



Life after lockdown

When will prosthetics services return to normal?

Inside: Stay fit with workouts for the body and the mind

Blesma Bulletin

Summer 2020



Welcome to the Summer 2020 Bulletin. It is fair to say that I did not imagine I would be writing my first Bulletin introduction in these circumstances. Having been in COVID-19 lockdown for some four months now we are living in varying degrees of social isolation and have learned the new language of distancing: PPE, Zoom, and (worst of all) social bubbles. Although we have made significant changes to the way we work, Blesma is still managing to keep Members in contact and provide support where it is most needed.

Our BSOs and Outreach Officers have switched to operating remotely, while the majority of head office staff are working from home. We continue to plan for the measured relaxation of lockdown as and when circumstances allow – and we all look forward to being able to see each other again face-to-face. For now, we continue to take a cautious approach to relaxing our guard.

In this Bulletin you will find a lot of useful advice on living with lockdown – from the latest updates on social security and welfare services, to news on NHS services, the Veterans' Gateway, and new studies that Members are taking part in. There are practical tips on preventing

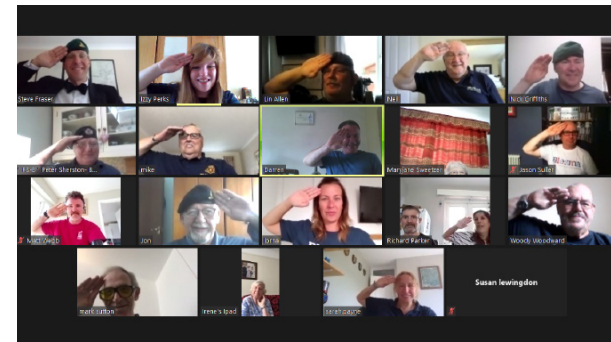
fraud as we all spend more of our lives online, and you will find excellent examples of how Members have reached out to each other, arranged a huge variety of distanced social events, and kept themselves active throughout the pandemic. We also report on the commemoration of Armed Forces Day and VE Day.

One of our COVID-19 adjustments was Blesma's first-ever online AGM. I am very grateful to the Members who took part in the video meeting, and to those who took the time to submit their proxy voting forms. I have included a full report in this Bulletin.

As we look to the internet to stay connected with one another, it's important to take time out and 'unplug' from our screens. To that end, you will find a special feature towards the back of this Bulletin containing puzzles, games, and exercises that can be completed without turning to technology.

As I write, we are considering 'masking-up', working on restarting the Activities programme, representing our Members' interests in government and across the sector, processing grants, and planning for the return of a full prosthetics service. Most importantly, we are keeping in touch across the Association and staying safe. I hope that you find this Bulletin useful.

Jon Bryant
Chief Executive



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From osseointegration to socket fit,
the Centre for Blast Injury Studies
produces vital research.

Learn more in the Autumn issue of
Blesma Magazine. Out in September

NHS England Prosthetic Service Review update

BSO (Prosthetics) Brian Chenier is a registered stakeholder with NHS England and as such he receives regular updates on a number of projects and workstreams currently being undertaken. One such project is the Prosthetics Service Review in England.

As well as being a stakeholder, Brian is directly involved in the review process as a Patient and Public Participation Member of the review team, and forms an integral part of the communications subgroup along with representatives from the Limbless Association and LimbPower. Below is the most recent Review update:

NHS England is responsible for planning and buying specialised services for people who need complex disability equipment. This includes all major upper and lower limb amputees, and people with congenital limb deficiencies who have a potential to use a prosthesis to help them mobilise or improve upper limb function.

We contacted stakeholders in March last year to update on the review of specialised prosthetics services. Following extensive engagement with both patients and staff working in prosthetics centres across the country, we had begun to explore some potential changes that could be made to the existing service specification and



clinical model in order to address some of the issues that have been raised by patients, carers and professionals.

Any changes that are proposed would need to be based on an accurate picture of current provision, and since April 2019 the focus of the review has been on working with all centres to ensure we have consistent, detailed information about the number of patients seen and the type of care they receive.

This data collection is progressing well, and we have begun to analyse the data, picking up where we need additional or clarified information, and working with centres to improve this so that we can be confident that we have the robust information required to progress the review.

One of the main points raised by patients was over concerns about equal access to equipment options, regardless of which centre they attended. Work to address these issues has been continuing, and the National Framework for Prosthetics equipment will be operational from April 2021.

This framework means that the same equipment and devices will be available to all prosthetic centres in England. This should ensure that all patients will have access to the appropriate equipment to meet their clinical need regardless of which prosthetics centre they attend, offering more patient choice and standardisation on price.

Due to the present situation, the Prosthetics Review team is currently



BSO (Prosthetics)
Brian Chenier
talks to GPs at
a training day

re-deployed to support the national response to the COVID-19 incident. When it is safe to resume, we will restart our engagement work with you. We greatly appreciate your support to date and look forward to continuing this work once we are better able to do so.

When this work resumes, we plan to organise some engagement events, particularly with some of the patient groups who may be affected by potential changes to the clinical model, including children and young people, people with complex needs, and those with upper limb prostheses. We will be in touch with people with more information about these events, but if you would be interested in being involved with these please contact us at www.england.nhs.uk.

prosthetics.transformation@nhs.net

Please can we also take this opportunity to remind people that if you have any concerns regarding your current prosthesis or rehabilitation needs please do contact your prosthetics centre. Your centre will be able to offer advice and support, and can offer a limited service in line with Government guidance, particularly for those patients in the vulnerable groups.

Please do let any colleagues or patients know that they can register as a stakeholder in order to receive updates from the Clinical Reference Group directly online at www.engage.england.nhs.uk/application/crg-stakeholder-reg-april-2019

WHEN WILL LIMB CENTRES RETURN TO NORMAL?

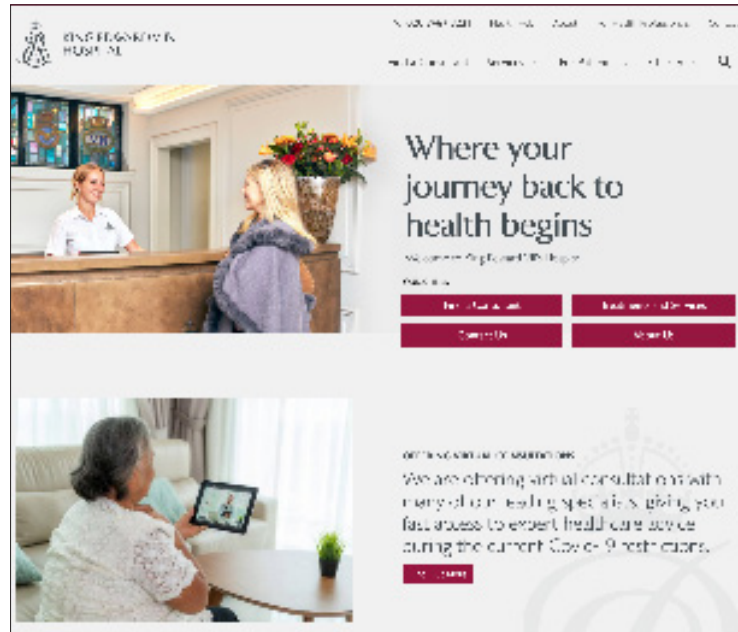
NHS Limb Centres are still in a period of significantly reduced services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst some have been able to offer emergency support to key workers and those most in need, the service has naturally been under a lot of pressure to redeploy staff and find safer ways of working through the crisis. As the Government (and Devolved Administrations) works towards a gradual and safe return to normal working there will be a phased return of limb services across the country.

All patients are being asked to consider this when trying to make appointments and accept that continued delays will be inevitable. Patients will be expected to adhere to any safety measures that are put in place from time to time as well as get used to potential new ways of operating the service. Some Centres may continue to operate a telephone triage system where a prosthetist will call to discuss the issue and work out a plan of action to support the patient – hopefully reducing the number of physical appointments needed.

Time will tell how successful this will be and Blesma is standing by to assist any Member who has difficulty accessing their Limb Centre as we slowly move to a new normal (whatever that looks like).

If you have a question or would like advice about prosthetics, please contact BSO (Prosthetics) Brian Chenier on 020 8548 7080

Virtual Veterans Pain Management Clinic



Living with persistent pain can be very difficult, as it can affect all areas of your life. Would you like to attend a free veteran-specific pain management clinic to help you learn ways to manage your pain more effectively?

Following very good feedback from its first-ever virtual Pain Management Programme (PMP), King Edwards VII's Hospital is able to offer more. The face-to-face programme has twice been rated as 'outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The virtual programme delivers the same content as the face-to-face version without the need to travel to or stay

in London. The Pain Management Programme will provide you with practical strategies to help you improve the quality of your life

“Having attended the PMP I now feel so much more confident with my overall pain management”

“The programme has been fantastic. It has helped me to be able to get through my day”

“My pain is now more manageable”

alongside your pain – managing physical activity and mood, for example, reviewing pain-related medications and helping you to understand your pain better in order to feel more confident and in control of the day- to-day management of your pain.

The programme runs for nine days spread over six weeks, with a follow-up after nine months. King Edward VII's Hospital provides the assessment and treatment for free.

Spaces are limited and a GP referral, along with Proof of Service, will need to be submitted before an assessment can be offered. Successful applicants will need a laptop or tablet to take part in the virtual programme.

To apply for a place on the virtual Pain Management Programme please contact Caroline Dunne on 020 7467 4370 or by email at carolinedunne@kingedwardvii.co.uk

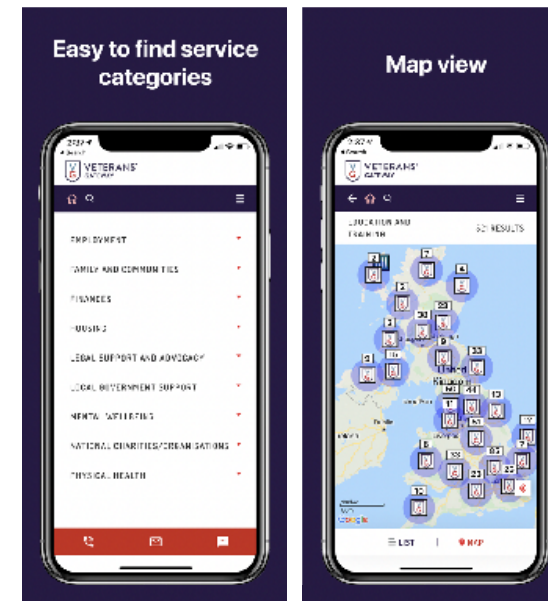
Veterans' Gateway has launched a new app

Veterans' Gateway has now launched a new app which will help veterans find support organisations in their area using a smartphone or tablet. Using the app, the user can access local support for issues relating to finances, housing, employment, relationships, physical and mental health, and more.

The directory, which is intuitive and easy to use, groups all NHS facilities across the country, as well as more than 2,000 charitable organisations. The map tool can be used to either look for organisations in the user's area, or you can search by name, postcode, or descriptive words (e.g. financial support).

For further support, users can contact the Veterans' Gateway team via phone, email, or chat right from the home screen. The app will not feature all the sections currently available on the Veterans' Gateway website, so users are encouraged to make sure they still access www.veteransgateway.org.uk for even more comprehensive advice and information.

The Veterans' Gateway app is available to download from the App Store or Google Play



DigitalCULTure Course at the BFBS Academy

The BFBS Academy has launched an online course and digital community that aims to help Service leavers and others in the military community gain the skills they need to secure a job in the digital industry. The course also allows individuals to expand their own business through social media, which is more relevant now than it has ever been.

Digital CULTure is a vocational, in-depth, fast-track 11-week web-based course from the BFBS Academy. The Academy is part of the military charity and media organisation BFBS, and has been designed to take individuals with little or no knowledge of social media to an advanced knowledge and skill level.

If the course sounds like it may be something you are interested in, please get in touch with your Support Officer to discuss it further (BSO contacts can be found on p42) as Blesma may be able to help with financial and other support.

To find out more about the course you can either visit www.thedigitalcult.co.uk or get in touch directly by sending an email to laura.mcturk@bfbs.com



Blesma Annual General Meeting 2020

The 2020 Blesma Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place by video conference on Saturday 13 June. Some 19 Members took part in the meeting and 133 proxy voting instructions were received. The meeting was therefore quorate in accordance with Blesma's Articles of Association and Rules. During the meeting:

- The 2019 Trustees Annual and Strategic Report was briefed and received
- Crowe UK LLP was appointed as the Auditor
- Mrs Rebecca Maciejewski, Mr Mark Pillans, Mr Tony Harris and Mr Bob Monkhouse had resigned as Trustees
- Mr Stuart Croxford and Mr Steve White were appointed as Trustees
- Gen Sir Adrian Bradshaw and Ms Ali Grant were re-appointed as Trustees

As Chief Executive, I briefed the meeting on the Association's response thus far to the COVID-19 crisis. Blesma had entered 2020 in a sound financial position and was fortunate to have a strong financial reserve that would allow the Association to function despite the economic effects of the pandemic. The Finance and Investment Sub-Committee had met just prior to lockdown and

had decided not to take income from investments for two quarters, and confirmed that cashflow was sustainable.

Blesma staff had transitioned quickly into working from home. A small number of head office staff were furloughed, with the government paying 80% of salaries while the Association continued to pay the remaining 20%. Blesma's BSOs and Outreach Officers were quick to initiate contact with all Members, prioritising those who were vulnerable or shielded.

BSO (Prosthetics) Brian Chenier liaised with the NHS and other service providers to support Members' needs as prosthetic services were reduced to support the response to the crisis. The Independence and Wellbeing staff have continued to service requests for grants, including some bids for support such as assistance with IT provision and sporting equipment during the lockdown.

Looking towards the future, the Association is anticipating an increasing need to counter the effects of social isolation during the lockdown, as well as the economic fallout from the crisis. Blesma's financial position, however, is robust. The links across the Association are still very strong, and both staff and Trustees are confident that Blesma will be able to support independent and fulfilling lives into the future.

A Member had raised an issue for discussion at the AGM, reflecting a concern that some Blesma events had not been as inclusive as was possible. He asked that Blesma ensure that events were open to all Members, regardless of disability.

The Chairman responded by saying that the Board had concluded that this approach was absolutely correct in terms of Blesma's overall activities programme. The Board felt, however, that a policy that each individual activity must be open to every Member would restrict Blesma's ability to plan a wide range of activities that would challenge every participant.

The Association would make every effort to overcome obstacles like the availability of appropriate accommodation or disabled access in the planning of activities.

Planning staff would also ensure that the range of activities offered would allow every Member of the Association to be challenged. The Chairman agreed that when an activity was not fully inclusive the reasons why would be made clear.

When the meeting was opened-up to Members the following were discussed:

Following media reporting that a Member had been imprisoned for serious offences, a Member sought assurance that potential risks to Members and staff were



Photography: Andy Bate

appropriately managed. The Chairman responded that these matters had been considered at length by the Board of Trustees. It is not possible to conduct background checks on all Members without due cause. Blesma does, however, act as soon as it becomes aware of any potential risk. Participation in events and activities

may be denied, and the Board has the authority to withdraw membership. In this particular case the Board concluded that while the offences were serious, the imprisonment of the offender removed any risk to Members or staff and there was still a charitable need. Staff involved in these cases are fully briefed and are asked to

confirm whether they are content to provide support.

A Member reflected concerns that the degree to which Members suffered from loss of use of limb could vary. The Chairman responded that the Association's position was that the permanent inability to use a limb was effectively a loss, and therefore membership of the Association was appropriate. If the loss of use had been overstated the Board had the authority to take action, up to and including expulsion from the Association.

Should a Member's condition unexpectedly improve to the point where continued membership might be considered inappropriate, the Board would engage with the Member. As Chief Executive, I advised the AGM that a review of Blesma's criteria for loss of use of limb was being conducted.

The Chairman then thanked Members for taking the time to participate in the AGM. The discussion of points raised by the membership had been particularly valuable. He added that the Board was determined that the process to select Blesma Trustees was as open and transparent as possible. Members were strongly encouraged to apply to become Trustees in order to ensure that the Board should continue to consist of at least 50% Blesma Members.

Jon Bryant OBE
Chief Executive

Blesma celebrates 75th anniversary of VE Day

Though many of the jubilant celebrations which were planned for the 75th anniversary of VE Day were cancelled due to the coronavirus crisis, it did not stop our Members from celebrating at home. Here are some highlights from the day's celebrations.

BLESMA'S VIRTUAL VE DAY CHOIR

The Blesma voice rang out loud and proud with a virtual chorus of the wartime classic *We'll Meet Again* to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day in May.

Members, staff and supporters came together to produce a unique track, with individuals recording their own versions of the Dame Vera Lynn song that kept spirits high in the dark days of World War II.

Each person recorded their version of the chorus at home before the Association's technical wizards combined them to create a commemorative track which formed part of the national rendition of the song following the Queen's Speech on VE Day.

The voices of injured veterans as they joined in the song provided a poignant moment to remember and honour the sacrifices of those lost and injured in war. Professional soprano Alicia Lowes also lent her incredible voice to the choir. Blesma Members admitted their



Staff and supporters sang their own version of *We'll Meet Again* for VE Day

singing voices were not necessarily choir quality, but they were thrilled to 'belt out' the song as part of the tribute.

"It was good fun," said Member Patricia Welsh from Tavistock. "I cannot sing for toffee, but I did try and I wanted to enter into the spirit of things!" Meanwhile, Tracey Mooney added: "Thank you for letting me be part of it."

DAN RAISES SPIRITS WITH HIS WARTIME DISPLAY

Blesma Member Dan Newbold treated his entire street to a jubilant display of military memorabilia (above right) to mark VE Day 75 on Friday May 08.

In 1982, Dan deployed to the Falklands to serve as part of the 59 Independent Commando Squadron

in the Royal Engineers. Dan was involved in the Battle of Goose Green and many others before returning on the SS Canberra.

Dan wanted to mark VE Day, and planned his display to be a total surprise. On Thursday evening there was just a small amount of bunting outside his house, but Dan got up early on Friday morning to set everything up before the neighbourhood woke.

Military vehicles were parked up on Dan's drive next to a showcase of military memorabilia. To capture the 1940s feel there was 1940s music playing, while gin and tonic was served from a teapot.

"I loved it because people loved it," said Dan. "People were walking from all over to have a look at the display, everyone was very respectful



Dan Newbold marked VE Day 75 in style at home

and maintained a social distance. There was something so special about the number of people who came to see what we had done, pay their respects, and share stories of what their loved ones went through way back when."

Dan explained the importance of marking such a day. "I want to remind people that during a time when the 'silent plague' is dominating our news stories, our lives and those of our loved ones, now more than ever is a time to give back. I wanted to remind people that, as a nation, we have overcome so much. We will overcome this too if we respect each other and stick together."

The day also provided the perfect opportunity to raise money and awareness for Blesma, and

with donations from passers-by Dan was able to raise £130 for the Association. Congratulations to Dan for his marvellous display!

VE DAY CAKES

On VE Day Member Mike Keating and his family got into the spirit of the Northern Ireland 'Bake like



a Pro' competition. Ellie (9) and Ben (6) helped to create dinosaur and mermaid cakes, with equipment provided by Outreach Officer Fiona Morrison.

With a little help from Mum to grease the tins and ice between the layers, both children were able to make impressive four-tiered cakes that were beautifully decorated. For Ben, mixing the ingredients was a favourite, while Ellie excelled at spreading the mixture smoothly into each tin. Finally, Dad (Blesma Member Mike) signed off their creations with a piped 'VE Day' to commemorate the day.

"A sincere thanks to Blesma from the Keating clan for providing this challenge. It was a great way to spend the day and celebrate VE Day," said Mike.

Coronavirus Fraud Alert

Fraudsters and scammers are notoriously opportunistic, and many are using the upheaval caused by coronavirus to their advantage by creating convincing scams. One such scam involves fraudsters calling home phones and sending text messages to mobile phones, which contain misinformation or could leave you out of pocket if you fall victim. Some calls and texts claim to be from the Government, your GP's surgery, the NHS, or even the World Health Organisation.

In the calls, either a recorded message or caller will claim to be contacting you about coronavirus. They might offer you a test for the virus, a cure or treatment, or the chance to discuss your medical or shopping needs.

These calls are designed to encourage you to either speak to an operator or press a button on your phone under the guise of giving you 'more information'.

- If you speak to an operator, you could be at risk of giving them your personal information or your financial details, which could result in identity theft or financial loss
- If you press a button on your phone you could be connected to a high-cost premium phone number, leaving you liable for a significant call cost



If you are unsure that a call is genuine, the best thing to do is hang up. If you think a call or text might be genuine – from your GP, for example – you can call the surgery back to check if they have tried to contact you. Meanwhile, text scams often include links or attachments which can't be trusted. Don't click on them.

Further COVID-19 scams include:

DOORSTEP CRIME

Criminals target older people on their doorstep by offering to do their shopping for them. The thieves take the money and do

not return. Dodgy doorstep cleansing services, meanwhile, offer to clean drives and doorways to kill bacteria and prevent the spread of the virus.

ONLINE SCAMS

Email scams that trick people into opening malicious attachments, which put the recipient at risk of identity theft by divulging their personal information, passwords, contacts and bank details. Some of these emails have lured people into clicking on attachments by offering information about people in the local area who are affected by coronavirus.

Fake online resources – such as false coronavirus maps – that deliver malware, an information stealing programme which can infiltrate a variety of sensitive data.

REFUND SCAMS

Companies offering fake holiday refunds for individuals who have been forced to cancel their trips. People seeking refunds should also be wary of fake websites set up to claim holiday refunds.

COUNTERFEIT GOODS

Fake sanitisers, face masks and COVID-19 swabbing kits sold online and door to door. These products can often be dangerous and unsafe.

DONATION SCAMS

There have been reports of thieves extorting money from consumers by claiming they are collecting donations for a COVID-19 'vaccine'.

The best way to protect yourself from fraud is to take a moment to consider the offer. If it seems too good to be true, it probably is. While many communities have been coming together to genuinely offer support, it is important to stay vigilant.

Find out more at www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fraud-and-cyber-crime

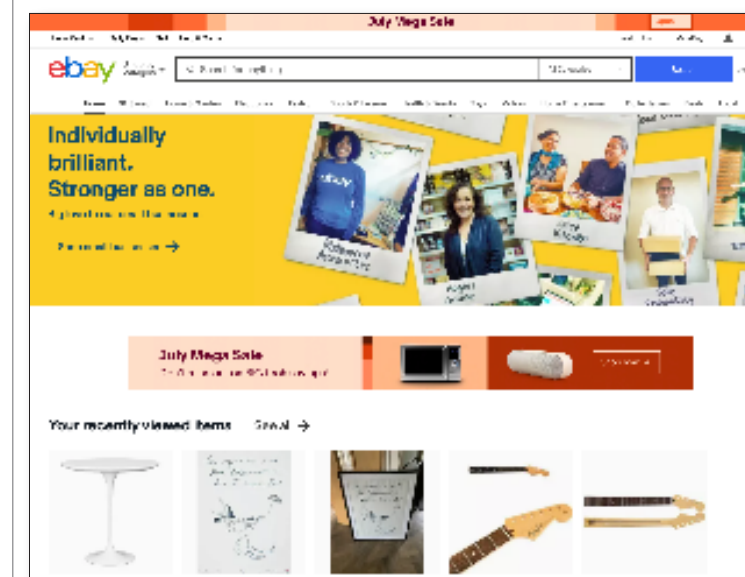
Ebay for charity



Are you an eBay lover? Now, whether you are buying or selling, you can use your everyday purchases to support Blesma from the comfort of your own home.

eBay for Charity has partnered with the PayPal Giving Fund to make it easy for sellers to donate between 10% and 100% of their items' final sale price to a certified charity. This means that the buyer can donate without paying any extra, and the seller can stand out from the crowd while giving a little something back.

Once a month PayPal Giving Fund will combine and deliver 100% of all donations collected for that charity. It may seem like a little, but it can add up to make all the difference. We hope you will remember Blesma the next time you list!



Armed Forces Day 2020

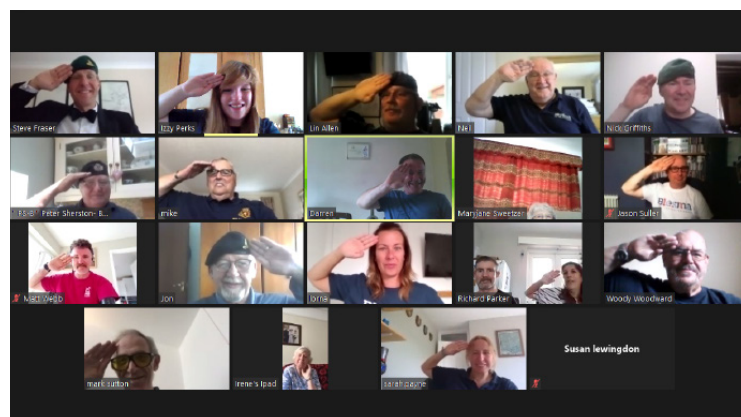
Although Armed Forces Day 2020 was unlike any other, separation did not dampen the spirits of Blesma's staff and membership. Members from across the South West and the London and South East Areas came together online in their respective groups to enjoy tea and cake, and some rather challenging but exceptionally well-presented quizzes, courtesy of BSOs Steve Fraser and Outreach Officer Sarah Payne and BSO Paul Findlay and Outreach Officer Jess Linge respectively.

SOUTH WEST

The first online quiz of the day was that of the South West Area. There was something for everyone, with challenging questions on everything from horticulture and art, to the Royal Artillery.

Questions on the history of Blesma following World War II served as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices of military service and the great losses that those who serve are prepared to make for us all. Participants' ages spanned many years, and the younger Members in attendance who lost limbs or the use of their limbs in more recent conflicts showed that Blesma's work is just as important now as it has always been.

Finally, in solidarity with the entire spectrum of the military community, Members and staff



Blesma Members and staff joined together to 'salute our Forces'

joined together to 'salute our Forces'. This shared salute is to show our appreciation and gratitude to all those who have served, are serving, or who have lost their lives in service.

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST

The London and South East Area's online gathering, led by Jess Linge and Paul Findlay, provided the opportunity to share military memories and stories of time in Service. Members retold amusing anecdotes and reflected on National Service.

The participants had each received an afternoon tea box from Jess which they enjoyed during the video activity. As with their counterparts in the South West, the group also enjoyed a challenging quiz that encompassed celebrity, famous logos, general

knowledge, and military rounds. The get-together was concluded with a chat about future plans and hopes for a slow and timely re-introduction of Blesma social gatherings post lockdown.

We are moving ever closer to experiencing these much-missed face-to-face meetings once again but until then, and as an important way of marking Armed Forces Day, these video calls proved a fun and meaningful means of celebrating military life and service, proving that social distancing doesn't have to mean social isolation.

Counselling services for Members

WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

In times of crisis, looking after our mental health is just as important as protecting our physical health. Stress, anxiety and fear can all damage lives if we are not mindful about our mental health. If you are finding yourself under strain during this period, remember that Blesma provides a free counselling service to Ordinary and Associate Members, as well as their carers, Widow/ers and surviving partners.

Whatever our circumstances, background or role in life, talking about the things that are worrying us, and sharing our troubles with a sympathetic person, can help us feel better. You can, of course, talk to your BSO, but there may be an occasion when you need to talk to a trained counsellor. If that's the case, you may be interested in this service.

HOW DOES IT HELP?

LONELINESS

Many of us can feel lonely from time to time. Our family may live a long way away, and old friends may have passed away. Talking about your sense of loss can help you feel better.

DEPRESSION

Depression can affect anyone at any time. Counselling can help you overcome depression and give you strategies to cope when you're down.

BEREAVEMENT

Coping with the loss of loved ones is never easy. Counselling can help you move beyond a sense of emptiness after losing someone close.

ANXIETY

Feeling scared, unsure or nervous are all very common. Counselling can help you regain your self-confidence and equip you to face your anxieties.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships need to be nurtured. Counselling can help you to improve relationships with your partner, colleagues, family and friends.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Counselling Service receives your application and will then

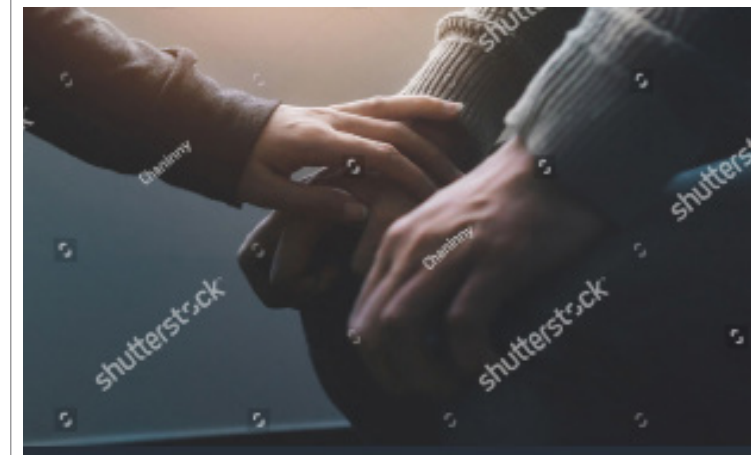
contact you to make arrangements. After you have seen the counsellor for the first time, they will normally offer five additional sessions, usually at regular times each week to suit you.

WHO CAN USE THIS SERVICE?

Any Blesma Member or carer of a Blesma Member as well as a Blesma Widow/er or surviving partner of a Blesma Member.

HOW TO ACCESS THE COUNSELLING SERVICE

You can apply in two ways: either by contacting your local Blesma Support Officer and asking them to apply on your behalf; or you can call 0300 0120 369. Your confidential application will be taken over the phone or, if you prefer, you can ask for an application form to be sent to you.



Meet our two new team members

IZZY PERKS

COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVE

Izzy Perks joined Blesma last September as the Association's Interim Communications Officer. She made such an impression that in March she joined the team permanently as Communications Executive. Welcome, Izzy...

So, how did you come to work at Blesma?

I had just completed my English Language and Literature degree after six years of study with The Open University. In that time, I gained experience in all sorts of roles, from being a taxi controller to selling kitchens. I knew that I wanted to settle somewhere where I could be creative and put what I had learned while studying to genuinely good use. When I saw the interim role at Blesma, I thought I could gain some great experience, but I have gained so much more than that.

Like what?

I have never worked anywhere quite like Blesma. The staff care so deeply about each individual Member's wellbeing, and we look after one another's wellbeing too. The Association is genuinely open to everyone's ideas – Members and staff alike – which has given me a sense of confidence that I haven't had for a long time. Most importantly, hearing our



Members' stories and then getting to know them has taught me what resilience really looks like. I am so grateful to Blesma for that.

What does your role entail?

My role focuses on digital content and output. I assist with things such as our social media, keeping Blesma Connects up to date with the latest news, revising webpages and coordinating virtual events such as the Virtual VE Day Choir featured on page 12. I also compile the articles for the Bulletin.

What has been your highlight while working at Blesma so far?

I help to deliver Blesma's Digital Inclusion Programme, which gives digitally isolated Members the technology they need to stay in touch with family and friends.

Lockdown has not allowed our Digital Inclusion sessions to take place in the same way, but hearing the difference getting online has made to our Members' lives during this challenging time has been so rewarding. Also, attending the Making Generation R Theatre Day was so inspiring; I left with a whole new outlook on life.

Tell us more about the Digital Inclusion Programme

Blesma has been reaching out to those who are digitally excluded, providing technology and advice so they can access all that Blesma has to offer. The plan was to get Members together to learn to use a tablet in a series of 'sessions', but now that they can't happen the programme is more important than ever. The Outreach Officers have been amazingly adaptable with this, and I offer advice to them where I can.

Tell us a little about yourself?

In my free time I love to garden when it's warm, and when it's cold I come in and play video games. I'm even hoping to start my own 'Game On For Blesma' challenge soon. Blesma's office move has worked out well for me, as I live in Chelmsford – about 20 minutes' walk from the office – with my partner Scott, my Mum, my little brother and an exceptionally naughty cat.

JESS LINGE

OUTREACH OFFICER

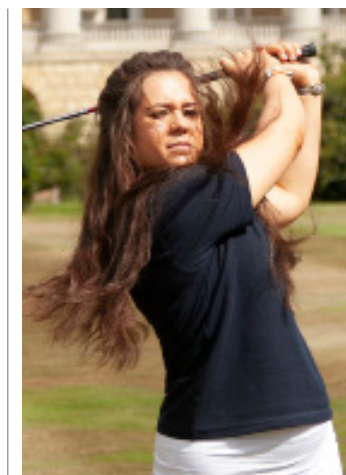
LONDON AND SOUTH EAST

Tell us a bit about your work background

Before I started working, I studied sport at college and was a member of the golf academy, which was great because it meant I played golf five or six times a week! After finishing college, I completed an apprenticeship in business. Then I moved to Essex, where I've lived for the last three years. Before I joined Blesma, I worked for an accountancy firm as an Insolvency Administrator. Although my background has been varied, I believe it has added to my self development and growth.

What first made you want to work for Blesma?

I have grown up with Blesma in my life. My Dad has been a Member for more than 25 years. I have seen the difference Blesma has made to my family's life, and to be given the opportunity to help others the same way is something very important to me and close to my heart. I have always loved the opportunities Blesma creates for its Members; from learning new skills and taking up new hobbies, to socialising during activities and making life-long friendships with people you may never otherwise have met.



Was it strange to start a new job during lockdown?

It has meant I have been unable to carry out my normal duties. However, I have had the chance to connect with, and speak to, lots of Members in my Area, which has been wonderful. Once we are back to normality, I am very much looking forward to getting stuck in with activities and home visits, it will be great to finally put faces to the voices on the end of the phone!

You got to go to the annual Blesma Golf Day recently...

Yes, I had a fantastic day at the Blesma golf fundraiser. It was my first 'physical' Blesma event. It was great to meet Members, and to finally meet some of my colleagues in person. Everyone

I spoke to thoroughly enjoyed the day and it was a pleasure to play with my team. The day consisted of some challenging greens, brilliant golf from players and great final scores. Overall, the event was a success and I look forward to attending more Blesma events like this in the future.

What have you learned so far?

I have learned a lot since joining Blesma, not just about the job and how the Association operates, but from our Members, too. It has been a pleasure getting to know them and it's been wonderful to listen to their incredible stories and unique backgrounds. I have been trying to find out what activities Members enjoy and would encourage them to share ideas with me – I believe we are constantly learning. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Members for their kindness and warmth towards me when I first joined.

What do you like to do for fun?

I am a keen golfer and although I haven't been able to play as much as I'd like to recently, I always try to practice at the driving range. I hope the weather is good this summer so I can get out on the course more! I also love to play netball and have recently decided to jump in late on my New Year's resolution of working out more. Let's see how long I can last...

Activities update for 2020 and into next year

The Activities Team understands that this has been a difficult time for all Members and the postponement of activities adds to the general feeling of the times. The decision to postpone events did not come lightly but above all else your safety is our driving force. Our phone calls and emails to notify you have been met with positivity and resilience – a true reflection of the character traits that build our membership. We have had an overwhelming amount of support from you over the last few months and we hope we can get back to running our Activities Programme within the current guidelines very soon. Until then, thank you all once again for your understanding.
Jess March and the Team

Perhaps no area of support has had to adapt quite as dramatically as the Activities Team. Though the coronavirus crisis has led to many activities being postponed, Jess March and her team have been working non-stop to keep up with the latest guidance, make changes to the programme, and secure new dates for activities that can be done safely.

Blesma knows that Members would benefit from activities now more than ever. As we slowly and cautiously move out of lockdown, the team are looking forward to welcoming you back to the ‘new normal’, with new opportunities for activities both virtual and – when safe to do so – physical. The team are looking forward to seeing you in person in the not-too-distant future.

PADDLESPOrts FLORIDA ACTIVITY REPORT

In March, five Members attended a paddlesports activity in Key Largo, Florida. They explored lush waters, saw alligators, and made it back to the UK just in time for lockdown. Member Peter Scott recalls his incredible trip...

On Saturday 06 March we arrived at the Heathrow hotel, ready to embark on our trip the next day. I had already met two of the Members – Olivia and Yorkie – from other trips, so it was good to see them again. In Miami we were met by Bill and Joe, two members of Team River Runner (TRR), and taken to our chalet on a campsite by the ocean.

On the first day we met up with the rest of the TRR team. Each morning we all met for breakfast

and were told the plan for that day. First, we completed our safety training in the outdoor pool on the site, and that afternoon we were fitted for our kayaks, which included padding for our stumps. Then we spent the afternoon kayaking around the Mangroves. The next day we went to Rock Harbour, paddling out into the Atlantic Ocean and then on to Rodriguez Key, returning through mangrove trails. We kayaked five-and-a-half miles in total. Once we were back and cleaned up, the TRR members took us for a lovely evening of BBQ, drinks and chat.

The following day we kayaked another five miles around the Florida Keys, and in the evening enjoyed another BBQ with drinks and a live band. It was a long day but a great one! The next day began with a visit to a dolphin care centre. We learned about the dolphins and then had the chance to join them in the pool. I never ever thought I would have the chance to do that! It was a really fun time and we learned so much about the dolphins. We got to see even more wildlife the next day on our visit to the everglades, which included several very close encounters with some alligators.

Towards the end of the week we spent time going out for some local kayaking, while our last day was spent on a boat snorkeling around a barrier reef.

The entire week was a fantastic experience. A huge thank you to Jamie, Bill, Joe, Kevin and Ralph of Team River Runner. Thank you also to Florida Bay Outfitters for the loan of the kayaks. And, of course, thank you Blesma – we all had a fantastic time!

PETER SCOTT



CROCHETING TO CONNECT

Jess Linge, Outreach Officer for London and the South East, and Sarah Payne, Outreach Officer for the South West recently joined forces, rallying their membership to help spread some joy to those who have suffered the most during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The pair created an online rainbow crochet activity, inviting Members to crochet a rainbow to hang in their garden or window, to help lift their spirits. When they realised they had extra wool, those taking part wanted to go one step further, by sending the rainbows they had created to isolated Members so they would know they were not alone.

The keen crocheters also set about creating pairs of knitted hearts for families whose loved ones had to be treated in the ICU. By creating two identical hearts, one to remain with the patient, and one for the family to keep, Members helped a great number of people feel a sense of connection during the most difficult of times.

“The crochet rainbow of unity symbolises everybody coming

together at this time of need, so I thought it was a lovely idea,” said Jess. “I have asked Members to send in photos of their creations so I can create a collage.”

If you are interested in a crochet activity, please get in contact with your Outreach Officer.

TEA AND TOAST ON THE SOUTH COAST

Andy Barlow, Outreach Officer for the South, put modern technology to good use during the lockdown by getting Members together via the video chat tool Zoom.

On 24 of April, Members in the South gathered together online to catch up and raise a toast to Blesma and the ongoing work of the NHS. At a time when tensions around the pandemic were high, the toast was fitting tribute for the Members involved.

Many topics were discussed, but of particular interest was the work of Member Alasdair Carnegie. He has written a collection of books over the years and was more than happy to answer questions about his latest publication; *I Leapt To My Foot*.



“Thank you for setting up the coffee mornings and the Blesma ‘toast’ during the week,” Alasdair said. “It was my first experience of Zoom and I enjoyed it. It was amazing that after only one session I had made new friends.”

Such online gatherings have been taking place between all over the country, and we hope that they have all been enjoyed just as much as this one in the South.

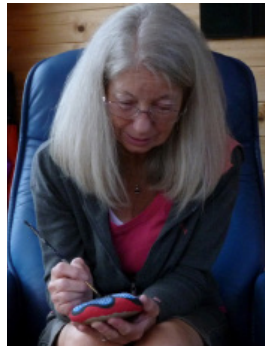
Turn to p27 for a simple-to-follow guide on how to use Zoom

STONE PAINTING

Blesma Members in Scotland are commemorating their loved ones by painting stones for a Poppy Cairn. After spotting a Facebook post by the Scottish Military Museum, Emma Gratton, Outreach Officer for Scotland wanted to get Members involved in the museum’s Cairn of Remembrance project.

The activity, which simply involves finding a stone or pebble and then painting a poppy and the name of a missed loved one on it, was also designed to help Members honour the memory of friends or family members who had passed away during lockdown, when funerals could not take place.

“I wanted the Poppy Cairn to be created by veterans, so they have a direct input in the museum,” said Ian Inglis, founder, curator and manager of the museum. “When Emma told me that Blesma Members had been painting stones, I was blown away. It means so much to the Military Museum Scotland that veterans from lots of military charities get involved. The museum is also a veterans’ hub. It’s great that Blesma Members are getting



Stone painting has given Members the chance to remember loved ones



involved in things that we do. I look forward to hosting them sometime in the future.”

Altogether, 19 Members took part, with four partners and 14 children and grandchildren joining in, too. For some, the activity gave them the chance to remember a friend or family member, while others, like Blesma Widow Lorraine Anderson, have enjoyed the calming focus of painting the stones at a difficult time.

“Painting stones, or Blesma Rocks as I call them, has been cathartic for me,” said Lorraine. “The feeling of calm that comes with pure concentration cannot be underestimated. I am completely taken over and, in those moments, can forget my overwhelming grief over the loss of my life partner. I will be inscribing my rocks with the names of those I want to

salute. They went before so we can be now. I am eternally grateful.”

Blesma Member Terry Horton also enjoyed the activity: “It’s been a pleasure and a privilege to do this for Blesma and the museum. It’s such a lovely way of remembering our loved ones. I’ve never done this sort of thing before, and to say I enjoyed it is an understatement,” he said.

After lockdown, the team plans to deliver the stones to the museum with Members involvement.

This article is in memory of William Pollock, Fiona Duff, Daniel O’Neill, James Henderson, Michael Joyce, Anthony Thompson, Alastair Sinclair, John Rush and James Docherty (Blesma Members who lived in Scotland). Each Member has also been commemorated within The Poppy Cairn by Emma

What you said about seated yoga

“After the chair yoga sessions I felt more relaxed, and so did my joints!”

Patricia, London & South East

“The yoga sessions are just what the doctor ordered. Each session has felt more comfortable than the last. They also give me good exercise and make me feel relaxed. I could often have a little kip afterwards”

Mike, South West

“The one-hour yoga sessions are wonderful; an oasis of mindfulness and relaxation techniques. The class is pitched perfectly to accommodate all abilities, and our teacher is very aware and inclusive. A great stretch for body and soul. Well done to Emma for organising this popular class”

Lorraine, Scotland

SEATED VIRTUAL YOGA SESSIONS

As an avid novice but total advocate of yoga, Scotland’s Outreach Officer Emma Gratton had a discussion with her teacher, Frances Fullarton, to see if she might be able to provide sessions for Blesma Members.

The COVID-19 pandemic put a stop to that, so Emma arranged for Frances to trial six half-hour sessions of seated yoga that would be accessible for all Members in Scotland. The trial class started with five Members, including two Widows. Everyone enjoyed it and asked for more advanced sessions.

Some of those who took part were also involved in the Making Connections Zoom sessions and, after telling fellow Members about the yoga, helped to grow the group to involve four Areas, with 11 regular attendees.

“I believe that yoga is for everybody and to that end I adapted poses so that they could be done sitting in a chair,” said instructor Frances Fullarton.

“The Members responded very positively to the yoga class, which initially lasted half an hour and is now a one-hour class. It has been a challenge to work with the group on a remote basis but I have thoroughly enjoyed teaching the group. I hope the class continues as the Members appear to benefit from it and return each week for more.”

BLESMA VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB (LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST, SOUTH WEST AND MIDLANDS)

During lockdown, the London and South East, the South West and the Midlands Outreach Officers teamed up to create a book club for Members. The club, which has take place both online and offline, has offered Members an opportunity to stay connected, and to build new relationships with Members across the regions.

Overall, the book club has received great feedback and all of the Outreach Officers involved hope to continue with it for the foreseeable future. Following the completion of their first book *The Silent Patient*, the Members agreed to combine their overall thoughts and summaries together to create a Blesma book review...

BLESMA BOOK REVIEW THE SILENT PATIENT

Exciting, emotional, captivating... this psychological thriller has left us wanting more. It starts with a woman named Alicia, who has been accused of murdering her husband. However, how can we be sure when Alicia has not spoken a word in the six years following his murder? Will she ever speak again, and will we ever know the truth of what really happened that night? These were the questions which had us hooked!

Alicia now spends her days residing in a mental care facility called 'The Grove', where she continues to live in silence. Enter Theo Faber, a psychotherapist who is obsessed with Alicia and driven to solve the mystery of why she killed her husband. Despite what may seem, at first,

Allen Parton's
book *Endal* was
shared with
Members in
Northern Ireland



to be a confusing timeline, the ending brought together all the characters. We could go on, but why ruin the twist(s)?

What we can say is this book is truly captivating. The author, Alex Michaelides, manages to hold the suspense throughout the book to the end, leaving you clutching for more. Somehow, you find yourself being taken on this emotional rollercoaster with the characters, relating to them and experiencing the impact of their emotions.

Overall, we thought that this was a wonderful choice of book to read, and we would recommend it to anyone who loves a thriller – there is no doubt that this book will leave you sitting at the edge

of your seat!

“I was once a passionate and avid reader, but work and other issues gradually took over my time,” said Blesma Member and book club participant Steve Rigby. “Now that currently isn’t a problem, being a part of the Blesma Book Club has restored my joy in reading. No more long-winded reports and endless emails, but a good novel!”

“Sharing my thoughts and hearing other people’s views has been interesting – we all have our opinions on the things we see, hear and read. And it’s great to hear from others and have them hear my opinions. I can’t wait for the next book!”

ENDAL BOOK REVIEW

As part of Outreach Officer Fiona Morrison’s move to help Members ‘unplug’ during the lockdown she supplied Members throughout Northern Ireland with copies of the book *Endal* written by Blesma Member, Allen Parton (pictured above). *Endal* is about Allen’s very special relationship with a dog, and the role it had in helping him overcome his injury and get back to living life again.

You can read more about Allen and Endal in the Autumn 2019 issue of Blesma Magazine. Find out on the Blesma website at www.blesma.org/media/444795/blesma_mag_autumn_2019.pdf

What Members in Northern Ireland thought of ‘Endal’

“Very, very interesting and must be set up for book number two with Endal Junior. A book for everyone - now passed to my daughter and family to read.”

“I found this to be a very personal, if a bit sad, story of a family’s struggle with mental and physical challenges. Myself and my wife had the honour of meeting Allen, Rookie and Endal Junior last year when they were guests at a local school. An amazing and resilient man.”

“It shows what a dog can do to help a human come back from a traumatic experience and, through time, help that person return to the family he loves.”

“I enjoyed reading about the journey Allen travelled with his family and his companion Endal who certainly changed his life”.

Blesma Awards 2020

Every year, during the gala dinner at the Members' Weekend, the Blesma Awards are presented to their deserving winners. Unfortunately, this year's Members' Weekend did not take place, but the combined talent, selflessness and dedication shown in 2019 means the show must go on! Meet this year's winners...

THE EARL OF ANCASTER MEMORIAL AWARD DAVID STEVENSON



The Earl of Ancaster Memorial Award for 2019 was awarded to David Stevenson.

The citation reads:

This award was established in memory of Blesma Member Major The Earl of Ancaster KCVO TD, who served in the Leicestershire Yeomanry in World War II and lost a leg in Normandy in 1944. It recognises outstanding work undertaken by a Blesma volunteer. This year, the Earl of Ancaster Memorial Award is presented to David Stevenson.

Blesma Member David became a Digital Volunteer in 2018, making a real impact in the Wales and West Area by supporting and advising his fellow Members and Widows who were digitally excluded.

By working hard at gaining his fellow Members' and Widows' trust, he has encouraged somewhat nervous digital novices to use the internet and pick up tablets or smartphones for the first time. The friendly and personal touch he brings to the role has boosted the confidence of numerous individuals and opened up new ways they can interact with Blesma, as well as friends and family.

David has taken a proactive role in not only helping Blesma Members and Widows in his Gloucester and Cheltenham patches, but also in improving his own knowledge, which he applied to good effect.

It is only fitting that we recognise David's dedicated service to Members. He is a most worthy recipient of the Earl of Ancaster Memorial Award.

THE CYRIL STEPHENS AWARD JAYNE AND RICHARD WARING



The Cyril Stephens Award for 2019 has been awarded to Jayne and Richard Waring.

The citation reads:

This award is in memory of Blesma Member Cyril Stephens OBE, one of the founder Members of the Association, who was Honorary Auditor for Blesma from 1932-1947 and National President from 1949 until his death in 1956. It recognises the work undertaken by Blesma supporters and this year is awarded to Jayne and Richard Waring.

Jayne and Richard have been supporters of Blesma and Blesma's Nottingham Branch for more than a decade, with Jayne officially joining the Association's volunteer ranks in 2017.

The duo consistently provide support to Blesma Members and staff in the Nottingham/Midlands area, holding cake sales and regularly taking Blesma Members to Nottingham City football games, hosting them in style in their box. Jayne also took up the role of Welfare Officer for the Nottingham Branch before taking on additional duties as the Welfare Rep for the whole of Nottinghamshire.

Since they began fundraising for Blesma, the pair have raised several thousand pounds for the Association, have made introductions resulting in nearly £30,000 raised, and have treated Members to unforgettable experiences at 'Forest'.

It is only fitting that we recognise Jayne and Richard's dedicated service to our charity by the award of The Cyril Stephens Award.

THE FRANKLAND MOORE TROPHY CHRIS JONES



The Frankland Moore Trophy award for 2019 has been awarded to Chris Jones.

The citation reads:

This award is in memory of Dr Charles Frankland Moore OBE and his wife Dr Elizabeth Frankland Moore OBE, who were held in very high esteem by Blesma Members as a result of their vital work after World War II in securing Blesma's strong financial position. This award recognises the work undertaken by Blesma's Welfare Volunteers (known as Welfare Reps), and this year is awarded to Chris Jones.

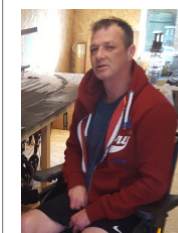
Chris has been a Welfare Rep since 2005, and originally received the Frankland Moore Trophy in 2017 for his tireless work with Members located in Gloucestershire.

In the last two years, Chris' work ethic and support of his fellow Members has reached new heights. As well as making a huge difference in Gloucester, Members living in Cheltenham and beyond his 'patch' are now benefitting from Chris's reliable support.

In his 15 years in post, Chris has proved totally reliable. His empathy and approachable manner have helped build a great rapport with his fellow Members while completing face-to-face welfare visits - or "on patrol" as Chris likes to call it. He goes above and beyond the requirements of the role, providing additional support by attending hospital visits with young amputees and completing vital shopping trips for Widows.

Chris provides a hugely valuable service to his local Blesma Support Officer and is an excellent example of 'Member helping Member.' He is truly deserving of the Frankland Moore Trophy.

THE JACK TRIGG AWARD MARK BASCOMBE



The Jack Trigg Award for 2019 was awarded to Mark Bascombe.

The citation reads:

The Jack Trigg Memorial award was established in memory of Blesma Member Jack Trigg, who served in the Welsh Guards in World War II and lost an arm in Normandy in 1944. Following Jack's passing, a request was made that a silver salver was purchased to recognise personal endeavours or sporting agility. This year, it is awarded to Mark Bascombe.

Former Fusilier Mark had both his legs amputated and lost most of his fingers as a result of frostbite and illness which developed while he was working as a lorry driver.

Mark was an active man who had always been in employment and provided for his family. All that changed after the amputations. He became wholly dependent on his wife and children, and was not able to go out through fear of further deterioration.

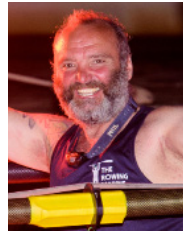
Eager to return to his life-long hobby of model making, Mark wanted to build a hobby shed but lost his remaining fingers in the process when he dropped a brick on his hand. Mark gave up his beloved hobby until a routine visit from Blesma, who spearheaded a project to get Mark a wheelchair-accessible structure.

In the last 12 months, Mark's determination and outlook on life have dramatically improved. He has developed a therapeutic space that he can escape to as well as finding new ways and methods to build his models with no fingers. The impact has been so positive that he has started to record his story (using speech recognition software) to inspire other amputees and disabled model railway enthusiasts.

The Jack Trigg Memorial award is presented to the truly deserving Mark Bascombe.

THE HAMBRO AWARD

LEE SPENCER AND MARTIN HEWITT



The Hambro Award for 2019 was jointly awarded to Lee Spencer and Martin Hewitt. The citation reads:

This award recognises high achievers in any field having displayed exceptional commitment and dedication. It was established in memory of Blesma Member Major J O Hambro MC, a former Chairman and Treasurer of Blesma who served with the Coldstream Guards and lost a leg in Normandy in 1944. This year, it is awarded jointly to Lee Spencer and Martin Hewitt.

2019 was a headline year for former Royal Marine Staff Sergeant Lee and Parachute Regiment Captain Martin, as both tackled individual mammoth challenges that would not just celebrate personal achievement but also inspire anyone with a disability.

Lee kicked off the year by attempting his solo row across the Atlantic, breaking three world records in the process. He became the first physically disabled person to row from mainland Europe to mainland South America, completed the longest ocean row by a physically disabled person, and beat the existing record by 36 days. Prior to 2014, Lee had no experience in rowing. Now, he has four Guinness World Records.



Four months later, Martin battled 125mph winds and -68°C temperatures to scale Mount Everest. He had launched a scheme to make it possible for disabled climbers to achieve the Adaptive Grand Slam that includes climbing the highest peak in each of the continents and reaching both the North and South Pole. Martin is the first person to fly a Blesma flag from the summit of the world's highest peak.

Through grit and strong will to succeed, Lee and Martin have cleared pathways for others and achieved incredible feats. Many veterans struggling to come to terms with their disabilities have been encouraged by their example to overcome adversity and achieve things they may never have thought possible.

Lee and Martin are jointly awarded the Hambro Award in recognition of their groundbreaking and unique achievements.

Blesma enjoys a cuppa at the SIA Daily Virtual Café



On 01 June the Association took part in the Spinal Injuries Association's (SIA) Daily Virtual Café. BSO for the South Area, Pat Donnachie, was invited to share his knowledge and experience of all things Blesma with a group of the SIA's support officers and beneficiaries. Also present were representatives from Limb Power, a charity that exists to engage amputees and those with limb impairments in physical activity, sport and the arts.

The discussion was co-ordinated and led by the SIA's Support Network Officer for London, Lady Marie Dawson-Malcom. Lady Marie was an excellent facilitator, and Pat was able to tell everyone in attendance about Blesma's work, and the breadth of our support.

At the beginning of the drop-in session, some of those listening admitted that Blesma was relatively unknown to them, but it did not stay that way for long. Pat spoke of the Association's long and proud history, from the Branches of the early days of the charity,

to how the Association remains relevant in modern times through representation and work with the NHS Limb Service and other statutory services and charities.

He also described the many opportunities provided by Blesma's Activities Programme and the life-changing impact they have, as well as the additional benefits that Making Generation R has had for participants. The session concluded with a quiz. Blesma, the SIA and Limb Power were each represented. Unfortunately, none held their own in the face of some challenging *Catchphrase*-themed questions!

If you would be interested in taking part in the Spinal Injuries Association's Daily Virtual Café, follow them on Twitter @Spinalinjuries and go along for some informative discussion

Your simple guide to meetings online

During lockdown, many more of us have been turning to technology to stay in touch with our family and friends. One of the most popular ways of doing so is through the Zoom meeting app. Before the COVID-19 crisis, Zoom was a popular tool used for meetings in the workplace. Now, with its excellent video chat facilities, it is used for everything from cooking classes to quizzes.

Below, you will find a simple guide on getting started with Zoom, which may come in handy for your next virtual Blesma event!

1. TO USE ZOOM you will first need an internet connection and a device with a camera and microphone. This may be a laptop, a smartphone, or a tablet. Visit www.zoom.us and set up an account, if you do not have one already. Click 'Sign Up' and enter your email address.

2. YOU WILL RECEIVE AN EMAIL with a link from Zoom. Click 'Activate Account'. You will be prompted to enter your name, and choose a password, which you will need to log in later. Make sure to check your spam folder if you do not receive the email.

3. IN THE NEXT SCREEN ZOOM will offer to invite your colleagues to join. There is no need to do this, so click 'Skip This Step' in the bottom right-hand corner.



4. FROM THERE YOU HAVE the option to start a test meeting. You can try it out to get a feel for the programme. At the edge of the screen you have options to mute yourself, turn your camera on and off, or leave the call. To use these options on a computer, hover your mouse over each one and click (or tap!).

These options are only visible when you move your mouse over them (or tap for smartphones or iPads) and will disappear once you move the mouse. Before starting the first meeting you will have to download the Zoom programme or 'app' to your device. Zoom provides step-by-step instructions for this.

The Zoom meeting window will look slightly different on tablets and smartphones. Please note that you may be prompted to grant the app

permissions for it to use your device's camera or microphone.

5. TO JOIN A MEETING that you have been invited to, simply click the link that the host has sent you. Ensure your audio is enabled at the bottom of the screen.

NOTE: Zoom will display the image of whoever is currently speaking. This means it is best to avoid having more than one person speaking at a time, as it can become confusing as the video switches back and forth.

We hope you have found this guide useful. If you have any questions about accessing or using digital technology, please get in touch with your Outreach Officer.

Updates from Scotland and Northern Ireland

SCOTLAND UPDATE

In these unprecedented times, our BSOs and Outreach Officers have been working harder than ever to ensure that all of our Members, particularly those who may be shielded or self-isolating, have everything they need.

Emma Gration, Outreach Officer for Scotland, has really been pulling her sleeves up, collaborating with other charities, and even volunteering for them at weekends, to ensure that we reach all of the most vulnerable.

Fares4Free is a charity that asks taxi drivers and companies to give free fares to help veterans and their families access essential services and combat social isolation. Emma has been working with the charity to reach our Members when Blesma alone could not.

After Emma called a Widow who was suffering with dementia, she also thought to double-check with her granddaughter that all was well. It was lucky she did, as the granddaughter was concerned that they could only get a delivery of groceries for her nan in a couple of weeks' time and, as she lives down south, was unable to deliver them herself. Emma put in a call to David Gibson of Fares4Free, and the charity was able to collect and deliver essentials for her within just a few hours of the call.



Dave Gibson from Fares4Free

Similarly, one Glasgow Member did not have access to a phone, making it impossible for Emma to get in contact. She called up Fares4Free, and arranged for them to make a welfare check, delivering a bag of groceries as they went, just in case they were required. Luckily all was well with the Member, and the groceries were kindly donated by Fares4Free on this occasion. A similar welfare check helped Emma to rest assured that a Member she couldn't get in contact with was fine and well.

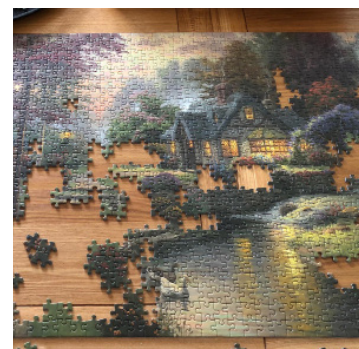
It is so important for military charities to collaborate when there is a need for veterans and Service people. This is a fantastic example, and we would like to thank Fares4Free, and acknowledge all the other fantastic charities working with us across the nation as we get through this crisis.

NORTHERN IRELAND UPDATE

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic so much of everyone's time was spent 'plugged in', keeping up to date and listening to the government guidelines on how we would progress. I saw an opportunity to offer activities that allowed Members and their families time to 'unplug'. I looked to provide a distraction for Members in my region (Northern Ireland), even for a short time, from TV screens and devices.

My plan was to go back in time to something we might have enjoyed in our childhood and which could still be enjoyed by all. To that end, our Outreach Activity Programme adapted as we looked to supply model-making kits and jigsaw puzzles. It was hoped that these traditional activities could positively challenge and provide hours of entertainment (but not frustration!) for everyone.

The start of lockdown saw some glorious weather, and our Members making a move towards



Northern Ireland's Members display impressive jigsaw and baking skills

the garden and DIY projects, sharing top tips on how to get the most out of home-grown plants and produce.

Our Widows have enjoyed knitting and crocheting lap/shoulder blankets in Blesma colours. When lockdown restrictions ease, we hope to be able to enjoy a celebration lunch where these beautiful blankets can be displayed before being gifted to local Members and Widows,

with the priority given to those in residential care homes.

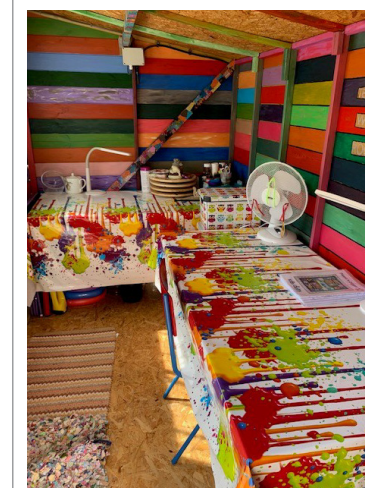
Lockdown baking has also proved popular within the Association as Members have shared ideas and even created tutorial videos on bread and scone making. You can read my Simple Scone recipe on p35.

FIONA MORRISON

Teresa paints a new hobby shed in lockdown

Blesma Member Teresa Garrard has been busy painting her hobby shed during lockdown. Teresa uses the shed as a craft room, mostly for painting old garden ornaments, but once lockdown was announced, Teresa decided to transform the shed as her lockdown DIY project.

"I'm in the vulnerable category so I decided I wanted a project as I knew I was going to be stuck at home for a long time," said the 62-year-old Royals Air Force veteran. "I looked at all the colours of paint and thought I could colour each panel differently. It took about four weeks to complete and I had so much fun doing it! It makes me happy every time I go in there, and it's much better than a plain old shed!"



Branch News

BOURNEMOUTH BRANCH

Bournemouth Branch is coming out of lockdown pretty well, all things considered. If anything, I believe that we have become more caring and more together as a Branch. This, I must confess, is due to the unfailing and dedicated work of our Blesma Support team here in the South West; namely BSO Steve Fraser and Outreach Officer Sarah Payne.

They have rallied round and contacted all Members in the South West throughout the past 10 weeks, aided by Branch Members who have also contacted our own membership. It has been an exercise in togetherness and in being mindful of others.

There have been a few tears along the way, a few incidents involving ladders and curtains, and I have been led to believe that all our gardens are looking “blooming lovely”. It was indeed kind that the weather has been so good to us, but not so fortunate if, like some Members, you are stuck indoors.

All the Members I have spoken to are looking forward to getting out once again, however many are in complete isolation due to underlying health conditions. To them I would advise “stick with it!” Every day brings more hope and every day is another day towards normality – whatever that may be.

We were going to have a Branch meeting in Dorchester in order to attract some of the ‘Islanders’ off the rock. Hopefully, this will still take place, as I intend to make it happen when we get the all clear.

‘Bravo Zulu’ Steve and Sarah, and to all other Members; keep going, we are getting there.

Peter Sherston-Baker
Chairman

GREAT YARMOUTH AND LOWESTOFT BRANCH

We hope you are all keeping safe and well as we make our way through the coronavirus pandemic and the challenges it has brought to everyone.

The Branch held its AGM on 20 February and saw changes to the administration of the Branch, with Stuart Ellis stepping down as Chairman after several years at the helm.

The Branch Members voted the new Board in with Philip (Bob) Monkhouse becoming Chairman, Simon Cavie remaining as Treasurer and Helen Cullen was welcomed as Branch Secretary. Helen has been a Volunteer Welfare Representative for nearly five years and is an active member of the Branch so was delighted to take up the role.

Sadly, over the past year several Branch Members have passed away, including Stella Clarke who was featured in the Spring 2020

Blesma Magazine. Our friends are missed and we continue to offer support to their families.

The ‘Veteran Breakfast Club’ has moved to the Lord Kitchener Memorial Holiday Centre in Lowestoft and, before coronavirus, met on the second and fourth Saturday of the month from 09.30. It is a great opportunity for veterans and serving personnel to get together over breakfast and a cuppa, and is regularly attended by Branch Members. Hopefully, the breakfast club will be up and running again soon.

Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, all our planned activities have either been cancelled or put on hold, but we continue to contact each other to offer support where needed. We, like all other Branches, are missing our face-to-face gatherings, but rest assured we’ll be back together as soon as it is safe for us all to do so.

We hope to get together before the Christmas Lunch and have tickets reserved for the well-renowned Thursford Christmas Spectacular, a night of song and dance, at the end of November.

Helen Cullen
Secretary

Members at the Shard for digital marketing course

Blesma Members Paul Findlay, Luke Morrison and Stewart Harris attended a five-day digital marketing course in March. The pilot course was run by Mike-Alpha, with training provided by world leading marketing agency Jellyfish at the Shard, London.

Through the course, which has been backed by Facebook, Mike-Alpha aims to educate the UK Armed Forces community in marketing theory, strategy and planning.

Military veteran and digital marketing specialist Andy Mihalop co-founded Mike-Alpha alongside Blesma Member Si Harmer, with an aim to help military service leavers, veterans, spouses and dependents learn digital marketing skills to either build a second career or run their own business.

“There is a pool of talent in the Armed Forces community that no-one in the industry is tapping into,” said Andy. “I saw an opportunity to train the community and help them into employment or with their own business.”

“This is our first course, but we are already talking to Jellyfish about a couple of people going into their marketing academies. We are also hopeful that three of the spouses will be going to work for a large corporate, and five or six people either going



into internships or full-time roles. Four veterans here are also early-stage entrepreneurs, and we are hoping that what they learn here will help their businesses to grow.”

The Digital Marketing course is split across theory and practical group sessions focusing on marketing, advertising, and social media. Once completed, students

are then paired with a Marketing Academy mentor, who works with them over six months to enhance their skills.

Luke Morrison, a former Private in the Parachute Regiment, is hoping the course will help him with his fitness endeavours.

“I came into the course with an open mind, knowing I could benefit from the course in the future as a personal trainer, with my drone filming and for future Blesma opportunities,” he said. “I’ve had a little experience with Facebook adverts for my fitness, but I never really knew anything about it. Now, I know about how to target an audience to make sure my adverts are seen by my audience. It was a brilliant course.”

Spotlight on Benefits and Social Care

Welcome to the Bulletin's regular section on the benefits system. As well as highlighting some useful information regarding the benefits system, on occasions we will be raising awareness of some health and social care matters. If you would like to discuss your benefit entitlement or have a social care query, please contact your Blesma Support Officer (their contact details can be found on p42). Alternatively, you can contact Liz Watling in the Independence and Wellbeing Team by email at iwabenefits@blesma.org or by calling her on 020 8548 3516.

COVID-19 EFFECT ON BENEFITS

Due to COVID-19, the recent months have seen some unexpected changes to the benefits system. Most of these have been made to reduce the level of face-to-face commitment required to evidence entitlement to a benefit. These changes are open to amendment at short notice, with a return to business as usual expected at some stage.

Below is a list of those changes most likely to affect our Members, but this is not exhaustive. There is also the possibility that some of these will change either by the time the Bulletin goes to print, or indeed afterwards. As always, we would recommend speaking to your Blesma Support Officer before making a claim for a benefit.

PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT

To evidence a new entitlement to the benefit, an assessment is carried out. This is usually face to face with a healthcare professional, but decisions can also be paper-based. This means looking at the claim form filled in by the claimant as well as any medical evidence that is available.

The social distancing measures have meant that the face-to-face assessments have been put on hold. Assessments will now be by telephone or will be paper-based.

Those already entitled to the benefit usually have a review date, when they will be reassessed to check their ongoing entitlement to the benefit. These reviews have been suspended, with claimants continuing to receive their current payments as normal. From July, some review and reassessment activity will gradually resume for Personal Independence Payment (and Disability Living Allowance). Initially, this will be those claims for a review or reassessment which were already underway when this activity was suspended.

WORK CAPABILITY ASSESSMENTS

Those claiming Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit, as they are unable to work, have to undergo a Work Capability Assessment. As with the Personal Independence Payment, these are usually carried out face to face with a healthcare professional or made on a paper-based decision.

The face-to-face assessments have been temporarily suspended. Assessments are now by telephone or are paper-based. Those already entitled to the benefit usually have a review date, when they will be reassessed to check their ongoing entitlement to the benefit. These reviews have now been suspended. Claimants will continue to receive their current payments as normal until further announcement.

STATUTORY SICK PAY

If you are an employee and not able to work, you should usually receive Statutory Sick Pay from your fourth day of sickness as long as your earnings are at a set level or above. For those self-isolating in accordance with the government guidance on coronavirus, Statutory Sick Pay is now payable from the first day of absence.

CARER'S ALLOWANCE

Carers who are earning less than £128.00 per week can claim Carer's Allowance if they are providing at

least 35 hours per week of care to a disabled person who is in receipt of a disability benefit at a set rate.

As a temporary measure, the government has announced that emotional support, as well as the more traditional forms of care, now count towards the 35 hours of care per week needed to meet the criteria.

Restrictions on certain breaks in care have also been temporarily lifted. If there is a temporary break in caring because the claimant, or the person they are caring for contracts coronavirus, or if they have to isolate because of it, this does not count towards a break in care.

BENEFIT APPEALS

Face-to-face hearings have been temporarily suspended. If possible, a tribunal judge will assess the case without a hearing by making a decision based on the documents. If the judge is able to do this, a 'provisional decision' will be sent to the claimant. If the claimant disagrees with this decision, they can request a hearing.

If there has to be a hearing (either because the judge is unable to make a decision on paper, or the claimant requests one), the tribunal might suggest a phone call or a video conference.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Universal Credit is a benefit to support those on a low income, whether in or out of work. As it is means tested, your income and capital (including that of your partner) affect whether you will receive a payment of the benefit.

There has been a surge in the number of claims due to people being furloughed or unable to work at present and seeing a drop in their self-employed income. Before COVID-19, claimants had to attend an initial interview to verify their identity and discuss their work prospects. All routine face-to-face appointments are suspended for the foreseeable future and will be dealt with online where possible.

From 06 April 2020 the standard allowance in Universal Credit increased by £20 per week for one year. Face-to-face Work Capability Assessments have been suspended (see Work Capability Assessments above). Universal Credit is replacing an old system for benefits to cover the cost of living including payments for children and rent. The old benefits are known as 'legacy benefits' and they are:

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit

You are unable to receive a legacy benefit and Universal Credit. If you make a claim for Universal Credit whilst already receiving a legacy benefit, your legacy benefit will stop, and you may find yourself receiving less money through Universal Credit. The government is trying to raise awareness of the effect on those receiving a legacy benefit and claiming Universal Credit.

However, regardless of this, if a legacy benefit claimant makes a claim for Universal Credit this will take precedence, irrespective of whether the claimant was aware of the possible decrease in income or not.

Please speak to your Blesma Support Officer before making a claim.

SOCIAL SECURITY SCOTLAND

Our Scottish Members may be aware of our previous Bulletin articles about how the benefits system in Scotland is changing. Due to COVID-19, there are now some delays to the timetable for the introduction for some of the devolved benefits. Social Security Scotland's intent is to prioritise the devolved benefits which are already in payment. Most notably for our Members, this has resulted in the change to disability benefits, Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance being delayed.

If you are receiving Personal Independence Payment (or its predecessor Disability Living Allowance) or Attendance Allowance, you will continue to do so. The new Disability Assistance, which is replacing these benefits for most claimants in Scotland, has been put on hold. Blesma is engaging with Social Security Scotland and we will update our Members once we have more information.

Get fit with Gregg Stevenson

GREGG'S EXERCISES

At the beginning of lockdown, Blesma Member and trained PT Gregg Stevenson put together a series of gentle exercise videos, specially designed with Blesma Members in mind, to help us to keep our minds and bodies healthy. Here are a few exercises from his seated sessions. Please remember to take care when doing any new exercise routine.

1. KNEES TO CHEST

While seated, hold your arms out to the side, and lift both knees up towards your chest. Hold them in this position for five seconds – or as long as you can – and repeat five times. If this is too difficult, try starting with just one leg at a time.

2. BICEP CURL TO PRESS

For this exercise you will need a weight, this can be a tin of baked beans or a bottle of water – it doesn't need to be heavy. Hold one weight in each hand at your sides. Curl the weights from the elbow towards your shoulders. Once there, rotate your hands outwards and press the weights up so your arms are straight above your head. Repeat 10 times.

3. TRUNK ROTATIONS

With your feet on the floor and legs stationary, gently twist from the waist, first to the left and then through to the right. You do not need to push yourself into an extreme twist, you can work up to this gently. Be mindful of your neck, keep it relaxed and twist only from your core.

4. YTWs

Once again using a weight, lift your arms from down at your sides, to above your head forming a 'Y' shape and then bring them back down with control. From the same start, lift your arms out to either side, forming a 'T' shape before returning to your sides. Lastly, hold your elbows out to the sides, with your hands stacked on top in the shape of a 'W'. Bring the weights in towards each other, and hold your arms parallel to your chest before returning to the 'W'. Repeat each exercise 10 times.

5. LATERAL STRETCH

Gently raise your arm up high, and then over your head and down your back. Make sure to keep your stomach muscles engaged and breathe into the stretch as you guide your elbow down and gently lean to the opposing side. You should be able to feel the stretch in your waist and rib area. Repeat this gently 15 times on each side.



Try Fiona's classic simple scone recipe

Baking has become more popular than ever during lockdown. Join the trendsetters with Outreach Officer Fiona Morrison's recipe for simple but tasty scones. You'll be the envy of fellow Members at your next Zoom cream tea catch-up!

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes (oven temperature 220°C)

What you need: a mixing bowl, mug, tablespoon and cutter

1. Measure out 2 mugs of self-raising flour, a pinch of salt and 4 tablespoons of sugar in a bowl.
2. Break 1 egg into a mug. Add 4 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil and top up with milk.
3. Pour this mixture into the dry ingredients and mix/knead.
4. At this stage you can add ingredients such as dried fruit (in fact, anything you want).
5. Pat out on a floured surface and cut out 8 scones (Tip: if you don't have a cutter carefully use the top of a glass.)
6. Brush the tops with the beaten egg and bake for 10 minutes until risen and golden on top.
7. Eat warm or cold with jam or, for a delicious treat, generously top with clotted cream. Enjoy!

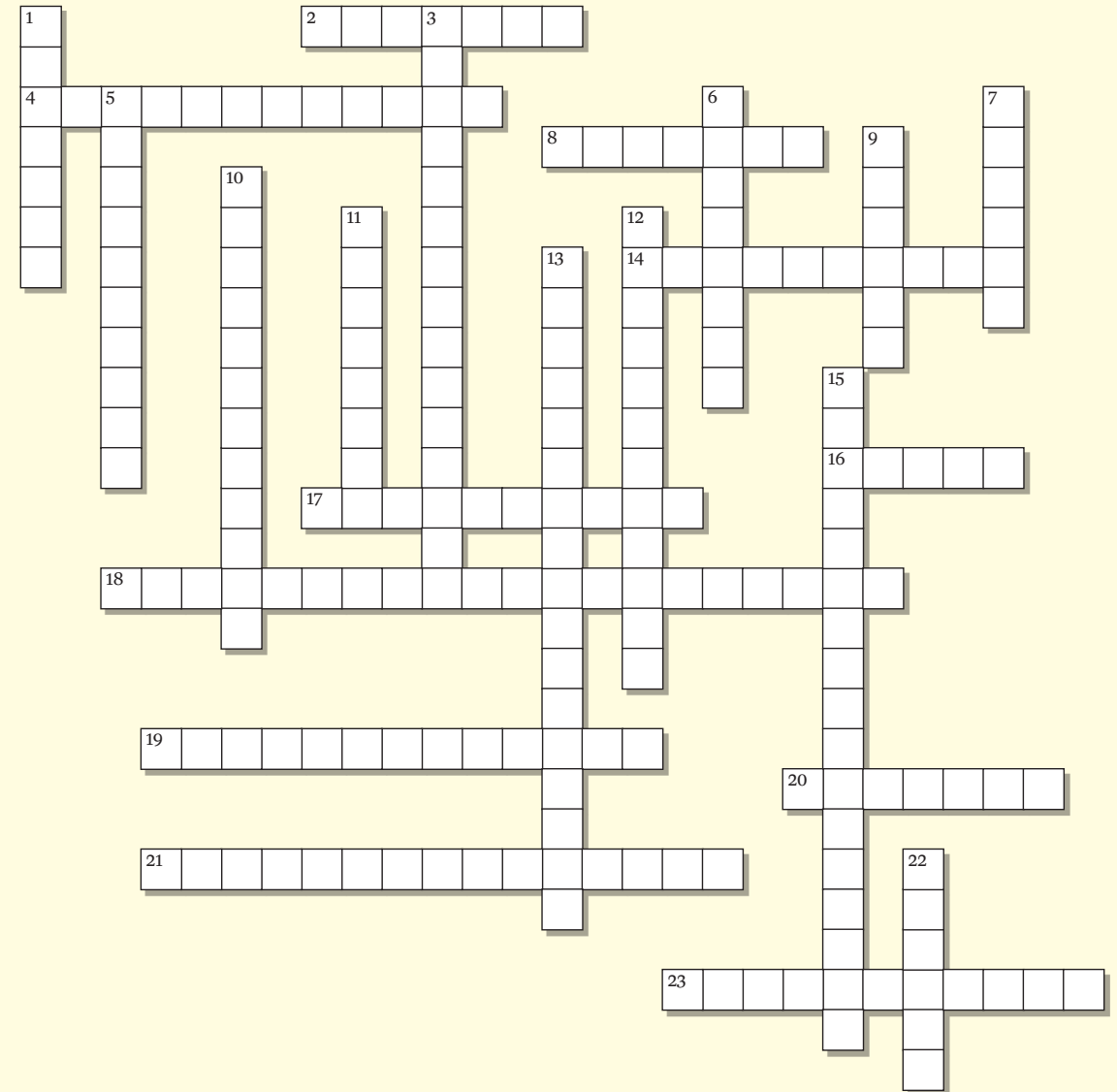
Test your military and Blesma knowledge

ACROSS

2. Blesma Magazine was formerly known as what?
4. Which Blesma Member won Bronze in the Men's KL2 canoe sprint at the 2016 Summer Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro?
8. Blesma's Royal patron is Prince Duke of Gloucester
14. What was the name of the Royal Air Force's high-altitude strategic bomber, operational from 1956 to 1984?
16. The Battle of Monte Cassino took place in which country?
17. Which main battle tank did Challenger Two replace?
18. To which class does the aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales belong?
19. What was the location of Blesma's previous offices, Frankland Moore House?
20. Betts is Blesma's Director Independence and Wellbeing
21. Which former Army Sergeant won two gold medals at the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens?
23. Which Blesma Paralympian designed his own prosthetic bindings to allow him to snowboard?

DOWN

1. What is the British Army's earliest battle honour?
3. Where was the first Blesma National Sports Day held?
5. Blesma's offices recently moved here
6. At which battle in 1815 did Napoleon surrender to the British?
7. Jon recently took over as Blesma's Chief Executive
9. Ian is Blesma's Operations Director
10. What was the name of the Royal Navy submarine that sunk the Argentine ship ARA General Belgrano during the Falklands War?
11. Which military base is situated next to a famous natural beauty spot on the Jurassic Coast in Dorset?
12. Which Blesma Member and former Parachute Regiment Captain scaled Mount Everest in 2019?
13. What name is given to the procedure by which a prosthetic is permanently surgically anchored into the bone?
15. Which US General in World War II later became the 34th President of the USA?
22. Blesma Member Lamin Manneh featured on which popular home improvement show?



NOTES

Try our simple (and not so simple!) Sudoku quizzes

EASY, TO GET YOU STARTED...

				7		3	5	
1		3			4		7	2
			3		6			8
5			4	6		2	8	
		1	5		3	9		
	6	4		2	7			1
4			2		9			
9	1		7			4		5
	2	7		4				

NOTES

MEDIUM, TEST YOURSELF

9				8	6		3	2
			2	1			7	
		5			3		8	
			8				6	
		3	6		5	4		
	6				4			
	1		3					
	9			5	2			
3	8		9	6				5

HARD, ONLY FOR THE BRAVE!

	2		5	6			3	
		9			4	1		
4								
9			7	8				
8	7			1			5	2
				4	2			9
								4
		8	6			5		
	9			7	8		6	

Can you master our military wordsearch?

B	E	E	L	R	A	A	L	C	N	O	O	O	E
R	N	F	I	N	T	F	A	O	F	A	T	L	C
I	E	L	A	H	S	R	A	M	D	L	E	I	F
G	L	E	N	O	L	O	C	M	R	T	D	E	N
A	L	N	A	J	O	N	I	A	T	P	A	C	E
D	N	S	M	O	R	E	F	N	S	I	C	L	P
I	O	I	M	D	M	F	M	D	A	N	R	A	A
E	E	G	N	T	I	E	N	E	R	I	E	R	E
R	N	N	M	A	J	O	R	R	A	A	C	I	G
A	A	A	E	O	O	I	O	T	O	A	I	M	R
T	G	E	N	E	R	A	L	E	L	A	F	D	E
I	G	C	O	M	M	O	D	O	R	E	F	A	D
E	T	N	A	N	E	T	U	E	I	L	O	A	M
C	A	F	M	O	A	A	A	M	L	M	O	D	R

Find the following words in the grid above. They run either forwards, backwards and diagonally

**GENERAL
ADMIRAL
COMMANDER
MAJOR**

**LIEUTENANT
CAPTAIN
ENSIGN
FIELDMARSHAL**

**COLONEL
BRIGADIER
COMMODORE
OFFICER CADET**

The Blitz (in retrospect) by Noel Harrower

Blesma Member and acclaimed writer Noel Harrower's poem *The Blitz (in retrospect)* has been included in an anthology of veterans' poetry. In 2019, Oxford Brookes Poetry Centre began a series of poetry workshops for US and UK military veterans. Drawing on the expertise of the Poetry Centre – a home for research into poetry and advocacy of its value in society – these workshops, designed and led by poets, veterans and academics, seek to explore how poetry can enable veterans to think through their experiences.

THE BLITZ (IN RETROSPECT)

We grew used to the scream of the sirens
in those shortening days.
It usually wailed soon after the darkness fell.
My brother and I slept in the old coal-house
under the stairs. Strengthened by an outer wall,
it was turned into a snug shelter, with
sleeping bags on the floor, and stools for Mum and Dad
in the old pantry. A wall had been demolished, and
two different functional areas performed a new task.

There was no point in trying to sleep in our bedrooms.
It was icy cold up there anyway, so we bunked in the
shelter.

We grew used to it, after the first few nights.
It was an adventure we half enjoyed, until the bombing
started.

We said our prayers, and trusted they made us safe.

The night I'll never forget was just before Christmas.
It had gone quiet, and Mum slipped out to get drinks.
We heard the shriek of a falling bomb, and Dad leaped up
to pull her back under cover. A neighbour's house collapsed
and we held our breath as the crash made our shelter vibrate.
We heard the smash of glass, and wondered "is our
home gone?"
We stared at each other, waiting, and then – in the quiet
– Dad

opened the pantry door to see that a disordered kitchen
was still intact.

After a pause, he explored further (we still had dining
room windows),
and then he crept towards the front and shouted "Oh,
Elsie, come and look!"

We followed him into a room suddenly illuminated by a
deep red sky.

At eight years old, I did not recognise the significance. It
was so beautiful.

"Is this dawn?" I asked, awestruck.

"No," Dad told me, "it's Manchester burning!"

Our house was quite unspoiled.

After the All Clear sounded, we tried to rest again, but
sleep eluded us.

It was Saturday morning
so, after breakfast, Roy and I went out to look at the damage.

We'd never seen anything like it before.

A neighbouring home had lost its front.

"It looks like a doll's house," I said in amazement,

peering at a bed, suspended on a tilting floor

in an upstairs room. We marvelled, and picked up shrapnel

that we knew we could take to school for swops.

We had adjusted very quickly to a new way of life,

but it was much harder for the grown-ups.

BLESMA POETRY COMPETITION

Has Noel's work left you feeling inspired? We would
love to showcase more of our Members' poetry
in coming editions of the Bulletin. Therefore, we
would like to invite you to submit your own poetry
to ihj@blesma.org or post it to Jessica Mackinnon,
Blesma the Limbless Veterans, 115 New London
Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0QT.

Useful contact numbers across the Association

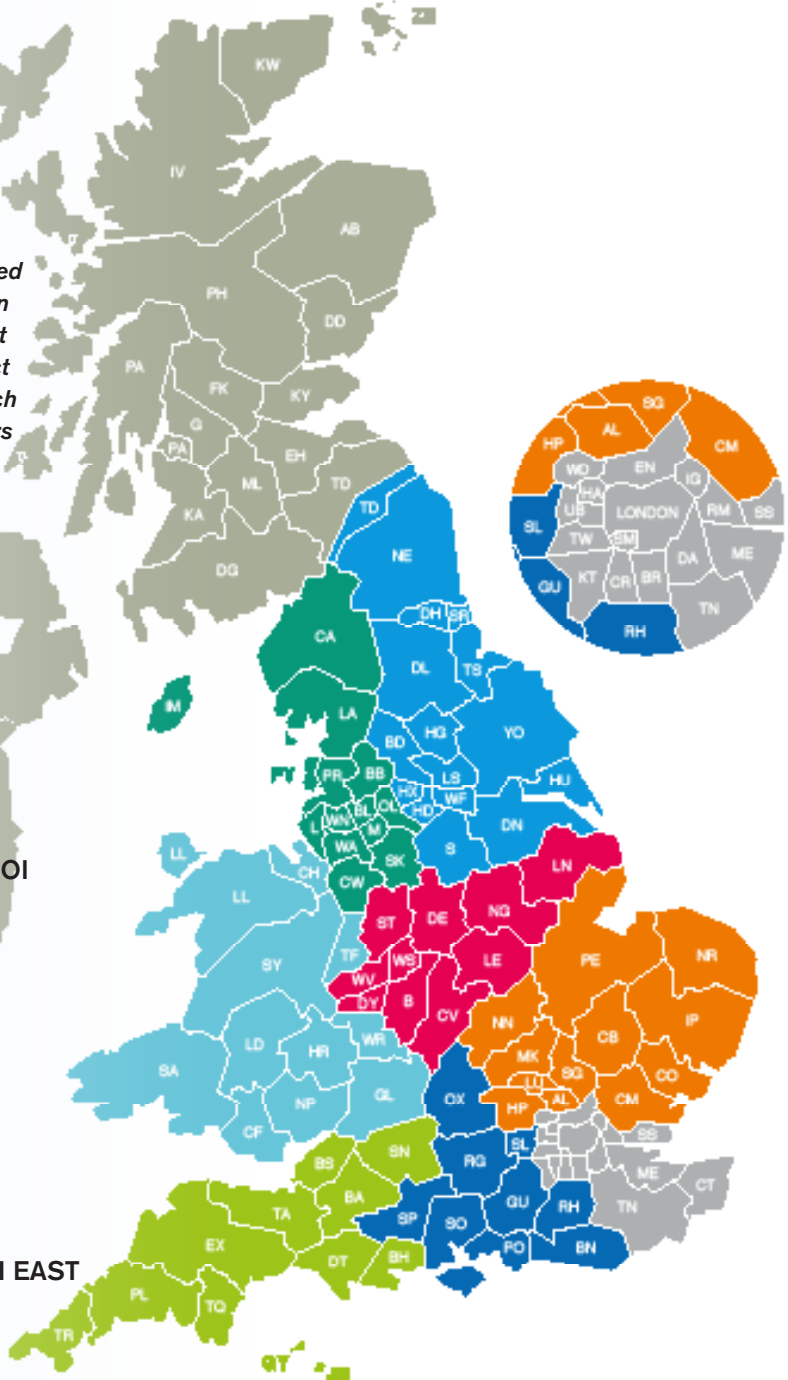
TITLE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
BLESMA SUPPORT OFFICERS			
BSO (Prosthetics)	Brian Chenier	020 8548 7080 07796 715908	bsoprosthetics@blesma.org
BSO Eastern	Kevin Long	020 3954 3020 07825 536364	bsoeastern@blesma.org
BSO London & South East	Paul Findlay	01268 415290 07469 242277	bsolse@blesma.org
BSO Midlands	Sam Wileman	020 8548 7095 07825 536363	bsomid@blesma.org
BSO North East	Pete Shields	01469 532176 07908 667219	bsone@blesma.org
BSO North West	Mike Downes	01257 795144 07825 536362	bsonw@blesma.org
BSO Scotland, NI & ROI	Steve Burton	07766 258461	bsosniroi@blesma.org
BSO South	Pat Donnachie	020 3954 3026 07741 846106	bsosouth@blesma.org
BSO South West	Steve Fraser	01278 789393 07788 312747	bsosw@blesma.org
BSO West	Tom Hall	020 8548 7098 07780 165085	bsowest@blesma.org
Members Living Overseas	Liz Watling	020 8548 3516	iwabenefits@blesma.org
BLESMA OUTREACH OFFICERS			
National Outreach Coordinator	Martin Gwillim	07741 891632	outreachcoord@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Eastern	Darren Fuller	07741 661159	outreache@blesma.org
Outreach Officer London & South East	Jess Linge	07741 845793	outreachlse@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Midlands	Vanessa Lucas	07741 845429	outreachmid@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Northern Ireland	Fiona Morrison	07741 744617	outreachni@blesma.org
Outreach Officer North East	Adele Miller	07741 847211	outreachne@blesma.org
Outreach Officer North West	Kirsten Morrissey	07741 846674	outreachnw@blesma.org

TITLE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
BLESMA OUTREACH OFFICERS Cont			
Outreach Officer Scotland	Emma Gratton	07884 695703	outreachscotland@blesma.org
Outreach Officer South	Andy Barlow	07384 834449	outreachsouth@blesma.org
Outreach Officer South West	Sarah Payne	07741 737563	outreachsw@blesma.org
Outreach Officer West	Jason Suller	07741 744141	outreachw@blesma.org
INDEPENDENCE AND WELLBEING			
Members Support	Liz Watling	020 8548 3516	iwabenefits@blesma.org
Members Admin	Elaine Hems	020 8548 7093	memberadmin@blesma.org
Grants Admin	Susie Grainger	020 3954 3022	grantsadmin@blesma.org
Welfare – Direct Line		020 8598 9459	
ACTIVITIES			
Activities Manager	Jess March	020 8548 3519	activities@blesma.org
Membership Engagement Officer	Emily Mizon	020 8548 7094	meo@blesma.org
Activities Executive	Clare Wellings	020 3954 3021	ae@blesma.org
FUNDRAISING			
Associate Director of Fundraising	Tony Bloomfield	020 8548 3517	adfundraising@blesma.org
Senior Community and Events Officer	Abbie-Louise Mills	020 8548 7089	communityeventsofficersnr@blesma.org
Regional Fundraising Manager	Chris Knight	07774 797 318	regfundmgr@blesma.org
Corporate Partnership Officer	Abbi Wilkins	020 8548 7084	cpo@blesma.org
Corporate Partnership Manager	Mike Allen	020 3954 3029	corporate@blesma.org
COMMUNICATIONS			
Communications Manager	Lorna Dorrell	020 3954 3023	commmgr@blesma.org
In-House Journalist	Jess Mackinnon	020 8548 3514	ihj@blesma.org
Digital Media Manager	Nick Tuck	01299 896282	digitalmedia@blesma.org
Communications Executive	Izzy Perks	020 8548 7092	commsexec@blesma.org
DIRECTORS			
Chief Executive	Jon Bryant	020 8548 3512	ce@blesma.org
Operations Director	Ian Waller	020 8548 3513	od@blesma.org
Director Independence and Wellbeing	Heather Betts	020 8548 3515	diw@blesma.org
USEFUL CONTACTS			
Main Office		020 8590 1124	info@blesma.org
Office and Facilities Manager	Paula Ferreira	020 8548 3511	officeandfacilities@blesma.org
Admin Support	Sue Stokes	020 8548 7091	officeexec@blesma.org

Blesma by area

Have you got a question or need advice? Don't hesitate to get in touch with the Blesma Support Officer in your area. The contact numbers for all BSOs, Outreach Officers, and relevant members of staff can be found on p42.

- SCOTLAND, NI AND ROI
- NORTH WEST
- NORTH EAST
- EASTERN
- MIDLANDS
- WEST
- SOUTH
- SOUTH WEST
- LONDON AND SOUTH EAST



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