



## THE (SECOND) DAY LAMIN'S LIFE CHANGED FOREVER

The Blesma Member, the TV programme and the future King of England

### Swing when you're winning!

Seven Blesma Members formed the driving force behind Team GB's latest



### Bigger, bolder, better Blesma

Just a few of the top stories that made 2015 another great year for



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## USEFUL CONTACTS

### Editorial

020 8548 3513

od@blesma.org

### Membership Services

020 8548 3515

doms@blesma.org

### Activities

020 8548 7094

activities@blesma.org

### Fundraising

020 8548 3517

fundraising@blesma.org

### PR and Media

020 8548 7092

mediasupport@blesma.org

You can also follow us

on Twitter @BLESMA

Stay in touch.



Have you got a great story you'd like to tell? Do you want help publicising an event or expedition that you're planning? Then get in touch with us at [editor@blesma.org](mailto:editor@blesma.org)

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# Chancellor announces £2m pilot for 'life changing' DSF surgery

Operation previously unavailable in the UK could change the lives of some of the most severely injured Service personnel

**B**lesma has welcomed the recent announcement in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement that funding from banking fines will be used to conduct and evaluate a pilot programme on Direct Skeletal Fixation (DSF) surgery.

DSF, also known as osseointegration, has not been available before in the UK. The procedure, during which a titanium rod is permanently inserted into the bone, allowing a prosthetic to be attached, can be life changing for some of the most injured Service personnel and veterans as it eliminates the need for a socket.

The money will fund 20 patients over two and a half years from April 2016. The operations will be carried out at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, with follow on rehabilitation at Headley Court.

Blesma has campaigned hard for closer collaboration between the various government departments that deal with the most complex traumatic injuries.

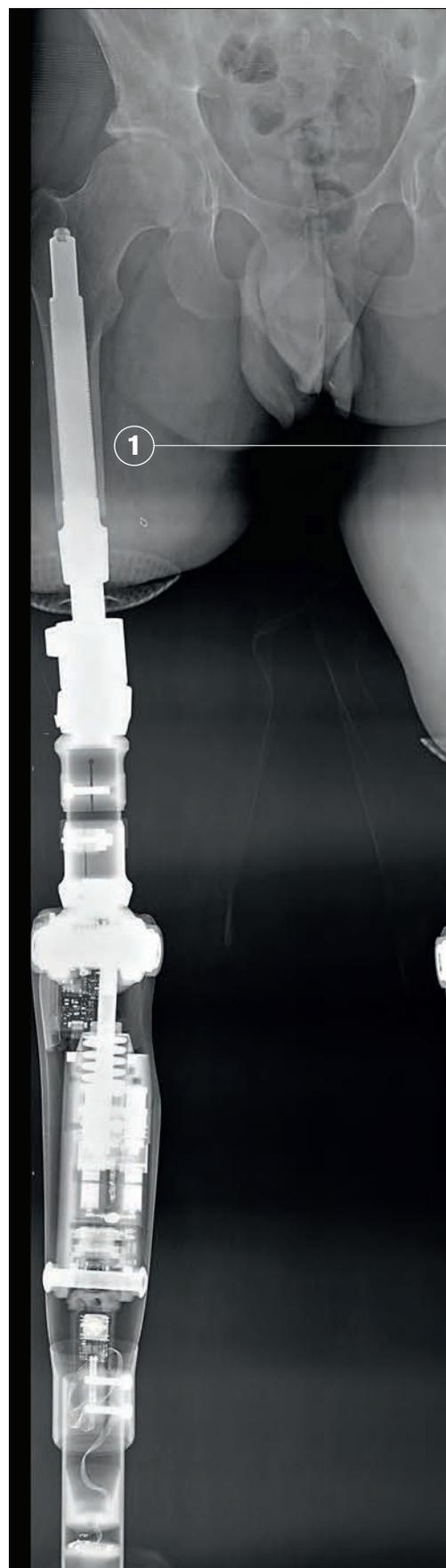
"As the expert Service charity on living with limb loss, Blesma is looking forward to playing a leading role in communicating with Service charities and individual

veterans to ensure this pilot programme benefits those veteran amputees most in need," said Blesma Chief Executive Barry Le Grys.

"We will work closely with the MoD, the NHS and the UK Departments of Health to determine the referral pathway for the DSF pilot, and to help identify eligible and suitable veterans for the programme. We will continue to support our Members and, where necessary, help guide those who might be eligible for consideration of Direct Skeletal Fixation through the entire process."

The referral pathway could also act as a second opinion for veteran amputees for whom getting suitable sockets has been difficult as DSF could provide them with an alternative route. Referral of patients from one clinician to another already happens within the NHS. However, what would be new is the second opinion being provided by Defence Medical Services.

*For advice on prosthetics contact Brian Chenier, BSO Prosthetics, on 020 8548 7080 or at [BSOprosthetics@blesma.org](mailto:BSOprosthetics@blesma.org)*





## Remembrance Day On parade at the Cenotaph (p22)

### A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO OSSEOINTEGRATION

Direct Skeletal Fixation (DSF), otherwise known as osseointegration, has only been used in amputations since 1995. A highly-advanced external component (a prosthesis) is attached directly to the human skeleton through a 'transcutaneous bone anchoring device' or, put more simply, a metal rod. The procedure has, until now, not been available in the UK.

1 A titanium rod is inserted into the middle of the bone using a technique similar to that in a hip replacement operation. Small fins stick out from the rod to keep it in place in the first few weeks. The rod's surface is also sprayed with a highly porous plasma that allows the bone to grow into it, producing an incredibly strong bond.

2 At the base of the stump the skin heals to the bone to form a seal around the implant. The base of the rod, which protrudes through the skin for several inches, is coated with a bacterial repellent, called Niobium Titanium Oxide, to combat the risk of infection.

3 An attachment at the end of the implant allows an off-the-shelf prosthesis to be clipped on and off in a matter of seconds. The entire procedure is usually carried out with two operations, eight weeks apart.



# welcome



When asked, I find it surprisingly difficult to explain Blesma. 'Service charity' simply doesn't seem to do it. I draw attention to the 'a', explaining that we are people with things in common, more than may immediately spring to mind, who have come together. There is limb loss, but even that doesn't wholly do it. It's a lot to do with spirit and that togetherness thing. I try to explain that, to varying degrees, we may be physically challenged, some acutely, but this can serve to motivate.

There is an inspiring, shared drive to get on, to live life to the full, and that is what we are so very much about; together with friends, supporters and the membership itself, helping Members as required to achieve and so overcome. There for life then, in the fullest sense, with passion to match.

Let me try to illustrate some of this by drawing on several examples from this year, and highlighting what is planned for next year.

Through the year we have continued to campaign, most notably with Jon White producing a report that should improve provision of prosthetics – a fine example of the Member helping Member(s) principle. Two more BSOs joined the team, to cover London and the South East, and Scotland and Ireland. On the activities front, we have remained inspirationally 'physical'. There was Soldier Ride around the West Country, finishing at The Royal Hospital Chelsea. Davie Timmins cycled with the FELIX RAAM team across the United States, raising £12,000 for the Association. Peter Bowker walked unsupported across the Greenland ice cap, while Grant White and Yanto Evans participated in the Land Rover British Rally, winning a stage. Our golfers beat the Americans in the Simpson Cup at Royal St George's. There was so much else besides; Cassidy Little's win in the *People's Strictly For Comic Relief* and Mark Smith's bodybuilding.

It also gives great pleasure to note our determined move into the arts, photography in particular getting up a serious head of steam, including an exhibition at The Mall Galleries. Members have also featured in the performing arts; Swifty has been cast in a new play for the West End in April 2016 and the hard-hitting film of our Members' actions in Afghanistan at the Kajaki Dam, on which they also advised, has won numerous awards. Looking ahead, four Members are currently rowing across the Atlantic and we shall be strongly represented at the Invictus Games in Orlando, and the Paralympics in Rio in 2016. In all this, I draw attention to our ambassadors; Marcus Lyon, Darren Swift, Jon-Allan Butterworth and Martin Hewitt. Notables in their chosen fields, they selflessly promote our cause, helping Members similarly to achieve their fullest potential.

Again, there is so very much; the above serves principally to illustrate the point. I close by highlighting the year's most enjoyable Members' Weekend. We plan to repeat its success in June, so please put it in your diary. It's the opportunity for us all to come together, Members, friends and supporters alike, to go over stuff, learn, plan and otherwise look ahead and prepare for what comes next.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

**Lieutenant General Sir Cedric Delves KBE DSO  
National Chairman**





Dave completed the Three Counties Ride before signing up for Soldier Ride. He completed the distance trouble free apart from having to cycle by a farm just as it was cleaning out its yard.

“There were a couple of inches of slurry across the road and I was in the first wave of riders who went through it. We were covered in muck,” he said. “I got a puncture in the middle of it as well, which was character building!”

“The ride was great because it was a chance to chat to people from the UK and the States about family and general stuff – we tended not to talk about injuries – and seeing the other guys challenging themselves really spurred me on. I’ve now bought a new hand bike, which I intend to do many more miles on over the next few years. I’ve definitely become more positive about my cycling since joining Blesma.”

Barry Le Grys, Blesma’s Chief Executive, added; “Soldier Ride is a highlight of our Activities Programme. For the cyclists who take part, it can be an extremely moving, even life-changing, experience.”

## Soldier Ride is back and bigger than ever

This year’s Soldier Ride was hailed as a huge success after 30 veterans enjoyed a 120-mile journey through England over 10 days in October.

The challenge, which went from Wiltshire to the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, proved a perfect way for Blesma Members and US veterans from the Wounded Warrior Project to boost their rehabilitation, improve their confidence and simply go out and have fun.

For Dave Sandles, a former Corporal in the Royal Logistic Corps, it meant a chance to improve his cycling skills, meet other veterans and get inspired to take on even greater levels of physical activity.

“I had been out of the military for a long time and wasn’t aware I could join Blesma until about 18 months ago,” said 49-year-old

Dave, who was paralysed from the chest down after a motorbike accident while on exercise in Germany in 1994. “I was on the archery coaching team at Invictus and guys asked me why I wasn’t in Blesma.”

*Fancy taking part in next year’s Soldier Ride? Find out more about it, as well as a host of other activities planned for 2016, in the Activities Brochure that has been inserted into this issue of the magazine*



## A SHORT MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Blesma’s Chief Executive Barry Le Grys has recorded a video message in which he looks back at some of the Association’s successes of 2015. Barry highlights key events in campaigning and activities, and gives an overview of the many ways in which Blesma has assisted its Members over the last 12 months.

“Vitality, it’s about doing what we can for individual Members. What are their goals and where can we assist them? Where we can, we will,” Barry pledges.

Watch the short video at [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)





# Diving wrecks and reefs in the Red Sea



**N**ineteen fearless Blesma Members buddied up to explore the depths of the Red Sea on this year's scuba diving expedition to Egypt in October. Over seven days the team completed 269 dives, spent a whopping 186 hours and 48 minutes under water, and passed 11 PADI diving certifications between them.

"It started back in early September when our novice divers spent a weekend at RM Poole completing the confined part of their Open Water course," explained Bob Monkhouse, who led the expedition. "The weekend went well and everyone passed, so the real journey could then begin!"

The divers flew out to Egypt where they spent a week on board MV Whirlwind.

"The boat was fantastic and the crew looked after our every need," said Bob. "The food was good and one of our guys even spent the night trying to catch dinner with a hand line off the back of the boat."

"The week went too quickly but we completed lots of fantastic wreck and reef dives. We even managed to dive the SS Thistlegorm, which was sunk in 1942 with 303 rifles, three-tonne trucks and motorbikes in the holds – and they are all still there!"

The Egyptian reefs are alive with many different types of fish and corals, and the

divers got to tick all sorts of marine life off their spotter's list.

"We saw everything from dolphins to moray eels, lion and puffer fish and even sharks," said Bob. "Everyone had a fantastic week. Many a tale was shared over a beer, lots of new friendships were made, and I'm sure many of the Members on the expedition will carry on diving in the future."

"A big thanks must go to HQ for all their help organising such a wonderful trip."

*Fancy taking part in next year's scuba diving expedition? Find out more about it, as well as a host of other activities that are planned for 2016, in the Activities Brochure that has been inserted into this issue of the magazine*



## NEWS BRIEFS



### MEMBERS PULL TOGETHER

Kirk Bowett (above left) has walked 47 miles from Hunstanton to Cromer alongside friends and family in a bid to raise funds for Blesma. Kirk, a Blesma Member, completed the challenge in just 17 hours. "I was inspired when I saw other fundraisers completing the walk and wanted to give something back to Blesma in return for their valuable support after I was involved in a near-fatal incident in Iraq in 2013," he said. Kirk has raised more than £1,200 and plans to take on the Three Peaks Challenge in 2016.



### NOT ONE, NOT TWO, BUT THREE CHALLENGES FOR BLESMA

Charlotte Kay has taken on a variety of challenges this year to raise money for Blesma. She has run a total of 24.9 miles over the course of three events, her most recent one being the Scottish Half Marathon, to raise more than £300 for the Association.

## HELP US TO IMPROVE YOUR MAGAZINE

What do you think of this issue of the magazine? What subjects would you like to see covered in future issues? Is there a particular topic that you would like to see included? Let us know by emailing us at [editor@blesma.org](mailto:editor@blesma.org) so that we can keep on constantly improving your magazine.



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## Veterans' Network gala dinner raises £120,000

The inaugural City Veterans' Network (CVN) charity gala dinner was held at the Imperial War Museum in early November, and raised more than £120,000 for three military charities.

Some 320 people, including celebrities, Service men and women, and military veterans attended the dinner. Through a combination of live and silent auctions and pledges, the event raised a significant amount of money for Blesma, Combat Stress and SkillForce.

During the event, representatives from the three charities gave speeches and shared stories about the help their particular charity gives its members.



"I worked in a bank for four years after coming back from three operational tours of Iraq," BSO Paul Findlay told the guests, "but as I had lost my right leg, I became more and more involved in Blesma's work.

I eventually switched jobs and I now work for this wonderful charity."

Paul was joined on stage by Mark Ormrod, who was given a standing ovation after explaining how he lost three limbs on operations, and how Blesma helps veterans like him.

The CVN was formed in October 2014 and is made up of firms from across the financial services industry. It is dedicated to sharing ideas and experiences about the best ways to employ ex-Service men and women.

## NATWEST BRANCH BOOSTS BLESMA'S BANK BALANCE

NatWest's Chadwell Heath branch, which is just a short distance from Blesma HQ, has been given a makeover. To celebrate, staff and customers at the branch collected donations for Blesma during a launch event in November, and raised almost £200 for the Association.

"I was really pleased that we were able to partner our launch event with such a worthwhile charitable organisation as Blesma. I would urge anyone who doesn't already know about Blesma to visit them



on Facebook and Twitter to find out more," said branch manager James Bott.

On Friday 04 December, staff at the Ilford branch of NatWest also collected donations for Blesma when they too reopened their branch to the public following refurbishment.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### ROAD TRIP IN AID OF BLESMA

A convoy from MG Rover clubs across the UK drove from Land's End to John O'Groats in October, raising almost £4,000 for Blesma along the way.

MG Rover Leg4Leg was organised by Craig Meredith and Jess Stephens from Bristol, who are both members of the Modified MG Rovers Club.

They set off on 02 October, carrying a specially-made MG emblem, and encouraged clubs from across the country to link up with them on their journey. The convoy stopped off at the Blackpool Home on 03 October to visit staff and veterans, before arriving in John O'Groats two days later.

"Jess and Craig have put so much effort into the organisation of this epic event. Every penny raised from this trip will go towards supporting our injured Service personnel through activities and welfare support," said Hana Goodman, Community Fundraiser at Blesma.



### WET AND WILD IN 2016

Members who have always wanted to learn how to do this in a powerboat are about to take their first steps towards some serious speed! A course held at the Westminster Boating Base, a charity water sports centre in London, in January will teach Members the basics of powerboating and give them a RYA level 1 powerboat certification.

**For future courses, please look out for the regular Activities email update**

### VETERANS DANCE PROJECT

The Veterans Dance Project is looking for wheelchair users in London and the South East to be part of a dance team to take part in the official commemorations of the Battle of the Somme in 2016.

The team will rehearse in London, with a taster day planned for January, and members will perform in France in July and London in November.

**Contact [info@folkinmotion.co.uk](mailto:info@folkinmotion.co.uk) or call Ju Gosling on 07973 252751**

## In the spotlight

CRAIG BRODIE



“  
DURING  
THE WEEK  
BONDS  
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LIFE-LONG  
FRIENDS

”

Craig, a prosthetist at the Exeter Mobility Centre (pictured above left), helped out as a member of the support team during this year's Soldier Ride.

“I was very keen to volunteer my time and skills to help with Soldier Ride. As a rehabilitated wounded soldier and a registered prosthetist, I have always admired Blesma's mission statement and felt that I had the skills and experience to participate as a valued member of the support team. From a selfish point of view, I was also very keen to spend a week in the company of ex-Service men and women where I knew I could depend on a common language of banter and camaraderie, something which I miss dearly since my medical discharge from the military.

“Any apprehensions were quickly dispelled when I was welcomed with a brew at Chadwell Heath on the Friday morning. I was made to feel very welcome and was delighted to help the team load the vans for the *Grand Départ*. Ex-soldiers are pleased to be given any opportunity to show their organisational skills and ‘can-do’ attitude. By the time I had driven in convoy with the other members of the support team to our base of operations in Swindon, I felt that I had shed all the daily stresses and strains of modern working life. I had also seamlessly integrated into a fantastically efficient team with an ethos of providing support to our riders during the week ahead.

“I drove to London the next morning and was thrilled to be the first Blesma representative to greet the American Wounded Warriors who would take part in the ride. I proudly shook each of them by the hand whilst sporting my newly acquired Blesma sweatshirt. At the meet and greet that night I felt very proud to sit with the support team, and was astounded by the high calibre of personnel who made up the team.

“Each morning, no matter how early I began to prepare my vehicle for the start of the day's cycling,

I was beaten to breakfast by the riders. Their enthusiasm was infectious, their smiles and banter heart warming, and I never once needed a reminder as to the value of my participation. Any assistance I offered, no matter how small, was met with a big smile and a big hand on my shoulder. To support these wounded heroes was an honour and a privilege, and one that I would repeat again without thinking if I was ever called upon by Blesma.

“During the week, bonds were formed between ex-soldiers and support staff that could have easily been read, by the casual observer, as bonds between life-long friends. Together we laughed, shared stories and spoke as only brothers-and-sisters-in-arms can. We shared some road grime (that's another story) and a warm bowl of soup by the roadside. We met with dignitaries from local towns, we shared some spectacular riding and four British seasons all in one wonderful week. I was called upon to dispense a little medical support during the ride and that only brought me closer to the members of the team. I was sad to see how quickly the week flew by.

“As we approach the Paralympics in Rio, the public awareness of our wounded Service men and women will once again be heightened. As a prosthetist, I am extremely privileged to have a working relationship with Blesma and would urge anyone who works in a mobility centre to fully engage with this wonderful organisation and volunteer their time, no matter how short, to facilitate events for a sector of our population we all hold very dear.

“I loved being a member of the support team during Soldier Ride, and the experience has only fuelled my desire to get more involved with Blesma in the future.”

*For more on this year's Soldier Ride, and details of how to take part in next year's event, turn to p06*



## BOOK REVIEW

### I LEAPT TO MY FOOT BY ALASDAIR CARNEGIE



In his inspiring personal story, Blesma Member Alasdair Carnegie recalls that everyone of a certain age remembers what they were doing when President Kennedy was assassinated. Alasdair had just been told that his left leg was to be amputated the following Monday! He remembers thinking the prospect of a life with just one leg seemed like the very worst of bad news.

Amputees will no doubt recognise Alasdair's triumphs and tribulations, but the book is essential reading for non-amputees as it gives an insight into the continuing challenges of wearing an artificial limb.

Alasdair's saga is also essential reading for business schools, while military historians should read it for the unvarnished insights that it gives into key aspects of military history.

Alasdair has always been ready to help others through the vigour that he brought to organisations such as the Disabled Drivers' Motor Club and Blesma. But in his book, he readily pays heartfelt thanks to family, friends and professionals who have helped him overcome difficulties and reach new heights. Alasdair has a vital tale to tell, and he tells it very well.

*I Leapt To My Foot by Blesma Member Alasdair Carnegie is available to buy now on Amazon in paperback (£5.99) and on Kindle (£2.99)*



## Greek expedition is 'happy days' for Blesma's sailors

A mixed group of ages and experience, including three sailing novices, have taken part in Blesma's Mediterranean sailing expedition in Greece.

The crew spent six days sailing on the Southern Ionian Sea, where they competed against 170 boats in the annual Southern Ionian Regatta.

"The location inspired everyone on the expedition to get involved in everything that was thrown at them, and it soon became mandatory to shout 'happy days' at every opportunity," said Stu Ellis, one of the three first-time sailors on the trip.

"It was amazing that we were able to compete so successfully in a major regatta after only a few days learning ancient and outrageous names for bits of equipment!

"Fewer than half the boats finished the race in the allotted time, but both our boats managed to complete the course in very good times, even though we were faced with a crowded start and Force 6 winds at the halfway point," said Stu.

"It was a great week that was very well organised by the sailing company, Neilson, and, of course, the two skippers Nigel Smith and Steve Fraser. Happy Days!"

## FOOTBALL CLUB HAMMERS HOME SUPPORT FOR BLESMA

West Ham United FC hosted Blesma at their Premier League match against Everton in early November.

Blesma Members formed part of the Guard of Honour that led the minute's silence for Remembrance Day before the match. They were joined by members of 16 Air Assault Brigade to raise £676 in donations from generous West Ham fans.

"It was fantastic to have a number of Blesma Members join us at Saturday's match, and it was so fitting that they be recognised on Remembrance Weekend," said Joseph Lyons, West Ham Foundation Chief Executive. "The work carried out by their organisation is essential, and we're delighted to be supporting their efforts

and looking at new ways we can work together to improve the quality of life for Blesma Members."

As Blesma is an associate charity of the club, Members will be invited to meet West Ham players and take part in workshops with the West Ham United Foundation in the coming months.

"Our Learn to Coach programme will offer Blesma Members opportunities to gain their coaching qualifications and to develop their journey with the West Ham United Foundation on a more long-term basis," said Joseph.



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## GET UP, GET OUT AND GET ACTIVE IN THE NEW YEAR

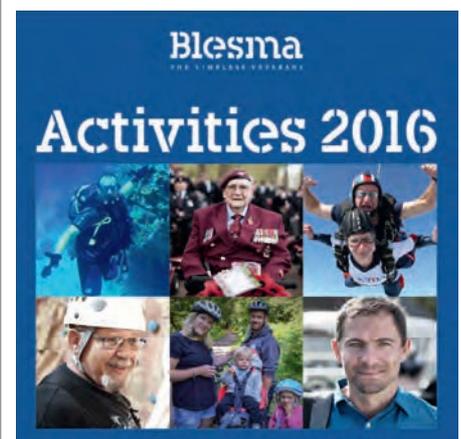


Blesma's Activities Programme for 2016 is bigger and better than ever! The activities on offer cater for every level and ability, from beginner to serious adventurer. There's something on offer for every age group and all interests too, so if you think Blesma's activities are just for adrenaline junkies, think again.

Artistic pursuits such as painting and photography are becoming increasingly popular, and Blesma is offering more of them. But the most important part of any activity is the social aspect. Whatever the event, Members help each other, work together and share experiences – you don't have to be an expert to enjoy yourself!

All the activities are free, Members just need to pay for their transport to and from the meeting point. Blesma will often also pay for accommodation the night before to allow you to travel at your own pace.

*The Activities Brochure 2016 is inserted into this magazine. Apply now using the Application Form in this issue, by calling Emily Mizon on 020 8548 7094 or by emailing her at [mea@blesma.org](mailto:mea@blesma.org)*



Blesma Member Darren Swift centre stage at a Blesma Community Project

# Tell your story and inspire an audience

**W**ould you like to gain valuable leadership, public speaking and communication skills, and inspire young people at the same time?

Blesma is looking for Members to take part in its all-new Community Programme, in which Members who have overcome, or who are overcoming, injury will share their story with the wider community through public speaking and workshops.

"We have places on the Blesma Community Programme for 10 Blesma Members, who will initially take part in an intensive six-day training programme in London," said project leader Alice Driver. "Members will benefit from one-to-one coaching and group-based training run by the theatre industry's experts in public speaking. They will learn to become an assistant workshop facilitator and also be



taught how to deliver their own personal story about overcoming adversity before practising it on a West End stage. This is a fantastic opportunity to learn a range of valuable skills and inspire young people across the country at the same time."

Following the six-day training course, Members will then get paid to deliver their story alongside a professional workshop facilitator in three schools or community centres across the country.

*Blesma will be running a series of taster workshops in London in January (all expenses will be covered). These sessions will give a deeper understanding of what the project has to offer. If you are interested in attending one of these taster sessions, please visit [www.blesma.org/communityprogramme](http://www.blesma.org/communityprogramme) or send an email to [info@thedriveproject.co.uk](mailto:info@thedriveproject.co.uk)*



**BOOK NOW!**

# Members' Weekend 2016

## 04-06 June

The Members' Weekend is back for 2016 and will be bigger and better than ever. The event will be held at the Chesworth Grange Hotel in Kenilworth, Warwick. Members will be able to...

- \* Share their stories
- \* Debate what's important to Blesma
- \* Try new activities
- \* Learn what's been going on in the Association
- \* Catch up with old friends and make new ones

The Weekend is free for Ordinary and Associate Members, as well as their spouses/carers, and those Honorary Members who hold Branch office.

There are only 150 spaces, which will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Make sure you don't miss out. Book your place now by completing the form in this issue of the magazine or contact *Lisa Aston* on [lisa.aston@blesma.org](mailto:lisa.aston@blesma.org) or 020 8548 3511**

## NEWS BRIEFS

### CALIFORNIA SCREAMING

Applications are still being accepted for the Trans4mers skydiving expedition to California in April. To be considered for the expedition, Members must attend a training weekend at Netheravon airfield on 20-21 February.

During the weekend Members will learn the basics of skydiving and practise in a harness before experiencing the wind tunnel at Airkix in Basingstoke.

**To register your interest, please email Emily at [mea@blesma.org](mailto:mea@blesma.org)**



### FANCY A KICK ABOUT?

The Limbless Association is looking for Members to take part in a weekly football match at Feltham Community College every Saturday from 11am to 1pm.

**If you would like more information please contact Dean Heffer on [dean@limbless-association.org](mailto:dean@limbless-association.org) or call him on 01245 216674**

### FREE SCAR TREATMENT

Therapists are offering free ScarWork treatment to Blesma Members to help their scars feel more comfortable. The treatment is even suitable for old scars.

**Email Emma, mentioning Blesma, on [info@restoretherapy.co.uk](mailto:info@restoretherapy.co.uk)**



## France honours Blesma Member with nation's top military honour

Blesma Member John Glanvill-Smith has been recognised by the French President for his military engagement and steadfast involvement in the liberation of France during World War II.

John has been awarded the rank of Chevalier in the Ordre National de la Légion d'honneur. Established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, it is the highest military decoration in France.

John was a Second Lieutenant with the 1st Battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment during the Normandy Landings. He was badly wounded in October 1944 when he lost a leg to a mine in Holland. "Those at Omaha Beach deserved it a lot more than I did. But, of course, it is a great honour and I think it is fantastic," said John when asked about the award.

## ROWING TEAM PULLS TOGETHER TO BREAK WORLD RECORD

A TEAM OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY rowers have pulled together to set a new world record for the fastest 100km relay on indoor rowing machines, raising money for Blesma along the way.

The relay, held on Saturday 17 October, was completed in 4 hours, 49 minutes and 48 seconds, beating the existing record by almost half an hour. As well as the 100km record, there were also 6km and 60 second challenges featuring experienced and novice rowers.

The event, which took place at the 4 Rifles Gymnasium in Aldershot, was organised by indoor rowing club Sub 7, WO1 (SMI) Stuart Jackson RAPTC, SSgt (SSI) Scott Pollock RAPTC and WO2 Ian Wilde REME.



Teams from Sub 7, Q Power, MAD Team, Team Oarsome and Tribesports as well as the British Army and Royal Navy took part, and were joined by three-time World and seven-time British indoor rowing champion, Graham Benton.

The event was dubbed the Charles Morley Memorial XV, in honour of veteran Charles Morley who died aged 84 just before the event was due to take place. At the last count, the event had raised £2,143 for Blesma.

"The effort that everyone put into organising this event was reflected in its huge success, including broken records," said Hana Goodman, Community Fundraiser at Blesma. "The funds will go towards helping ex-Service men and women to lead independent and fulfilling lives. A big thank you to everyone involved!"

# You can help with the future of prosthetics

Brian Chenier, BSO (Prosthetics), offers the latest on prosthetics. This issue; hi-tech trials, futuristic pilot projects and trousers that can help you to walk...



**B**lesma Members are being sought to take part in a number of studies that are set to shape the future of prosthetics. A team of researchers from the University of Strathclyde are keen to find out about physical activity levels and sedentary behaviours in those who use artificial limbs. To do this, participants in a study will be asked to wear an activity monitor for a week to record their posture and movement. They will also be asked to complete a short questionnaire giving information such as their age and gender.

Sarah Deans, Teaching Fellow and Prosthetist/Orthotist at the University of Strathclyde, acknowledges that regular physical activity is an important part of maintaining health and is also a good way to reduce the risk of many diseases. Yet low levels of physical activity are prevalent; only 40 per cent of men and 28 per cent of women in the UK meet the minimum recommended physical activity levels. The research team is keen to understand if amputees could be encouraged to become more physically active, and how this might be achieved.

The researchers would like to recruit amputees who have unilateral (one-side only) lower limb amputations at either trans-tibial (below the knee) or trans-femoral (above the knee) level. Participants should routinely wear a prosthesis and be over 18 years of age.

The work is supported by the School of Psychological Sciences and Health, and the Department of Biomedical Engineering's National Centre for Prosthetics and Orthotics at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. This project has been given full ethical approval by the School of Psychological Sciences and Health Ethics Committee at the University of Strathclyde. On completion of the study, the results will be disseminated at national and international rehabilitation conferences, and in a relevant rehabilitation medical journal.

If you would like to find out more about the study, or think you might like to participate, contact Sarah Deans directly at the University of Strathclyde on [sarah.deans@strath.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.deans@strath.ac.uk) or 0141 548 3929.

### WEARABLE SOFT ROBOTICS

Researchers are also looking for lower limb amputees who can walk, but with either a little or a great deal of difficulty, who would be willing to be interviewed about the impact of their loss of mobility.



You can help make big strides in prosthetic technology

Researchers at a number of universities have been awarded £2 million to develop soft robotic clothing that will enable those with mobility impairments, disabilities and age-related weakness to move easily and unaided, and to live independently and with dignity. The end results will be easy to use, comfortable, adaptable and, vitally, meet the users' individual mobility needs.

Smart trousers, for example, could help vulnerable people avoid falls by supporting them whilst walking, give people added strength to move between sitting and standing positions, and even help them to climb stairs. The hope is that they could eventually replace stair lifts, wheelchairs or other mobility and stability aids.

This intelligent clothing or 'second skin' will use artificial 'muscles' made from smart materials and reactive polymers, which are capable of exerting great forces. They will be developed using the latest technologies in wearable soft robotics, nanoscience, 3D fabrication, functional electrical stimulation and full-body monitoring.

They will include control systems that monitor the wearer and work with the body's muscles to give the most suitable assistance. For patients needing

“  
**SMART TROUSERS COULD HELP PEOPLE AVOID FALLS, GIVE THEM ADDED STRENGTH, OR EVEN HELP THEM TO CLIMB UP STAIRS**  
”



**Osseointegration has, until now, been unavailable to military or civilian patients in the UK**

rehabilitation, the smart clothing will initially provide strong support and subsequently reduce assistance as the patient recovers mobility and strength.

Many existing devices used by people with mobility problems can cause or aggravate conditions such as poor circulation, skin pressure damage or susceptibility to falls. Wearable Soft Robotics could alleviate many of these problems and reduce healthcare costs.

Blesma will be monitoring and supporting this project as case studies are developed and focus groups are consulted. For more information, or to take part in the focus groups or be interviewed for a case study, please contact Brian Chenier at [bsoprosthetics@blesma.org](mailto:bsoprosthetics@blesma.org). Alternatively, you can contact Sarah Manns directly at the University of the West of England on 0117 328 7012.

### **DIRECT SKELETAL FIXATION**

The term 'Direct Skeletal Fixation' is used by the NHS to describe what most Blesma Members refer to as osseointegration. It encompasses the surgical implantation of a rod (usually titanium) into the bone of the residual limb which then protrudes through the skin so that a prosthetic limb can be attached (see above). A small number of military patients have undergone the surgery abroad (it is currently not available to patients in the UK) and are in various stages of rehabilitation.

In his Autumn Statement on 25 November, Chancellor George Osborne MP, announced that monies from banking fines will be used to conduct and evaluate Direct Skeletal Fixation (DSF) surgery.

The procedure can be life changing for some of the most injured Service personnel and veterans as it eliminates the need for a socket which, for a lot of amputees, causes them the most issues. Blesma has campaigned hard for closer collaboration between the government departments that deal with the most complex traumatic injuries. *The White Report*, written by Blesma Member and triple amputee Jon White, published in August, called for this. Blesma will support those eligible and suitable through the process, liaising with the MoD and NHS as required.

(Read the news story on page 04 for more on Direct Skeletal Fixation.)

### **ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY LIMB LOSS FORUM (APLLF)**

At the end of the last government, the All-Party Parliamentary Limb Loss Group (APLLG) was dissolved and has since been re-constituted as a forum. The forum is an opportunity for limb loss groups and representative bodies to gather together to brief and update parliamentarians on issues that are relevant to the limb loss community. Blesma remains a constant feature of this group. The first meeting of the forum took place at Portcullis House, Westminster on 27 October and was chaired by Cheryl Gillan MP.

### **3D PRINTED SOCKETS**

3D printing is becoming more popular, both in industry and at home, with the advent of affordable desktop 3D printers. The 3D printing of prosthetic sockets is a relatively new area, and Blesma is currently involved in a project that will take 3D printing of sockets to the next level. A system that has already been successfully trialed in a clinical setting is now ready to be tested more fully as a 'scan and fit at home' model.

Working with a small project team led by Prosfitt, Blesma has identified suitable Members for the trial, which is now underway. The project aims to show that a prosthetist can attend the patient's home, scan the residual limb, use computer software to produce a virtual model and submit the file for 3D printing. The new socket would be returned to the prosthetist within days and taken back to the patient's home for fitting.

The material would also allow for professionals to make minor changes on site. Proving this concept works well in this way would also suggest that it would work equally as well within a Limb Centre. The reduction in time between scan and fit would be a huge improvement to the current situation, and the ability to replicate sockets quickly would be advantageous.

A full report into the trial will follow once it has been completed and analysed in the New Year.

*For advice on prosthetics issues please contact your BSO in the first instance. You can also contact Brian Chenier, BSO Prosthetics, on 020 8548 7080 or email him at [BSOprosthetics@blesma.org](mailto:BSOprosthetics@blesma.org)*

## **2015 in numbers**

*This year, Blesma has helped its Members with their prosthetics issues in all sorts of ways*

**130**

Members directly supported in their dealings with the NHS Limb Service

**10**

Veterans Prosthetics Panels (VPP) attended

**93**

NHS Limb Centre attendances with Members

**212**

Applications to the VPP supported

**£1.3**

**million**

Cost of veterans prosthetics funded through the VPP

# INBOX

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

## Blesma takes to the ocean waves

WHEN BLESMA ANNOUNCED THAT they wanted suggestions for more activities at the 2014 Members' meeting, my daughter prompted me to investigate some sailing activities. As a result, The Jubilee Sailing Trust joined up with Blesma to arrange an opportunity for Members to apply for assisted voyages. I took up the challenge with Mike Fowler and Nigel Smith.

The ship was constructed and fitted to accommodate almost all disabilities. But be warned, this was not a holiday in any way! We were

signed on as the crew of a working ship, operating 24 hours a day on a watch system, with four watches to cover every 24 hours. There were nine to a watch, plus an experienced watch leader.

Everyone had the chance to do each job on board, including going aloft to work the sails. Mike and I went aloft in our wheelchairs, hoisted up by eight heavies, heaving on a rope to sea shanty chants. Rest assured that every safety precaution was exercised and we were never in danger.

The Jubilee Sailing Trust has similar aims to Blesma in that it encourages disadvantaged people to push themselves,



Ron Bright on board (pictured far right)



giving a sense of fulfilment in achieving something they thought was beyond them and giving new reasons to make the effort to improve their lot in life.

It was a fantastic six-day experience and we returned home with a satisfying tiredness, a good sense of achievement, and a strong desire to do it all again. We completed 347 nautical miles, at least two-thirds of it under sail, and we hope to do it again (although next time somewhere warmer and more exotic). So come on, get your requests in to give it a go yourselves.

**Ron Bright**

## Big thanks to Electric Mobility

I WAS EXTREMELY PROUD TO take part in the Remembrance Day parade this year as part of the Blesma contingent. A special thank you must go to Electric Mobility of Ilminster, the scooter company that lends Blesma all the scooters every year without charge so that our Members can take part in the parade.

It is not only a huge financial saving to the Association but this kind gesture enables (almost) all of those who apply the opportunity to take part. Many Members don't possess their own scooters and would find it very hard to complete the march using prosthetics.

**Frank Garside**

**Read more about the Remembrance Day parade on p22**



## Blue Badge holders could be seeing red over parking rules

I READ YOUR ARTICLE ABOUT THE Blue Badge Scheme in the Autumn issue with interest, and would like to bring to your attention a little-known fact following the demise of the road fund tax disc.

Whilst many motorists may be pleased with the abolition of the disc, perhaps little thought has been given to disabled motorists who have a Disabled Blue Badge and are exempt from the road fund tax.

Whilst most local councils provide special parking facilities for badge holders, many require payment unless the vehicle is exempt of the road fund tax. Enquiries made to several councils resulted in a mixture of responses from “no decisions have been made” to “we are advising those with tax exempt discs to continue displaying them even after the expiry date.”

West Dorset Council’s approach is to issue a special disc to be displayed in the



windscreen. East Dorset Council also issues a disc for display in the windscreen, whilst North Dorset makes no concessions for tax-exempt vehicles. It would be extremely interesting to learn how other local councils are dealing with this important issue.

Surely those disabled people with a tax exempt vehicle should not be required to apply to each local authority in which they visit to either obtain a special badge for display in the windscreen or apply to be added to that authorities’ database.

As someone who uses their vehicle on an almost daily basis, often travelling to different parts of the country, it could well be that my windscreen will be festooned with discs from numerous authorities.

Unless something is done, parking authorities may well be tempted to abandon the scheme. I, and many others, will be most grateful if the current exemption can be retained without the need to apply to each local authority.

**K Chapman**

## 60-SECOND INTERVIEW



## MIKE DOWNES BSO FOR THE NORTH WEST

**B**lesma Member and triple amputee Lamin Manneh was chosen to take part in the TV programme *DIY SOS*. He was given a purpose-built house, designed with his unique needs in mind. Mike Downes, the BSO for the North West, (above left) was instrumental in making sure Lamin was involved in the project.

### How did you get involved with Lamin?

The family moved to the North West a couple of years ago after Lamin had finished his rehab at Headley Court. Lamin needed a big house for his five children, and he found one in Hyde. I was his BSO, so I helped out with a few routine things like advice and getting him a wheelchair. His house was OK in terms of being adapted and fitted out, it ticked the boxes, but it was clear that something wasn’t right. Binta, Lamin’s wife, was unhappy with the trouble on the street, and Lamin was frustrated at being unable to protect his family. For a former soldier, that’s tough.

### So how did they end up on *DIY SOS*?

I got an email from a lady at Manchester City Council out of the blue about a venture between *DIY SOS*, Walking With The Wounded and Haig Housing. Haig had bought some council properties, and the

others had got together to transform them. I arranged a meeting with the producers and told them I might have people who would meet their criteria. Lamin was top of that list because he clearly wanted to move. Other possible candidates didn’t particularly want to leave their homes, so he was perfect for it. In July, I asked him if he would be interested and he leapt at the chance.

### How satisfied are you to see the difference it has made to the family?

It’s fantastic. This is life changing for them. The house is actually a bit smaller than their old one, but the lift and the adaptations are all spot on.

### Is Canada Street a place that other Blesma Members could potentially move to?

Yes. What we saw on TV was Phase One. There are still 17 or 18 houses to fill. Without the TV cameras rolling, I’ll go back to the council soon, and suggest some other people who might be keen to move in. Maybe since the show has been on TV, some more people will stick their hands up and say they’re interested in moving here.

*Read more about Lamin and the DIY SOS project on p32*

# OBITUARIES

## Those we have lost

### Major General Mike Swindells

15 January 1930 to 13 October 2015

MAJOR GENERAL MIKE SWINDELLS, who has died aged 85, was a career soldier who rose to command his regiment. He was National Chairman of Blesma from 1991 to 1996.

In 1969, Maj Gen Swindells assumed command of the 9th/12th Royal Lancers and, two years later, he took the regiment to Detmold, Germany. Traces of the informality of wartime days were still apparent. Many of the officers still dressed in jeep coats and tank boots, and wore Service dress hats with earphones wrapped around them when on exercises.

Maj Gen Swindells, who had a short fuse and stood no nonsense, soon converted the regiment with its new Chieftain tanks into a highly effective operational unit. This was not achieved painlessly but his legacy proved to be an enduring one.

He was also fiercely protective of his regiment. When the brigade commander



visited ranges in Germany to observe live fire exercises, which were the culmination of the training year, he was not impressed. One of the squadrons failed to fire the first tank shell on the dot of 08.00 hours and the gunnery that followed was second rate.

The brigadier, a man renowned for intolerance, summoned the troops and launched into a harangue. He was reduced to silence within seconds by Maj Gen Swindells, who exclaimed; "How dare you address my regiment like that? If you have

### Those who have passed away

September 2015 to November 2015. May they rest in peace.

Addison S	RAF	HQ	07/10/2015
Birkett R	RCT	HQ	Early 2015
Bradshaw W	Civilian Casualty	Walsall	02/11/2015
Burton R	Airborne Reconnaissance Sqdn	HQ	15/10/2015
Ferguson J	Royal Signals	Walsall	Sept 2015
Hinton R	RA	HQ	13/10/2015
Hobday A	RA	HQ (Woolwich)	20/09/2015
Hopkins J	RN	HQ	11/11/2015
Hyslop T	Scots Guards	HQ (Wiltshire)	05/11/2015
Ing A	Queens	HQ	17/10/2015
Lester W	Royal Signals	HQ	Sept 2015
Lynch P	Grenadier Guards	HQ	25/11/2015
Murray J	RN	Portsmouth	Nov 2015
O'Connor Helen	Royal Logistic Corps	HQ	Oct 2015
Osmond I	Sudanese Defence Force	HQ	05/09/2015
Owen R	RE	HQ	25/11/2015
Pennycook J	RA	HQ (Edinburgh)	15/09/2015
Russell R	King's	HQ (Earby)	01/10/2015
Simmons Margaret	WAAF	HQ	08/11/2015
Smith F	RAF	HQ	22/10/2015
Stay-Sothcott A	RN	Isle of Wight	26/10/2015
Tancock M	RAF	HQ	Sept 2015
Tyrell M	QARANC	HQ	04/10/2015



any criticism to make then you should say it to me personally and in private!”

George Michael Geoffrey Swindells was born at Bollington, Cheshire, on 15 January 1930 and educated at Rugby. In 1948, he was called up for National Service and the following year he was commissioned into the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards (5 RDG) who were stationed in Germany at the time.

On his release, he worked in the textile industry but subsequently rejoined his regiment and accompanied the men to Korea. In December 1951, they arrived at Pusan and he commanded a troop of tanks as part of the Commonwealth Division.

The regiment handed over to 1st Royal Tank Regiment in December 1952 and spent a further year on active service based at Shandur on the Suez Canal before returning to Britain. Maj Gen Swindells was adjutant of the Cheshire Yeomanry from 1955 to 1956 and, after attending Staff College, he served with 5 RDG in Germany, Aden and Cyprus, and in staff appointments in Singapore and Brunei.

In 1975, he took command of 11th Armoured Brigade at its HQ at Minden, Germany. After a year at the MoD, he was promoted to Major General in 1980 and moved to Bonn as Chief of the Joint Services Liaison Organisation. He returned to the MoD in 1983 and served on the Defence Intelligence Staff. On his retirement from the Army in 1985, he was appointed CB.

Maj Gen Swindells was controller of the Army Benevolent Fund from 1987 until 1997. He was colonel of the 9th/12th Royal Lancers from 1990 to 1995 and National Chairman of Blesma from 1991 to 1996. In 2006, he was appointed national president of the British Korean Veterans Association.

As a younger man, he was a keen polo player and skied until he was 80. He had a deep love of the countryside and was never happier than when he was in the company of those who lived by the land. He enjoyed salmon fishing and gardening.

Mike Swindells was drowned off the coast of Elba while he was on holiday. He was very fit for his age and a competent swimmer, but it is believed that the undertow proved too strong for him.

He married Prudence (Prue) Tully in 1955. She survives him with their two daughters. A son predeceased him.

Photograph: Ipswich Star (Archant)



## Health minister gives support to veterans

Ben Gummer, Minister for Care Quality at the Department of Health, on the Government's continued commitment to Service personnel

**T**his year's Remembrance events were another poignant reminder of those who have fallen in the line of duty, fighting for this country.

“As I do every year on Remembrance Sunday, I laid a wreath at the beautiful memorial for the dead in Christchurch Park in my constituency of Ipswich. Those also laying wreaths included the family of a soldier killed in Afghanistan, Aaron McClure. Unfortunately, their grieving is hardly historic in the experience of our town, as in so many others across the UK.

“But as we remember those who have fallen, or been seriously injured in the line of duty, I want to underline the Government's continued commitment to providing the best possible health care to our serving personnel and veterans, who have put their lives on the line around the world.

“In 2011, we introduced the Armed Forces Covenant, which set out our duty as a nation to veterans and those in the Armed Forces. The health commitments of the Covenant enable veterans to access priority NHS treatment for any condition related to their service, subject to clinical needs of others.

“This means that veterans who have lost a limb as a result of their service are able to access world-class prosthetics and can regain as much independence as possible. NHS England has established nine specialist NHS prosthetics centres across the country which are providing veteran-focussed care.

We are hugely grateful to Blesma for their advice and support towards this.

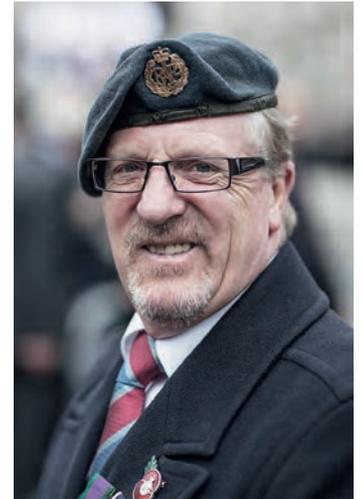
“For some veterans, the impact of serving in dangerous environments can lead to complex mental health problems, sometimes not becoming apparent until many years after they have left the Forces. That is why we have 10 specialist veterans mental health teams across the country, a 24-hour veterans' mental health helpline (0800 138 1619) and the Big White Wall online mental healthcare and counselling service, which can be found at [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)

“Looking to the future, we are committed to research and innovation. I am delighted that the Chancellor has committed £2m of funding to conduct a trial for a pioneering surgical procedure, Direct Skeletal Fixation, which allows a prosthetic limb to be fitted directly to the bone in an amputated leg and has the potential to dramatically improve the quality of life for military amputees.

“Our Armed Forces and veterans can be assured that their contribution will not be forgotten. We will continue to place paramount importance on your health and well-being.”



*For more information on these issues, visit the NHS Choices Armed Forces website at [www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/militaryhealthcare](http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/militaryhealthcare)*



# LEST WE FORGET

*This year, as every year, Blesma Members proudly paraded at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day to pay their respects to those lost but not forgotten*

Every Blesma Member has a different memory of their time in Service, and for everyone associated with the military, Remembrance Sunday means something different, too. The weekend is an extremely important event in Blesma's calendar and this year, as ever, a large group of Members travelled to London to take part in the parade at the Cenotaph. A contingent of 22 Members on scooters and wheelchairs, seven

walking wounded, as well as family members and carers, were led proudly past the Cenotaph by Jim Chittenden, the charity's sole World War II veteran participant, flanked by Will Dixon and Stuart Pearson.

After the parade, some of the Members spoke about who their thoughts were with on this emotional day, and recalled their personal experiences among the respectful crowds who gathered in the capital to pay their respects.







**SUSAN FOULDS, 55**

*Wife of Blesma member Mick, a former Royal Engineer injured at work in 2007*

“This is our sixth Remembrance Sunday with Blesma and it’s always a wonderful weekend. You see a lot of familiar faces and renew old friendships, but the great thing is that there are also always new people here, so you can share their experiences, learn new things and make new friends. It feels like a family, and it is a big, happy mix, although the day itself is very emotional. Some faces will inevitably be missing, which is sad – this year I’ll particularly be thinking of Stephen Hambrook, a lovely man who died this year.

“The atmosphere is quite incredible. Waiting at Horseguards and coming together with all different ages and regiments, plus family members and

children, is very moving. Taking part in these weekends has helped me as well as my husband. He was injured at work eight years ago and had to have both legs amputated below the knee. It was very difficult and sudden for us.

“Blesma was very welcoming – a club that really looks after its Members. Mick went skiing with Blesma, fell over a lot, and got told to get up by everyone else! It helped him, and that helped me – it brought us back from a dark place. After an injury like his you can go into yourself and get depressed or withdrawn. You can think that life is over or you can realise that there are people going through the same, or worse, and get on with it. This weekend reaffirms that to me.”

**ALAN CRAVEN, 44 (RIGHT)**

*Served with the Royal Engineers Parachute Squadron from 1988 to 2002*

“I love this weekend because it is a chance to meet up with like-minded people – everyone understands what each other has been through. We have fun on the Saturday, then parade on the Sunday. The parade is so touching – it makes you respect the fact that there are always people worse off than you. So much goes through your head on the day, it is very emotional. First and foremost are the lost colleagues, those who didn’t make it back. I’ve been coming to the Cenotaph for 12 years and it’s still hard to explain how it makes me feel. I was injured when I fell from 1,000ft when my parachute didn’t open on a night jump in America. My leg shattered, I snapped my pelvis, broke my jaw and skull, and had blood on the brain. I was given 24 hours to live, but somehow I survived. It has been a struggle since, but weekends like this make you realise that those of us who are still alive are the lucky ones. I’ll be sad for those who didn’t make it back when we parade.”



**CAROLE KING, 51**

*Served with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. She left in 1990 and had her leg amputated in 2006 following a long-running injury*

“This is my third Remembrance Weekend in London with Blesma. I find it really special because it gives me the chance to come together with other Members. It gives you a bigger sense of pride doing the march through London, because you’re not just the amputee contingent – you’re part of a much bigger whole. The sense of togetherness is hard to describe.

“I’ll be thinking about three military friends who I have lost recently. There is a sense of sadness, but it is also a celebration of their lives. We celebrate our Armed Forces like no other country in the world, and I love that. Blesma does this weekend very well and has helped me in so many other ways.”





### **DANIELL HAMBROOK, 42**

*Marched this year in honour of her father Stephen, who led Blesma's parade last year and died in February*

“My dad was so honoured to lead the procession last year. He was a very humble man, but I could tell just how proud he was – he had a smile on his face the whole time, he was glowing. He loved the fact that Blesma put him with a young amputee, too: and the lad stayed with him the whole time, which was fantastic.

“The day is perfect, the way it brings young and old together. Dad died in February this year and Blesma made sure I could march in his memory – which is part of what the charity does so well, it makes you feel like one of the family. It's always been that way, ever since

dad had his amputation when I was eight or nine years old. He lost his leg in the Falklands in 1982 when he stood on a landmine in an area that had previously been declared safe, and around which he'd escorted Margaret Thatcher just three days before.

“Being here this weekend with so many friends has made the loss of my dad easier to take. For me, the most emotional part of the ceremony is when the men sing at the Cenotaph. That low rumble of the huge choir just gets me every time. I brought dad's hip flask with me too, because he liked to pass that around on the day!”



### **JIM CHITTENDEN, 91**

*Served in the Parachute Regiment's 'Pathfinders' during WWII*

“This is a very, very important weekend to me and I was extremely honoured to be asked to lead the parade for Blesma this year. I have been coming to Remembrance Sunday for many, many years, and it always means so much to me. I quite often go to military reunions, I used to be a Pathfinder, and when I give a toast I always make sure it is to absent friends, because it is so vital to remember them.

“On the day itself, I think about all the people I served with back in World War Two. I joined up at the age of 18 and went to North Africa, Italy, France and Greece.

A lot of people I was there with didn't come back from the war, and this Sunday never fails to take me right back there, all these years later.

“The best thing about the event is meeting up with everyone for a couple of days. I have made so many friends and it is wonderful to get together and catch up. We all socialise on the Saturday night at the hotel, then we get out on the parade and march together the next day. There are only three of us left from the Pathfinders, and this year I am the only WWII representative parading with Blesma, so this year really is special.”



**ANDY JONES, 51 (LEFT)***Served in the Royal Navy from 1981 to 2000*

“Remembrance Weekend is very hard for me and I get a lump in my throat every year. I joined up in 1981 and should have gone to the Falklands on HMS Ardent, but couldn’t because I was due to have a knee operation.

“My mate said he’d take my place but he never came home. He’ll always live in my memory and I will always feel very guilty about being here. It should have been me. When I found out he was killed, I let his next of kin know. I was only 17 and a half. It’s still with me every single day. Every year I write a poem, which I attach to a wreath. It’s my way of remembering him.

“I don’t know where I would be without Blesma. They have been phenomenal, a real lifeline, and I sing their praises to everyone. This is my sixth year coming here, meeting up with other veterans and showing our respect together. It doesn’t matter where you served, or what part of the Armed Forces you were in, Blesma knits us back together.”

**ALISON GRANT, 47***Served in the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps from 1991 to 2006*

“This is my eighth Remembrance Weekend with Blesma. Keeping the tradition going is crucial – we need to teach the next generation about its importance. There are lots of veterans out there, and this weekend is vital to them. Hopefully, it can help make our world a slightly better place.

“On the day, I think about lost friends, colleagues killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and my father, too. I believe it’s not just about Service personnel, but honouring people you’ve lost who mean a lot to you.

“What keeps bringing me back to taking part in the Remembrance parade with Blesma is meeting old friends. I’ve done a lot of activities such as skiing, sailing, and photography since joining up in July 2004 when I was hit by a drunk driver.

“We honour our military like no other country during the Remembrance weekend. It is very special.”

**ANDREW BRACEY, 40***Served as a Reservist with the REME from 1994 until 2009*

“This is my first Remembrance Weekend in London with Blesma. I usually mark it at home in Southend, and in the past I have found the day difficult. I always do it my own way; I have a cross that I place down for the guys who I have known and lost, people who I’ve served with. Doing it this way, and coming to the Cenotaph, is a once-in-a-lifetime chance. It is amazing and emotional, but above all, it is a way to celebrate Remembrance Sunday with people who are in a similar situation to me.

“The parade is full of people who genuinely understand what I’m going through. Weekends like this get me straight back into the old camaraderie. It doesn’t matter if you’re Army, Navy, whatever – we are all in this together. For a while, I didn’t cope too well but I’m now cracking on with things and have come to realise that there are people out there who are less fortunate than me. Blesma has helped. I’ve been involved with the Association for a year and it has helped me get a new racing chair. I’m flying in it and aiming to make the Invictus Games, and then hopefully the Paralympics.”

# HOW TO... Have a(nother) very, very full year

*From the adrenaline-infused X Games to the star-studded world of Strictly Come Dancing, Blesma has done it all in the last 12 months. Here are just a few of the highlights*

**JANUARY  
X MARKS THE SPOT**

Owen Pick, who tried snowboarding for the first time on a Blesma trip two years ago, was invited to compete in the X Games in Colorado. The all-action X Games attracts the most exciting and extreme skiers and snowboarders from across the world, and Owen finished seventh in his debut in the Adaptive Snowboardercross competition. Owen now has his sights set on the 2018 Winter Paralympics in South Korea.

**MARCH  
THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE**

Ex-Royal Marines medic Lance Corporal Cassidy Little (below) won Comic Relief's version of the hit TV show *Strictly Come*



*Dancing.* Cassidy partnered up with *Strictly* regular and professional dancer Natalie Lowe as they scooped the coveted glitter ball trophy in *The People's Strictly* in March.

Cassidy, who trained as a dancer before spending 10 years in the Royal Marines, lost his right leg below the knee in an IED blast in Afghanistan four years ago.

"I didn't anticipate I would ever dance again," Cassidy said of his appearance on the show, "but I had a fabulous time. I danced in front of millions of people with one leg – and won!"

**MAY  
A WEEKEND  
TO REMEMBER**

The new-look Members' Weekend was a roaring success. More Members than ever before attended the event and were treated to a packed programme of inspirational talks, exciting activities, and marvellous company.

From a Gazelle helicopter landing in the hotel grounds to Members' tales of derring do, to a spot of scuba diving in the hotel pool, the weekend crammed all manner of activities into an extended programme.

"The aim was to bring Members together to find out what each other has been up to, to debate what's important to us as individuals and Blesma as a whole, to build on our independent, fulfilling lives, and to discuss how Blesma should move forward," said Blesma's Chief Executive, Barry Le Grys, after the event. "We succeeded in meeting all of those aims."



**JUNE  
WHAT DID YOU DO  
IN BLESMA WEEK?**

From the glorious sunshine of a garden party to icy gales on top of Britain's highest mountain, the second Blesma Week highlighted the lengths people will go to to support the charity.

Blesma Week was a towering success, with more than 100 events taking place across the UK, raising more than £30,000 for the Association. Activities included cake sales, football games, gruelling sponsored runs and much, much more.

"The week was a big Blesma party. What really impressed me was the spirit and generosity on display," said Blesma Chief Executive Barry Le Grys, who took on the Three Peaks Challenge as part of the effort.

**BLESMA'S WARRIORS**

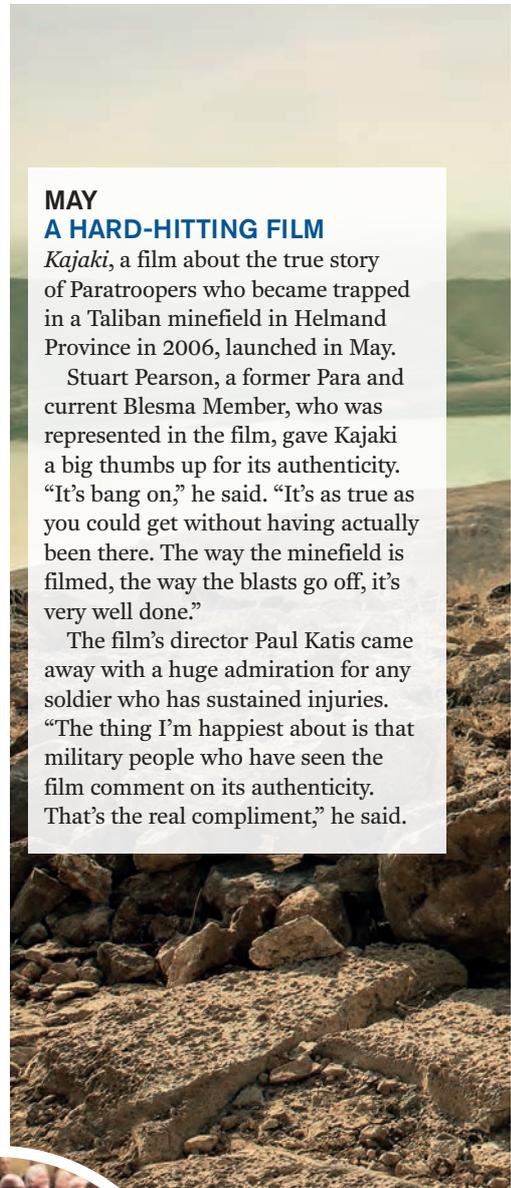
Team GB returned triumphant from the Warrior Games in the USA with a haul of 85 medals, including an impressive stash of 42 golds. The 40-strong team, including

**MAY  
A HARD-HITTING FILM**

*Kajaki*, a film about the true story of Paratroopers who became trapped in a Taliban minefield in Helmand Province in 2006, launched in May.

Stuart Pearson, a former Para and current Blesma Member, who was represented in the film, gave *Kajaki* a big thumbs up for its authenticity. "It's bang on," he said. "It's as true as you could get without having actually been there. The way the minefield is filmed, the way the blasts go off, it's very well done."

The film's director Paul Katis came away with a huge admiration for any soldier who has sustained injuries. "The thing I'm happiest about is that military people who have seen the film comment on its authenticity. That's the real compliment," he said.





a number of Blesma Members, enjoyed 10 days of competition and camaraderie with US Service teams in a range of adaptive sports at the US Marine Corps Base at Quantico, Virginia.

### A WORLD FIRST

British veteran Peter Bowker became the world's first amputee to complete an unsupported crossing of the Greenland ice cap. He led a team of five intrepid adventurers almost 600km, using skis to pull the 300lb sleds that carried everything they needed; their food, clothing and survival equipment.

As well as the sheer distance and fatigue involved, they battled against temperatures that dropped as low as -37°C and had to be aware of the constant threat of polar bears during the 27-day world record attempt.

### AUGUST THE WHITE REPORT PUBLISHED

Blesma Member and former Royal Marines Captain Jon White delivered a hard-hitting report that challenged how care is being provided to above-knee amputee Service veterans.

*The White Report*, a detailed analysis of current provision combined with far-reaching recommendations to improve services, was commissioned by Blesma and the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund. It looked into the care of Britain's amputee war veterans, found failings in the NHS, and called for a restructuring of health services to support the seriously injured.

"The major findings are issues with funding and bureaucracy combined with the fact that current services have a lack of relevant experience," said the report's author, who lost both legs above the knee, and his right arm at the elbow, while



serving in Afghanistan in 2010. "The aim of the report is to help the Government create the conditions to allow our injured Service personnel to shine."

### OCTOBER HOME, AT LAST

Lamin Manneh captured the nation's hearts when he and his family appeared on the TV show *DIY SOS*. Thanks to the huge efforts of volunteers – including Princes William and Harry – an entire road in Manchester was transformed into a haven for veteran Service men and women, with Lamin getting the keys to one of the homes.

"The house is life changing," said Lamin. "At night, I can now go up in the lift and read my kids a bedtime story. The kitchen has adjustable surfaces, the corridors and doors are very wide, and the bath, with the lift into it, is fantastic. But the best thing about this house is that it was built with love, with people working from the heart, giving their time for free." Turn over the page for the full story.

### DECEMBER 4 MEN, 3 LEGS, 1 CHALLENGE

Four brave Members (pictured top) set off on the Talisker Atlantic Challenge this month in an attempt to become the first all-amputee team to row across the Atlantic. Row2Recovery Skipper Cayle Royce was joined on the expedition by Lee Spencer, Paddy Gallagher and Nigel Rogoff.

Cayle was one of two Blesma Members who took part in the last challenge, back in 2013. The crew successfully completed that expedition in 48 days, nine hours and 13 minutes, during which they covered 3,000 miles, made up of an estimated 1,400,000 oar pulls.



# “THE FUTURE KING OF ENGLAND HELPED TO PAINT OUR HOUSE!”

*When Lamin Manneh appeared on DIY SOS he couldn't have imagined how perfect his purpose-built home would end up. But there was one thing that really put the gloss on it...*





**Home. At last. Lamin's family can live, love and learn in a purpose-built space**

Lamin Manneh's house in Manchester is full of laughter. With five kids ranging in age from two to 12, it's a riot of noise and fun, with football games being played outside and drawings being coloured in at the kitchen table. At the centre of it all is Lamin. Originally from The Gambia, he's got a big, ebullient personality – constantly tickling, hugging, and encouraging his children.

It has, however, been a long journey for this family to reach anything bordering on domestic happiness. Back in 2010, Lamin was blown up by an IED while serving with the Irish Guards in Afghanistan. He lost both legs above the knee as well as his left arm. The physical rehab and mental recovery from such a horrific injury was tough enough, but just as he was trying to get his body and mind back on track, the family found themselves facing other issues.

Having bought a house in Hyde, Manchester, the children found themselves being pelted with eggs and stones. There were even attempts to slash the family's car tyres. What happened next turned Lamin into a minor celebrity in his adopted city. Thanks to the TV show *DIY SOS*, Lamin and his family have

moved to Canada Street. This old Mancunian avenue had seen better days; with houses boarded up, it was in desperate need of attention. But thanks to the huge efforts of a number of volunteers – including Princes William and Harry – the road was transformed into a haven for veteran Service men. Millions watched the programme on TV when it aired in October and were deeply moved as Lamin told his story, and eventually relocated to his purpose-built new home.

But there's more to the tale than the programme let on, including an untold Blesma link. *Blesma Magazine* caught up with Lamin and his family to discover more, and to find out how they're settling in...

**How's life on your new street?**

It is perfect. We have a couple of great neighbours who were also featured on the show, who suffer from post-traumatic stress. We look out for each other and we have a support network now. We wanted to recapture that camaraderie you get from being in the military – we were isolated from that in our old house. That had played on my mind for a long time, so this is a dream. There are other people who have been living



on the street for years and they've been very welcoming. They pop in for a cup of tea. Sometimes people say; "We saw you on TV, we just want to give you a hug." That's fine with me! I'm looking forward to more veterans moving in here and hopefully this idea might be rolled out all over the country. These houses have helped us all.

**The reaction to the show has been overwhelming...**

Yes. It has been incredible and my family and I are so thankful. We've had postcards from all over the world, and social media went crazy. Everyone is crying with happiness! But that's great. My family feels secure here. It is emotional. When I first saw the house, I couldn't believe it. It blew me away, it went beyond everything I had expected. If you see the before and after pictures, they are just amazing. To think that before we moved in it was used as a cannabis farm!

**You got involved in the project due to Blesma, right?**

Yes, my BSO Mike Downes is the person who told us about it and introduced us to the producers. Without him, we would not be here. Our old house was OK but the environment wasn't ideal. I'm not going to say bad

things about the area because the majority of people were fantastic, but we did have problems and I wasn't there all the time to be able to look after my kids. My wife, Binta, was unhappy and I wanted them all to be safe. It bothered me. This is a much better environment.

**What was the process of filming like?**

We were interviewed by a TV producer before they selected us. I was so happy to be chosen. Next they consulted with us about the house and what we wanted from it. I got involved in the design. The main thing for me was having a lift. It was so time-consuming and stressful getting up and down the stairs in the old house. I also wanted a bath I could get into. But after that we let the team get on with the job.

**How was Nick Knowles off camera?**

He is a great guy. He's very nice and although this is his job, you could tell that this project was a real passion for him. He genuinely loves helping people and this was done from the heart. I think it has always been a dream for him to do something for veterans, and he was wonderful with my family.

**Lamin plans to find work helping others like himself**



**Above: Lamin and his wife, Binta  
Right: Lamin's new home allows him to spend quality time with his family**



**And you can now say that the future King of England decorated your lounge...**

Ha, yes! William and Harry were fantastic, and very down to earth. They have both served, so we spoke like military guys. They like helping people and taking responsibility for things. It is quite something to say the first family of the UK helped to paint my house. They were good painters, too! But they were just like the other volunteers – trying to give something back to those who weren't as lucky as them in the war.

**What made you join the British Army in the first place?**

I grew up in Africa wanting to be a soldier. The Gambia was a colonial country, so we knew all about the British Army, and I admired it. I liked the discipline. I joined the Irish Guards in my late 20s. I trained at Catterick and then went to my regiment in Windsor. There was a lot of banter, mickey taking and fun, and I loved the fitness and sport – I liked pushing myself mentally and physically.

**You used that determination in your rehab, too...**

Yes. Getting injured was a shock. All I remember about being blown up is someone saying; "You're going to be alright," then I woke up in Birmingham. I'd been in a coma for seven days. When Binta told me I'd lost my legs, I said; "That's not true – I can feel them!" The first few weeks were hard but I'm a positive person, and I realised I had to get on with my life. I needed to be there for my family. If I sat moaning, what example would I be to my children? So I quickly got back to being determined. At Headley Court, you see people who are worse off than you, suffering with mental health problems. Trying to help them, and myself, gave my recovery momentum. It got me through.

## LAMIN MANNEH, BY THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW HIM BEST

### BINTA MANNEH

*Lamin's wife, Binta, is mother to Marianne 2, Aminata 4, Abou 7, Ebrima 9, and Musa 12*

#### Your husband's injury must have hit the family as hard as it hit him...

Yes. When Lamin was injured, it was horrible for him and so horrible for all of us, too. We felt so bad – we didn't know what to do. I was pregnant with Aminata and it happened on the last day of 2010. When I got the news, I didn't know what to do. It was the worst day of my life. We went to Birmingham to see him and the whole thing was just unbelievable. But we soon felt lucky that he was alive.

#### The move to Manchester didn't initially go well, did it?

I like Manchester – it is a good city with good people – and Lamin saw a house that he wanted to buy. Maybe because he supports Manchester United. But we had problems in Hyde. I spoke to Mike Downes, our Blesma Support Officer, about it. One time, Aminata was hit by a stone and was bleeding. We had to go to the police. I said to Mike; "We are not happy here, we need to get out."

#### And help came very quickly...

It was almost like a miracle! It feels like a burden has been lifted off us, we are far less stressed. I used to worry all the time and Lamin was always worried. Now we are very happy. The kids can go out and play on the street safely, it is wonderful. Everyone is very nice and friendly. Our neighbour was on the show, too, and he is a very good guy. We are settled. I love the space in the house, we have lovely rooms, but most importantly, we feel free again.



### MUSA MANNEH

*Musa, 12, stole the show on DIY SOS when he made a speech to hundreds of volunteers*

#### How difficult has it been for you, seeing your dad get injured?

When my dad joined the Army, I was very proud of him. I was only six years old. He went away to England, and then he came back to pick me and my brother up, to bring us here. When he got injured, it was terrible. I was crying like mad – I couldn't believe he had lost his legs and an arm. I was so sad. But now he is an amazing example to other people. He always makes people feel good about themselves, and he shows them that you can get over things when they go wrong. That makes me very proud.

#### How did you feel about being on TV?

All my friends saw the programme and were talking about it the next day. I made a speech to the builders at the end, I liked doing that. All those people had really helped us, and it made me feel better about myself to say thank you.

#### What was the best part of it all?

All the people helping us. They weren't doing it for money, so it was very kind. It makes me want to help other people. My dad is all about helping people, and I want to be like that as well. Our new street is great because there are lots of kids. It is safe and a good place to play.



#### And the house has made a practical difference?

It is completely life changing. At night I can now go up in the lift and read my kids a bedtime story. The kitchen is great with its adjustable surfaces, the corridors and doors are very wide, and the bath, with the lift into it, is fantastic. I have a soak in there every day! But the best thing about this house is that it was built with love, with people working from the heart, giving their time for free. That makes us all very happy.

#### And the family is closer than ever...

Family is the most precious thing in this world. I was very proud when my son, Musa, made a speech to all the builders, and the children have learned a lot from being involved in this project. Life is all about what you can do to help humankind.

#### What's next for you?

I'm looking for work and ways to help people like myself. That is what I want from life. I've always liked helping others. I'd love it if projects like this one could spread. It could make such a big difference for other veterans. Together, we can help each other and be strong together.



Pictures: Andy Bate Words: Danny Buckland

**T**he ambitious vision of a state-of-the-art clinical rehabilitation centre moves ever closer as the bricks and mortar of the new Defence rehab facility on the Stanford Hall estate take shape in the heart of England. Contractors are now constructing purpose-built units at the 354-acre Nottinghamshire site that will become a beacon of care for wounded Service personnel. It is intended that the site could make provision for civilians, too.

The £300 million project for a new Defence National Rehabilitation Centre (DNRC) began with a conversation between the Duke of Westminster and General Sir Tim Granville-Chapman, then the Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff in 2009.

“The Duke was leaving service after a distinguished 43-year career in the Reserves. Over the previous two years, he had been involved in mobilising Reservists for Iraq and Afghanistan, and was struck by the very high price military personnel were paying in service,” says General Sir Tim, now the

DNRC’s Programme Director. “He wanted to do something in the medical field for these people and decided clinical rehabilitation was a good way to go. Let’s be clear, though, this project is about what Headley Court has pioneered so well, making sure its legacy endures for another 70 years. It is about preserving the Headley Court legacy by putting it into a 21st century clinical space.”

### FROM HEADLEY TO THE DNRC

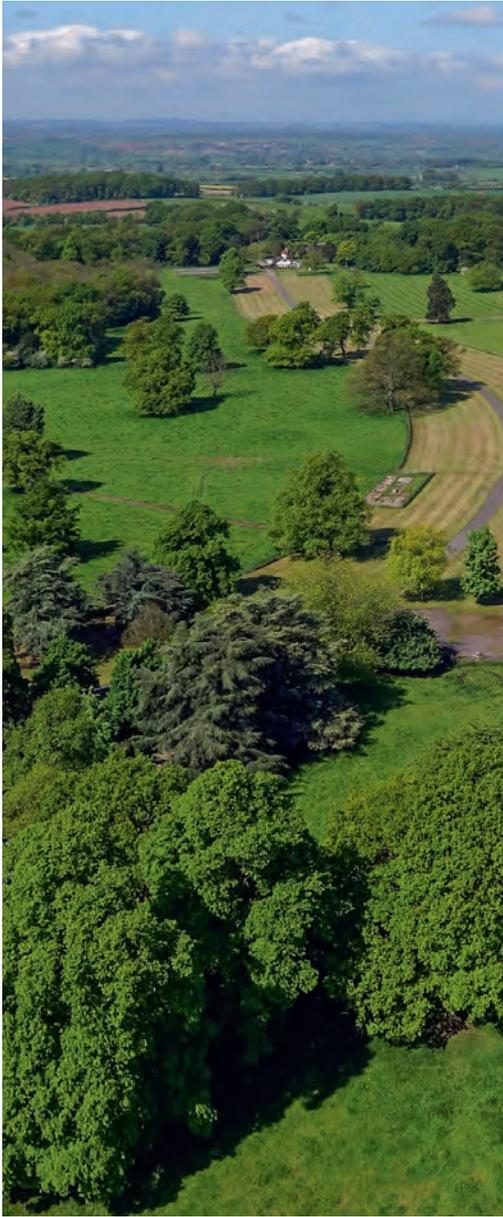
Construction will near completion in 2017, the 70th anniversary of when Headley Court, the Surrey country home once owned by a Governor of the Bank of England, was commissioned as a single Service, officer and air crew unit as part of the RAF’s string of hospitals throughout southern England.

It developed into an all-Service, all rank facility that carried out inspiring and ground-breaking work. Headley Court will be missed but, as its doors close, a bespoke 21st century medical facility will open. The new site will be strategically positioned in

the heart of the nation, an hour from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, which houses the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, and was the main centre for severely injured personnel returning from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Stanford, a 35-bedroom Grade II-listed mansion, has a colourful past as the former home of entrepreneur and philanthropist Sir Julien Cahn. He would entertain up to 80 house guests at weekends, ferrying them the three miles from Loughborough station in a fleet of black Rolls Royces. But the building does have a military connection as Sir Julien, whose fortune came from a furniture empire in the 1920s, allowed it to be used as a 70-bed hospital during WWII.

The original house will be restored and used for training and administration. But the significant build will be the bespoke 21st century clinical facilities adjacent to the existing house, designed in conjunction with the existing staff at Headley Court to reflect the latest thinking and experience from



THE DEFENCE NATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTRE WILL BE ONE OF THE MOST ADVANCED MEDICAL FACILITIES IN THE WORLD WHEN IT OPENS ITS DOORS IN 2018...



# BUILDING THE FUTURE

operations. It has been designed with precision so the units and wards encourage the efficient flow of patients and staff to allow enhanced clinical performance.

The new complex will have a dedicated neurological unit, the latest facilities to rehabilitate complex trauma patients, a state-of-the-art prosthetics department, an outpatients' unit and a 30-bed hostel for overnight visits. Every square inch has been considered; in some places even the lighting will be controlled to improve recovery rates.

The Duke commissioned a £1.5 million feasibility study which used Stanford as the test case for the calculations. The property, which had passed through several hands, was subsequently purchased as the DNRC charity geared up for the monumental project. The clinical designs were worked up during more than 300 user group meetings with the Headley Court practitioners to ensure that every nuance of care was taken into account so that hopes could be welded to practicalities.

"Headley Court was far sighted but was never designed to do what it does," says General Sir Tim. "We have incorporated current clinical thinking on all aspects of the design, and the facilities are very flexible so management can get the best out of them as never before. The accommodation and atmosphere will be very good, so patients will feel at home. Their experience will be significantly improved, which will help their clinical outcomes."

## A STATE-OF-THE-ART SERVICE

General Sir Tim's enthusiasm for the project radiates as much as his steel to bring it in on budget and on time. A forensic attention to detail keeps the project on track but the decision on how best to seize the opportunities for national use on the site will be considered by Government next year.

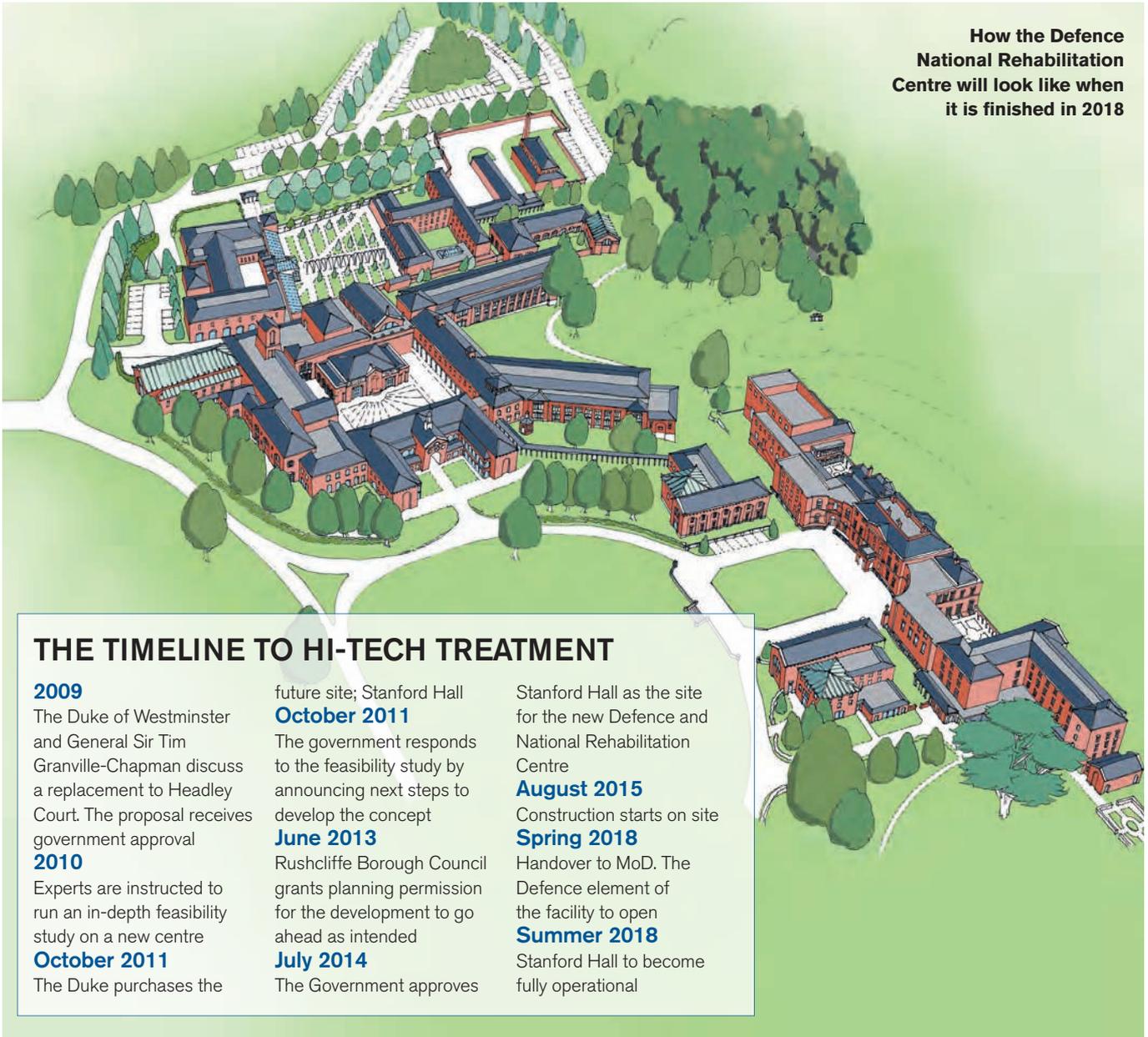
The military's unparalleled expertise of returning Service personnel back to fitness and independence is beyond question, but how post-Service care will be delivered has

yet to be established, although General Sir Tim expects Blesma to have a powerful voice in ensuring its Members get the best. Concerns raised by *The White Report*, commissioned by Blesma and the Royal Marines Charitable Trust, about care for amputee veterans will be very relevant.

Former Royal Marines commando Captain Jon White researched current provision this year and found that veterans experienced variable standards of care that both hampered recovery and were a financial burden to the NHS. His detailed conclusions echoed Blesma's belief that services were patchy and needed fresh thinking, and the NHS was challenged in the most complex cases.

"Is there scope for making the system work differently under the DNRC? Yes, I think there is," says General Sir Tim. "The government will have to reach a view as to what degree it can offer the best service to veterans, but there is an opportunity to capitalise on the outpatients'

How the Defence National Rehabilitation Centre will look like when it is finished in 2018



**THE TIMELINE TO HI-TECH TREATMENT**

**2009**

The Duke of Westminster and General Sir Tim Granville-Chapman discuss a replacement to Headley Court. The proposal receives government approval

**2010**

Experts are instructed to run an in-depth feasibility study on a new centre

**October 2011**

The Duke purchases the

future site; Stanford Hall **October 2011**

The government responds to the feasibility study by announcing next steps to develop the concept

**June 2013**

Rushcliffe Borough Council grants planning permission for the development to go ahead as intended

**July 2014**

The Government approves

Stanford Hall as the site for the new Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre

**August 2015**

Construction starts on site **Spring 2018**

Handover to MoD. The Defence element of the facility to open

**Summer 2018**

Stanford Hall to become fully operational



capacity at Stanford. It could cope with an influx of veterans if that was government policy and I can see Blesma Members as obvious people in that category.”

The policy fine-tuning will start next year as the Ministry of Defence gears up for the DNRC to become operational in 2018. The fundraising, primed by a £50 million donation from the Duke of Westminster, has now reached £208 million with all sorts of businesses from Iceland Foods to Burberry, as well as charitable trusts, foundations and individuals giving multi-million-pound sums. Fundraising is open to the public, too.

“We had to raise two-thirds of the money in a short space of time, but the proof of concept had already been done through the feasibility study which was immensely important,” says Fundraising Director Holly Butcher, an experienced charity fundraiser, who describes the project as a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

“The government will run it, so there has never been a question mark over how the

running costs will be fulfilled, which has meant we could approach people with a one-off proposition. The Duke’s £50 million donation was quite defining in setting an example, and I’m pleased to say that British business has got on board in a big way.”

Some overseas donors, including several in the US, have also responded generously to underscore the importance and heritage of a trans-Atlantic military collaboration.

“We have embarked on a wider public campaign as well as the major donor work, so every £5 and £10 will make a difference,” says Holly. “This Centre could change the way the UK operates in this field of medicine. People see how big that is and have responded, but we still have a very long way to go.”

General Sir Tim adds; “What was truly extraordinary was that businesses and people were donating to a concept as nothing had been built. We managed to persuade them that the narrative was strong enough for us to succeed. I don’t think

we have ever had anyone who hasn’t been convinced that this is a good cause. It is a new charity that is refreshing an existing idea – and that resonates.”

**TRULY GROUND BREAKING**

Reaching the £300 million target will mean the latest technology can be employed in the perfect environment for treatment and recovery. The Stanford Hall estate will become the only establishment in the world offering complex trauma, neurological and back to life care (which includes prosthetics) all under one roof.

Elsewhere, the gardens will be landscaped to provide vital sensory input to recovery programmes, and it is even planned that the rehabilitation capability will offer a Computer Assisted Rehabilitation Environment (CAREN) system – a virtual reality diagnostic and therapy capability. A specialist gait laboratory, meanwhile, will improve mechanical analysis and exercise pathways.



**DNRC Programme Director General  
Sir Tim Granville-Chapman and  
Fundraising Director Holly Butcher**

Research will also be a high priority. The main building is being refurbished to house both lecture theatres and tutorial spaces, and a firm goal is collaboration and knowledge-sharing with the nearby universities and hospitals of Loughborough, Nottingham, Birmingham, Warwick and Leicester.

The potential is elevated because of the number of Service personnel who survive their injuries and return to an independent life. Feedback from their experiences is valuable to influence future treatment.

#### **CHANGING THE NATION**

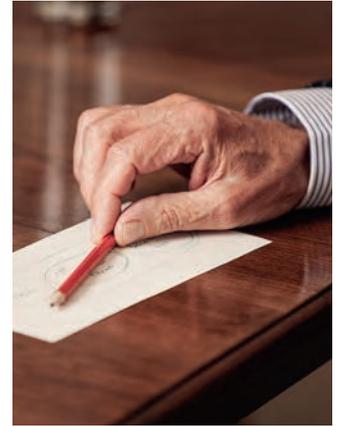
“There is impressive medicine all across the Midlands,” adds General Sir Tim. “These university hospitals are keen to seize this opportunity. If we get that synergy, then an awful lot of people will benefit. We have about 1,000 people who were injured in their early 20s, for example, who 15 years ago may not have survived. Now, they will live for another 40 years or more.”

The Defence facility’s core business will be dealing with musculoskeletal and spinal injuries during training and deployment, to maintain the three Services’ fitness for duty rates of 95%. However, this could provide a template to improve the nation’s civilian return-to-work rates from injuries.

“For the military, the basic principle is that you don’t send people on operations until you are clear that, as a nation, you are capable of looking after them,” says General Sir Tim. “But if we pull off the national part well and establish it as a hub with spokes to other centres, we’ll change the nature of clinical rehabilitation in this country.

“We are determined to make sure the new Defence facility at Stanford Hall is a worthy successor to Headley Court, and does for the next 70 years what Headley Court has done so well for the last 70.”

*For all the latest developments at the Defence National Rehabilitation Centre visit [www.thednrc.org.uk](http://www.thednrc.org.uk)*



#### **THE BUILD IN NUMBERS**

### **6 months**

Some staff will transfer from Headley Court in a process that should take around six months

### **1.2 million**

bricks will be laid which, if positioned end to end, would stretch from Stanford Hall to Headley Court – and beyond

### **141,000**

slate roof tiles will be used

### **6.6**

The amount of concrete used in the construction would fill more than six and a half Olympic-sized swimming pools

### **400**

The weight of structural steel needed in the build is equivalent to 400 male African elephants

### **11.5**

The new turf around the grounds would cover 11.5 football pitches

### **1,413,000**

Stanford will use almost 1.5 million kilowatts of renewable energy every year

### **43,000**

The total floor area of Stanford Hall (in square metres)

# Jean Goodall

In the third in a series of features about women in Blesma, Jean Goodall looks at the Association from a Widow's perspective

Jean Goodall became the Chair of a Blesma branch almost without a say in the matter. "I was sitting at the back of an East Berkshire meeting in 2000, a couple of years after my husband had died, and the Chairman announced that he was going to stand down," recalls the 76 year old. "The Treasurer shouted 'Jean!' and before I knew it, I was taking the meeting. Next, I got a letter from Blesma congratulating me on being the new Chair and Welfare Officer, which hadn't even been mentioned!

"I really enjoyed it though," she admits. "Everyone said it was because I like telling people what to do! It's true that I liked arranging days out. We went on so many; musicals, museums, riverboat trips. I sorted out all the meals – the Summer lunch, the Christmas party – by myself. It kept me very busy, which was a good thing because I hated having nothing to do."

## PIECING TOGETHER THE PAST

Jean has been rightly recognised for her achievements within the Association, having won a Blesma Soldiering On award, among other commendations. She married her husband, Jim, in 1969. Jean was 29 and Jim was 50, and already a Blesma Member after losing part of his foot in Africa.

A typical old-school military man, Jim was truly stoic. "He very rarely talked about the Army," says Jean. "To this day, I have no idea how he got his injury, and his daughter by his first marriage didn't even know he was at Dunkirk!"

Nevertheless, Jean managed to piece together her husband's military career. Jim had joined the Hampshire Regiment in 1935 and served across the globe during WWII. "After Dunkirk, he transferred and trained with No.2 Commando, 11th SAS and went on to test-jump in the Air Corps. Prince Charles once told me that Jim was a very brave man who had jumped out of holes in the bottom of Whitley bombers. I told him he knew a lot more about my husband than I did!"

Jim was discharged in 1946 and joined the Post Office, eventually becoming an Inspector. "He'd fought against his injury since he was 20, and got quite ill almost as soon as we were married," says Jean. "I must have seen every hospital in the south of England over the next 29 years. He had lots of operations, and his leg was finally amputated when he was 70.

"After that, he had to use a wheelchair. I was his carer and helped him get around for the next 10 years. He wasn't small so it was tough, and it took a lot out of me."

Blesma became a refuge for them both and they enjoyed numerous trips out with



the Association, including horse training at Combermere Barracks, trips to Beating the Retreat, and "a very boozy trip to France – I've never seen so much drink in my life!"

Being among like-minded folk was the main draw for them both. "It was very traditional then; I'd sit with the wives while the men chatted," says Jean. "But being with others who were dealing with similar problems helped me immensely. We were all in the same boat and so didn't have to put on an act – we all knew exactly how each other felt."

Then, in December 2012, Jean's world changed again. "We realised we would have to fold the Branch because I was arranging meetings and only four men might turn up," she says. "So we went out for a slap-up dinner to mark the end. That afternoon, I went to the doctors and was told I had

cancer. I went through a rough time – but a lot of people do, so I don't complain."

Now recovered, Jean can't help but feel sad that Blesma is losing its old structure. "I understand why. Blesma has adapted and evolved well, and many Members are young – they're working and doing lots of great activities, which is brilliant," says Jean. "But when they're older, they'll need companionship, and that's what the Branches provide. I loved the community structure and I'm sure there will come a time when they're wanted again."

## GIVE WIDOWS MORE OF A SAY

She also thinks that Widows aren't given enough of a say in how the Association is run. "We're not classed as Full Members, and I think that needs to change because we don't have voting rights. I used to vote when I was Chair of the Branch, but now I can't. I think Widows should get a vote and have the same rights within an organisation we're told we're a part of. Women shouldn't be treated like second-class citizens, and I think we should be more involved in deciding the issues that affect our families deeply.

"We know what the men are going through, and in the most part we probably have just as tough a time as them. I kept going for my husband, but since he died I've been in and out of hospital. I didn't look after myself while looking after him."

Despite this, Jean remains a huge fan of the Association. "Blesma is brilliant. The activities are fabulous and the welfare on offer is fantastic. Blesma helped me out with funding when I needed a shower installing, and I've been on a couple of Widows' Weeks, which were brilliant."

Jean remains as busy as ever. "I still work for the War Widows' Association and I've just started as part of the Macmillan Cancer Support service. I stay in touch with a lot of the old Branch Members, too. I try to help out if there is ever a problem. I made so many friends through Blesma, and that's what it's all about."

*“Widows should have the same rights within an organisation we’re told we’re a part of. Women should be more involved in deciding the issues that affect our families deeply”*





Pictures: Andy Bate Words: Nick Moore

# TEAM GB 3 TEAM USA 1

**THE REAL FOCUS OF THE 'RYDER CUP FOR WOUNDED EX-SERVICE MEN' IS FRIENDSHIP. BUT WE MIGHT AS WELL SWING WHILE WE'RE WINNING**

**T**he wonderfully undulating links of the Royal St. George's course on the Kent coast has been the venue for the British Open 14 times. This stunning course has consistently been ranked among golfing's greatest venues thanks to a blend of superb greens, tricky fairways and treacherous rough.

Today, the course is playing host to another major competition as the red of the USA duke it out with the blue of Great Britain. Drives thunder hundreds of yards, chips are deftly placed by the flags from immaculate bunkers, and long putts consistently snake into the holes. Accents from Mississippi to Maidstone, and from Manchester to Massachusetts, whoop with patriotic fervour as the players score points from each other.

This could easily be the Ryder Cup, but look carefully and there is a difference. Peeping out from below the majority of the pressed golf trousers are flashes of metal legs, while other competitors display different scars of war. That's because this is the Simpson Cup, the fourth annual tournament between injured Service men,

women and veterans from either side of the Atlantic, and the quality of the action is testament to the soldiers' powers of recovery.

"I played golf recreationally before I joined the 82nd Airborne Division and dreamed of being up there with Tiger Woods," says Shawn Whitmore from North Carolina, an American with a handicap of 8, as the final group make their way down the 18th fairway. "But then, in Afghanistan, I was hit by a rocket propelled grenade. I was injured in my hip and femur, and had my biceps reconstructed and replaced. I couldn't turn, couldn't bend, couldn't flex. I had to learn to walk again before I could even think about learning to play the game once more. But I put myself back together and now I'm a better golfer than before my injury."

## **PUTTING RECOVERY FIRST**

A similar story is repeated by virtually every player on the course today, and when they speak they all sing the praises of one man; John Simpson. He founded the



## THE SIMPSON CUP



On Course Foundation, a charity with more than 500 Members that operates in the UK and America, with the aim of rehabilitating injured Service personnel and veterans by driving, pitching and putting. Having been diagnosed with polio as a youngster, John found the fairways to be the perfect tonic, and went on to manage top professionals including Nick Faldo and Greg Norman.

“Golf helped me so much because it’s the only sport in which you can compete with able-bodied people on a totally level playing field,” he says. “You can regain a tremendous amount of self-esteem and self-confidence through golf. I started the Foundation with the aim of first getting injured guys playing before finding them work experience and, ultimately, employment in the golf industry.”

“It’s been a tremendous success. Four years ago we launched the Simpson Cup as something for our Members to aim towards as a way of showing what can be achieved. These guys have bounced back from real adversity and it is humbling to witness.”

The tournament has been held four times, with Team GB winning the first two, at Sawgrass in the USA and then at Royal Lytham in Lancashire, while the USA snatched their first victory at the Congressional Course in Maryland last year. In 2016, Oak Hill in Rochester, New York will play host to this fantastic event.

With the scores delicately poised at 3-3 overnight, after a first day of play in almost

**“I COULDN’T TURN, OR BEND, OR FLEX. I HAD TO LEARN TO WALK AGAIN BEFORE I COULD EVEN THINK ABOUT LEARNING TO PLAY ONCE MORE”**

monsoon conditions, GB team captain Jason Evans is dead set on regaining the cup. “We didn’t need a team talk this morning,” Jason says. “You know what military guys are like; very competitive! We’re so pumped up to win because of our defeat last year. That’s all the motivation the guys need.”

### GIVING GOLF A GO

Jason is one of seven Blesma Members in the GB squad, all of whom have gained a huge amount from the sport. “I was a mechanic in the REME when I was injured in 2001 in a road traffic accident, and I spent the next seven years in a wheelchair,” he says. A former football fanatic, golf wasn’t even on his radar until after his amputation in 2008. “I had heard about the On Course Foundation and decided to give it a go,” he says. “The next thing I knew, I was bitten by the golf bug and had joined a club. The

Foundation is fantastic because it gives you the best coaching possible. You can take part in a one-day or a three-day introductory course, where instructors work with your disabilities to make you the best player you can be. It’s great for your fitness, and being out in the fresh air, meeting like-minded people, is great psychologically, too.”

The charity has close links with Blesma, who provided much-needed funding when it was starting up. “Blesma understood what we were trying to do straight away and immediately saw the benefits – we wouldn’t be where we are without them,” says John Simpson, who is keen to dispel any myths that those who have never swung an iron might have about the pastime.

“Any Blesma Member who thinks golf isn’t for them should come along and give it a try. Forget the preconceptions about money – we help with the costs of playing, and our courses are a free introduction to the sport. What’s great about golf is that, even if you’ve never played before in your life, chances are you’ll hit a ‘wow shot’ in your first session that will get you hooked. It gets you out the house doing things, and the camaraderie is fantastic.”

Even in the pressured atmosphere of the Simpson Cup, that spirit is evident in both squads. “We’re all hugely competitive on the course, but the golf is almost secondary,” says Shawn Whitmore. “All the players from both sides are the best of friends after the

**Former Royal Lancer  
Paul Swain was the  
only player missing  
an upper limb**



**The fourth Simpson Cup  
was a close-run thing,  
with Team GB eventually  
coming out winners**



## JASON EVANS

**GB's team captain served in the REME between 1991 and 2003**

### **How did you train for this event?**

We met up the week before the competition to play a few rounds and talk tactics. This is a wonderful course but it's not easy – it's one to play after you've got your handicap down a bit. I'm very proud of the boys and how well we did. It was very difficult out there, especially on the first day in horrendous wind and rain.

### **How much has Blesma helped you as an individual?**

Hugely. I've been all over the world with Blesma – I've done white-water rafting and skiing in Colorado, sailing, all sorts. Bob Monkhouse helped me get involved with the Association initially, and I've really enjoyed my time with them. The golf has been fantastic for me and winning this has been the icing on the cake!

### **How important is the tournament to both teams?**

It's something to aim for over the year but the best part of it is the social side, and meeting the American guys. The guy I played with today was a gentleman and a great golfer.



competition, and we welcome each other with open arms because we know what the other guys have been through.”

If there’s one competitor drawing particular admiration out there today, it’s Paul Swain. While single and double leg amputees have to deal with balance and weight transfer issues on the golf course, Paul, a former Royal Lancer, is the only competitor missing an upper limb.

“The guys call me the One-Armed Bandit,” he laughs. “I used to be a tank commander and got injured in Afghanistan when my translator stepped outside the safe zone

**“EVEN IF YOU’VE NEVER PLAYED BEFORE, CHANCES ARE THAT YOU’LL HIT A ‘WOW SHOT’ IN YOUR FIRST SESSION AND BE HOOKED”**

and initiated an IED. I lost my arm but I consider myself lucky because he was killed. My rehab was second to none and Blesma have been absolutely fantastic – they even helped to fund some gym equipment for my new career in fitness training.

“I played golf a bit as a kid, and Blesma introduced me to the On Course Foundation in 2012. I had some muscle memory, but as a golfer your left arm is your ‘direction’ arm and your right arm is the ‘power’ one, so I’ve had to relearn everything. Chipping is the hardest but I’ve got to the point where I’m

**TJ BROOKS**

**Team America’s captain puts camaraderie before Cup success**

**Tell us about your military career...**

I served with the 1st Battalion Marines and was injured in 2011 in Afghanistan. I stepped on a pressure plate IED and lost my right leg above the knee. It’s an injury a lot of the British guys will be familiar with. This tournament is great because we all know what each other has been through, so there’s a real sense of camaraderie.

**How was your golf affected?**

It’s harder for me to transfer my weight, which you need to do for an effective golf swing, but I’ve got around it. Overall, I’m a better player than I was before my amputation and I hit the ball further. I’ve got my handicap down to 11. It’s been a great form of recovery and I’d recommend it to anyone as rehab, even if you’ve never played the game before.



**How has the trip to the UK been?**

It’s been so much fun. I wanted to win, as captain, but regardless of the result we’re happy to be here and it was a great match. The Brits are great guys and we have got to know a lot of them, and become very close.

playing off a handicap of 16. The Simpson Cup is great and it’s all about having fun. I’ve played in all four and I’ll be the captain next year, so the pressure is really on!”

This year’s competition is a close-run affair, with Team GB eventually winning 9.5 to 8.5. After a stirring speech from John Simpson, the sides retire to the clubhouse for a few well-deserved drinks. “We’re disappointed but there’s no bad feeling,” says USA captain TJ Brooks. “Hopefully, we can win the cup back again next year, but for now it’s all about spending time together.”

British captain Jason Evans, meanwhile, is jubilant. “We played well as a team against some great opposition, so I’m really happy;” he says. There’s only one worry left. “We’ll take the Americans out for drinks tonight, but I’m pretty sure we’ll end up having to put them to bed after a couple of beers!”

*If you are interested in trying golf contact Emily Mizon on [mea@blesma.org](mailto:mea@blesma.org) or on 020 8548 7094. You can find out more about the On Course Foundation at [www.oucoursefoundation.com](http://www.oucoursefoundation.com)*





## JESS MARCH

*Jess has only recently taken over as Blesma's new Activities Manager but she already has big plans for 2016...*

**I grew up horse riding. I was lucky because my mum and dad rode, and my aunt ran a stables. I got hooked. I wasn't naturally talented but I worked really hard and represented Team GB in western riding equestrian from the age of 14 to 20. My last year was as captain.**

**After that I coached international equestrian champions and then worked for the military charity Horseback UK. I created a rehabilitation programme, which was a great experience. I went to a lot of events, set up horse shows, brought clients to events – it taught me adaptability and gave me great people skills.**

**Before I applied for this job, I went on a Blesma activity as a carer. I'd met a Member, Ali Grant, and had become friends with her. She invited me on a skiing exped as her carer. She is paralysed from the waist down and was just amazing on the slopes. Everyone was so fast! It was a wonderful trip, and confirmation of the can-do attitude at Blesma.**

**Working with injured veterans has changed my outlook. I used to be quite a negative, pessimistic person, and now I'm very positive. I'm extremely grateful for what I've got.**

**I feel like I've come into this job at a really good time, with all the activities in a great place. I've got the utmost respect for Dave Coulton. He developed events effectively. Blesma had 40 events last year – lots more than when he started. Now it's up to me to take them on even further.**

**Dave built on a structure of Members leading Members. I want to develop that through a leadership programme. We want to give our activity leaders more support through a clear structure and appropriate training. By investing in them, we hope to encourage more Members to take part and secure the activities programme for the future.**

**We're going to carry out a Member's survey to find out how we can get more people involved in activities. There is a great variety to Blesma's activities, from photography to skiing, but we want the Members to guide us more.**

**My first two months here have been great fun. I've met loads of Members already and I want to talk to as many people as possible – to find out how activities changed their lives, because the stories are always so uplifting, but also to get negative feedback and find out how our events can be improved.**

**“I USED TO BE  
QUITE A NEGATIVE,  
PESSIMISTIC  
PERSON, AND  
NOW I'M VERY  
POSITIVE”**

**I want Blesma to host more activities than ever next year. We already have seven new ones lined up. The key is for Members to gain confidence and independence, and enjoy the social aspect in a comfortable environment. Getting Members out of their homes and as active as possible is my aim for next year.**

**A copy of the 2016 Activities Brochure can be found in this issue. Please take a look, choose the activities you'd like to take part in next year, and book your places as soon as you can.**



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