

BLESMA

Magazine

The magazine for limbless veterans



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Got an event planned? An ex-Sun editor and PR expert tells you how to publicise it **p32**



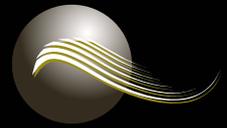
Living life in the spotlight

Tread the boards with the Members who are telling their stories on stage **p20**



Meet the new Chief Executive

Barry Le Grys talks about his new role and his plans for the future of the Association **p08**



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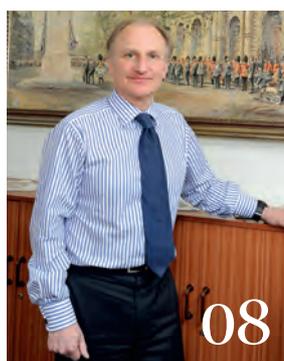


Image: Cylla von Tiedemann

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Stay in touch.



Did you miss the **Activities Calendar for 2014** that was inserted into a previous issue? Email **Activities (left)** for more info

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NEWS

News, views and opinion
from the world of BLESMA



Rob Copsey (this picture) is cheered on by his daughters (above left). Jane Wood pushes the pain barrier (left)



Photographs: Andy Bate

Runners go the extra mile for BLESMA in London Marathon

The London Marathon is the biggest fundraising day of the year for many charities and, as usual, BLESMA got in on the act, with runners raising thousands of pounds – and having a fantastic, if painful, time of it to boot!

“This was my fourth marathon and it was the best one,” says Rob Copsey, 43, a volunteer Welfare Officer from Kent who is a below-the-knee amputee. “Previously I’ve struggled with my prosthesis and the training, but this year it all came together for me.

“As an amputee, too much activity can give you trouble with your stump, so the key is not to over train but to do just enough so you know you’ll finish,” says Rob, who was injured in Sierra Leone while serving with the Royal Engineers as a Lance Corporal.

“I got around without taking my leg off for the first time in 4 hours and 55 minutes. The support was brilliant, and I’m hoping to raise £2,500 for BLESMA. It’s my charity of choice and I’m always telling people about what they do. They’ve helped me a lot and I’ll always raise money for them.”

Kevin Godlington, 37, from Kent, made things particularly tricky for himself this year by carrying a medical dummy around the 26.5 mile route.

“I’ve done a few marathons and ultra distance events but never carrying something weighing 60 pounds,” he laughs. “It really slowed me down! I’ve previously done marathons in under three hours, but this time it took me six hours and 15 minutes. It was an uneven load and very uncomfortable!”

Having raised more than £10,000, Kevin – who runs a post-conflict agriculture development company – sees the agony as worthwhile. “BLESMA is a great charity. Many of my wounded friends have been helped by them. They need more money and a better opportunity on the veterans stage.”

Having served with the Royal Engineers and Special Forces for 12 years, Kevin has raised “a couple of thousand grand” over the years for various veterans charities, and intends to help BLESMA more in the future. “I founded Tickets For Troops with a few friends and I’ve wanted to do something for BLESMA, too. Doing this was great.”

Christie Vickers agrees. The 24 year old from London, a portfolio manager in Mental Health Services for the Central and North

BLESMA Week

The charity had its very first dedicated week of celebration in June. Read all about it on p14

BLESMA runners Emma Nekrews (left) and Alan Nekrews (right)



West London NHS Trust, raised more than £2,500. She chose to run for BLESMA after doing some work at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court.

“Having seen first-hand the support that BLESMA offers injured service personnel, I wanted to contribute towards their great work,” says Christie, who is also an RAF Reservist with 600 Squadron in Northolt.

“It was a great day and I was feeling fine up until somewhere near the 22nd mile, and then I finally ‘hit the wall’. I completely understand the meaning of that phrase now – I’d had enough. It felt like I’d been shot in my kneecaps, my hips hurt, all I’d taken in for hours was fizzy pop so I felt sick...

“But I made it. I did it in less than five hours. The whole day was incredible. I was saying ‘never again’ afterwards, but then the very next day I was emailing BLESMA to see if I could run for them again next year!”

If you would like to join Christie and the other BLESMA runners on the streets of London next year contact Laura Hyde on 020 8548 7084 or at events@blesma.org



Almost there: Rob Workman at Mile 19

welcome

It is a tremendous privilege for me to be able to welcome you to the Summer edition of BLESMA Magazine. I am thoroughly excited about my role and somewhat in awe, too. I have a lot of questions still to ask to get up to the standard expected, and it is high – everybody I have met across the Services charity sector has respect for our specialised role and the depth of our expertise.

I am also humbled by all that you read in this magazine of Members achieving so much. There is another piece from me in these pages, not as impressive but it will let you know me better and I think that is important considering how tight-knit an association BLESMA is. I also provide some insight into what I see on the horizon and how Chadwell Heath should look to serve Members and the Board as we move forward. Being connected and being expert are core priorities.

In this issue you will read of the exploits of Members both in the physical and creative areas. Ed Appleby and Matt Kingston are featured in the skies over California, and we visit the Specialist Rehabilitation Centre in Leeds to see how they look after our Members. Looking further ahead, many activities are planned over summer, with the highlights being sailing in Greece and cycling groups in Belgium and South East England. We look forward to seeing how they fared in the next issue.

Please do tell us your views and thoughts on BLESMA, whether by social media, email or plain letter. We are very keen to step up dialogue and debate – they are significant functions of our digital media and the magazine.

On the subject of expertise we have begun raising our views and concerns already this year on the next review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, on the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, and the Armed Forces Covenant. We are also influential in shaping a refreshed Veterans Strategy which aims to promote greater collaboration between Government and the Services charity sector.

As I write this piece we are about to depart for the Members' Weekend. This is a great opportunity to get together, discuss issues and enjoy good company. Looking further forward is the Annual General Meeting on 24 June. There is a formal agenda but the state of BLESMA will be presented with an opportunity for discussion before the chance to get together in a more social environment. Please call in if you can.

Barry Le Gry
Chief Executive



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- The 4Seal Liner is designed for use in a socket with a distal expulsion valve and provides excellent suspension by means of its four integral seals.
- Easy Glide surface and flexible nature of the seals make it simple to roll on and negates the need for any lubricant when donning the socket.
- Umbrellan fabric contained within the silicone as part of the liner matrix, provides both increased durability and pain-relieving effect from phantom limb pain, phantom limb sensation and idiopathic residual limb pain.



Team GB paracyclist and BLESMA Member Jon-Allan Butterworth



Team GB paracyclist is BLESMA ambassador

Jon-Allan Butterworth is a BLESMA Member and is now the ambassador for its cycling events. He represented Great Britain at the 2012 London Paralympics, and won silver medals in the 1km Time Trial and Individual Pursuit.

“I’m really excited to be the Cycling Ambassador for such a worthy charity and one that is so passionate about cycling,” he said. “BLESMA runs a varied programme of bike rides; one that is only going to grow over the next few years.”

Jon-Allan joined the RAF in 2002 and served in Afghanistan in 2005 and Iraq in 2007 as a Weapons Technician. In August 2007 he was caught in a rocket attack and had to have his left arm amputated above the elbow in a battlefield hospital.

He made contact with British Cycling as he was recovering at Headley Court and was given a place on the British Paracycling Programme in January 2009.

“We’re delighted that Jon-Allan is our Cycling Ambassador,” said David Coulton, BLESMA’s Activities Manager. “All our cycling events are incredibly popular and go a long way towards empowering wounded warriors who will carry these scars – both visible and not so visible – for life. Having the backing of an elite cycling champion and a rising star like Jon-Allan works wonders in promoting and furthering our cause. He is an inspiration and will help raise awareness of our unique range of charity rides as well as our vital efforts to rebuild lives.”

WALKING ACROSS SCOTLAND FOR BLESMA

Every year staff and students from Banchory Academy in Aberdeenshire take part in their Across Scotland Challenge. The expedition sees them travel the breadth of Scotland by a different route, raising money for charity as they go.

This year they supported BLESMA because Paul Burns took part in last year’s event ahead of his untimely death just two weeks after completing the challenge.

In May, 14 pupils and four staff members set off with BLESMA Member Tony Checkley and BLESMA’s Digital Media Officer Nick Tuck from the Island of Vatersay. They headed to the Butt of Lewis, crossing the Western Isles before heading to the mainland to travel from Ullapool to Tarbat Ness Point. They completed the 300-mile journey from the West coast to the East coast in seven days. “My heartfelt thanks go to Banchory Academy for raising funds for our injured service personnel and for such a fitting tribute to Paul Burns,” said Annette Hall, Head of Fundraising at BLESMA.

Wishing Aureen a fond farewell

Aureen Jones has retired after 19 years working for BLESMA HQ. She saw many changes in her time at the Association, having originally worked as the secretary to the Assistant General Secretary Harry Twitchett.

Next to be looked after was Stephen Coltman who had the habit of saying, as she arrived in the office;

“Aureen, I have an important job for you, but do please take your coat off first!”

Then came Aureen’s most cherished time with the Association as she supported her “lovely boss” Ernie Stables who she remains in regular contact with.



A change in role after Ernie’s early retirement meant that Aureen went on to provide support to the officials at Chadwell Heath. The role still afforded her the opportunity to liaise closely with the Membership, a part of her working day that she found most rewarding as she built a great rapport with many over the years.

So it is with great sadness that all at HQ, as well as many across the organisation, bid a fond farewell to a loyal and dedicated servant of many years as she starts on her next adventure.

BLESMA NEEDS YOU!

Would you like to feature in BLESMA’s new series of adverts? The Association is looking for Members to volunteer to be part of a photo shoot. It doesn’t matter how old you are or how your injury occurred – if you have a story to tell we want to hear from you.

The focus of the adverts will be to show Members with their families or as a group. *If you are interested in helping please contact Bryony Stevens on 020 8548 7092 or at mediasupport@blesma.org to find out more.*



Meet BLESMA's new Chief Executive as he gets to grips with his new role and gears up to mark the centenary of the outbreak of WWI

Barry Le Gry's MBE

Barry Le Gry's became BLESMA's new Chief Executive in March. He feels "privileged, excited and nervous" to be taking on such an important role. He joins the organisation following a distinguished career in the Armed Forces, during which he saw active service in Northern Ireland, the Falklands, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan, and commanded national and international forces up to Brigade level. His time in the Army also saw him work with the UN, the Cabinet Office, NATO and Army HQ, as well as in Chief of Staff roles in the field. He spent much of this time heavily involved in trying to find ways to locate and disarm Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

Barry joins BLESMA from a final posting to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Canada and, as he immerses himself in the challenges of charity life, we sit down with him to talk about his time in the Army, his views on amputation, and why he feels as if he's in control of a spaceship...

What drew you to military life?

I grew up on a farm in Suffolk and was often turfed out of bed to feed the livestock – so the Army seemed like it might be an easier life! I wanted to see the world so I got a bit of life experience first, working in the offshore oil industry in the North Sea in 1977. That was character building – and then I went to RMA Sandhurst in 1978.

Did you enjoy the military?

Thoroughly. I commissioned into the Royal Corps of Engineers in 1979 and went on my first tour of Northern Ireland soon after. Commanding a squadron in Plymouth and a regiment in Germany were rewarding experiences. I loved working with the locals in countries such as Iraq, Sierra Leone and Kosovo, trying to understand and support their cultures.

When did you first meet an amputee?

My first squadron had been posted to the Falklands and there were a few people on the team who'd lost legs. Then I went to Sierra Leone, which was horrendous

as amputation had been used as a tool of terror by the rebel fighters. In the Balkans a soldier under my command had lost a leg and compensation got awkward because he was under the UN flag. The issue was resolved, and it eventually led to where we are now with military pensions.

Then Iraq and Afghanistan came along...

As head of the Corps of Royal Engineers I met a lot of troops and their families to try and work out how best to help. All the time I was aware of BLESMA and what a great job they were doing. Even back then I'd always steer our soldiers towards them.

You worked on an anti-IED strategy...

In conflict, it's cat and mouse. If you do one thing, the opposition does another. We'd always seen IEDs as singular devices, but in Afghanistan we were coming across whole fields of them. They were like hi-tech WWII minefields. We had to look at capacity, approach, techniques, equipment. It took some time, but our efforts definitely made a considerable difference.

Do you think the public perception of amputation has changed over the years?

I believe so. Different generations see it in different ways. Older generations maybe don't make too much fuss, and might prefer it if nobody notices. The modern generation is much more open about amputation. 'Here's my leg, here's how it works – I don't mind wearing shorts.' There is much less stigma now and that has to be a good thing.

How do you see your role at BLESMA?

BLESMA is a unique charity because the Members get a vote. They've paid a high price to be in the club, so we're steered by them and our Trustees. It's a fellowship of shared experience. I'm conscious I haven't paid the price to be a fellow – they are committed, passionate and loyal to their shared experience. My role is to serve them and provide whatever momentum I can.

What are your plans for BLESMA?

Our profile will change in the eyes of the public and politicians post-Afghanistan, and that will alter our environment. We need to think carefully about how we adjust to that. We also need to be clear on our core values and how we deliver them. Working with Members, seeing them in their homes, helping them to lead independent lives – these are the important things.

What have you learned in the first months?

Communication is vital, with our Members, supporters, volunteers, potential donors and partners. And not to assume anything – the chances are, you'll be wrong. I'm asking lots of questions. We have a lot of expertise, and we need to draw on all of that to understand our Members' needs for the future.

What are your hopes for the charity?

The power of technology is increasing as is the complexity of injuries. We need to conduct more research to refine what the needs of our Members are likely to become. At the moment I'd equate it to flying a spaceship through an asteroid belt. I know where the Trustees and Members wish to get to – and we will get there – but I just need to keep steering!

So what's the destination?

We need to ensure that we continue to keep our values at the fore. Our values are care, putting Members' needs first, sharing their stories, striving to learn more, offering support and guidance, and being experts on living with limb loss. If, in time, Members say we are still their support mechanism of choice for that, we will have succeeded.

BARRY'S CAREER

- 1959** Born
- 1978** Joined RMA Sandhurst
- 1980** Tour of Northern Ireland
- 2000** Tour of Kosovo
- 2001** Work in Sierra Leone with the UN
- 2003** Tour of Iraq
- 2007-10** Tours of Afghanistan
- 2010-14** Canada Defence Adviser
- 2014** Becomes BLESMA Chief Executive

“Our values are care, putting Members’ needs first, sharing their stories, striving to learn more, offering support and guidance, and being experts on living with limb loss”





Sue Charlesworth



Barry Le Grys



Brian Chenier



Tony Harris

A weekend to remember

This year's Members' Weekend followed a new format but it was still the same roaring success. If you didn't go, here's what you missed...

Members from as far afield as Glasgow and Cornwall came together with residents from the Blackpool Home to make the journey to Leicester in mid-May for the annual Members' Weekend.

The event was an opportunity for Members to get together, enjoy each other's company, exchange ideas and catch up with what has been going on in the BLESMA world over the last 12 months. This was the first time the gathering has been held separately from the Annual General Meeting, but the programme contained some familiar elements, including an Act of Remembrance which this year was conducted by Reverend Duncan Weaver CF.

The event was held on 17 and 18 May, with the first afternoon being taken up with presentations on BLESMA's work. The event began with a whistle-stop tour of 2013 and the changes that BLESMA

has experienced over the last 12 months, including the retirement of Jerome Church and the appointment of Barry Le Grys as Chief Executive (turn to page 08 for an interview with Barry). This was followed by a brief financial overview, the highlights from the activities programme and an insight into the strategic plan.

The keynote was delivered by Brian Chenier, BSO (Prosthetics) and John Francis BSO (Projects). They spoke about



Sam Fitzgerald

their work supporting Members in key areas such as accompanying them to Limb Centre appointments, participation in service specification and policy development with colleagues in the Department of Health and NHS (England), liaison with the Defence Recovery Capability in supporting those who are making the transition from the military to Civvy Street, the work with the Veterans Prosthetics Panel, an update on developments in prosthetic technology, and current research projects in prosthetics, phantom pain and socket technology.

INSIGHTS FROM THE EXPERTS

Brian and John were joined by Alison Treadgold, Armed Forces and Veterans Lead NHS England and Chair of the Veterans Prosthetics Panel and Sue Charlesworth Ops Director of Preston DSC and Chair NHS Centre Managers' Forum who spoke about their work.

Many members took the opportunity to ask questions about the availability of Murrison funding post-April 2015 and the distribution of the current funding, particularly in reference to what has been spent on prosthetics and upgrading facilities. Sue spoke about the impact of the Murrison funding on the work of Preston DSC and the initiatives they have put in place to improve the service they deliver to veterans.

Later in the day Prarthana Rao, the Communications Lead, put in a plea for

BLESMA's show stoppers

The Members who are wowing audiences nationwide on p20



Steve Gill



Cedric Delves and Stuart Riley



The Chilwell Military Wives Choir perform for Members



Cedric Delves and Scott Blaney

Members to share their stories. This is the most powerful tool we have to inform people about the charity's work. By way of an example Tony Harris spoke about his involvement in the Race2Recovery project. Team Founder, BLESMA Member and Trustee, Tony spoke about his injuries and what motivated him to participate. His humorous delivery and inspiring anecdotes held the audience enthralled.

BACK TO BUSINESS

It was then back to business with the final presentation of the day from Heather Nicholson, Director of Membership Services, who posed the question; 'What does being connected mean to you?' In explaining how BLESMA Members are connected to each other, to their Support Officers, and to external partners who deliver support, Heather gave an overview of the work of the Membership Services team over the last 12 months.

Saturday evening was spent enjoying dinner and the awards ceremony before a short concert by the Chilwell Military Wives Choir. Socialising went on into the small hours – for some anyway!

Sunday morning saw everyone gather to hear about the Activities Programme, to learn more about the sports that Members enjoy and to chat with staff. Everyone who attended was given the chance to leave feedback so HQ can tailor future events.

There will be more about the Members' Weekend in the next Members' Bulletin.

BRANCH NEWS GREAT YARMOUTH AND LOWESTOFT

RECENTLY I RECEIVED A CALL QUITE OUT OF THE BLUE TO ASK IF A representative of the Branch would come along to the Beccles Indoor Bowls Club. Always happy to oblige, our Chairman Ron Gill and myself went along. What a fantastic afternoon we had chatting and drinking tea while watching the ladies play bowls. At the tenth end Christine, the Ladies Club President, called for attention. Ron was asked to stand and he was presented with a cheque for £1,500. After thanking the ladies for all their hard work in raising such a generous amount I eventually managed to talk everyone into having their photo taken (see below)!

Thanks once again must go to the Beccles Indoor Bowls Club Ladies Section for thinking of BLESMA in their fundraising efforts.

Bob Monkhouse



In the spotlight

PRARTHANA RAO AND THE BLESMA COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



“
OUR MAIN CHALLENGE IS THE AWARENESS AND THE VISIBILITY OF THE BLESMA ‘BRAND’ TO THE AVERAGE PERSON ON THE STREET
”

Prarthana joined BLESMA in January 2013. Her PR career spans the commercial and voluntary sectors, and she has previously specialised in celebrity PR, working with Team GB cyclists Bradley Wiggins, Chris Boardman and Joanna Rowsell.

“I was brought in as the first member of the Communications Team. I soon realised that BLESMA’s biggest challenge was not the military community, which held the charity in the highest regard. It wasn’t the camaraderie or sense of fellowship amongst the Members, which must be experienced to be believed, the number of loyal supporters or the unparalleled membership services on offer. The biggest hurdle was, and continues to be, the awareness and visibility of the BLESMA ‘brand’ to the average person on the street.

“You will most likely have seen the recent facelifts to BLESMA communications. Two key examples are the new website launched in July 2013 and, of course, the metamorphosis of the BLESMAG into the more modern looking BLESMA Magazine. Fully aware that raising an organisation’s profile is not a one-person job a team soon grew to include experts in various spheres. As a media relations professional with a passion and a proven knack for achieving visibility, I hope to take BLESMA’s communication to new levels. Besides myself, the Communications Team consists of Media and Communications Executive Bryony Stevens, Digital Media Officer Nick Tuck and, most recently, PR consultant Stuart Higgins.

“A member of the Army Reserve, Bryony brings a fresh perspective to publicising fundraising efforts and is in the process of building a bank of Member case studies to help tell the BLESMA story better. Her recent successes include publicity for BLESMA in *The Daily Telegraph*, *ITV Meridian* and on BBC radio.

“Nick has improved BLESMA’s digital and social media presence remarkably since he joined and has already increased BLESMA’s Twitter followers by more than 2,000 in just six months. A recent addition to the team, Stuart is a former editor of *The Sun*

newspaper. He effectively gives the team the ability to identify the key focus to drive a media campaign. Together the Communications Team has an insatiable appetite to creatively engage the public consciousness. Here are just a few of the projects we are working on...

RAISING AWARENESS

“There are more than 2,000 Armed Forces charities in the UK so it’s vital to differentiate ourselves. We are working towards positioning BLESMA as one of the oldest military charities, empowering injured veterans to lead independent and fulfilling lives since WWI. Many are unaware of our heritage or that we are one of the oldest charities specialising in limb loss. The aim is to create messaging which grounds us firmly in history and reinstates our relevance with soldiers who might require our support for the next 80 years.”

CELEBRITY PR

“Approaching celebrities for their backing and support is relatively new to us. Help from a well-known figure can give access to his or her supporters. Recent additions to BLESMA’s supporter portfolio include HM The Queen’s sculptress Frances Segelman, journalist Anne Diamond, actress Belinda Stewart-Wilson and paracyclist Jon-Allan Butterworth.”

GOT A STORY? GET IN TOUCH

“If you have a story we want to hear from you. Dealing with the media through us will ensure your interests are safeguarded. The Communications Team at HQ can support you with advice on the most suitable form of publicity for your event. This could be a press release, a piece in this magazine or our website, or through social media. And if you find the prospect of a media interview daunting we can help with some training.

For tips, techniques and advice on PR and how you can make it work for you, as well as contact details for Prarthana and her Communications Team, turn to p32

BLESMA set to put family first

Charity will play a pivotal role in a new partnership set up to conduct comprehensive research into how limb loss affects amputees' families

FINE DISPLAY OF PADDLE POWER

Jon Wight and Luke Harding have raised almost £1,500 for BLESMA by taking part in this year's Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race.

Starting in Devizes, Wiltshire on Saturday 19 April at 7am, the pair paddled non-stop to Westminster, supported by a crew that met them periodically with food and hot drinks. The team completed the 125-mile course in 28 hours and 23 minutes.

Out of the 200-or-so boats that started the race, more than a quarter failed to finish.

"The race has been linked with the Armed Forces for decades and it just felt right that we raised money for this incredibly impressive charity," said Jon. "We had to contend with 15mph headwinds and temperatures that dropped as low as 3°C overnight. We fell in the water four times but the thought of empowering injured veterans kept us going through the cold and the wet!"

Annette Hall, BLESMA's Head of Fundraising said: "There was a fantastic effort by all involved in making sure the guys were supported along the way so they could complete this challenging event. A massive well done to Luke and Jon in raising vital funds for our wounded Service men and women, and a big thank you from everyone at BLESMA!"



Photograph: Andy Bate

BLESMA has announced a new partnership with the Veterans and Families Institute (VFI) at Anglia Ruskin University.

The charity has commissioned the VFI to look at the academic evidence relating to the impact of limb loss on families, with a particular focus on how families cope and what support is considered effective.

The first stage in this piece of work is a thorough review of all the academic literature published to date. The partnership will be looking at literature not just from the UK but from across the world, and will consider academic papers relating to civilians as well as those that relate to Service and ex-Service personnel.

"The exercise will help BLESMA identify the research that focuses on the impact of limb loss on families and, importantly, will help to unearth any gaps in that knowledge," said Heather Nicholson, Director of Membership Services. "We have also asked the VFI to consider any relevant non-academic literature such as family-orientated articles in previous

issues of BLESMA Magazine. We anticipate that the VFI will have finished the review by the end of the summer and, after having briefed BLESMA on its findings, it will formally launch its findings at the British Psychological Society Veterans Conference in November."

The VFI has been able to fund two post-graduate students who are employed on this important piece of work but your help is still needed. If you have written or published any material on the subject of how your limb loss has affected your family or relationships the VFI review would like to hear from you.

Similarly, research and the continued use of the best and most up-to-date evidence are really important to the work of BLESMA. To this end the partnership is interested in identifying any Members who would be willing to talk to researchers about their experiences.

For more information or to volunteer contact the principal investigator Matt Fossey on matt.fossey@anglia.ac.uk



HELP US TO IMPROVE YOUR MAGAZINE

What do you think of this issue of BLESMA Magazine? Write to us at editor@blesma.org and let us know. Tell us what subjects you would like to see covered in the next issue so that we can constantly improve your magazine.



Clockwise from above: BLESMA Week begins at the Cinema Museum; the Blackpool Home Garden Party; Frances Segelman and Alex Stringer



BLESMA Week

Inaugural BLESMA Week is a success

The first dedicated BLESMA Week, a fundraising initiative organised by the Association, took place in June. BLESMA Week opened on Monday 2 June at the Cinema Museum in London with a screening of clips from the historic film *Reach for the Sky*. This was followed by a Garden Party at the Blackpool Home on Tuesday, and on Wednesday renowned sculptress Frances Segelman produced a sculpture of BLESMA Member Alex Stringer in front of a small audience.

REACH FOR THE SKY

A range of Members, supporters and volunteers were invited to a reception to launch BLESMA Week that included the screening of clips from *Reach for the Sky*. The 1956 film is the true story of WWII pilot, amputee and BLESMA Member and Trustee Douglas Bader. One of the lead actors, Muriel Pavlow, attended the event along with BLESMA Member Sam Gallop, who flew fighters in WWII and spoke movingly in support of BLESMA.

BLACKPOOL GARDEN PARTY

Almost 300 people attended Blackpool Home's annual Garden Party on Tuesday 3 June. "The party was an opportunity for friends to meet and swap stories," said Jacqui Longden, the Home's manager.

"Now in its twelfth year, the Garden Party had two very special reasons to celebrate in 2014; not only was it the first to be held in support of BLESMA Week but this year also marks the Home's 65th anniversary."

This year's event was attended by the Mayors of three local boroughs as well as senior Army personnel from the local Barracks in Preston, with entertainment supplied by the Royal Artillery Lancashire Volunteers Band.

FRANCES SEGELMAN

On Wednesday 4 June, the sculptress to HM The Queen and strong BLESMA supporter Frances Segelman opened her home to a select audience as she sculpted BLESMA Member Alex Stringer.

"Frances saw Alex on the cover of *The Sunday Times Magazine* and contacted us asking if she could sculpt him," said BLESMA's Communications Lead Prarthana Rao. "She kindly opened her home to 70 people who were able to watch her at work. Frances created a sculpture of Alex which was near-finished in two hours – a treat to witness!"

Frances will donate the piece to Alex when she has applied the finishing touches.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

As well as these 'official' engagements, volunteers up and down the country put on their own events to raise money and increase awareness of the charity.

John Philips, for example, held several events in and around Wiltshire including charity collections at his local Tesco and Asda stores. John, son of BLESMA member Andy Philips, also organised a stand at the Wiltshire Armed Forces Day in late June.

Elsewhere, Laura Creighton and her team at the Amputee Rehabilitation Centre at the Royal Derby Hospital organised several fundraising events including a bake sale for hospital staff and visitors.

"Our first ever BLESMA Week proved to be a huge success," said Annette Hall, BLESMA's Head of Fundraising. "We sent out more than 800 letters to supporters and volunteers asking them to get involved

and hundreds responded asking for a fundraising pack. This is definitely the start of what will become an annual celebration – the first week of June will now always be known as BLESMA Week."

For fundraising advice email communityadmin@blesma.org or call 020 8548 1124



BLESMA's brand new look

A group consisting of BLESMA Trustees, staff and Members have been working closely with an external creative agency for the last nine months on a project to rebrand the Association.

Their brief was to refresh the BLESMA brand to ensure the Association continues to be seen as dynamic, forward-thinking and purposeful in the coming years, as well as appealing to an increasingly

younger membership demographic. The working group was given strict parameters to adhere to. The Association's name and strapline, for example, were not to be changed, while the Tri-Service colours needed to be incorporated in the new logo.

The exercise is nearly complete, with a new logo (pictured) having been recently signed off by the Board of Trustees.

"The stencil font represents the Armed

Forces and gives a 'fractured yet whole' symbology," said Ian Waller, BLESMA's Operations Director. "The font speaks of dependability, respectability and gravitas while the Tri-Service colours nod to our military history and add a sense of fun and lightheartedness that runs through all that BLESMA holds dear."

More information on the rebranding and use of the new logo will be available soon.



SIX THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEW LOGO

1 The stencil font reinforces the roots that BLESMA has in the Armed Forces.

2 The individual elements of the logo break down into simple shapes. They represent the limbs and joints of the human body.

3 The different shapes suggest individual elements can be removed or replaced, yet the parts come together to create BLESMA.

4 The colours represent the Tri-Services and give continuity with the current BLESMA logo.

5 The blocked, heavy shape of the letters represents the solid foundations of the organisation.

6 The strapline 'The Limbless Veterans' is written in a classic serif font to represent BLESMA's proud history.

A vital symbol of our support

BLESMA Chief Executive Barry Le Gry signed the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the Association at the Members' Weekend in May (see story on p10).

The Armed Forces Covenant, published in May 2011, sets out the relationship between the nation, the government and the Armed Forces.

"The government has a duty to defend its people. The Armed Forces do that, risking injury and putting their lives on the line," said Ian Waller, BLESMA's Operations Director. "The nation has a moral obligation in return which states that the Armed Forces deserve respect, support and fair treatment from the community.

"BLESMA is very much committed to supporting the Armed Forces. The Association employs Reservists, actively



Barry Le Gry (left) with Chairman Cedric Delves at the signing of the Covenant

participates in Armed Forces Day and looks after the needs of its Members, all of whom have served, or are related to someone who has served, in the Armed Forces.

"We as an Association are delighted to have signed the Corporate Covenant. It is a public declaration of our commitment that underlines what we, as a charity, have held dear since our inception following WWI."

FISHING FOR COMPLIMENTS

BLESMA's annual fishing competition took place at Revels Fishery near Dorchester on 15 May. Thirteen Members from across the country took part in a hotly-contested affair.

The winner was the person with the heaviest weight of fish. Everyone managed to catch at least one fish, but Andy Derry fared better than everyone by winning the competition with a total weight of 37lb and 6oz from Allan Long (25lb 7oz) and Roger Fullbrook (23lb 13oz). Andy 'did the double' as he also won the prize for the biggest catch of the day (10lb 6oz).

Congratulations must also go to Dave Shenton who won the Visually Impaired Cup and to Alan Moore who won the Armless Trophy.

↘ BLESMA BRIEFING

How you can make a real difference to limb centres...

Brian Chenier, BSO (Prosthetics) gives us the lowdown on the latest from the world of prosthetics as well as updates on the Murrison Report and how you can make your voice heard



I have been continuing my visits to NHS Limb Centre and Disablement Service Centres over the last few months, and have spent time in Sheffield, Leeds, Cambridge and Nottingham as well as making return visits to centres in Norwich and Roehampton with Members. I have also ventured across into Wales and visited centres in Swansea and Cardiff.

“I was privileged to be invited to speak at the joint National Prosthetic Centre Managers Association/ BHTA conference in Crewe in May. My presentation was a timely chance to remind those responsible for providing prosthetic services of the reason BLESMA was formed in the years following WWI. As I made my presentation, highlighting the problems faced by many veterans of both World Wars it struck me how significant our work still is today. So much has changed in the provision of prosthetics, but the need to maintain a clear focus on meeting our Members’ needs is still a key principle in our continued campaigning.

“I also attended the PACE Rehabilitation ‘Road to Recovery’ conference in London in May. The event was a great opportunity to meet a number of people working in amputee rehabilitation and to see new technology in action. It was great to see that two of the key participants, Nathan Cumberland and Andy Garthwaite (pictured) were BLESMA Members. They spoke about their experiences with state-of-the-art prosthetics. Nathan gave a demonstration and talked about life with the Genium X3 and Andy spoke about his journey and steep learning curve with Targeted Muscle Re-innervation (featured in a previous issue). This was also a chance to see the BiOM Power ankle and Bartlett Tendon Knee, an excellent device for high-activity, multi-terrain bike riders.

As part of the £15 million pound investment by the Government for enhanced prosthetic services and components for eligible veterans, a £1m grant has

been released for use in centres not identified as Enhanced Veterans Centres (of which there are nine).

This cash injection will be divided between the remaining 25 centres through a bidding process. Centre managers will be asked to provide a plan of how they would use a fair share of that funding to benefit veterans and other patients. The money is nonrecurrent and should be spent on infrastructure or equipment, not staff or components. An example of where this money could be spent is in providing ‘test tracks’ of multi-terrain surfaces where all patients can try out their limbs in realistic situations (see the feature on the Specialist Rehabilitation Service in Leeds on p26).

Another example might be to invest in CAD/CAM technology which could then be linked to a Carver system to make sockets either on-site or at a nearby centre. Managers will be asked to consult with user groups and demonstrate how this has been done. Increased access to gym and physiotherapy items might also be an area for investment. You know best what your centre needs, so please talk to your centre manager and make your voice heard.

PROSTHETIC CENTRE USER GROUPS

One of the constant themes I hear as I travel around the country to attend numerous meetings is the term ‘Patient Voice’. This is an area where you can really make a difference locally to your service. I would encourage anyone who can spare a few hours a month to do just that. You may find that your local centre doesn’t have an active User Group at the moment and this might be an opportunity to set one up. User Groups can also help inform policy debate and encourage real changes that matter to you – the patient.

If you have a question on anything to do with prosthetics contact Brian on 020 8548 7080 or email him on bsoprosthetics@blesma.org



MUCH HAS CHANGED, BUT THE NEED TO FOCUS ON MEETING MEMBERS’ NEEDS IS STILL A KEY PRINCIPLE IN OUR CONTINUED CAMPAIGN





IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Charley Streather came up with the idea of a Photography Week in 2012 and it has since evolved to become a key part of BLESMA's offer. Find out how in the next issue.

HELP SET A NEW WORLD RECORD

Richard Hunt has taken the difficult decision to postpone his record-breaking attempt to paddle around the coast of Britain until 2015.

The 43-year-old BLESMA Member began his attempt this April but had to stop after 11 days when his shore team decided they could no longer support him.

"It is frustrating, especially as I was comfortable paddling, but I need a shore team to help me get the kayak in and out of the water, and to keep track of me," he said. Richard plans to paddle 2,300 miles over six months in an attempt to raise between £20,000 and £50,000 for BLESMA, and in the process beat the current solo kayak record of 2,010 miles.

To find out more about helping out go to www.thegreatpaddleround.co.uk

Those we have lost

Those who have passed away between January and April 2014. May they rest in peace.

Adams G	RE	HQ	03/02/2014
Allen J	RN	Portsmouth	13/04/2014
Allkins I	REME	HQ	12/04/2014
Baldwin K	RCS	HQ	27/02/2014
Barrowclough D	RA	Blackpool Home (Blackpool)	30/03/2014
Cragg J	Border	HQ (Rochdale)	02/03/2014
Eeles D	RN	HQ (Bucks)	04/04/2014
Ferguson J	RASC	HQ (Bucks)	22/04/2014
Gardiner I	Indian Army	HQ (Reading)	01/02/2014
Harman K	RN	HQ	03/03/2014
Harrison E	RN	Blackpool Home (Southampton)	26/04/2014
Howells W	RASC/RCT	HQ	25/03/2014
Innes D	RAF	HQ	04/01/2014
Jackson W	RMP	HQ	27/01/2014
John S	Welch	HQ	01/02/2014
Jones R	RGJ/RMP	HQ	12/04/2014
Lofstedt Mrs S	ATS	Blackpool Home (Southampton)	05/03/2014
Nicolas J	RE/Royal Corps TPT	HQ	March 2014
Purcocks G	Staffs/Worcs	HQ	09/02/2014
Reid D	RAF	HQ	03/01/2014
Reynolds M	RN	HQ	11/02/2014
Rich R	RASC	HQ (Dartford)	13/03/2014
Savage D	RE	Southampton	28/02/2014
Smith J	Dragoon Gds/CMP	HQ (Sheffield)	20/03/2014
Stokes A	Merchant Navy	HQ	March 2014
Tyson J	Seaforth Highlanders	HQ	March 2014
Wright C	RAF	HQ	17/02/2014
Young Miss J	RAF	HQ	04/03/2014
Young R	Sussex	HQ	31/03/2014

INBOX

Word from our inbox. Get in touch at editor@blesma.org

Charlie Radclyffe believes it's time BLESMA reviewed its membership policy



Time for BLESMA to change

Ex-Service men and women with a spinal cord injury have many similar difficulties in life as less-able double amputees. Both groups often use a wheelchair, require similar modifications at home and face similar challenges when it comes to finding work and living a life of quality and dignity. More importantly, they have all served their country and are now facing an additional hardship in life due to their disability.

I can understand that BLESMA was originally set up to support those who had lost a limb in Service. I suspect this was then extended to those losing a limb post-Service. More recently, those suffering the loss of use of a limb in Service, like myself, were entitled to join. It now seems fair and right to extend membership to those who have lost the use of their limbs post-Service.

People discuss the concept of how to tackle the backdating of membership. With the current constitution the only new LOULs who can join the charity are those either injured from this moment forward or those discovering that their old Service injury enables them to join. Hence the charity must be receiving very few LOUL applications. I strongly suspect that the number of in-Service amputees applying to join is also rapidly declining with our preparing to leave Afghanistan. Surely, with the number of new Members in decline,

combined with the passing away of many of our WWII Members, BLESMA's total membership must be falling.

I believe there are some 100 to 150 post-Service LOULs individuals, which in the scheme of BLESMA's total membership of 5,000 to 6,000 is a tiny percentage.

But really, for me, it comes down to the old military question of 'Does it feel fair and right?' The current situation, in my opinion, fails this military litmus test.

Just imagine two guys talking in the pub:

"There's this military charity that helps soldiers who got injured in Afghanistan and elsewhere."

"Oh really? Great!"

"And now they also help those who lost the use of their limbs in Afghanistan and elsewhere."

"Oh really, even better!"

"And they even help those who lost a limb after leaving the military:"

"Wow, they sound amazing! And they must help those who lost the use of their limbs post-Service too..."

"Well, erm, this is awkward, but no. Those individuals are not considered possible Members. They served their country and all but, you know, they weren't injured *whilst* serving Queen and Country."

"Yes, but neither were the post-Service amputees. I'm confused. This seems like a huge injustice. And surely it's much more a question of whether they have served their country along with the fact that they now have a limb issue. It feels like the charity should either help only those injured in Service or all those with applicable injuries. Can you tell me what the charity's name is?"

"The British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association."

"So what's the issue? Even the charity name doesn't suggest all their Members were injured in Service!"

I strongly believe that post-Service LOULs should be able to join BLESMA.

Charlie Radclyffe, HQ Branch

THANKS TO EVERYONE INVOLVED IN WIDOWS' WEEK

I thought you and the readers might like to hear about the Widows' Week holiday I have just returned from. I had just spent 14 weeks in hospital when my son, Andy, encouraged me to book it. What a great time I had! I don't belong to the Birmingham area/Branch but after the week I have just had how I wish I did!

The programme on offer was full of the things I used to long to do. On one day, for example, we went to the top of Blackpool Tower and stood on the glass floor. The staff in the Home were wonderful and very helpful, and the food was out of this world – I'm now wondering why I have not been before! I met a lovely lady during the week who I will stay friends with in the future, and I got back in touch with another lady who I'd met at the Christmas party. I could go on and on singing their praises. Thanks once again to all involved in organising the fantastic week.

Marjorie Spencer



Got a story you want to share?

Email editor@blesma.org and we'll put it in the magazine



I had a good spin, handling the controls – luckily, one's prosthetics can operate the steering pedals in the plane without too much difficulty! The only time I was a bit nervous was when I asked how we would land if the engine stopped. Raymond proceeded to demonstrate (without actually touching down in a field or stopping the engine).

I had to land the plane, again with very precise instructions – all very exciting. I think I must have passed muster as a future date was made.

Sara was amused to see me emerging from the plane with a very large grin on my face. Unfortunately, the winter weather cancelled several further flights, so as I write this I have only had two more lessons since, which were also great fun but more serious instruction is now taking place.

The old brain has had to get used to doing homework again in the form of *The Microlight Pilot's Handbook*. This includes the principles of flight, which has shown me a new vocabulary with words and terms such as aerofoil section, angle of attack, camber, leading edge and many more. One has to learn what actually makes the plane fly and the effect of the sundry controls. There's quite a lot to take in!

If I progress (still a big 'If!') it will probably take me about two years to be able to fly solo. This already seems like a somewhat daunting prospect, but I am sure it will continue to be great fun.

Sandy Milne, Dorset

It's never too late to learn

I am 85 years of age, a double amputee and am learning to fly. The idea was suggested at a chance meeting with a pilot. Was it a mad idea? Not a bit of it. It has turned out to be great fun. If you can't walk very well and driving a car is a problem why not become a pilot?

With some trepidation, driven by my wife Sara, I arrived at Old Sarum Airfield just north of Salisbury and was met by my instructor, Raymond. He took me out to a very trim looking small plane. It was a two-seater, high-wing monoplane, which was easy to get into, not having to climb up. It is technically classed as a Microlight, which means it has a weight limit (so I'll have to watch those sticky

toffee puddings from now on!) Raymond wanted to know what skills I had up my sleeve. I somewhat lamely said "riding horses" (before I lost my legs). I suppose a well-trained thoroughbred responds to controls somewhat like a plane, and both do not always behave as you might expect!

I thought we would just go up for a jolly with Raymond doing the flying. Not a bit of it! He made me taxi to take off and, after a lengthy briefing and precise instructions, I found myself having to take off (backed up by dual controls). Our Labrador, watching with Sara, was upset to see me disappear and tried to jump the perimeter fence after me.

WAR WIDOW'S PENSION

I saw, with interest, the article on potential BLESMA Members from the past in the last issue of BLESMA Magazine.

I think Adrian Carton de Wiart, who was a Lieutenant General, actually was a BLESMA Member. He was also the British Representative to the Polish Government in 1939 but had to leave quickly.

When I was Assistant General Secretary, I remember dealing with his widow who lived in Eire. She was a post-retirement wife (his third, I believe) and a BLESMA Widow. She received no Service pension (as pre-78 post-retirement marriage) but had a War Widows pension. I know we helped her regularly with grants towards her winter fuel as she lived in a draughty pile. Readers might also be interested in a snippet in

relation to our most famous non-Member, Lord Nelson. In about 2003, Channel 4 called me as they were in the process of filming two naval programmes. One called *Rum, Bu***y and the Lash* and the other was on Nelson's surgeon at the Battle of Trafalgar. They wanted a Lord Nelson look-alike. We were able to help and Member Robert Linge got the job.

Stephen Coltman

THE REALITY OF PHANTOM PAIN

I was very interested to read the article on phantom nerve pain in a recent issue. My experience of the phantom dates back to March 1945. On the eighth of that month I lost my right foot to a device, and after



attention by Canadian medics I was put in a very large building with a large number of other casualties. The next stop was

Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot where I was met by a rather elderly nurse who, when I said about the nerves, informed me that I would have them for the rest of my life. She was right. Over the years several pain clinics have tried with no avail to help. One effort in particular stands out in 1987, when the injection left me on crutches for 13 weeks.

I was able to keep working until I was 62 and so far have been lucky enough to have had 30 years retirement and 64 years of happy marriage. Well done Bette Rose.

Ron Rose



Life in *theatre*

A group of soldiers have been wowing audiences across the country with their real-life stories of courage. For them, 'break a leg' just doesn't come close...

Words: Nick Moore **Pictures:** Rankin, Cylla von Tiedemann

Going into combat is easier than going on stage," laughs Cassidy Little, a Royal Marine-turned-actor. "You've got to stay alive when you're under fire but it doesn't matter if anyone likes you or not! The first 50 or 60 times I got up on stage, it was very nerve wracking."

Cassidy is talking about his lead role in *The Two Worlds of Charlie F* – a unique collaboration between the Ministry of Defence and the Theatre Royal, London. The stage and the Armed Forces may seem unlikely bedfellows – with military culture at odds with the sensitivity of the arts – but plays are about stories, and few people have more fascinating tales to tell than those who've seen active service. *The Two Worlds of Charlie F* has tapped into this – both in terms of audience approval and rehabilitating those involved.

The project was conceived by theatre producer Alice Driver after a chance meeting. "I met a surgeon in Birmingham who introduced me to a military patient," she explains. "He told me that when you get injured you lose your purpose but you also lose your voice. I thought it made sense to create the first theatre

recovery project for wounded, injured and sick service personnel to give them their voices back. The MoD generally uses sport and adventure training for rehab, but with the financial backing of the Royal British Legion, we persuaded them that this could work, too."

The MoD allowed the theatre company to contact wounded soldiers, including BLESMA Members, which led to workshops and interviews with military personnel who had all been in Afghanistan. This, in turn, led to a play being written by the award-winning poet and playwright Owen Sheers, and created through a partnership between The Theatre Royal Haymarket Masterclass Trust, The Royal British Legion and Defence Recovery Capability.

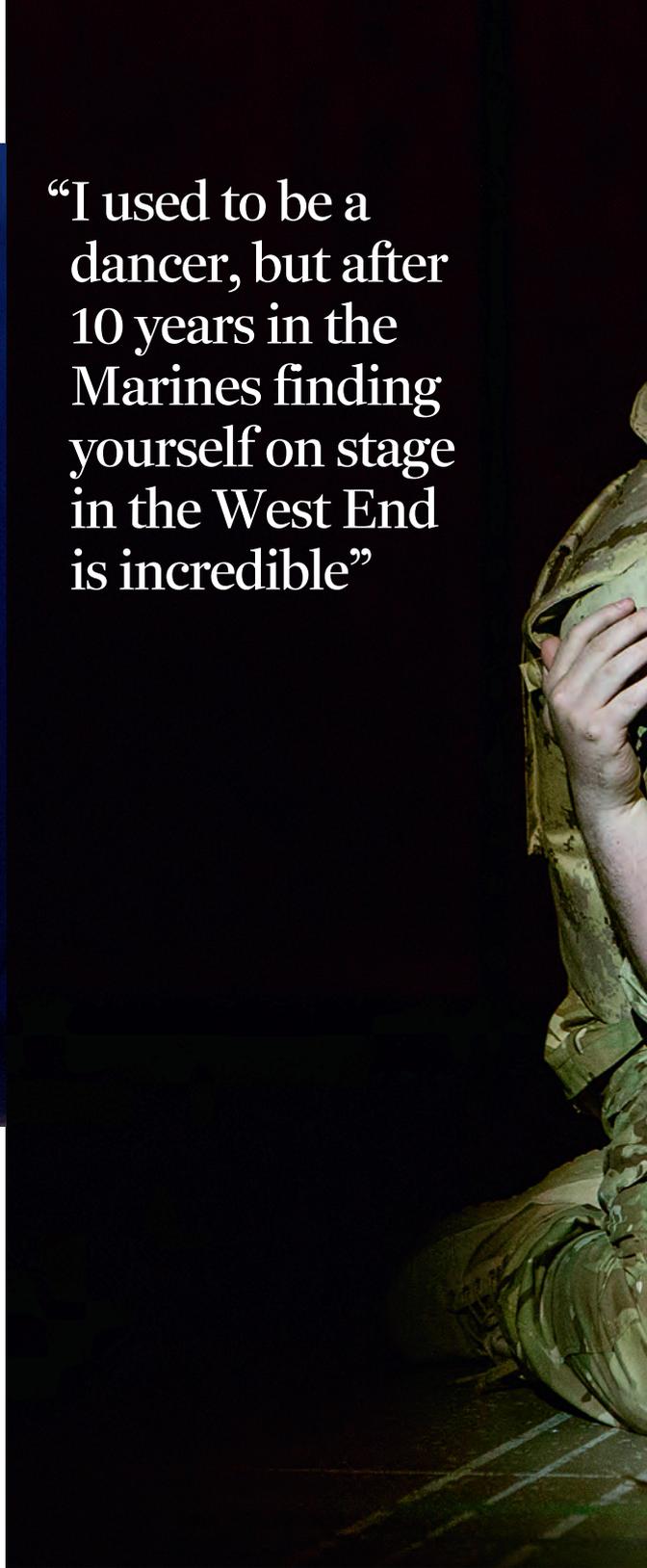
"Ray Winstone, who is a patron of the play, helped with the recruiting," says Alice. "If I stood up in front of a bunch of squaddies and said that theatre was cool I might not get a great reaction, but we knew Ray would. He helped break down barriers and open people's eyes to the power of stage – it overcame a lot of scepticism. Ray was hugely supportive. Renowned director Trevor Nunn also came in to oversee the



Members of the cast of the inspiring play *The Two Worlds of Charlie F*



“I used to be a dancer, but after 10 years in the Marines finding yourself on stage in the West End is incredible”



project, which ensured this was going to be a world-class production in a world-class theatre.”

It certainly worked. “I only went along to keep my mate company – I didn’t want to be in it,” says Dan Shaw, 23, from Milton Keynes, who lost both his legs in an IED explosion in 2009 while serving with The Rifles. “Now I have a part based on my experiences and I love every minute. I’m trying to pursue acting as a career now and I’ve even got an agent.”

After drawing on the stories of Dan, Cassidy and around 60 other injured servicemen and women, Owen Sheers wrote *The Two Worlds Of Charlie F*. “It is based on the true stories and experiences of the soldiers, their families and caregivers,” says Alice. “We have soldiers acting parts, telling us about their experiences, aided by professional actors. Everyone who volunteered with the project was used somewhere. If they weren’t acting, they were working backstage or helping with the press.”

SETTING THE SCENE FOR RECOVERY

“It was life-changing for everyone,” Alice continues, “the play gives the guys an opportunity to be listened to. So many injured soldiers get frustrated because they feel as though they’ve been forgotten. This play allows people to hear what’s going on. It also makes the guys part of a team again, it helps with confidence and self-esteem, it gives them a purpose and a goal.”

The Two Worlds of Charlie F examines life before, during and after injury; it is a soldier’s view of service, injury and recovery. Moving from Afghanistan, through the dream world of morphine-induced hallucinations

to the physio rooms of Headley Court, it explores the consequences of being wounded, both physical and psychological – and its effects on others as the soldiers fight to win a new battle at home. “The professional actors in the show act, while the soldiers tell their stories,” says Alice. “The characters are on stage with real injuries – it couldn’t get more powerful.”

The play is personal and moving, but it also has a huge amount of humour and humanity. “It’s raw, it’s poignant, it’s funny,” says Alice. “It tells the public a story we don’t often hear about. We hear about deaths, but not the wounded. It is not political. Regardless of how you feel about war, this story is inspiring. It’s about joining the biggest regiment, the regiment of the wounded, who fight their battle in sitting rooms and



their own minds every day. It normalises disability in the way that the Paralympics did.”

Cassidy Little, 32, an ex-Royal Marine who plays lead character Corporal Charlie Fowler, was recruited for the part at Headley Court just two months after his 2011 IED injury in Afghanistan. “I wasn’t even weight-bearing at the time, but I knew I needed something to occupy my mind. I have an arts background and used to be a dancer, but after 10 years in the Marines, finding yourself on stage in the West End is incredible.

“Doing this has helped all of us, there’s no doubt about that,” he adds. “The play gives an insight into the secret world of what it means to be a soldier one day, a casualty the next, and a civilian the day after that. The evolution is cathartic. The more you explore what

has happened to you, the better off you are and the better you explore the dark caverns of your mind that are created by the trauma you’ve gone through. This has got me closer to the person I was before my injury.”

Fellow cast member Darren Swift, 48, who lost both legs in a Northern Ireland terrorist attack in 1982 agrees: “It’s a great play, and it’s all about us and our experiences, so it has helped me a lot. I’ve loved being involved and the way it shows our journeys back to Civvy Street is great.”

Dan Shaw agrees: “My character is based pretty much 100% on what happened to me, so it’s nice to be able to tell my story and educate the audience.”

The play was first performed in January 2012 at two charity fundraising evenings at the Theatre Royal

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DARREN SWIFT

48, lives in the Lake District with his wife and daughter. He plays several different parts in the play

Tell us about your injury...

I joined the Royal Green Jackets in 1982. On my third tour of Northern Ireland I was in a terrorist attack and lost my legs.

You started acting soon afterwards...

My dad lived near Pinewood Studios and I did some extras work. I played people who got blown up in films, scary monsters, that kind of thing. I enjoyed it a lot.

And then you got a decent part in a play...

I toured with the National Theatre's version of *Travelling Lights*, which was great. Doing that led to me getting into this play.

How much have BLESMA helped you?

Loads. I've been involved for years and I've done pretty much everything; skiing, snowboarding, canoeing, rafting, skydiving, climbing, the lot!

DAN SHAW

23, lives in London. He plays Rifleman Leroy Jenkins

How did you get injured?

I lost my legs to an IED in 2009 going to the aid of an injured colleague. I tell the full story in the play – the character is basically me with a different name. It's been great to share what happened to me with an audience, educating people and telling an important story.

How has being involved helped you?

I am more outgoing and confident, and have more energy now. Going on stage is tough, even compared to military action!

How helpful have BLESMA been?

Having being injured quite recently and then involved with the play, I've not had a chance to get involved with BLESMA yet. But I am a Member and I will do some activities in the future. It's a great charity.



Haymarket, followed by a small tour. It was a huge success by any measure: it won the Amnesty International Award for Freedom of Expression 2012, got five star reviews across the board and was even featured on an Alan Yentob BBC documentary. "I am so proud and overwhelmed," said Ray Winstone afterwards. "It is the most moving play I've seen for a long time. The public should get behind this and be part of something unforgettable."

Two of the people in the final audience were producers Garry McQuinn and Amanda Faber who were invited by the team to launch the second run of the play. This UK tour was undertaken earlier this year,

followed by a two-week run at the Princess of Wales Theatre in Toronto, Canada. Alice subsequently helped create an Australian version of the show and the team want to develop productions in America and Canada.

"It was life-changing for the participants, but we never expected the impact it has had on the audiences," she says. "It altered the way people think about these issues. But the primary goal was to help the guys involved, to get them in the right mindset to go on and do whatever they want. Some will act again, which is great, others will go on and do different things. It's a real kick start. I'm a huge fan of all those involved, they are very inspiring. Their attitude is incredible."





Nancy Rhodes has been the Centre Manager at the Specialist Rehabilitation Service at Seacroft Hospital in Leeds for the last 10 years

*“We’re just doing our job;
helping amputees meet
their objectives”*

*The Specialist Rehabilitation Service in Leeds has one simple rule:
the patient's needs always come first, no matter what that takes*

Words: Nick Moore Pictures: Andy Bate



“We try to provide the best care and to do it holistically. We look at the whole person and not just the missing limb”

There was a Paralympian amputee on TV recently who'd had his car stolen with his prosthetics in the back,” says Nancy Rhodes as she takes us around the Specialist Rehabilitation Service at Seacroft Hospital in Leeds. “He'd been learning to use them so he could walk his sister down the aisle. He was upset, so we gave him a call and said we could help.

“He came in at 2pm in his wheelchair the day before the wedding and walked out at 7pm on his new legs. He was so grateful, and got to give his sister away as planned. We got emails about that from all over the world, but we were just doing our job – helping amputees meet their objectives.”

This kind of story abounds as Nancy, the manager of the facility and a whirlwind of Yorkshire energy, introduces us to employees in what is clearly a very happy working environment. There's one core philosophy here: put the patient first, and the Specialist

Rehabilitation Service, which includes prosthetic, orthotic and wheelchair services, has been doing just that for a long time.

Under Nancy's decade-long stewardship, it has become a beacon of best practice, and the kind of place that any amputee – and any BLESMA Member – should feel comfortable visiting to get a top-rate service.

“We provide the best care holistically,” she says. “We look at the whole person and not just the missing limb. Time and again I've heard people say ‘I've lost a leg, not my brain. I want people to take into account that I play golf, or ride a horse, or want to continue with my high-powered job’”

So much so, that managing patients' high expectations is now one of the centre's key challenges. “What patients think they need and what is clinically appropriate are not always the same,” Nancy says. “People see the latest hi-tech components online and think they need them. That's not always

the case but if something is clinically appropriate the team will always try to get the best and most suitable equipment.”

TEN YEARS ON...

According to Nancy, who was head of Neurophysiology before she crossed into management 10 years ago, a patient-centred approach is the key at Leeds.

“We have a dedicated set of professionals who are focused on making every patient's experience the best it can be. Our team has been trained in all the latest techniques for the most up-to-date prosthetics, orthotics and wheelchairs. And they think outside the box to help a patient achieve their goals if a solution is proving difficult.”

To assist with this clinicians now book their own diaries, so if extra time is needed with a patient, it can be accommodated. “We look to spend the appropriate amount of time with each patient, so they don't need



Some patients, including BLESMA Members, travel hundreds of miles to be treated by Nancy's team of specialists

to be brought back to the centre time and time again. Clinicians sometimes have eight or nine patients a day, sometimes they have just two – whatever is right,” says Nancy. “And we make sure we don’t bring patients in cold; we discuss their requirements on the phone first to find out what the issue is beforehand and appoint accordingly. Often parts can be ordered before a patient comes in. There’s nothing more irritating than being brought in and having to start from scratch. It wastes time and money. We are a very efficient centre. Waiting lists are under a week even though we have 3,500 amputees on the books in a very large catchment area.”

Leeds was the first centre in the UK to look at different contract models to become “partners with their service providers,” says Nancy. “We broke the mould of how the NHS works with companies and it saved £800,000 in the first year on invoicing costs alone. It cut out duplication, we moved to

one IT system, we know to the penny what we spend. We have transparency here.”

Not being chosen as one of the nine Murrison centres was very disappointing, and something of a shock to the staff here given that Leeds was the North’s original Ministry of Pensions centre set up to care for the injured and sick from WWI.

“But we carry on the way we always did, providing the best care for our patients,” she adds. “It changes nothing. We have been voted the Best Centre in the UK by the Limbless Association three times, and have won the National UK Lean Award for sharing best practice and ‘lean’ management.”

All this means more time and money for the patients. Lee Entwistle, a BLESMA Member from Accrington who lost his leg above the knee in a bike accident in 2000 says Leeds is “brilliant. There’s a limb centre 10 minutes down my road but I’ve never thought of switching to somewhere more

local – I’d rather do a 180-mile round trip. I’ve been treated so well here,” he says

Patients should never hesitate to ask questions, insists Nancy. “They need to scrutinise our quality of service all the time,” she says. “We encourage that. It’s the only way that we can improve. We are always asking for feedback so that we can continue to improve the service – who else is better placed to comment than our patients?”

For the centre’s military veterans, there is often more support and advice than they think is available on the NHS. “We want to make them aware of just what is available, and we advertise that all over the centre. We have around 60 staff on the prosthetics and orthotics side, and 30 in the wheelchair department, so it is a big resource.

“We have an active User Group and encourage people to sign up. Our psychologist runs group therapy sessions as well as individual sessions and these have been



“A patient had a tattoo on the leg he’d lost, so we got it reproduced on his prosthetic. I put myself in their position and think what I’d want”

well received – last year the User Group wrote and designed some of the literature in our patient information leaflets,” says Nancy.

HELPING BLESMA MEMBERS

“A veteran’s approach can be different from that of other amputees. They can be more gung-ho about their injuries – but others can’t cope so well with the military approach towards recovery and get better results here. One size doesn’t always fit all, and we have had patients who have achieved better results here with a more managed approach.

“Changes in government policy certainly mean that patients know what they’re entitled to. We get some young men who treat their prosthetic limb like a mobile phone and expect an upgrade every time a new model comes out, even though some cost almost £50,000! So sometimes we have to say no. Managing patients’ expectations is the hardest part of the work the team here

have to do and I am always impressed with how the staff manage and help their patients on a daily basis.”

Leeds has had some notable successes with BLESMA Members. “There was one young man who’d been blown up and was understandably struggling to cope. Our psychologist did a lot of work with him and we have made him some fantastic, unique kit. He’s up and walking now and that’s very satisfying, but we knew from the start that progress had to be at his pace.”

There have been light-hearted moments, too. “There was a patient who’d had a tattoo on the leg that he’d lost, so we got the same tattoo reproduced on his prosthesis. Getting it right for patients is very satisfying. I put myself in their position and think about what I’d want. We get loads of cards and thank-yous, some really positive feedback.”

Overall, Leeds is reflective of the great work being done in limb fitting centres

across the country, and BLESMA Members should be reassured that these are fantastic places to seek help, support and advice, whatever their needs may be. From recycling old limbs to the Third World through to showcasing art on the walls painted by amputees with their ‘wrong’ hand, the whole place is inspiring and uplifting.

“I really enjoy working here,” says Nancy. “Our aim is to provide a level of service that is equivalent to that of a private centre – one-on-one time with the clinician, making sure patients have the right amount of time with a clinician, and that they are given accessible appointments.

“I want to be able to offer that on the NHS. It is essential that we listen to, value and understand our patients. I think we are definitely doing that here.”

**Got a question on prosthetic provision?
Call Brian Chenier on 020 8548 7080
or on bsoprothetics@blesma.org**

What to expect at the Leeds Limb Centre

Take a journey through the Leeds centre with Branch Manager Steve Carter



“It’s all about quality of life,” explains Steve Carter (above) who has been working with Nancy for a decade to improve the Leeds centre. “We have military amputees who want legs for hill walking, or to take part in a run, or something waterproof so they can shower with it. And if it’s a valid prescription, and accountable, we will try to get it for them. Anyone can call us and we can take them through the centre.” So what’s on offer...

1 PHONE APPOINTMENT

“We start with a phone call and will allocate each patient a prosthetist. They’ll be booked in and we’ll see if we can get ahead by ordering in parts at this stage. We’ve learned what kind of things get approved by the VPP and can order things early, buying them from NHS budgets and reclaiming the funding to minimise delay.”

2 RECEPTION

“We have an IT system that runs right through the centre, starting at reception. So when a patient comes into the centre, the prosthetist will know straight away and be with them with the minimum delay.”

3 NURSES’ OFFICE

“The nurses’ rooms flow up to the medical room, so it’s logical. We’ll get physical data on a patient’s first visit and the nurse can deal with other health issues at the same time if necessary so that the doctor doesn’t have that on their list. We’ve recently carried out a complete redesign of the patient journey and now it works extremely well. Our clinical nurse can help patients with things like quitting smoking, stump problems, and wound issues. It means the specialists can focus on their areas of expertise.”

4 FITTING ROOMS

“There’s a lot of daylight for proper assessment, and a mixture of open space and private areas for examination, if that’s what you prefer. We have separate men’s, women’s and children’s areas, too.”

5 CASTING ROOM

“There are some examples where plaster casting still works better than laser scanned design, so we offer it. The process takes longer, but for certain shapes of stump it works better, and some patients ask for it, so we oblige.”

6 COMPUTER-AIDED DESIGN ROOM

“Here we laser scan limbs, so that fittings can be made to the precision of 0.001mm, in full conjunction with the patient. We have a laptop and a laser scanner, and so a patient can say ‘my previous socket

irritated me just here’, and we can alter it accordingly.”

7 WORKSHOP

“This is where a team of six experts build and modify limbs – from running blades to bionic equipment. One prosthetist may be sorting out a hi-tech leg via Bluetooth, while another is filing down a bespoke foot. It’s a real mix of old-fashioned craftsmanship and the latest technology and skills.”

8 PHYSIOTHERAPY ROOM

“It has bars for walking, gym equipment, and other ways to assess patients and help maximise their prosthetics. We have an area with gravel, steps and other uneven surfaces to practice on and understand how the prosthetics work in a ‘real environment’. We also have a wheelchair route to teach patients how to use powered chairs outdoors.”



HOW TO...

PR your event

There's no point planning an event if you'll be the only one there to see it happen. Make your hard work work harder with these priceless PR tips from BLESMA's man in the know...



ORGANISING ANY sort of event can be time consuming: there's a huge amount of effort in the preparation, making sure you've got everything in place for it to run

smoothly. But promoting the activity is a completely different challenge. Whether it's a cake sale or an expedition across the Atlantic, there's no point doing it unless people will buy your cakes or sponsor your efforts.

Luckily, BLESMA have hired an expert to help. Stuart Higgins (pictured above) is a former editor of The Sun newspaper. He works with the charity as a PR consultant – helping people across the organisation to maximise the potential of their events, whatever the size.

“Whether you're working on a national, regional or local scale, I can offer tips on how to PR your event,” he says. “We see all kinds of fundraising events, activities and get-togethers happening on behalf of BLESMA, and we don't want all that effort going to waste. Hopefully, this advice can help that hard work work harder.”

Here, Stuart explains some of the tricks of the trade when it comes to promotion, advertising, and making the most of local press and social media while highlighting some pitfalls and common mistakes...

1 INVESTIGATE THE MEDIA

Whatever event you're planning, it will need to be promoted to spread the word as far as possible. Identify the media that you believe best matches your audience – older audiences are more likely to be traditional media ‘consumers’ so target them through local radio and regional newspapers rather than social media. Think about which newspapers have the highest circulations or largest audiences, and remember that radio is still very effective. Be careful not to alienate any rival media organisations, so try to be creative when thinking of different angles



to your story, and try to keep everyone happy with a good flow of content.

2 TELL A GREAT STORY

People nowadays are bombarded with requests to support all sorts of events. Ask yourself what makes your story that bit special or different from all those other competing events or causes. One obvious way is how you tell your story and make it compelling, eye-catching, sincere and even emotional. Spend as much time as you can honing and shaping the words and messages.

3 ENGAGE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook are vital routes to your potential audiences – particularly when it comes to capturing the younger contingent. But be careful not to waste your efforts. Explore possible supporters or ambassadors who have their own strong following and who might spread your word for free. Try to make sure that even



4 KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

It's tempting to be extremely ambitious and plan an event that's full of bells and whistles, but it pays to be realistic about your objectives and your audience – especially in your own community. Those who know you will want to offer their support simply because it is you and they respect the fact that you're challenging yourself (a first marathon, perhaps) or believe your efforts will benefit a cause they understand and identify with.



celebrities are great – they will raise the profile of your event and guarantee support and an increased audience if they attend the event or support the cause.



6 GET YOURSELF INVOLVED
When you are promoting an event or championing a cause you are a very effective PR person in your own right. Never give up. You know your own story backwards, so do not hesitate to share it with any social group you interact with whether it's in the pub or workplace. Get everyone involved and make them feel left out if they are not part of the action. Always be available and make sure any publicity or website information is always accurate and does not contain spelling mistakes or grammatical errors.

7 DON'T WASTE MONEY
PR is free publicity. Chance your arm with your local newspaper or magazine, or even the Post Office notice board, by persuading them to offer you free space to promote your event – because it's all in a good cause. Identify other free media such as community newsletters and websites or even church notices, and hassle local businesses for promotions or donations – remember that a number of small amounts will make a big difference in the end!

the traditional media platforms we have already mentioned (local newspapers and radio stations) carry your story on their websites. Ask them to include a click-through link in the story that takes people straight to your event's website. Make sure they use key words, and be careful with spelling to ensure the links actually work!

5 GET IN THE PICTURE
A great photo or video clip will immediately command more space on a page of a newspaper or a website. This may create an emotional connection and support through an eye-catching photo or it could be engaging through humour or a celebrity. Local

Meet BLESMA's Communications Team

If you have a burning Public Relations issue, or just need some advice, BLESMA's team of experts will be happy to help. Here's how to get in touch...



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Communications Lead
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Digital Media Officer
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THEY SAID JUMP

***...and these thrill-seeking BLESMA
Members didn't care how high! Go up,
up and away with the Trans4mers...***

*Words: Nick Moore
Pictures: Paul Capsey*



EDWARD APPLEBY, A BLESMA MEMBER who once served with the Honorable Artillery Company, has never been scared of much. But he *was* terrified of one thing. “I’ve always hated heights – really, really hated them,” he laughs. “I can do most things happily, but when I used to see people skydiving I’d just think ‘I’m not sure if I could actually cope with that’. It’s way out of my comfort zone, and I always used to worry that I’d let myself down and quit if I tried.”

Edward, however, is talking in the past tense. A year ago, he learned to skydive with BLESMA, and after doing his Accelerated Free Fall course (AFF), he got the bug. He’s since qualified to jump in formation, has re-bonded with an old friend who is also obsessed with leaping out of planes, and has gone on to compete in inter-military tournaments and even at the British National Championships. It’s fair to say he has undergone a complete transformation: it’s no wonder they call the programme that is changing the lives of BLESMA Members ‘Trans4mers’.

The scheme, run by instructors Andy Myers, Kim Myers and Dave Pacey, aims to turn novices (many extremely nervous!) into fully-fledged A-licence skydivers. Set up in 2012, the third annual project began this February, with a group of seven BLESMA Members taking part in simulated and tandem jumps in the UK before heading to Lake Elsinore, California in April to do the real thing solo. “The trip to the USA was very successful,” says Dave. “The aim was to teach the guys the right techniques and to expose them to controlled risk. By the end of the week, they had an FAI A-licence, which allows them to jump anywhere in the world. They are no longer students, they’re skydivers.”

1,000, 2,000, 3,000...

The group jumped every day for 12 days, with a weekend off. Each morning they’d meet at the skydiving centre for refresher training – drills designed to make dealing with a parachute malfunction second nature, such as recapping how to pull the reserve ‘chute.

“Then we’d take them up, and the students had to complete certain tasks in the sky to complete each element of the course and progress to the next level, which wasn’t easy,” says Dave. “It’s all about losing control and then being able to regain your shape –



learning to fall with stability.” The group completed an average of three jumps a day and were soon zipping around in the air, moving forwards, backwards and sideways. Everyone qualified, but some found it easier than others due to the nature of their injuries. “The key to skydiving is to be symmetrical – and these guys aren’t,” explains Dave. “You have to figure out how each individual can get through the air properly.

“That’s where the simulator in the UK proved to be invaluable – it was a controlled environment in which we could manipulate them, working on their movement before we chucked them out of a plane. It was a steep learning curve but they loved improving each day.”

Personal demons were certainly conquered. “I was petrified, I have to be honest, and on jump five or so I wanted to quit,” admits Matt Kingston, a former Royal Marine from Bristol. “But then we did a low altitude jump, which went well, and I had a talk to Dave, trying to work out what was wrong in my head. He squared away my issues, and after that I absolutely loved it. I was back-flipping out of the plane after that!

“It was a real journey, and I’m so glad I stuck with it, because it was brilliant from that point on. I was mega-motivated seeing the other lads. They help you ‘man up’ because many of them have overcome far worse injuries than mine. And the social side of it was great. The way the trip was organised was absolutely perfect. We had some time to relax too, which was nice.

“I learned a lot about myself, and I think everyone else did, too. We really bonded. When you’re put in a highly stressful environment everyone communicates more and you get closer as a group. We’ve all stayed in touch and that’s brilliant.”

Edward Appleby also battled through his phobia. The 40 year old from Devon, who lost his leg in 2005 and is now helping to lead Trans4mers trips, is still gripped by fear when he gets into a plane. “I felt like every jump was my last and that I couldn’t bear to do it again,” he says. “I’d get to the door with my eyes shut, using the chairs in the plane to find my way out! But as you do more and more jumps, you gain confidence. I had to overcome so much just to get out of the plane, so I felt like I was proving something to myself.”

Edward also saw massive improvements in his fellow jumpers. “Even getting into the plane wasn’t easy, but the guys were excellent. Everyone gets nervous but you

just accept that. One of the guys was a double above-knee amputee who was also missing some fingers. It was terrifying seeing him reach for his toggles because he didn’t have a whole hand. He was concerned about it but eventually he became our poster boy because he flew so well in the air. He was incredible. He was even doing flips! That was amazing.”

BLUE SKY THINKING

Dave Pacey saw huge progress among the men on a number of levels. “A lot of the guys thought they wouldn’t get the qualification, so it was a big success when they did,” he says. “The fact they were doing it as a group helped them through – they encouraged each other when it was difficult, and that pushed them on. It was a mission of self-discovery. They got through the fear and pushed their limits. These are brave guys anyway – they’ve been in danger in the military – but they really inspired me. I admire them immensely.”

The psychological benefits were soon evident. “Often, what holds people back is more in their mind than their physical injuries,” says Edward. “This trip helped to solve a lot of that for a lot of us. Skydiving helps you succeed or approach a challenge confidently, for example, with the faith that you can achieve a lot.”

Visiting the States wasn’t bad either, and the reception they were given everywhere they went was overwhelming. “You get a real hero’s welcome as a veteran over there,” says Edward. “Every time we went for a meal someone in the restaurant would pay for our entire tab. It happened all the time. Extraordinary!”

Further trips are planned. “This is quite expensive for a relatively small number of students, but the feedback is so good,” says Dave. “People get so much out of it, and it is a real challenge, so I’d encourage anyone to do it. You can see a real transformation.”

And there may even be something very special in the pipeline. “The guys who went out there are now discussing putting an amputee team together to enter competitions, so we’ll see how that goes,” says Matt Kingston. Watch this space...

If you are interested in getting involved with the Trans4mers and taking part in next year’s courses contact Activities Manager Dave Coulton on activities@blesma.org or on 020 8548 3519



HOW TO GO FROM A ROOKIE TO AN AFF-QUALIFIED SKYDIVER...

Groundschool and equipment check, Netheravon Dropzone

Held at the Army's home of parachute training in Wiltshire, and assisted by the Army Parachute Association, the students meet up for the first time to work on their specific equipment needs for skydiving as amputees, and to overcome any potential problems they might face.

Simulator jumps, Airkix

The group visited the Airkix facilities in Milton Keynes and Basingstoke to be taught how to find their best body position for jumping out of a plane.

Tandem jumps, Netheravon

Strapped to an instructor, the students experience exiting the plane for the first time, giving them a sense of what solo freefall might be like when they do it for real in the United States.

Continuation training, Lake Elsinore

Before jumping the group refresh everything they have learned so far.

Jumps 1-3, Lake Elsinore

Each student jumps out of the plane with two instructors clinging on to them. This is to make sure they stay safe and stable as they run through various drills.

Jumps 4-6, Lake Elsinore

Students jump with one instructor, who will eventually let go and allow them some solo freefall time, if stable.

Jumps 7-8, Lake Elsinore

Students jump accompanied by an instructor, but without contact unless absolutely necessary: they freefall solo.

Console jump, Lake Elsinore

A low altitude leap from 5,000ft to test students can get into a stable position and deploy a canopy within 10 seconds.

Jumps 10-18

Nine more console jumps, to make 10 in total. After 18 successful jumps, and after demonstrating a variety of different moves, students are awarded their AFF.





CONNIE EGLON

Connie Eglon, 62, began working as a carer when she was 18. She joined BLESMA Blackpool Home in 1991 and is now the housekeeper, managing a team of 15 staff

My background is in the care profession. Before

BLESMA I worked for Social Services at a psychogeriatric home. I left work to bring up my son and when I came back I was offered some temporary work at the Blackpool Home. I loved it so much I've been here ever since.

I love the variety of my job. I help manage the domestic

staff, I manage the rotas, make sure everywhere is kept clean, I work with those who come here on holiday, I help run the bar, dining room, kitchen and laundry. Basically, I do whatever is required. I walk in every day fresh, not knowing what I might be doing. That's great.

Working with amputees poses unique challenges.

It's all about meeting their individual needs. We have to learn about them and they have to learn about us, so we can work well together. It's all about treating people as individuals, not focusing on the disability. Everyone copes in a different way. Some are very brave and deal with all kinds of health issues as well as being limless.

Our residents want to do things for themselves. I remember when I started here a man dropped something on the floor. I rushed to pick it up and he said: "Excuse me, you're not here to make me helpless." I've never forgotten that. We are just here to assist.

We have 20 residents and they are wonderful. Each

person has different needs and we're a family. There is a great sense of humour and we all look out for each other. The staff doesn't change much because it's a happy workplace. Coming here feels like coming home.

Activities Weeks breathe life into the Home. We have

nine a year and they're great fun. The younger lot who come are lively and that's good for the older residents. They love to interact with the younger guys and a lot of stories are swapped. They learn a lot from each other.

BLESMA looks after people – the widows are a prime

example. They have a couple of weeks here a year and they enjoy it. They go on trips and to shows, we run bingo in the bar – it reinforces BLESMA's family feel.

Blackpool is a great place for the Home, there is so much in the area to see and do. The location is perfect.

“THIS JOB IS ALL ABOUT TREATING PEOPLE AS INDIVIDUALS AND NOT FOCUSING ON THE DISABILITY”



I hear some great stories running the bar. I learn a lot, and I hear all the war stories. Some of the men don't like talking about their injuries or the conflict they've seen, and I have to learn who wants to talk and who doesn't. Being sensitive to that is a part of the job. For some people, the past needs to stay in the past.



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