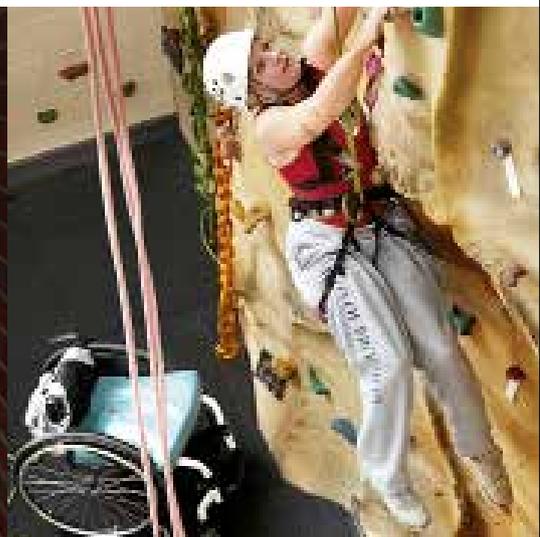


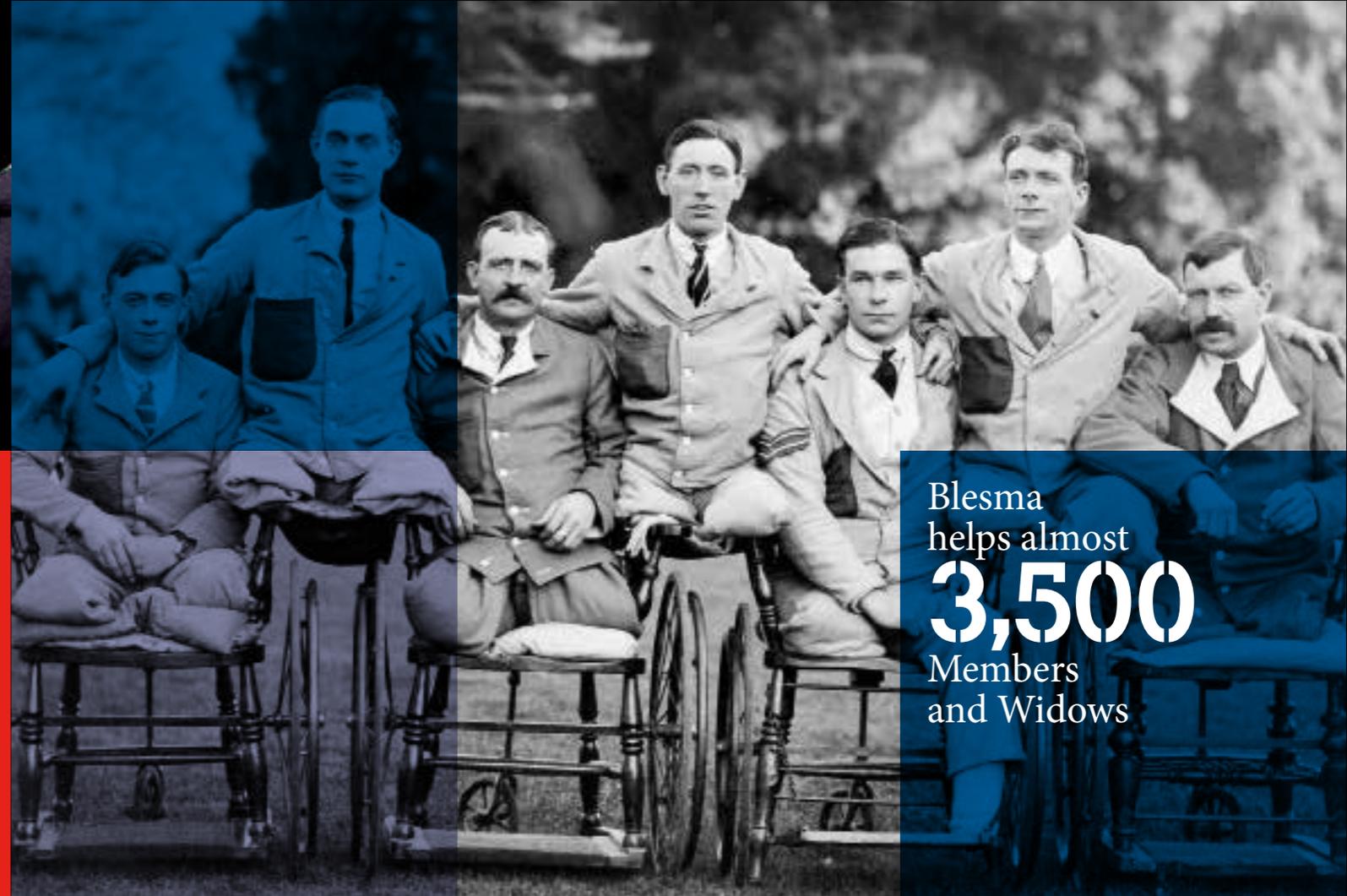
Who we are and what we do



An introduction

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans exists to guarantee our limbless veterans are not failed, forgotten or left to fend for themselves.

With your support, Blesma can ensure that our Service men and women, who have served our country and who endure limb loss every day, can lead independent and fulfilling lives.



Blesma
helps almost
3,500
Members
and Widows

The story so far

The First World War led to the birth of nearly 18,000 charities, of which around 10 exist today. Blesma is one.

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans, is dedicated to assisting serving and ex-Service men and women who have suffered life-changing limb loss or the use of a limb, an eye or loss of sight. We support these men and women in their communities throughout the UK.

We work tirelessly for our Members when the conflicts that have affected their lives are no longer a focal point in the nation's media. Since 1932, we have been the only Service charity that supports limbless veterans for the duration of their lives. Our Members range from the youngest amputee veterans to those who fought in WWII, some having lived with limb loss for more than half a century. Modern medicine transforms the physical injury, but it is a complicated process to treat the emotional trauma and related lifelong health problems.

Our mission

To assist limbless veterans to lead independent and fulfilling lives

Our vision

To safeguard our limbless veterans are not failed, forgotten or left to fend for themselves.

We will realise this vision by

- Delivering unique individual welfare programmes in local communities across the UK
- Delivering an annual programme of amputee-supporting-amputee activities
- Offering residential and convalescence care for our most disabled and infirm
- Advocating at local and national levels on behalf of our Members on issues that concern them

We will always:

- Care
- Be there for our Members through life
- Share our Members' stories
- Strive to learn more
- Offer support and guidance
- Put Members' needs first
- Be relevant to independence and fulfilment
- Be the expert Service charity on living with limb loss





Blesma assisted the uplift of **159** prosthetic prescriptions last year

In the last year Blesma has run **25** different activities for Members



Our expertise

Our team in Chadwell Heath represent the collective interests of the Membership at large. We have a long and proud track record in seeking and achieving improvements in the War Pension, in the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and in improvements in prosthetic services so that our Members are able to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

Our Area Support Officers represent the interests of the individual Members they support, by ensuring local statutory services are delivered, dealing with local authorities on behalf of Members and, where necessary, liaising with other charities and agencies. Here are just some of the ways in which we help and support our Members.

FELLOWSHIP

Members have helped each other since the first days of Blesma. This lies at the heart of what we do and applies our knowledge of Members' shared experiences; of traumatic injury, recuperation and eventual stability. This type of fellowship is not enough for everyone though, so our Welfare Team offers precise professional support when it is needed.

PROSTHETICS

Blesma does not pay for Members' prosthetics, but we do help prosthetists develop their skills at undergraduate and PhD level. We also work closely with the NHS to ensure the latest advances in the relevant medical fields are converted into practical solutions that can benefit all our Members.

ADVICE

We are experts in the War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), as well as a whole range of other allowances. Our team of Blesma Support Officers offer advice and assistance on applications for entitlements, and aid our Members and Widows at War Pension Tribunals and AFCS Hearings.

GRANTS

We offer our Members financial assistance with the additional costs and hardships of disability. We regularly contribute to the provision of wheelchairs, stair lifts, and home and garden adaptations so that they can remain as mobile and independent as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Since our inception, Blesma has campaigned successive governments for equal employment rights, opportunities and practices. Today, we still strive to help Members find employment.

INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY

We believe prosthetics and disabled provision should meet the needs of every individual Member. Our advocacy networking to local and national representatives ensures this is the case.

MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

Staying active after injury is essential to continued health and well-being. These activities and courses range from the cerebral to the adrenaline-fuelled, and are specifically targeted at our Members' needs.

A national issue

Blesma has evolved to become the recognised specialist charity in supporting limbless veterans. Our impact extends beyond our Members and the Armed Forces.

Collaboration between Blesma, NHS centres' teams, Defence Medical Services (particularly the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court) and industry has enhanced prosthetic and orthotic services for those living with limb loss.



A MEMBER'S STORY JON WHITE

Tell us a bit about your background...
I was commissioned into the Royal Marines when I was 19. I took command of 40 Commando Recce Troop in May 2008 and we deployed to Sangin in 2010. I was given charge of my own control base in Mahboob. That's where I was blown up.

How was rehab?
I went into ICU and was unconscious for three days – I couldn't breathe on my own. I only spent 27 nights in hospital, then I went to Headley Court. That was frustrating at times. The last time I used a wheelchair was a year and three days after the bomb.

Was it important to get back to 'normal life' as soon as possible?
Very. I believe you need to get on with rehab quickly or it can be a downward spiral. Stumps change shape if you don't do anything with them. You put on weight, sockets won't fit, it's harder to move...

How have you managed to maintain such a positive attitude?
Early on I made a conscious effort to see the positives in everything. That was difficult at first, but it did become second nature.

How have Blesma been?
Absolutely fantastic. They took me skiing in Colorado and got me involved in the Diamond Jubilee Pageant, which was incredible. But perhaps the most important thing was that early on my Support Officer would just pop in for a cuppa and to check I was OK. They really look out for you.



“Blesma have been fantastic. Early on, my Support Officer would just pop in for a cuppa and to check that I was OK. They really look out for you”

A MEMBER'S STORY BILL SHARPLES

How were you injured?

I served in the Royal Artillery in WWII as a Troop Commander. I was leading my men on patrol when I got hit by heavy shelling. I looked down and my right leg had been blown off and was hanging on by my trousers.

What happened next?

I was taken home. I spent a month in a hospital in Leeds where the doctors gave me a tin leg. I began to heal up, which took another five months or so.

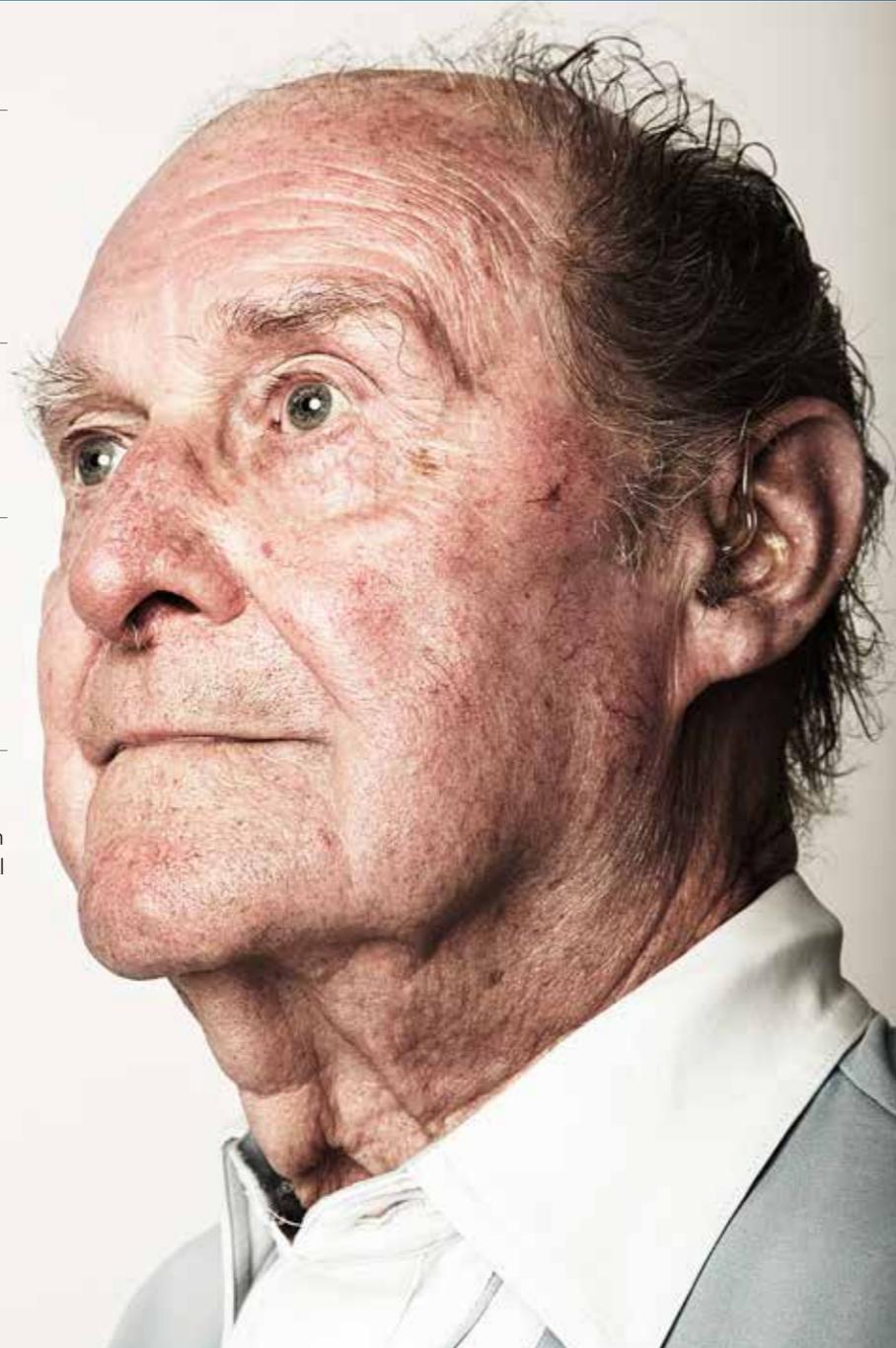
So then it was into civilian life?

I was discharged in May 1946 and bought an old mill – I never took handouts or drew the dole. Later, I ran a Post Office and worked for a brewery. I had seven children, and when I was 50 I retrained as a teacher in a special needs school.

How have Blesma helped?

They have been fantastic to me all my life. They helped so much with my leg and when I moved into the Home [Blesma's residential care home in Blackpool]. It is a wonderful place; the food is superb, and the people are so friendly, caring and helpful.

Blesma has existed,
in some form, since
WWI



Busting the Blesma myths

1

MYTH: "Considering the global impact that modern wars have had on local populations and the injuries sustained by our ex-Service men and women, it may be perceived by my friends that by donating to a Services charity I support the UK's involvement in recent conflicts."

FACT: Blesma is an association of individuals who have served their country. We are not a political organisation, or are pro- or anti-war, but exist to support those who have given so much to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

2

MYTH: "Every British citizen has free access to first-rate prosthetic care from the NHS. Aren't you doubling up on services already provided by the NHS?"

FACT: In 2013, our work played a significant role in ensuring that the country delivered on the promise to provide state-of-the-art prosthetic limbs to all those who have suffered limb loss attributable to their military service. It is a sad fact that prosthetic provision has been hampered by unequal provision across the landscape of "postcode lottery". This is improving due, in part, to our lobbying activities on behalf of our Members and those living with limb loss across the UK. We will continue to work until "postcode lottery" care is a thing of the past.

3

MYTH: "The Disability Discrimination Act ensures disabled people, including amputees, are able to lead the same lives and access the same services as the able-bodied."

FACT: The Disability Discrimination Act aims to ensure that disabled people are treated in a fair and equal way. The Act places duties on providers of goods, facilities and services and makes it unlawful for a service provider to discriminate against a disabled person. But the rehabilitation of amputee veterans is a complex process which requires specific support. We deal with individuals with individual needs which it is impossible to legislate for.

4

MYTH: "The MoD automatically provides compensation and pensions to those who are discharged from the Armed Services."

FACT: Compensation for injury and amputation is not automatic. An application process must be pursued and an ocean of paperwork navigated. On many occasions, because of the physical and mental trauma of the injury, it is not advisable nor possible to begin the application process immediately. We do all we can to ensure application concerns do not impede recovery and ensure veterans are not disadvantaged from changing national policies.

5

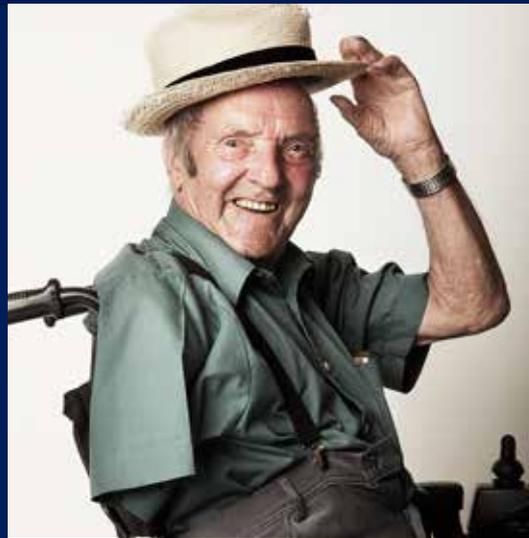
MYTH: "Many of the rehabilitative activities Blesma offers are in far-off countries. This seems like an extravagant use of charity donations."

FACT: Less than a quarter of our amputee-supporting-amputee activities take place overseas, and those that do are often with counterparts in other countries. Securing value for money in every part of our operation is a priority for Blesma. Much of the cost of these activities and expeditions are for professional care, training and equipment. Every activity we deliver is scrutinised in cost and practical impact on Members' health and wellbeing.



Blesma

THE LIMBLESS VETERANS



Thank you for your interest in our work. If you would like to find out more about how we support our limbless veterans and their families, please contact us.

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