Paralympian who rowed in the London 2012 Games, Nick has got his eyes on the Rio Games after this mission is done and dusted. Good luck!

To find out more or sponsor the team go to [beelinebritain.com](http://beelinebritain.com) or follow them on [facebook/beelinebritain](https://www.facebook.com/beelinebritain) or on [Twitter @beelinebritain](https://twitter.com/beelinebritain). You can donate at [www.justgiving.com/beelinebritain](http://www.justgiving.com/beelinebritain)



## BRANCH NEWS GREAT YARMOUTH & LOWESTOFT BRANCH

Since I missed writing in the last issue I thought I had better get pen to paper and let everyone know we are still alive and kicking in East Anglia. We are now getting back to some resemblance of normality as the council has started to clean the beaches in Lowestoft after the flooding before Christmas – so the summer must be on its way!

The Branch continues to tick along at a sedate pace, which is how most of us feel these days. If you are ill, get well soon and if you want a visit from Tom or Philip please give us a ring – we are always here to help.

We had our AGM lunch in January and the committee was voted back in en bloc so congratulations to them – keep up the great work. Please note a couple of dates for the diary: our summer luncheon will take place on 22 July and our Christmas dinner on 02 December – both will be held at the Burlington Palm Court Hotel in Great Yarmouth. I will send out invites.

It just remains for me to wish everyone good health and, remember, we are only a phone call away.

*Philip Monkhouse  
Honorary Secretary*

## CALLING ALL ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS

Always fancied seeing your name in lights? Or at least on the back of a BLESMA Christmas card? Well, now you can because the charity is running a competition to design one of this year's official BLESMA Christmas cards. Your entry can be a photograph, drawing or cartoon, and the competition is open to all ages.

To be in with a chance of winning simply send your A4-sized design, with your name and address written on the reverse, to **Christmas Card Competition, BLESMA, 185-187 High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex, RM6 6NA**. The closing date for entries is 30 May 2014. Good luck!



## ↘ BLESMA BRIEFING

# Are you up to speed with the services you're entitled to?

Since last April there have been significant changes in how Prosthetic Services have been commissioned in England and in the way veterans with service attributable amputations access NHS limb services and enhanced prosthetics



**T**he Government announced a cash injection of £15 million for Prosthetic Services last April which is set to run out in April 2015. Part of the money was for providing enhanced prosthetic components and part on investment for nine NHS centres, with a small part to be used for the broader outcomes suggested by Dr Andrew Murrison MP in his report *A Better Deal For Military Amputees*.

The term 'attributable to service' means limb loss as a result of military service. Anyone in this situation will have received either a War Pension or an Armed Forces Compensation Scheme award for the amputation. Your BSO can help you with this if you have any doubt.

On 1 April 2013, NHS England came into being and took over commissioning responsibility for Prosthetic Services in England. This did away with the 'Postcode Lottery' that some suggested prevailed under the Primary Care Trust system. This period of change has inevitably caused a number of uncertainties and, in some cases, complex issues. BLESMA has been, and continues to be, at the forefront of managing this change and mitigating any impact on our Members.

A consequence of this change has been the drafting of a new Service Specification for Prosthetic Provision in England which is due to commence public consultation soon. A general benefit of the increased publicity around enhanced prosthetics for eligible veterans and the Paralympics legacy is that interest in this subject is high amongst the public, Ministers and the NHS.

This has also carried across to the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. Last year, Scotland announced full support in providing enhanced prosthetics to veterans in line with the system in place in England. Wales followed suit and, last October, published their War Veterans – Enhanced Prosthetic Provision Policy. BLESMA was consulted on this work in the early stages. Currently no financial figure has

been given, but the policy sets out the process to be followed for clinicians to obtain enhanced prosthetics. The suggestion is that this will, where clinically appropriate, be funded from within existing frameworks. This is good news and all Members who have lost limbs as a result of their military service should seek a review of their prosthetic prescriptions. Should anyone encounter difficulty with this process or have any questions about prosthetic provision, please get in touch with Brian Chenier at BLESMA HQ on [bsoprosthetics@blesma.org](mailto:bsoprosthetics@blesma.org) or on 020 8548 7080.

In England, a large number of veterans have directly benefitted from the work of the Veterans Prosthetic Panel (VPP) and enhanced prosthetics are making a real difference to lives. The VPP was set up to consider claims by NHS limb centres for prosthetics that would not normally be funded by the NHS, but were available to those undergoing rehabilitation at Headley Court. After a slow start, and with only a few NHS centres making applications, almost every NHS centre has now made applications and the success rate is very high. All BLESMA Members are encouraged to speak to their prosthetist and consultant to review their prescription.

Some confusion still exists among those transferring from the military to the NHS. Nine limb centres (Bristol, Leicester, Sheffield, Carlisle, Preston, Stanmore, Portsmouth, Birmingham and Cambridge) have been selected to provide a particular focus on enhanced prosthetic provision to those leaving, or having left the Armed Forces. This does not mean BLESMA Members HAVE to go to one of these centres, and the reality is they may well be getting an excellent service from their local centre. It also does not detract from the ability of any NHS centre in England to submit a VPP application for an eligible veteran. Again Brian, along with your regional BSO, is on hand to help answer any questions you might have.



**THE VPP WAS SET UP TO CONSIDER CLAIMS BY NHS LIMB CENTRES FOR ANY PROSTHETIC THAT WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE FUNDED BY THE NHS**







## Help us to keep you informed

Have you moved home or changed your telephone number or email address recently? If so, please let Headquarters know. This will help to keep records up to date, ensuring that your BLESMA Support Officer can contact you, and that you receive not only the magazine and Members' Newsletters, but also any email updates about forthcoming activities and events.

BLESMA are conscious that many Members are unable or do not wish to use email or the internet. We will always provide hard copies of publications, but if you have family or friends who could receive emails on your behalf, please email the Membership Services team at [memberadmin@blesma.org](mailto:memberadmin@blesma.org) so that your details can be added to the electronic mailing list.

### THANKS GO TO AGILITY FOR ALL THEIR SUPPORT



Since 2010 Agility have been the MoD appointed contractor managing the global movement of service personnel's personal effects. They have also been supporting BLESMA. A donation of more than £7,000 in May 2012 was quickly followed by another of £1,240 when two members of Agility completed a 10km run for the charity. Agility went on to hold charity golf days in 2012 and 2013 raising more than £14,000. The most recent event was held during 'Movember' 2013 when five members of staff grew moustaches to raise £500.

## Can you see the end yet?

Four Members take on one of the toughest challenges in the world...

**K**ate Philp, Guy Disney, Ibrar Ali and Duncan Slater took part in Walking With The Wounded's 210-mile expedition to the South Pole, successfully completing the mission on 13 December despite terrible conditions.

"It was very tough, the hardest thing I have ever done," says Major Kate Philp, who serves in the Royal Artillery despite losing a leg below the knee in Afghanistan in 2008.

"We were pulling 70-80kg packs on skis, and by day four I felt like I had nothing in the tank. But we did it, and I'm delighted and privileged to have taken part."

Three teams of seven (one British, one American, one Australian-Canadian) each featured four injured servicemen or ex-servicemen, a polar guide, a charity

representative, and one VIP. Prince Harry was on Britain's team. The mission is thought to have raised more than £200,000 "Prince Harry was fantastic," says Major Philp. "He obviously brings a great deal of



publicity, but he's also very fit and strong, which made him a genuinely valuable member of the team."

Major Philp is also full of praise for BLESMA. "They engaged with me very early in my rehabilitation and

I took a trip to the USA with them a year after my injury," she says. "It has been a lengthy rehab for a fairly simple injury and it is great to be a part of a community who have been through the same thing."

**To find out more about the expedition or to donate visit [www.walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/southpole2013](http://www.walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/southpole2013)**

## GET READY FOR BLESMA WEEK

This year marks the centenary of the start of WW1 and BLESMA will remember this landmark in history with the first ever BLESMA Week. From 02-06 June the charity will hold a week-long celebration to raise vital funds as well as awareness of our work.

Getting involved is easy and fun, so if you're interested in holding your own event, from a cake stall in your work place to a skydive with your mates, get in touch with BLESMA's friendly Fundraising Team at [community@blesma.org](mailto:community@blesma.org) or on **020 8548 7089**. There'll be lots going on, so keep an eye on the website [www.blesma.org/blesmaweek](http://www.blesma.org/blesmaweek) for more.



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## Got a story you want to share?

Email [editor@blesma.org](mailto:editor@blesma.org) and we'll put it in the magazine

# NEWS



## Meet the man who'll try to paddle around Britain

**K**ayaking around Great Britain is a monumental task: only some 30 people have done it, and nobody has attempted a solo mission. Until now. Richard Hunt will be setting off to attempt the feat this April – paddling 2,300 miles for up to six months in an attempt to raise between £20,000 and £50,000 for BLESMA.

“I got into kayaking on a stag weekend five years ago,” says Richard. “I love the

coastline and always wonder what's around the next bay – that's what brought me to this ridiculous challenge! It will be extremely difficult. I'm sure there will be issues with the weather and current, but the mental factor is my biggest worry because I'm doing it solo. Good tunes on the iPod will be the way to stay sane!”

Richard's shore team will keep in touch and arrange local media interviews about 'The Great Paddle Round' as he passes

around the country. In the process he aims to beat Helen Skelton's solo kayak record of 2,010 miles, which she set on the Amazon.

“The record is secondary,” he says. “I'm doing this to pay BLESMA back for all the help they have given me.” Richard lost his leg in 1994 after a series of unfortunate events: after a minor sports injury in 1988 while serving in the Navy, his leg became infected, and was amputated following 20 further operations.

“I was medically discharged from the Navy and, after losing the leg, became very depressed,” he says. “Getting involved in BLESMA saved me. I went sailing, and the old military banter was there. I loved the fact I was doing things for myself again. It made me realise there was life after amputation. It restored my confidence.”

Richard has retrained as a teacher and, not content with taking on Britain's coast, he will attempt to break another record by paddling tandem down the Amazon next year, before attempting the length of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers after that – all for BLESMA, of course!

Visit [www.thegreatpaddleround.co.uk](http://www.thegreatpaddleround.co.uk) to find out more or lend your support

## YOU WANT MORE BLESMA SUPPORT

Analysis of the recent Members' Support Survey have revealed a number of areas where Members want more support. Key areas are the desire for BLESMA to provide more information on moving into care homes and accessing respite care. Information about how to access grants for the purchase of mobility equipment and respite breaks was also high on the agenda. Members also want to know how to meet other Members in their areas – through the Branch network or by finding those with a similar interest or hobby.

Some Members would appreciate more visits, whilst others are reassured knowing that support is at the end of the phone should they need it. The team at HQ have taken all the comments on board and are reviewing how best to deliver the support. Updates will follow on the progress over the coming months in this magazine and the Members' Newsletter.

## MAKE SURE YOU BOOK YOUR PLACE AT THE MEMBERS' WEEKEND IN MAY

The Members' Weekend will be held 17-18 May 2014 at the Hilton Hotel, Leicester. Planning is underway for the new-look programme with the AGM to be held in London later in the year.

The Weekend will begin on Saturday afternoon with an Act of Remembrance, followed by briefings and presentations to update Members on the charity's work before dinner and entertainment.

Sunday's activities workshop will give Members the chance to learn more about BLESMA's programme of sporting and artistic activities. Delegates will be able to talk to other Members who have tried everything from cycling to ski-biking.

There will also be the chance to meet the Support Officers to discuss any issues concerning health and wellbeing, and the

Manager of Blackpool Home will be available to answer any questions on the facility. Finally, a recruiting fair will explain plans to increase the volunteering opportunities within BLESMA and how you can support your fellow Members. Above all, there will be time to socialise with old friends and make new ones.

If you would like to showcase a hobby or sporting interest during the workshop, please get in touch with Dave Coulton on [activities@blesma.org](mailto:activities@blesma.org) or 020 8548 3519.

Attendance will be free to Ordinary or Associate Members, and to those Honorary Members who hold Branch Office. More information will be made available shortly and please remember that delegate spaces are limited to 80 so book early to avoid disappointment!

## In the spotlight

**BRIAN CHENIER**  
PROSTHETICS  
SUPPORT OFFICER

Brian and his father at last year's Remembrance Parade in London



“

**I CONSULT WITH OUR MEMBERS TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY WANT AND NEED FROM THE LIMB CENTRES. I HAVE TO JUGGLE AND NEGOTIATE. TALKING IS THE KEY!**

”

Brian Chenier has been BLESMA's Prosthetics Support Officer since April 2013. He was in the Army for 27 years, deploying to Iraq, Bosnia and Northern Ireland. He spent 12 years with the Royal Military Police and worked at the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester for the remainder of his service. He also campaigned for better mental health among servicemen and women.

“My role in BLESMA is to act as a troubleshooter for any prosthetic issues our Members have – or perceive to have. When the Regional Officers feel an issue might require a more targeted or high-level approach it comes to me. A Member may want help with funding for attributable amputees, for example.

“For the vast majority of our Members, the service they get from the NHS is perfectly acceptable, but as with any industry, things can break down. Policies or procedures don't always meet the expectations of the patient – that's where I get involved. I advocate for the Member, but also help NHS staff communicate back to our Members. I have an objective standpoint.

“One of the most common problems I deal with is times between appointments, and the number of appointments our Members have with a limb centre. The key issue for most amputees is socket fit and comfort. Mistakes can be made between an initial consultation and the fitting of a prosthesis: residual limb volume can change, so sockets don't work – that frustrates a lot of Members. I consult with them to find out what they want and need, then communicate it to the limb centre or service. We try to make sure the appointments are convenient and we don't want people waiting too long, so I juggle and negotiate. Communication is key.

“I'm based at BLESMA HQ, but I also visit limb centres. It's crucial for me to get to know the limb centre managers well – it's easier to have difficult conversations when you know the person. Centre managers are the ones who can really influence the clinical teams, from the top down.

“There are a few burning issues for our Members. The money the government allocated for enhanced prosthetic provision for servicemen and women who have been injured in the course of duty runs out in April 2015. I'm involved in trying to get that money re-instated, and make sure prosthetics don't drop off the agenda as we withdraw from Afghanistan. I do that by attending meetings, conferences and seminars, and by being a member of the Armed Forces Networks, who all have a wish to keep veteran health on the agenda. I am the voice of BLESMA at these meetings.

“Another issue is working with other charities on the wider issues of living with limb loss. I sit on a working group for complex disability equipment, which advises NHS commissioners on what patients expect from their service. I also work with amputees outside England, to make sure they get the care they need, too. Members based in Scotland, Wales or Ireland, also have access to prosthetic centres and each region has a BLESMA Support Officer. For those who live overseas and aren't quite sure how they can continue to get the help they need, they should get in touch with me, because I can advise them on their rights and liaise with the relevant agencies.

“What really strikes me about BLESMA is that the charity puts its Members first. It is all about meeting their needs and, as those needs change, BLESMA changes. As a former military man, I admire BLESMA Members, and enjoy being around military humour. It gets people through difficult times. The Blackpool Home's bar, The Legless Arms, is a key example. The military spirit prevails, and it's great to be working amongst that once again.

“A personal highlight so far has been joining BLESMA at the Cenotaph parade last Remembrance Day. That was something I had always wanted to do alongside my dad, who is a BLESMA Member. It was a special and humbling day for us both.”

**Contact Brian on 020 8548 7080 or 07796 715908 or by emailing him at [bsoprosthetics@blesma.org](mailto:bsoprosthetics@blesma.org)**



# Bored? Time for a challenge

Do you fancy trying something new in 2014? There are plenty of activities on offer through BLESMA this year. Just take your pick



Inserted into the last issue of BLESMA Magazine was a calendar of activities that are on offer to BLESMA Members in 2014. If you haven't already applied there's still time for you to get involved.

"All the activities that we provide are completely free, Members only pay for their transport to and from the meeting point," says Activities Manager Dave Coulton, "and we make sure that we cater for every level throughout the year, from beginner to serious adventurer!"

There's something on offer for every age group and all interests. And if you think BLESMA activities are just for adrenaline junkies think again. More artistic pursuits such as painting and photography are

becoming more and more popular with Members and are on offer during the year.

"The most important aspect of any activities programme is the social aspect," says Dave. "Whatever the event, our Members help each other out, work together and share fantastic experiences. The events are intended to get people interested in new activities and hobbies, it's not about going on holiday, and you certainly don't have to be an expert."

Take a look at the events on offer and book your place before the closing date to maximise the chances of getting a place. **If you don't have a calendar of events email Dave on [activities@blesma.org](mailto:activities@blesma.org) or call him on 020 8548 3519 to get one**

## BRANCH NEWS WALSALL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

WE ARE EXTREMELY GRATEFUL to our local BSO, Charley Streather, for a recent series of welfare visits to a number of Branch Members living in the east of our area. This was arranged by one of our Branch Welfare Officers, Gerry Crossland, who accompanied Charley on his tour.

The highlight of our winter was the annual Branch Christmas lunch, held as usual at The Terrace Restaurant. We were very fortunate this year to welcome Ian Waller and his wife, Rachel, to the Branch. Prior to the lunch I met them at the National Memorial Arboretum and gave an update on the work being carried out in the BLESMA Garden and Orchard.

We also welcomed Ann Keeley from the West Midlands Veterans Welfare Service, and our regular guest, Charley Streather. We were also very pleased to enjoy the company of two old friends of the Branch; Keith and Carol Meakin. A total of 38 enjoyed the lunch where they spent time chatting to old friends.

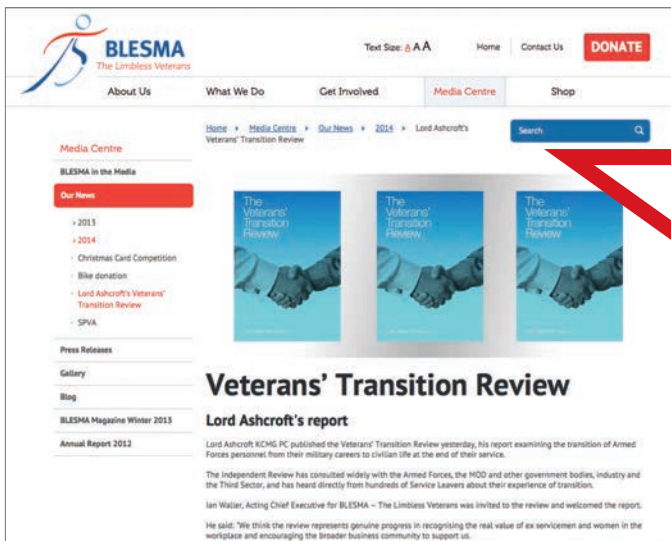
One of our stalwart members, Bill Bradshaw, is not well at present and we all wish him a return to better health. Our thoughts are with him and Lillian at this difficult time.

Sadly, we lost two of our widows during the winter. Lillian Cross and Marie Tranter both passed away over the Christmas period. Marie was the widow of Harold, our past Chairman, and she was a great support to Harold in all his BLESMA work. Our thoughts and prayers go to their families and friends at this difficult time.

Finally, on behalf of the Branch, I would like to thank Jerome Church for all his hard work over the past 13 years in support of the Association. We wish him a happy and long retirement.  
*Mike Gallagher, Secretary*

### TELL US ALL ABOUT IT

What do you think of this issue of BLESMA Magazine? Write to us at [editor@blesma.org](mailto:editor@blesma.org) and let us know. Please tell us what topics and subjects you would like to see covered in the next issue so that we can constantly improve your magazine.



Keep up to date with all the latest news, views and notices by regularly visiting the BLESMA website at [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)

## Veterans' review has been welcomed by BLESMA

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC has published the Veterans' Transition Review, a report examining the transition of Armed Forces personnel from their military careers to civilian life after their service.

The independent review consulted widely with the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence and other government bodies, as well as industry and the Third Sector. It also heard directly from hundreds of service leavers about their experience of transition.

Ian Waller, BLESMA's Acting Chief

Executive, was invited to the review and welcomed the report. "We think the review represents genuine progress in recognising the real value of ex-servicemen and women in the workplace and encouraging the broader business community to support us," he said. "It's also very encouraging that the review is looking at consolidating the military charity sector so that we can all work more closely with each other to ensure that our Armed Forces are getting the best support and advice from the relevant people."

### NEW PHONE NUMBER FOR VETERANS UK

The freephone number for SPVA's Veterans UK helpline changed in February. The new number is 0800 1914 218, and represents the start and end dates of WWI (1914 to 1918). This link to such an historic event will be memorable in what is the centenary year of WWI. The existing helpline telephone number (0800 169 2277) will still work for the foreseeable future.

As part of the changes the Veterans UK helpline has also extended its opening hours and is now contactable from 0730 to 1830 on work days (1700 on Fridays). SPVA has also teamed up with Combat Stress and the Samaritans for callers to access help outside of those hours. When the Veterans UK helpline is closed callers will be transferred to the Combat Stress or the Samaritans 24-hour helpline.

### THE RIPPLE POND ON HAND FOR FAMILIES

Losing a limb isn't just traumatic for the victim, it is also difficult for family members. The Ripple Pond is a support group set up by Julia Molony – whose son Anthony Harris is a BLESMA Trustee – for family members.

"When Anthony was injured I felt I couldn't talk to anyone, including him, about certain things," she says. "I desperately needed to relate to somebody. I eventually met another mum and I found that helpful and inspiring. There were things I couldn't say to Anthony that I needed to, but after the meeting, I was able to talk to him because I'd taken the emotion out of it. Our relationship benefited.

"We hope the concept will ripple around the country," says Julia. "We can put you in touch with somebody, and if there is nobody locally, we can support you, or set up a new group. This isn't therapy – they are groups that meet, have a coffee and support each other."

Find out more about The Ripple Pond or get in touch at [www.theripplepond.co.uk](http://www.theripplepond.co.uk)

## SHORTS

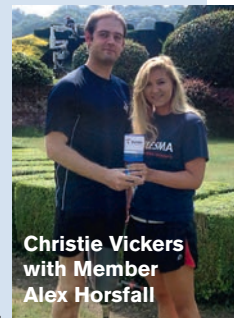
### CALLING ALL WIDOWS

Ordinary and Associate Widows are invited to enjoy a week's break at the BLESMA Home in Blackpool in Autumn where they will be able to sample the excellent hospitality of the Home and enjoy the wonderful sights of Lancashire.

There are two weeks to choose from – either 24 September to 01 October 2014 or 01 to 08 October. If you would like to be considered for one of the two weeks make sure you complete the form that will be mailed out with the Spring issue of the Members' Newsletter, and return it to Membership Services by 31 May.

### MARATHON RUNNERS

Best of luck to the following people who are taking part in this year's London Marathon to raise money for BLESMA; Rob Copey, Steven Francis,



Christie Vickers with Member Alex Horsfall

Kevin Godlington, Stuart Hague, Ben Horne, Chris Hunter, Alexandra Hunter-Dunn, Al Nekrews, Christie Vickers, Ross Waring, Anthony Wood, Jane Wood, and Rob Workman. Have fun and we'll see you at the finish line on the Mall!

### STOURBRIDGE GOLFERS

Further to the mention in the last issue, here is Trustee Jim Keating collecting a cheque for £6,918.50 from the Stourbridge Golf Club last November. Barry Corbett, the then Club Captain (far right), drove the fundraising, working hard for two years to raise the money.



L to R: Mike Harris (President, Stourbridge GC), Jayne Gill, Ian Baldry (Help For Heroes), Sandra Corbett, Jim Keating and Barry Corbett (Captain 2012/13, Stourbridge GC)

## OBITUARIES

# *Those we have lost*

### Douglas Baines

**1924-2013**

A lot has already been written about Douglas Baines. He has been the subject of a TV news piece and is held in near-celebrity status in a small town in France. So it is with deep regret that we have to write about his untimely death in November 2013.

Douglas was born in Goole, South Humberside in 1924 and was conscripted into the Army in 1942. He originally joined the West Yorkshire Regiment before transferring to the Parachute Regiment after he found out they paid two shillings a week more.

On 6 June 1944 (D-Day) Douglas was part of an assault into France and, like many of his comrades, was dropped in the wrong area. He was one of a number of soldiers who landed in the River Dives, dried out but essentially a bog. It took Douglas and his



fellow soldiers a long time to get out of the river, and when they did it was only with the help of a local farmer who was later captured

and shot for helping the British.

Dougie was eventually captured by the Nazis. He was being transported by train when he escaped by cutting a hole in the floor of the carriage and dropping onto the railway line. He then joined the French Resistance movement and was later decorated by them for his services.

Dougie survived another catastrophe when he returned to the frontline. He was in a glider that was shot down over the River Rhine as it was landing. He was the only survivor of the five-man crew but lost his leg in the process. (Dougie used the same prosthetic leg that he had fitted in 1947 until the day he died).

Dougie returned to France every year as part of the D-Day celebrations and always made time to lay a wreath on the graves of the farmer and labourer who had saved him. This year Dougie's widow, Lorna, will travel to France to honour Dougie's wish of laying a wreath at the farmer's grave.

### Others who have passed away recently

*June 2013 – December 2013. May they rest in peace*

<b>Baines D</b>	Yorkshire Parachute	Blackpool, Bradford	29/11/13
<b>Betts K</b>	Lancers	HQ	16/11/13
<b>Bowley C</b>	Army	HQ (Walsall, Birmingham)	05/11/13
<b>Cohen R</b>	QOCH	HQ	2013
<b>Coombs P</b>	Household Cavalry	Portsmouth	15/11/13
<b>Cremer M</b>	Royal Anglian	HQ	2013
<b>Crompton A</b>	KOYLI	Blackpool Home	18/11/13
<b>De Bertrand H</b>	RA	HQ	30/11/13
<b>Dougall P</b>	Life Guards	HQ	2013
<b>Edgley J</b>	Royal Artillery	Walsall	08/06/13
<b>Foster M</b>	RE	HQ	2013
<b>Gurd E</b>	Duke of Cornwall LI	Southampton	22/11/13
<b>Hughes A</b>	South Staffs/Black Watch	Walsall	07/06/13
<b>Jenkins J</b>	RAF	HQ (Blackpool Home, Leicester)	25/11/13
<b>Leng D</b>	RAF	Southampton	07/11/13
<b>Marsh P</b>	RA	HQ (Huddersfield)	04/12/13
<b>Milligan A</b>	Royal Sussex	HQ (Croydon)	10/12/13
<b>Mills M</b>	RN	HQ	01/12/13
<b>Nisbet I</b>	RM	HQ	28/11/13
<b>Owen E</b>	RAC	HQ	15/11/13
<b>Palastanga R</b>	RA	HQ	30/11/13
<b>Pickup R</b>	QLR	HQ	22/11/13
<b>Pryor E</b>	RAF	Blackpool Home	28/11/13
<b>Roskell G</b>	RAF	HQ	24/12/13
<b>Savage B</b>	RAF	Southampton	28/12/13
<b>Sharland H</b>	East Surrey	HQ	08/12/13
<b>Shore S</b>	REME	HQ	26/11/13
<b>Timm D</b>	Green Howards	HQ (Sheffield)	20/12/13
<b>Upington W</b>	Royal Ulster Rifles	HQ (Exeter)	01/11/13
<b>Walker H</b>	RA	Blackpool Home	30/12/13
<b>Wilkinson A</b>	RN	HQ	07/11/13

Off-road runner Colin:  
Below knee amputee



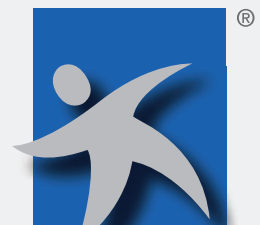
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# INBOX

Word from our inbox. Get in touch at [editor@blesma.org](mailto:editor@blesma.org)

**TOP TIPS**

**HOW TO...**

## Maintain your stump

Whether you're new to BLESMA or have been a Member for years, chances are you can pick up some tips from your peers. Read on...

**1 DON'T TRY TO WALK BEFORE YOU CAN WALK**  
This can lead to serious injury. It's not just your leg that's at risk, but your back too. It's better to use a wheelchair or a walker until you're confident you can walk on your own. Give it a few days. Eventually you'll be able to walk on your own and you can make a decision about it. Don't build up too much.

**2 KEEP ON TOP OF MINOR CUTS AND BRUISES**  
It's important to keep your stump clean and dry. Use a mild soap and water to clean the stump. Pat it dry with a clean towel. Apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly to keep the skin from cracking. If you have a bruise, use an ice pack to reduce swelling. If you have a cut, use a sterile bandage to cover it. Change the bandage if it becomes wet or dirty.

**3 MAKE SURE YOU USE YOUR STUMP PROPERLY**  
It's important to use your stump correctly. Avoid putting too much weight on it. Use a cane or walker if you need it. If you're using a wheelchair, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you. If you're using a walker, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you. If you're using a prosthetic leg, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you.

**4 EXFOLIATE!**  
It's important to exfoliate your stump. Use a soft brush or sponge to gently scrub the skin. This will help to remove dead skin and keep the skin smooth. Do this once a week.

**5 DON'T GET YOUR STUMP TOO HOT**  
It's important to keep your stump cool. Avoid wearing tight clothing. Avoid sitting on hard surfaces. If you're using a prosthetic leg, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you. If you're using a wheelchair, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you.

**6 PROTECT YOUR STUMP WHEN DOING EXERCISE**  
It's important to protect your stump when you exercise. Use a protective pad or sock. Avoid wearing tight clothing. Avoid sitting on hard surfaces. If you're using a prosthetic leg, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you. If you're using a wheelchair, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you.

**7 FIND YOUR OWN WAY**  
It's important to find your own way. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to try new things. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Don't be afraid to be different. Don't be afraid to be yourself.

**8 STAY ACTIVE**  
It's important to stay active. Exercise regularly. Go for walks. Do some stretching. If you're using a prosthetic leg, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you. If you're using a wheelchair, make sure it's adjusted correctly for you.

**TOP TIPS**

**Meet our experts**

These tips, tricks and techniques are brought to you by the following BLESMA Members...

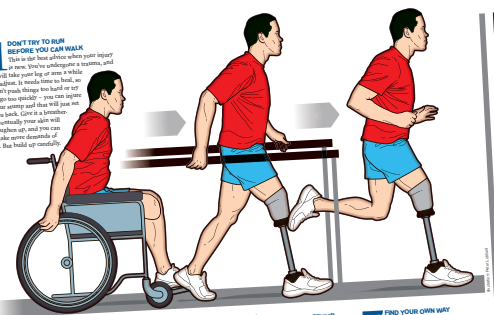
**Andrew Wilson, 30**  
Andrew, from Devon, has had his right leg below the knee since being injured in an IED explosion in Afghanistan in 2011. He was an officer in the Royal Regiment of Scotland. He is now working as a professional singer for BLESMA, and is also a member of several charities, as well as being a role model for the Queen's Recovery team.

**Will Dixon, 29**  
Will Dixon, from Gloucestershire, has had his left leg below the knee since being injured in an IED explosion in Afghanistan. He now lives in Devon and works for BLESMA as an Associate Director.

**Ron Dixon, 61**  
Ron, from Devon, has had his right leg below the knee since being injured in an IED explosion in 1999. He was a member of the Royal Air Force. He is now working as a professional singer for BLESMA, and is also a member of several charities, as well as being a role model for the Queen's Recovery team.

**WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS?**

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to try new things. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Don't be afraid to be different. Don't be afraid to be yourself.



Hot topic!

## DEALING WITH THE PHANTOM MENACE

My lower right leg has been amputated. Phantom pain? I always denied it, and further always heavily vowed it was never to have a home with me. However, since there is a pain sensation periodically in the missing leg and foot, what other term could be applied for these sensations? 'What's acupuncture?' I asked myself – and my GP. He set up an appointment for me to attend an NHS pain management clinic. The two young doctors were clearly mildly amused at my talk of looking for acupuncture and offered a spinal injection. I agreed and later attended a clinic, was given an injection and told to rest for three hours before leaving.

My question is a simple one; has anyone, in similar circumstances received relief via acupuncture? If so, I will try again and presumably have to receive this privately, since I have already requested

it from the NHS, but to no avail. Since many of the 'Handyman' guides feature adverts placed by acupuncturists, how does one choose? By a pin? Or should that be sterile needle?

**Raymond Barry**

**SOCK IT TO THEM!**  
My husband suffered from phantom pain and a great deal of discomfort around the stump after his right leg was amputated above the knee. I discovered the Farabloc Development Corp ([www.farabloc.com](http://www.farabloc.com)) and ordered an amputee stump sock and sent the required measurements. The sock didn't remove all pain but gave a lot of comfort and my husband wore it night and day. I believe it can be laminated into a prosthetic sock.

The fabric used is "made from a patented weave of nylon and ultra thin stainless steel fibres which help to increase circulation whilst filtering out harmful high frequency

electromagnetic waves which tend to aggravate nerve ends and worsen pain." The product can be returned within 30 days if unsuccessful.

**Jane Quail**

**CAN YOU GIVE ANY ADVICE?**

I am an 82-year-old BLESMA Member. I lost my right leg 18 months ago, having an above the knee amputation. I have a prosthetic leg and am doing fine for my age, except for acute phantom pain from the missing limb. I wonder is this common and whether other Members have found a cure. I am taking painkillers (oxycodone) every day prescribed by my doctor.

I look after my stump well and have had no problems with it. It does not grow any hair to speak of, and I exercise it without difficulty. The pain is never from the stump, always from the absent limb area. It is a sharp, biting pain, and I often am more aware of the missing foot. It feels heavier than my real one!

I have tried a Farabloc, mirror therapy, acupuncture, Tens machine, hypnotherapy, but none of these have made any difference. Have any other Members overcome this problem, and if so how?

I would be interested to hear by email to [n.harrower@btinternet.com](mailto:n.harrower@btinternet.com) or to the editor of the magazine [[editor@blesma.org](mailto:editor@blesma.org)]. Alternatively, you might like to share your experiences in the magazine.

**Noel Harrower**

## BIG THANKS TO BLESMA

My father-in-law was a Regimental Sergeant Major in the 1900s and when war was imminent in 1939 he told his 17-year-old son – my future husband – to join up in whatever role he thought he would be good at. My husband was working towards being a solicitor at the time and was welcomed into the Infantry.

My father-in-law had been very badly wounded in 1918, but despite that my husband enjoyed being a cadet and was among the first to be sent to what was to become known as the Phoney War. He went through Dunkirk with guns that didn't work and after he managed to get home safely he planned to work sighting guns when he was hit by an American Army lorry. He spent two years in hospital and had his leg amputated two weeks before our wedding (which we didn't postpone).

We were offered a house built for disabled ex-servicemen in Allerton. I still live there but sadly my husband died seven years ago. The house is called The Grange after the brave men from 1939. I get looked after by BLESMA, with visits from Mike Downes and the new magazine is very readable. Thanks for that.

**Marjorie Spencer**



**BLESMA Magazine**  
The magazine for limbless veterans

**Mind over matter**  
Meet the man who can move his prosthetic just by thinking about it!

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**

Look after your stump  
Stay on track and overcome from the people who know best **page 20**

**BLESMA and the rock star**  
Book shows our members in a whole new light **page 22**

**It's definitely not about the bike!**  
This week, Mike Downes explains how he's got on with his new prosthetic **page 24**

# Bluetooth tech controls knee

*BLESMA Member Gregg Stevenson is breaking new ground with an advanced prosthesis that uses gaming technology...*

**A** former soldier who lost both his legs while serving in Afghanistan has told how being fitted with the world's most advanced bionic knee has transformed his life.

BLESMA Member Gregg Stevenson, 29, is the first wounded serviceman to wear a ground-breaking prosthetic limb which is fitted with a Bluetooth remote control to switch between walking, jogging, cycling and even golfing modes. It also automatically senses and reacts to his movements, adapting seamlessly when he breaks into a run or tackles a flight of stairs.

The device is waterproof, meaning he can keep it on in the shower or at the beach. Gregg, who lives with his wife Melanie and their two-year-old son Harry in Foulridge, Lancashire, has said the new limb has given him "almost complete freedom".

"Before, I had to switch different knees for different activities – this is much, much easier," he said. "I feel blessed that I've regained this much mobility."

Gregg was just a fortnight from the end of his first tour of duty with the elite 24 Commando Engineer Regiment supporting the Royal Marines in Helmand Province in 2009 when he lost his left leg above the knee and his right leg just below the knee to a Taliban Improvised Explosive Device.

In January he was given the new Genium X model of knee, which is funded by the Ministry of Defence. The £70,000 limb is the first to be fitted in the UK. It is programmed from a laptop and can be switched manually between different modes.

What makes it particularly ground-breaking is that it uses computer console-style sensors to anticipate when the wearer is breaking into a run – to catch a bus, for example – and adapts accordingly, like a human leg.

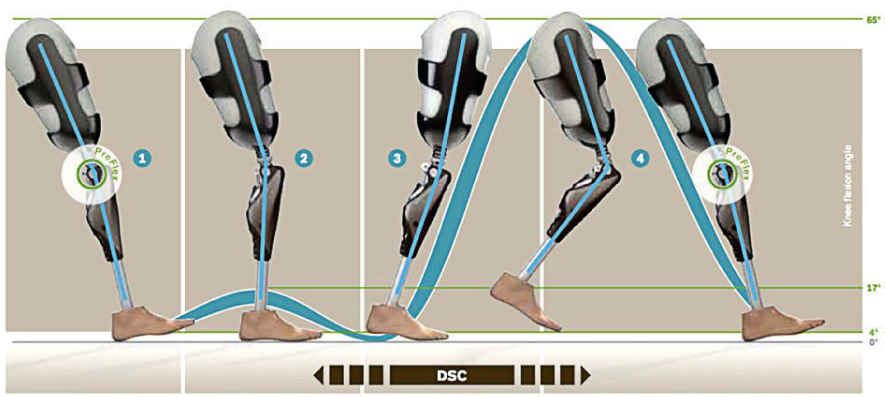
It was designed with the US military and was fitted at Lancashire Teaching Hospital's Specialist Mobility Rehabilitation Centre (SMRC) in Preston.

"I've just started kicking a football with my son. He will have to keep up with me now," said Gregg. "Since I was injured, I haven't been able to go back to work as an engineer because the prosthetic legs that I was using before really limited my movement, but now I'm hoping to get back to work. It's fantastic."

Dr Fergus Jepson, consultant at the SMRC in Preston said: "It's so pleasing to see a young man who is a double amputee, as a result of fighting for his country, being given a new lease of life thanks to this amazing new technology."

"We know how much this will enhance Gregg's life and give him new opportunities, and we are so proud to be the first centre in the UK to provide this piece of kit for one of our patients."

In 2010 the Government announced plans to invest £15 million to support and improve prosthetic services for military veterans. Following this, staff at the SMRC have been working in partnership with the Veteran's Prosthetic Panel and Ottobock, who have designed the new Genium X3 knee. The leg has previously only been used by a handful of veterans with similar disabilities in the USA.



**The Genium X3 has sensors that monitor from the moment the heel strikes the ground until the toe lifts off, telling the microprocessor exactly where the wearer is in the walking cycle**



## 30-SECOND EXPERT: THE GENIUM X3

- ◆ The prosthesis is made from aluminium, steel and carbon fibre and costs £70,000
- ◆ It gives the wearer the most anatomically correct walking posture and provides a similar gait to a real leg
- ◆ The knee automatically bends when the user picks their foot off the ground – and so simulates walking
- ◆ It has a battery life of five days – much longer than any other previous model – and is the first to be completely waterproof
- ◆ It is the first prosthesis that allows the wearer to walk backwards and up stairs as well as over obstacles
- ◆ It has several modes including biking, golfing, driving, walking and running – all of which are programmed by a computer before fitting. The user can switch between modes using a Bluetooth remote
- ◆ The knee uses similar technology to a Wii gaming console and smartphones to sense when the user is about to change activity. It then automatically switches between walking and running modes
- ◆ The Genium X3 has sensors that monitor the prosthetic from when the heel strikes the ground until the toe lifts off, so the microprocessor knows exactly where the wearer is in the walking cycle. It also measures the force on the knee to give the user a more natural movement.



# Water, water everywhere...

*Four men spent more than 48 days rowing across the Atlantic Ocean. This is their incredible story*

*Words: Nick Moore*

It sounds like something from a Hollywood movie. Four men in a rowing boat, battling across the Atlantic Ocean, when they're suddenly attacked by monster waves. "We hit some really severe weather," says one, Cayle Royce. "It got savage. There was a massive north-easterly swell meeting a north-westerly one – which means that the waves effectively double in size. We hit one that was 60 feet, and flipped over, rolling around like we were in a washing machine.

"Luckily we were clipped to the boat! We broke an oar, I banged my head, and we lost a few items never to be seen again. We were hand steering because the auto helm could not predict the waves. My colleague James got back in and held the course while I recovered and chucked some items back in the boat, and we carried on rowing. It made us feel very vulnerable and showed us the power of the mighty ocean."

This was no movie, though. If rowing across the Atlantic Ocean sounds like an awesomely difficult task, then doing it in some of the most rotten conditions imaginable makes it twice as hard. Stir in the fact that two of the four team members are amputees – Cayle lost both legs, a hand's worth of fingers and part of his

face to an IED in Afghanistan, his crewmate and fellow BLESMA Member Scott Blaney lost a leg above the knee, also to an IED in Afghanistan – and you've got a feat that seems downright impossible. But not only did the Row2Recovery foursome successfully reach Antigua in January 2014 after 48 days of furious paddling, they also finished an impressive third out of 16 vessels in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, raising a significant sum of money (which is still being counted) for Help For Heroes.

Sixty-foot waves aside, the difficulties faced by the group were countless. "We trained hard, but there's no preparation for two hours on, three hours off rowing, non-stop, for 48 days," laughs Cayle, a former Light Dragoon who, along with Scott Blaney was joined by two non-disabled team mates, Captain James Kayll of the Light Dragoons and Captain Mark Jenkins from the Royal Army Medical Corps. "We rowed 12 hours a day in three-hour rotations, so we didn't always do the same shifts. It's not as if you just sleep on the breaks, either. When you get off the oars you wash, resupply your water, eat, then you've got time for maybe half an hour's sleep before you're rowing again."

## MEET THE MEN WHO ROWED ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

*The Row2Recovery team consisted of four military men. Two are BLESMA Members and two are still serving...*

### **CAPTAIN JAMES KAYLL**

James is currently a serving member of the Armed Forces. He is in the Light Dragoons

### **LANCE CORPORAL CAYLE ROYCE**

Cayle was wounded in Afghanistan in 2012 serving as a sharpshooter with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force

### **CAPTAIN MARK JENKINS**

Mark currently serves with the Royal Army Medical Corps as a Physiotherapy Officer

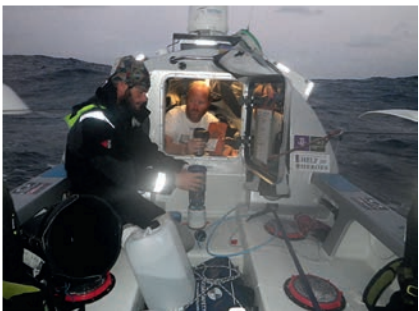
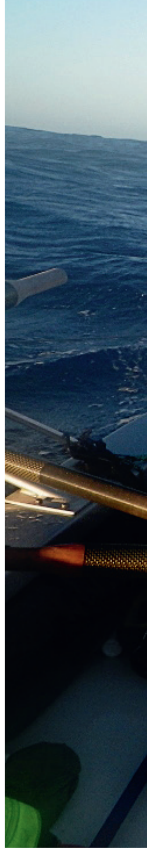
### **SCOTT BLANEY**

Scott lost a leg above the knee and suffered soft-tissue injuries from a bomb whilst on operations in Afghanistan





**ROW2RECOVERY**









*“There were guys in our crew who had left the Forces feeling as if they had unfinished business. This was like completing that tour for them”*

Lashed by rain throughout, the lowest moments were “the endless monotony of being wet,” says Cayle, 28, originally from South Africa. He was injured by an IED in Afghanistan in 2012 while serving with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force as a sharpshooter, and spent 48 days in a coma. “With salt water you get bad sores all over your body, and there wasn’t enough fresh water to wash it off. It’s also hard when you can’t see land. There are no reference points, so you just keep pulling the oars and looking at the GPS, even though you don’t feel like you’re moving. It messes with your mind.”

It wasn’t all drenched chaos, however. “The sunrises and sunsets were absolutely incredible,” says Scott Blaney, 27, a corporal in the Grenadier Guards from Nuneaton, who was injured in Southern Helmand in 2007. “It was scary at night when we couldn’t see anything and the waves were smashing us, but being with the lads, as part of a section, was brilliant.”

“The experience was great,” agrees Cayle. He had jumped at the opportunity to take part when he’d got the call from his former regimental colleague James Kayll a year ago. “I did yachtmaster courses, navigation courses and got on the rower for a few hours a day to prepare,” says Cayle. “It was such a buzz to finish. The welcome into Antigua was humbling. Hundreds of people came out, which was incredible after not having seen anyone for so long. Huge superyachts were hooting away, a cannon went off – then our friends and family appeared. Eighteen months after injury, after thinking life was over, I’d rowed the Atlantic!”

The feat was the second of its kind. ‘R2R’ was the brainchild of former Para Captain Alex Mackenzie and ex-Royal Gurkha Rifles Major Ed Janvrin. “We wanted to set up a real campaign, telling a big story about wounded soldiers and their families,” says Alex, who helped organise this year’s row. “Ed and I had done all kinds of events and we were looking for the next big thing. This seemed like it. There’s Everest, but that’s less of an exclusive club nowadays. Fewer people have rowed the Atlantic, so it seemed properly difficult.”

The 2011 R2R event was also famously plagued with difficulty, and was eventually completed to a deluge of headlines. “It was the best and worst thing I’d ever done,” says Alex. “The relentless shift system means you don’t relax, you’re always either too hot or too cold, you’re five inches from another person so there is no privacy. For us, everything that could go wrong went wrong. It was the most disastrous crossing possible, short of fatalities. Our autohelm broke, then our spare broke, so we had to steer manually. That was a downer. On Christmas Day our water maker broke, then the hand-operated water maker went and we were on emergency water rations for 17 days. The rudder also

snapped. One of the guys spent Christmas Day on morphine, extracting pieces of shrapnel from his buttocks that the rowing had brought to the surface. But we still made it to the finish line.”

So mishap-plagued was the row, it caught the public imagination. The Queen sent a message, Prince Harry got in touch, and a huge crowd turned up to greet them as they landed. The challenge raised £1 million for ex-servicemen’s charities.

This mission is well on the way to raising an impressive sum, too – although for the BLESMA Members involved, the rewards go above and beyond just raising money for charity. “I was injured in Afghanistan and when I lay on my bed after that, I was convinced a huge part of my life was over,” says Cayle. “But through my rehab and BLESMA’s help, I realised I was wrong. Lying injured, you hear the guys talking about skiing and diving and so on, and it’s a huge incentive to get better. I live for this kind of adventure.”

Alex backs up Cayle’s sentiments. “There were guys in our crew who had been wounded and left the Forces feeling like they had unfinished business. This was like finishing that tour for them. Mentally, I saw people reborn. One guy, who was injured seven years before, when rehab wasn’t what it is now, was

particularly affected. He said to me that this project gave him his confidence back. He saw new choices in his life.” The bond struck between comrades working together in such horrendous conditions is also lifelong. “It is an unbelievable companionship, although that isn’t guaranteed when you’re in such proximity to people – you may never want to see them again!” says Alex. “But we had an amazing crew and a higher purpose, which brought us together.”

Scott Blaney hardly even noticed his disability during the slog, he claims. “I don’t see the amputations making that much of a difference really,” he says. “I have got a damaged arm with shrapnel, pins and plates, and I ended up rowing with two fractures in it, but it was worth it. We are raising the profile for injured soldiers, showing that we are still here. BLESMA has been very important to me since my injury in 2007. I’d love to end up working for them.”

So, crucially, after 48 days of rowing, do the guys share Steve Redgrave’s famous post-Olympic rowing medal sentiment of ‘If you ever see me in a boat again, shoot me’? Far from it. “I’ve got loads of plans for more rows,” says Cayle. “I’d love to do it again,” reckons Scott. Hats off to them!

*Visit [row2recovery.com](http://row2recovery.com) to find out more about the attempt or to make a charitable donation*

## R2R IN NUMBERS

**1.4 million**  
pulls of the oar

**8,000 calories**  
burned per day

**5,000 calories**  
eaten per day

**3,000 miles**  
covered in total

**567 hours of**  
rowing per man

**480 people have**  
rowed the Atlantic  
– fewer than have  
climbed Everest or  
been into space

**48 days, nine**  
hours, 13 minutes  
spent at sea

**20% of body**  
weight lost

**15.5 stone** Scott  
Blaney’s weight  
on departure

**12.5 stone** Scott  
Blaney’s weight  
on arrival

**14 kilos lost per**  
man on average

**10 litres of water**  
drunk per day

**3 missing limbs**

**0 changes of**  
underpants!!



# They could have been Members too...

*BLESMA achieved national status in 1932 and can trace its roots back to WWI, but imagine if the charity had been around before that...*

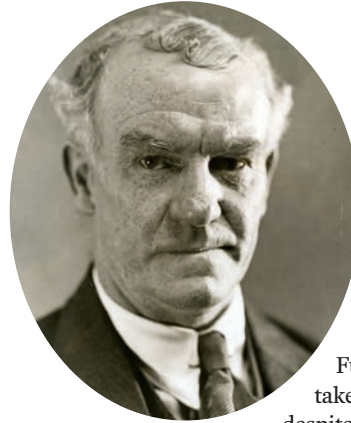
Every BLESMA Member has an incredible story to tell, and some of the UK's foremost military heroes from history could have been Members. Douglas Bader, possibly the most celebrated RAF ace of all time, joined the organisation after WWII. He famously crashed his plane before the war and lost both legs while attempting to pull off some aerial acrobatics. He almost died as a result, but recovered heroically, re-took his flight training and became a fighter pilot, winning at least 20 aerial battles during WWII. He even attempted escape from German custody after being captured, and was later knighted for his services to disabled people.

All of which got us thinking: who else from Britain's past would have made model BLESMA Members? We trawl through the history books to find some crackers...

## *Field Marshall Evelyn Wood*

Wood fought in the Crimean campaign and India Mutiny, where he was awarded the Victoria Cross. His face was crushed while attempting to ride a giraffe for a bet, but he was serious when the going got tough: despite major arm and elbow injuries, he persuaded a doctor not to amputate and went on to have a long military career.

**Membership status:** Honorary Member



## *Sergeant Alfred Richards*

He won the Victoria Cross in WWI's first Gallipoli landings. As a Sergeant in the 1st Battalion, the Lancashire Fusiliers, he led his men to take a beach against the Turks despite appalling losses. Richard's

right leg was amputated above the knee as a result of a wound sustained in the assault. He became a Provost Sergeant in the Home Guard during WWII.

**Membership status:** Ordinary Member

## *Brigadier General Charles FitzClarence*

FitzClarence was given the Victoria Cross for bravery in the second Boer War. During the conflict he led an almost untrained unit to triumph against terrible odds, and during the fierce fighting killed four men with a sword. He paid the price, however, being shot through both legs. That didn't stop him taking part in WWI, where he played a major part in the Battle of Ypres.

**Membership status:** Honorary Member

## *Lord Horatio Nelson*

Arguably our greatest military figure ever, he has gone down in history for his inspirational leadership and his strategic genius. In the Napoleonic Wars he was second to none – and he brushed off disability after being wounded in numerous skirmishes. His right arm was injured as he moored up during the battle of Santa Cruz, and it was immediately amputated. He reportedly told a medic; "I want to get rid of this useless piece of flesh". Nelson later lost an eye, before finally being killed at Trafalgar. No wonder he's got a fancy column in London and numerous pubs named after him!

**Membership status:** Ordinary Member



Pictures: Rex features, Getty Images, Topfoto



### *Adrian Carton de Wiart*

A Boer War, WWI and WWII veteran with the impressive billing of being the most injured soldier of all time. Wherever there was action, there was de Wiart, and he was shot in the head, stomach, leg and ear, as well as surviving two plane crashes. He once bit off his own fingers after being refused an amputation, wrote that he “enjoyed war”, was appointed as Churchill’s representative in China after WWII and wore a black eye-patch that Evelyn Waugh described as making him “look like an elegant pirate.”

**Membership status:** Ordinary Member



### *1st Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*

Bernard Montgomery, perhaps better known as ‘Monty’, was shot through the knee and lung by a sniper during WWI, but overcame these physical setbacks to become one of the main players in the battle against Hitler. He is famed for masterminding the defeat of Rommel in Africa in WWII, for winning a famous victory at El Alamein, planning the D-Day landings in Normandy and commanding the 21st Army Group for the remainder of the European campaign.

**Membership status:** Honorary Member

### *Henry Paget, Lord Uxbridge*

With over 13,000 men at his command, Paget helped defeat Napoleon at Waterloo before his leg was shattered by one of the last cannonballs fired during hostilities. The story goes that Uxbridge – clearly not one for a fuss – noted: “By God, sir, I’ve lost my leg!”, to which the Duke of Wellington replied: “By God, sir, so you have!” Amputated above the knee – with a saw and no anaesthetic – his limb was buried in Waterloo.

**Membership status:** Ordinary Member





*Got a head for heights and the guts to give anything a go? You need to learn how to jump out of a plane...*

**Words:** Nick Moore  
**Pictures:** Andy Bate

“YOU CAN BE THE MOST CONFIDENT, cocky person known to man, but when it comes to jumping out of an aeroplane at 13,000ft for the first time, it strips you back to the bone,” laughs skydiving instructor Andy Myers. “Everyone has the same fears and the same issues, but when you manage to overcome those as a group, you get to know each other very well and share a common bond. It’s a great experience.”

As far as exciting BLESMA activities go, two weeks of skydiving in the USA is right up near the top of the list. The Trans4mers scheme, run by Andy alongside founder Dave Pacey, aims to transform total novices – some very nervous, to boot – into fully-fledged A-licence skydivers. Established in 2012, the third annual course took place

this February and March, with a group of seven BLESMA Members taking part in several simulated and tandem jumps before doing the real thing solo in California.

“We wanted to get more amputees involved in the sport,” says Dave, a former member of the Royal Artillery and the GB skydiving team. “When you’ve had an amputation there are certain things you can’t do, but when you jump out of a plane, you’re not limited in the slightest – it’s just about learning how to deflect the air.”

As the Airkix skydiving simulator’s giant wind tunnel (where these pictures were taken) propels the BLESMA Members up, down and around in 100mph gusts – expertly guided by Andy and Dave – it’s clear there are certain challenges involved.



# THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Missing limbs make for asymmetric body shapes, and different centres of gravity need to be taken into account; while the lack of feeling from prosthetics means that every movement needs to be thought out.

“It’s all about getting the manoeuvres right and turning in the air,” says Ciaran Muir, a below-the-knee amputee from Manchester, “controlling your elevation and how to flip over if you go the wrong way up. It’s not too difficult – it just takes a while to get the muscle memory.”

Getting the project started was a challenge, says Dave. “When Andy initially suggested it, a lot of people dismissed the idea, because they seemed to worry that amputees were made of glass. As you can see from this, that really isn’t the case.

It’s to BLESMA’s credit that they saw the potential and have funded it. We’ve trained up 21 guys so far, and we’d like to expand, because there are lots of genuine benefits.

“These guys have had some hard knocks. One lad last year had confidence issues, and the trip completely transformed him. He came out of his shell – he doesn’t sit at the back any more, he’s in the middle of the group. He has taken the sport to heart and jumps every weekend. It really can give you a new lease of life.”

After a total of five hours of simulated and tandem training, California beckons. It’s a beautiful place – and a trip to Vegas may well be slotted in – but it’s not a holiday. “This is hard work, and at the end of the day when the adrenaline from diving

wears off, you’re absolutely knackered,” says Dave. “We’d do it in the UK, but the weather doesn’t allow us to, so going to California is the best way to do it.”

But how do you soothe those pre-jump nerves? “We just chat to distract the guys on the way up,” says Andy. “What did you have for breakfast? What are your hobbies? Before you know it, the doors are open and they’re ready to go.” And the military attitude always helps. “They have been through the mill and come out the other side,” says Dave. “They just crack on.”

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*If you’re keen to get involved with the Trans4mers contact Activities Manager Dave Coulton on [activities@blesma.org](mailto:activities@blesma.org) or call him on 020 8548 3519.*



**MATTHEW KINGSTON**

**28, from Bristol**

**What has the Airkix experience been like?**

Great fun. It's incredible watching the double amputees doing it. Life isn't that much different to how it was previously for us below-knee amputees, but you still get depressed. So when you see blokes missing three limbs with such high morale, it puts things in perspective.

**How much fun do you think California will be?**

It'll be a great opportunity. This is fun, but we're taking it seriously, too. You want to get it squared away and be the best you can be – just like you do in the military.

**Tell us about your injury**

I served with 40 Commando Royal Marines and was shot in Afghanistan in 2007. Headley Court and BLESMA have been amazing. I like the way BLESMA involves guys from all parts of the military, helping them connect with each other. It's not just guys who got injured years ago.

**What have you done since leaving the Marines?**

In 2011 I went into maritime security. I supply armed guards for merchant shipping. Basically we're stopping Somali pirates getting on board! I want to do that for a while, and eventually get more involved in expeditions.



**RYAN GOODMAN**

**24, from Birmingham**

**You're a double amputee. How tricky is it to skydive?**

It's not as difficult as I thought it'd be. Your centre of gravity is different so you oscillate a lot and see-saw around a bit, but I'm learning to control myself. It's all in the training, which is very professional. They gesture to you and you have to lip read a bit.

**How are you feeling about jumping from 13,000 feet?**

I'm a bit nervous but I can't wait! I've done tandem jumps but throwing myself out of a plane solo will be different!

**Tell us about your injury**

I was serving in Afghan with 2 Mercian in November 2011. I was on a foot patrol and my job was to clear a path. There were a lot of IEDs around, and I stepped on a pressure plate device and lost both legs.

**How has the rehab been, and have BLESMA helped?**

Like most people I've had my ups and downs, but I'm on the right path now. BLESMA have been superb and it's brilliant that they can get you on projects like this.

**What are your future plans?**

I like shooting – I was a sharpshooter in the Army – so I might get into being a shotgun instructor.





**CIARAN MUIR**  
**23, from Manchester**

**How has the training been?**

Brilliant. Being an amputee affects your balance, because you're heavier on one side, so it's all about finding a body position where the wind will pass around you evenly. You need to pay attention: jumping out of a plane at 120mph doesn't give you much time to adjust. But it's safe because the instructors are very professional. They jump out with you and can help on the actual jump if you're struggling.

**How does it feel in the tunnel?**

It's really odd. I was sceptical at first but once you're in there, it genuinely feels like you're falling. You think you're going to hit the floor, but thankfully you don't.

**Have BLESMA helped a lot with your rehab?**

Yes. I was injured in Afghanistan serving with the Coldstream Guards in 2010. I knelt on a landmine and lost my leg later in hospital. I did a few BLESMA events soon afterwards. The good thing about BLESMA is that you have guys from all different generations. It's helpful because they've been living with these injuries a lot longer than me. I was speaking to a guy who'd lost his legs 20 years ago. He had lots of tips and tricks to make life easier.

**DARREN PERRY**  
**44, from Birmingham**

**Why did you get involved with Trans4mers?**

I've always wanted to learn how to skydive. When I was a soldier I applied to do it but never got the chance, so I'm fulfilling a dream. I'm enjoying the training, and really looking forward to the States.

**Does it make you nervous?**

I've not jumped out of a plane yet, so I don't know how I'll feel. I think I'll be OK, but there will be a lot of time to think about plummeting towards the earth on the way up.

**What is the training like?**

It's been really enjoyable. I'm starting to get the hang of it, too. I'm tall, so controlling my limbs is the main issue – they're doing things I don't want them to. Single amputees are not as symmetrical as doubles!

**How did you get your injury?**

I was working as a firearms officer in the Met. I injured my Achilles, some stitches got left in and it cost me my leg.


**How did BLESMA help you?**

With the psychological side in particular. It's nice to get back into the camaraderie of the military and speak to people who have gone through similar problems.









# THE HOUSE THAT JON BUILT

*It takes a special house to feature on Grand Designs but Jon White's new home is more special than most*

*Pictures: James Winspear Words: Nick Moore*

**J**on White, 30, from Homerton in Devon, lost both his legs and his right arm in 2010 while serving as a captain in the Royal Marines. His journey from horrific injury on operations in Afghanistan to recovery in less than four years has been much more than inspiring. Jon now spends his time as a motivational speaker and building project manager, and is also writing a book about leadership.

Over 14 months, he also built a remarkable new home to fit his specific needs and accommodate his young family. The challenge of constructing a bespoke property on Halberton High Street was so unique it was featured on Channel 4's *Grand Designs*, with host Kevin McCloud following Jon as he battled to bring the project in on time and budget. We popped over to Jon's new gaff for a brew and to find out about his military life, rehabilitation and positive attitude – and to nose around his new airy, split-level home that was designed specifically to perfectly suit his needs.

*“Grand Designs was hard work, but I’m glad we did it. Kevin is great, but it’s funny going to the barber and hearing all about your house!”*





#### Tell us a bit about your background...

I was commissioned into the Royal Marines when I was 19. I went to the Commando Logistics Regiment, then to 45 Commando, where I was Heavy Weapons Troop Commander before becoming Company 2IC. After that I specialised as a mountain leader. I did my first tour in Afghan as a Ground Liaison Officer. I took command of 40 Commando Recce Troop in Taunton in May 2008 and we deployed to Sangin in 2010. I was given charge of my own control base in Mahboob, two kilometres south of FOB Jackson. That's where I was blown up.

#### How did it happen?

It'd been a tough tour. We'd taken four fatalities. Some days you'd be convinced you were next, but the day it happened, I didn't feel like that! We were going to a farmstead. An old farmer lived there, he was being harassed by the Taliban to see what we were doing. We left our base at 4.30am. We stopped to take off our night vision goggles. That's when it happened. The next thing I knew, I was flying through the air. Everything was in slow motion. I had time to think "Oh f\*\*k, it's me".

#### What happened next?

The way I remember it, the guys got to me instantly, but apparently it took a couple of minutes. I was trying to radio for help but the radio had been blown off my back. I lost consciousness. They give you three minutes to bleed out from injuries like mine, so the guys had to act fast. It was touch and go. The noise of the bike that came to pick me up woke me. They got me back to base and from there a helicopter took me home.

#### How was rehab?

I went into ICU and was unconscious for three days – I couldn't breathe on my own. When I came round, it wasn't a shock, because I'd been conscious during the explosion. I was up and about reasonably

quickly – I only spent 27 nights in hospital. I was sent to a chalet in the Cotswolds with Becks [*now Jon's wife*] so that we could get our heads around what had happened. Then I went to Headley Court. That was frustrating at times, but it moved along quickly. The last time I used a wheelchair was a year and three days after the bomb.

#### Was it important to get back to normal life?

Very. I set my sights so high, it was difficult for the medics to keep up with me! I believe you need to get on with rehab quickly or it can be a downward spiral. Stumps change shape if you don't do anything with them. You put on weight, sockets won't fit, it's harder to move. Horrible.

#### Tell us about your prosthetics...

At home, I'll be in my slippers. They're like my slippers! I put my taller legs on to leave the house. I went to America at the end of 2013 to get an upgrade to the X3 legs, funded by the US military. I've trialled them and they are more stable, you don't have to work as hard. When I put old legs back on, I get bad backache, so hopefully they'll help my back, long-term. I also have a prosthetic arm, which I put on when I go out. It looks smarter, and I use it for driving, carrying bags, kayaking – but I fell over and snapped it recently. Around the house, I don't use the arm. It's easier to use my stump to hold my one-year-old son.

#### Were you left or right handed?

I was right handed and lost my right arm. You may think that's the worst deal, but my dad came up with some wisdom. He said if you had to lose a hand, it's better to lose your stronger one, because it'll motivate you to use the prosthesis. If it had been my right, I'd have done everything with that, and never used a prosthesis.

#### How did you go about designing the house?

The plot was our neighbour's back garden and they already had planning permission.



## PEOPLE



We did it all from scratch, so it's bespoke. The idea was to design out any obstacles. Becks and I weren't living together before I was blown up, but neither her place nor mine was suitable. I had a cottage with stairs and steps everywhere. Her house had lots of steps up. It wasn't going to work.

### **What did you design into the new place?**

It's set up in case I ever have to revert back to a wheelchair in the future. There are very few steps. The stairs to the second level are shallow, so I can get up them easily. I can reach into cupboards in my stubbies. The en suite has a plinth to help me get in the bath. There's a lift to the basement and the top floor, but it's hidden away. We have a swimming pool with a pump so you swim against the current, and we have a gym too.

### **The layout and design is very interesting...**

It's flexible, especially the ground floor. It is set up for wheelchair use, so if I need to use a chair, I can. One side is quite open, the other is quite private. If I have a really bad time in future I could survive on the lower floor if I need to. Initially, we thought about going for the old-fashioned look, but eventually decided the modern look suited the house better. It's got a nice family feel already though, with toys everywhere!

### **What was it like to finally move in?**

We completed it in June 2013. It was a huge relief and towards the end it got stressful. We were still building when we moved in, but I slept like a baby that first night. The house gets hot, but that's a nice problem. We only have heating on in the en suite – I heat the floor so I can slide in on my bum!

### **What was it like to be on *Grand Designs*?**

The process was hard work, but I'm happy we did it. It's a professional journal of the build. It's funny watching it back – you get a different perspective. Kevin is a great guy. It's funny going to the barber and someone telling you all about your house, though.

### **How's the new career going?**

Really good. I ran a leadership consultancy programme for the NHS in January, but I really enjoy the project management. I want to stay current in leadership, so I'm still exposed to the same problems as my clients. The two should dovetail nicely. I've got several building projects lined up too – my skills from the military transfer well. I like to deal with issues, plan, overcome obstacles, manage men, have a laugh. It's very similar to my role in the military.

### **How have you managed to maintain such a positive attitude?**

Early on I made a conscious effort to see the positives in everything, and stay on an upward cycle. That was very difficult at first, but it became second nature after a while. You can work on increasing your positivity. We found a leak in the house and I said; "At least we've only got one". The builder said; "I don't know how you can be so positive", but it was a problem with a solution. I keep a sense of perspective.

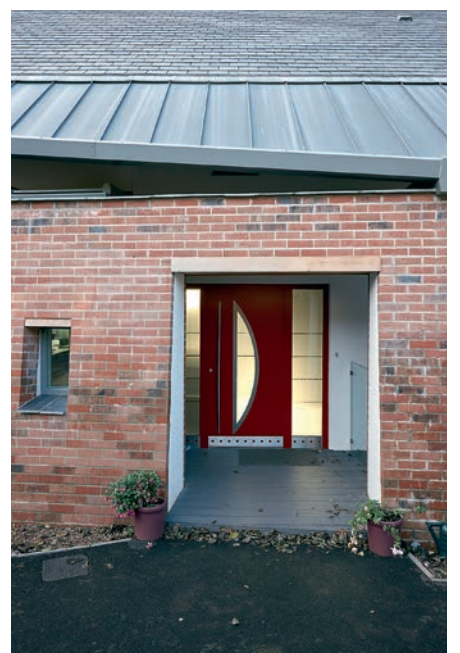
### **Your book sounds very interesting...**

It's a book of interviews, featuring 16 very high-level global leaders. For each one I'm interviewing a close aide and someone who reports into them. The idea is to get different views. For most people I think hard work is the crux, although I may be wrong. I'm speaking to Kofi Annan and General Breedlove (USAF), all sorts of people. It should be interesting and I'm really excited about it.

### **How have BLESMA been?**

They've been absolutely fantastic. They took me away skiing just before my wedding, and I learned to snowboard for a week in Colorado. The charity also got me involved in the Diamond Jubilee Pageant, which was incredible. But perhaps the main thing was that early on my BSO, John Francis, would pop in for a cuppa and check I was OK. They look out for you.







## DAVE TIMMINS (QGM)

*Dave, 33, was serving as an Infantry Escort in Afghanistan when he was struck by an IED and lost an eye. He's since become involved in BLESMA and currently works for SSAFA*

**I loved army life. I'd been working as a civilian HGV mechanic and fancied something new.** I joined the RLC as a driver when I was 22. I loved the camaraderie, and served in Germany, Catterick, Pirbright and Afghanistan.

**I became a Driver EOD Number 2 and was an Infantry Escort on my last tour.** I wasn't an Infanteer, a better description would be Operator's Bodyguard.

**I was hit in the face. I was on a routine clearance** in Sangin looking for IEDs and there had been some confusion with the clearance of a wall. The IED went off and the next I knew, I woke up in Birmingham.

**I was critically wounded. My parents** came from Scotland thinking they would be saying goodbye. I was on life support, but I recovered quickly. Living through that changes you totally. I'm a completely different person. I'm more tolerant, more giving, more thoughtful.

**BLESMA have been great. I lost my** right eye, but I consider myself lucky – being blinded in both eyes would have been so much worse.

**I was in Headley Court for seven** months and the rehab was fantastic. You recover from the shock and fear. The brain is a funny thing. I came

through my injuries to have a normal life again, while some with the same injuries can have a much worse response. That makes me feel so fortunate.

**There's always someone to give me perspective** or to tell me to get a grip. I've no time to feel sorry for myself. I still drive, I cycle, I've got a new job, two sons, two dogs and a cat – it's total carnage!

**It's been great raising money for BLESMA. They've** helped me so much – with things like my pension, and being there to give me advice. I've got nothing but great things to say about them.

**“I'M A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON; MORE TOLERANT, MORE GIVING, MORE THOUGHTFUL”**



**I've found a new career path. After** the injuries I worked with the Prince's Trust, helping underprivileged kids and young offenders, and for Glasgow's Helping Heroes. Now I'm the Regional Mentoring Coordinator North on SSAFA's new mentoring programme for wounded, injured and sick soldiers.

**Getting the Queen's Gallantry Medal** at the Palace of Holyroodhouse was one of the best days of my life. It brings home the implications of being a soldier. I don't think my uniform had ever looked so good, and meeting the Queen was great. My mum and dad were more proud than I was!



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