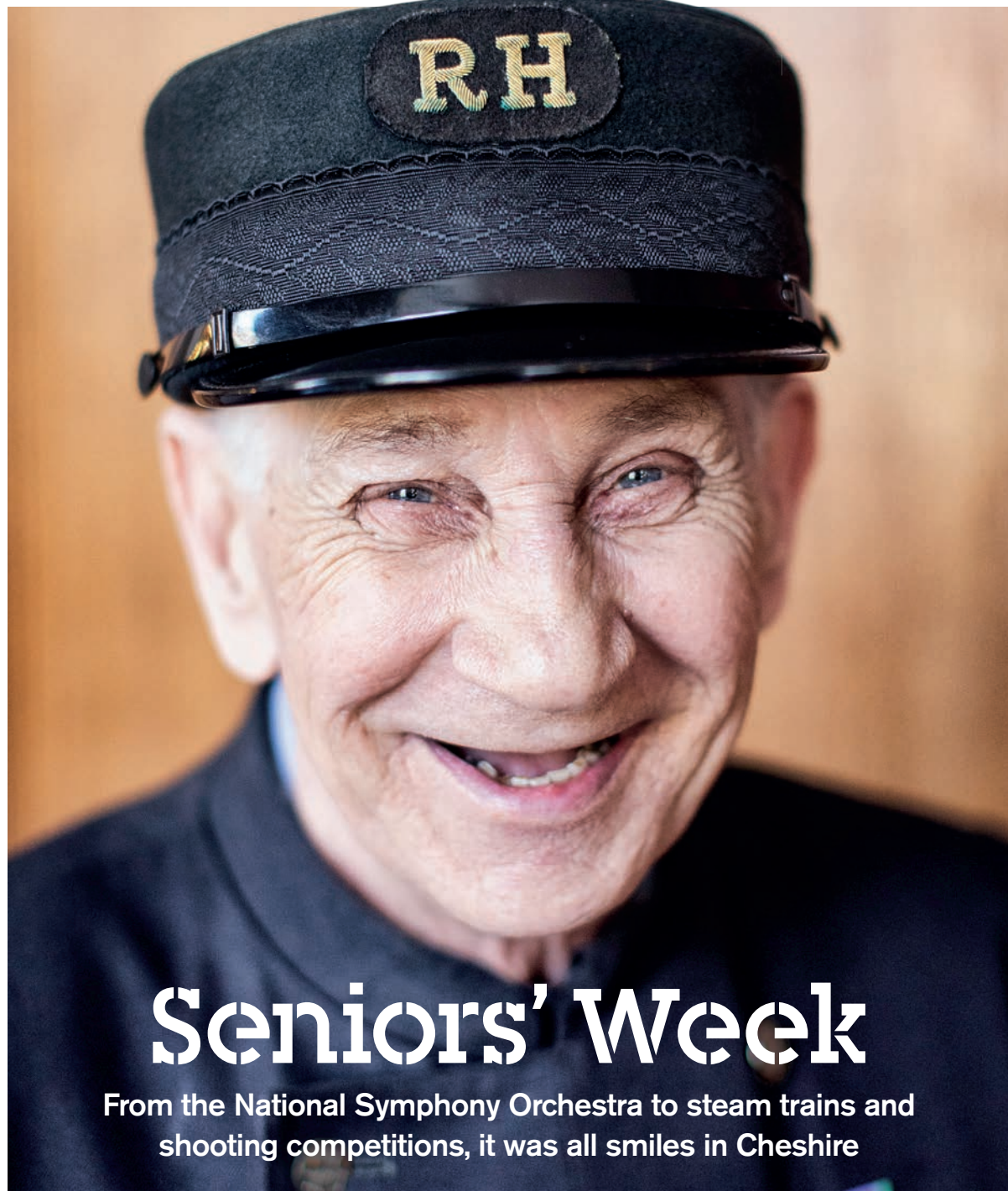


# Blesma

Bulletin Members' Newsletter Autumn/Winter 2018

Have you suffered loss?  
We'll help you find help  
Don't deal with loss alone **p20**

Has your GP promised  
to be Veteran Friendly?  
A new doctrine for doctors **p24**



## Seniors' Week

From the National Symphony Orchestra to steam trains and shooting competitions, it was all smiles in Cheshire

**Inside: Book Members' Weekend 2019 now!**

**Members sail to Jersey as part of  
Blesma's WWI commemorations**

**In the Winter issue of  
Blesma Magazine. Out soon!**



# Blesma Bulletin

## Autumn/Winter 2018



The year is passing fast and we now look to next year's Members' Weekend. It will be at a new location in Oxfordshire with lots of scope. Please see the outline details in this issue and start

making preparations. We introduced the new Outreach Officers at this year's Weekend and they are now most active thanks to your support, with local activities on the rise as a result. The article on sailing in Northern Ireland is a good example. We aim for more and your ideas are welcomed.

Already there has been a staff change, with Pat Donnachie succeeding Bill Gillett as the Support Officer in area South. We welcome Member Andy Barlow who succeeds Pat as the Outreach Officer, and wish Bill the best for his retirement. Sadly, we have said farewell to Blesma Area Meetings South and Midlands after more than 50 years of service, but their Branches continue to go forth and now have the Outreach Officers in support.

We have been working particularly closely with the National Health Services recently, and you can read about some of the topics in this issue.

We do much work behind the scenes for Members, navigating the complex NHS, and usually succeed in achieving a better service. I recommend the patience and perseverance of Brain Chenier, our Support Officer (Prosthetics), who writes in this issue. He helps Members to get an effective health service, and he can be called directly.

We are pleased with the commemorative issue of the magazine, and it has received much praise. Elsewhere, 25 Members took part in the commemorative performance *This Is Not For You*, and despite the gales, Members crewed a tall ship to Jersey. Blesma remembered 1918 in its own way, with Members at the heart of all the activity.

We are conscious that not all those who might be eligible to join Blesma get to hear of us. Please continue to spread the word and look out for any potential Members. If you do find somebody, alert your Outreach or Support Officer, or phone Elaine at Chadwell Heath. Finally, please contact Sue on 020 8548 7091 to order your delightful Blesma Christmas cards. They are so much more special than an email or a dash of social media.

**Barry Le Gry, Chief Executive**



### IN THIS ISSUE

ACTIVITIES	04
PROSTHETICS UPDATE	11
BRANCH NEWS	12
HELP AND ADVICE	20
HEALTH	24
MEMBERS' WEEKEND 2019	25
BENEFITS	26
CONTACT DETAILS	30

# Fab Family Fun

## Families Activities Week 06-10 August

**N**ot quite knowing what we should expect from the Families Activities Week, and with Ellie (7) and Ben (4) in tow, we decided to cover our backs with a weekend in London first. The kids loved *Walking with Dinosaurs* and *School of Rock*, but we needn't have worried; the week with Blesma surpassed our expectations and we all had an absolute ball.

We arrived at Marwell Activity Centre on Monday 06 August, where we found BSO South East and event organiser Bill Gillett waiting for us. After a site briefing and an evening meal with the other Blesma families (Pete, Ava and Noah, and Conrad, Donna and Alfie), the kids went off with new-found friends to wreak havoc in the playground while we settled into our four-bedroomed tent complete with fridge, microwave, kettle, patio and BBQ (definitely more glamping than camping!)

A cooked breakfast on the Tuesday morning was followed by a gentle introduction to activities, with the kids on a 'gnome hunt' and the adults 'wayfaring' (it's like orienteering, only more leisurely). Needless to say the kids were 100 per cent successful, whilst the adults attributed a lack of time to not quite completing our task!

Any remaining cobwebs were then blown away by quad biking sessions either side of lunch

across some great (and sometimes challenging) terrain, while the kids enjoyed electric cars, some climbing and the soft play area.

The final activity was a canoeing and kayaking session, which concluded with a game of water polo between boys and girls that saw the competitive spirit come to the fore. Several members of both teams ended up in the water as they over-reached! The boys were victorious, mostly because of a secret weapon in the shape of a 'bootneck' who was in his element on the water!

Our family missed the aerial course on the Wednesday morning as we'd booked our kids into a half-day horse riding course at nearby stables, but we were back in time for lunch to find another family (Ben, Kirsty, Blake and Caleb) had joined for the day.

The afternoon started with archery and (adult) Ben proving that he was the 'Robin Hood of Marwell'. Then it was back out into the woods for an afternoon of fun on the zip lines (for the adults) and an adventure trail (for the kids). There was a beginners' and a main zip line, and the group tried them both a number of times, striking different poses depending on confidence, and/or if the kids were watching. We ended the day with another group scoff or scran (depending on whether you were Army or Navy).

Thursday began with the climbing wall for everyone. The competitive spirit came out again, initially on a personal level – taking on the wall – and then on more of a 'pride' level as the kids showed the adults how it should be done!

Two sessions of clay pigeon shooting followed for the adults (so they could alternate supervising the kids on the electric cars, small climbing wall and small zip line). Donna, who had never shot any kind of weapon before in her life, showed the Forces veterans how it should be done by winning the competition. Cue a number of excuses about the shotguns not being zeroed!

Finally, it was time to take on the obstacle course. Most veterans will recall having to get up and over a 6ft wall at some point in their career – usually in Basic Training – and this certainly brought back memories as we clambered over the wall, fell over/off cargo nets, negotiated a pitch-black tunnel, and came up with unique ways of crossing a lake on a couple of logs. It was great fun!

Thursday concluded with a group barbecue courtesy of Sandra, who served up a fab selection of burgers, sausages, chicken and vegetables, along with all the requisite sides.

After breakfast on Friday we packed up, picked up our packed lunches, posed for a few group



photographs, thanked Bill and the Marwell staff for a fantastic week, and headed off in our own time for the final activity; a relaxed visit to Marwell Zoo, before heading for home.

The best breaks and trips I've experienced have been the ones where I've returned buzzing but feeling I needed another break to recover, and that was certainly the case this time! I completed activities I hadn't tried in a long time, and really enjoyed the mental exhilaration, all of which was made even more enjoyable as I was able to share the experience with both my own and other Blesma families.

The staff at Marwell got it spot on by encouraging everyone to try everything, but without being pushy – everyone could do as much or as little as they wanted. The staff were also very flexible as Bill (ably supported by daughter Sophie) ensured we maximised the opportunities available at the centre. I would return any time.

My only criticism? It all ended too quickly!

Thank you Blesma, from all the Keating clan, for a great week, an incredibly positive experience both physically and mentally, and a load of fantastic memories.

*By Mike Keating*



**Clockwise from top: the pigeons didn't stand a chance, Ben and Noah on the Gnome Hunt, Ava and Ellie go for a spin in the electric cars, and Pete and Ava take on the climbing wall**

# Blesma Horse Experience

## September 2018 at St. Leonards Equestrian Centre, Cornwall

**T**his was an event aimed at those with very little or no experience with horses; very much a beginners' guide to horsemanship. We certainly exceeded our aims, with the participants including someone with a horse phobia, one person who hadn't ridden since she was a youngster, and a 79 year old who was a first timer! Myself and one other Member had varying experiences with horses.

We met up at St. Leonards on Monday 17 September to settle into our self-catering accommodation and get to know one another. The jokes soon started! Emma Burns arrived just in time for tea with a loaf of her home-baked Guinness and treacle bread. She quickly became a friend for life!

Tuesday morning started with a talk by centre owner Andy Reeve, ably assisted by daughter Alex, who is an accredited instructor. We learned about the conformation of horses and what buyers look for in a horse, as Alex led in different horses to highlight Andy's talk.

Alex took over and demonstrated some basic horsemanship skills; how to approach a horse, grooming, and a briefing about tack.

After lunch (which included a different type of homemade bread from Emma!) we saddled up three horses for our first group riding lesson. We started with walking and gradually built up to trotting

around the arena. Paul Stocker had a fear of horses, but the lessons so far had shown him there was no need to worry and he took to it like a duck to water. In fact, his ears were covered by his lips because his grin was so huge!

Tom Gower, at the age of 79, had his first taste of horse riding – what a great achievement! Next up was Jon Thornley, who has quite a bit of riding experience and volunteers at his local stables a few days a week. Then it was Emma's turn. She hadn't ridden since she was a child but she rose to the occasion like one of her fabulous loaves of bread (pun, or should that be 'bun' intended). Finally, it was my go; I have a bit of experience so was comfortable.

With the riding lesson done, the horses were detacked and let out into the field. I know that we were pleased as everyone was smiling!

To finish off the day we sat down with Andy again and went through the 'points' of a horse (the main parts you can see). It was interesting

to discover that a horse's bone structure is similar to ours in all but size. Andy then took us to see two horses and their foals – perhaps the very definition of sweetness!

Wednesday arrived and five horses were turned out for us. With the grooming and tacking up completed, the second group lesson got underway. I was lucky enough to ride Tamara, Andy's ex-competition horse. Tamara was very responsive and gave me my first-ever canter. She also gave me my first attempt at jumping – this was supposed to be a steady trot over some low poles but Tamara had different ideas!

Changing from a dressage horse to a show jumper, she leapt over some high poles (which weren't actually there!) All this happened in front of Outreach Officer Rupert Lucas and the rest of the crew who, whilst concerned, had that usual military humour in place. Jon enjoyed riding a thoroughbred and everyone had smiles at the end once again.

**“Paul Stocker had a fear of horses, but he took to it like a duck to water. Tom Gower, at the age of 79, had his first taste of horse riding as well - what a great achievement for both of them!”**



A short oral test about the points of a horse followed, and we proved that our short-term memories were working! Then we had a break for lunch. Rupert joined us and Nina, my wife, brought us some pasties.

After lunch, we went for a hack around the St Leonards cross country course on the same horses. Everyone did really well – especially when it came to riding through a river. After a final detack and farewell to our steeds, we sat down with Andy once again. Alex rode her horse and demonstrated jumping and dressage techniques while Andy pointed out what to look for in both the rider and the horse.

The final part of the course was a presentation of BHS certificates to everyone who took part for a job well done. Our last night was a quiet one thanks to two very busy days behind us and a journey home the following morning.

Thank you to Blesma for your support in getting this event off the ground, something I hope that we can set up again in the near future.

*By Ian Whiting*



**Clockwise from top: Jon Thornley, Emma Burns and Paul Stocker were just three of the Members who had a fantastic experience learning to ride on the recent Blesma Horse Experience**

# York to New York: Blesma goes Stateside



**T**hank you for your service sir!” Turning around to look into the earnest faces of two children, thanking them in return, I continued with my lunch. I was one of six Blesma Members and 50 or so American ex-Service men and women taking part in the Wounded Warrior Project’s three-day cycling event through New York and Long Island.

We had been thoroughly briefed on arrival by Adam Faine, the Soldier Ride manager, as to what was expected of us. The no alcohol rule came as a bit of a shock but made good sense, and we were told there would be a prize for the rider who demonstrated traits such as encouragement and cheerfulness.

Day one started with a 4.30am alarm call. We were taken by coach into New York for the opening

ceremony, flanked by motorcycle police who expertly cleared the route. If there is one thing America excels at, it is opening ceremonies. There were crowds cheering, cars honking, the New York Fire Brigade Pipe Band giving it their all, and the American Bombshells in full swing with Old Glory.

And then we were off! Blesma leading, with the hand bikes in front. The first day was a 19-miler from the Fox and Friends studio, over the Brooklyn Bridge, to Coney Island. That afternoon, after the ride, we paid our respects at the 9/11 Museum at Ground Zero.

Over the next two days, we rode (23 and then 27 miles) through the villages and small towns of Long Island, the roads lined with cheering schoolchildren. And, seemingly in the blink of an eye,

it was all over and we were having lunch when the aforementioned children so politely thanked me for my service. This amazing journey started for me last year at a Blesma Introduction to Cycling weekend in York. Now I was in New York having just taken part in something that had immediately become a highlight of my entire life. Thank you Blesma!

I must pay tribute to all the people who made the entire event seamless. Of the Warriors whom I met, I think there can be no better cross section of American society. I’m privileged to have got to know them a little bit.

Perhaps a cautionary note is in order: as I mentioned earlier, this was an alcohol-free event for the duration. No question. We were representing Blesma, and perhaps our Army and the United Kingdom were being judged by our conduct.

And the cycling was not a dawdle or a doddle – a blistering pace was set by the entire group. It had to be, as the roads were closed for us – remember this is rush hour New York!

I would also like to thank the British Airways cabin staff who, on our return flight, presented each of us with a bottle of champagne. Finally, that prize I mentioned earlier was won by... me, Blesma Member Alec Beer. God Bless America!

*By Alec Beer*



# Blesma makes a huge splash in Belfast Lough

**F**or some of our Members, this was the first Blesma event they had attended, and we certainly adopted the ‘I can and I will’ attitude as we sailed with the Army Sailing Association (ASA) and Belfast Lough Sailability (BLS).

The use of two offshore yachts *Tern* and *Gerona* meant that everyone was involved, having the chance to skipper and communicate with a crew. Members were able to experience sailing on the open water, whilst speedboats and offshore ribs brought a totally different and exhilarating experience to the day. For some Members, this was the chance to try something they had never considered was even possible. The enthusiasm and laughter were infectious. That’s enough from me; here are a few quotes from our Members to give a flavour of the day..

“Brilliant day out”, “Best day out I’ve had in a long time”, “Awesome”, “So what’s next?”, “Blesma is now more than just a magazine”, “It’s nice to have an event in Northern Ireland”.

Meanwhile, Robbie from the Army Sailing Association said; “The Blesma team should be very proud of the day’s achievements and participation. Your Members and families were not only a pleasure to work with but also an inspiration. Everybody who I met wanted to participate in the activities, this was achieved by their will and can-do attitude.

“It was particularly satisfying to see young children skippering large yachts, with their parents delivering practical guidance and working together as a team. I have always employed the ‘happy to help you help yourself’ ethos, and your Members were incredible not only by suggesting ideas and ways to access some of the vessels, but by the commitment to get involved.”

The day was made a total success by the ASA, BLS, their amazing volunteers, and our own volunteer Kate. A big shout out to them – and they’ve said that we can come back, so watch this space!

by *Fiona Morrison, Blesma Outreach Officer*



**Members and their families enjoy a blast on Belfast Lough**

## ACTIVITIES

"Brilliant seven days. Outings varied and fun. Haven't laughed so much in years. Thanks Pete and Steve!"

*Kate Chapman 1*

"I really enjoyed this week. Rooms lovely and comfy. Pete and Steve took us out every day to somewhere different... Met some lovely ladies."

*Linda Rowbottom 2*

"Fantastic holiday at Alvaston Hall. Well looked after by Pete and Steve. Nothing was too much trouble. Thank you Blesma."

*Ros Corfield 3*

"Thanks so much for another wonderful Widows' Week. Hotel, food and staff were great, as were the visits out."

*Biddy Anders 4*

"My first Widows' Week, and what a lovely time! Pete and Steve took us out every day to wonderful places. Ten stars to Blesma for a great holiday."

*Joyce Parry 5*

"First time away since losing my husband. Ladies were amazing. Had a great time. Thank you Blesma."

*Denise Fitzgerald 6*

# Widows' Week



## 14 September 2018

"Fantastic holiday – fun and laughter every single day. Two wonderful BSOs to care for us."

*Pat Whittaker 7*

"Heard the story of the 12 widows and two married men? Apply for Widows' Week 2019 and all will be revealed. And how you will laugh!"

*Nancy McCormack 8*

"Thanks to Pete and Steve. Had a wonderful time. Great company, great venue and great trips out."

*Rae Murray 9*

"Most enjoyable seven days with Pete and Steve. I am an amputee and they went out of their way to make me feel safe. I am very grateful to Blesma."

*Agnes Frew 10*

"Thank you both for a great holiday. I had a wonderful time and very much hope to be there again next year."

*Jean Scanlan 11*

"An amazing treat. So well looked after by Pete and Steve. Wonderful trips arranged to places I'd never even heard of. Thank you."

*Coral McKenzie 12*

# Don't slip on the ice (or on the wet leaves)

**A**s we prepare ourselves for the Autumn and Winter months ahead, we listen to advice about making sure our cars are serviced and carrying essential kit in case of emergencies.

But what if you use prosthetics, a wheelchair, or other mobility aids? Similar simple rules apply. Making sure that whatever mobility aid you rely on is in sound working order is vital. Prosthetic limbs should, where possible, be checked and serviced by your provider.

If you have never worn your prosthetic in cold, wet or icy conditions, now is the time to plan ahead. Ask a clinician about any special considerations you should take into account. In extreme cold you may find that an extra sock or two is needed at the start of the day to cover your stump, removing them as your body warms up and the blood begins to flow.

Planning journeys will already be routine, but it might be necessary to change routes in bad weather to avoid troublesome areas; missing out a road where you know your wheelchair will have a tough time due to water, mud or ice, for example. If venturing out on your own, let someone know where you are going and when you expect to get there or be back. Sitting in the cold and wet with a puncture in your wheelchair is never fun!

So if you use mobility aids, be safe and make sure you plan ahead.



## NHS England Prosthetic Service Review – Update

The review being conducted by NHS England into prosthetic services is gathering pace and a recent public survey has been completed.

A large number of patients completed the survey, which asked some fairly broad questions to gauge user experience. This will now be analysed and will subsequently form the basis of a more detailed and prolonged public/patient engagement.

Blesma remains a constant member of the project team to

ensure patient engagement is central to any future decisions. We will give notice of any future opportunities to provide input into this review. The recent survey was only available online for a short period, but the next opportunity to contribute will be more widely accessible.

*For more on these or any other prosthetics issues, please get in touch with BSO (Prosthetics) Brian Chenier at Chadwell Heath on 020 8548 7080 or by email at [bsoprosthetics@blesma.org](mailto:bsoprosthetics@blesma.org), or visit [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)*

# News from across the Branches

## MIDLANDS

### Visit to the National Memorial Arboretum

Twenty one Blesma Members and four guests enjoyed a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum on Sunday 16 September. There were 12 from the Walsall and District Branch, 10 from the Nottingham Branch, and three from the Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft Branch.

The weather was very kind to us, as it only rained whilst we were in the restaurant enjoying lunch! For some, it was their first visit to the NMA, and for others it was a chance to experience the new Exhibition Centre and the much improved cafeteria.

Nearing completion is a large Events Centre, costing £1.8M, which will provide a theatre-style forum for up to 500 delegates, and dining facilities for up to 300 people. Two classrooms have also been built for school parties.

Our day started with a welcome talk and a short service in the chapel. Some Members then enjoyed an hour-long train ride around the site, whilst the more energetic took a guided walk. An excellent two-course lunch was enjoyed by all in the restaurant, and Members were then free to visit the Armed Forces Memorial, the Exhibition Centre, or other memorials as they saw fit.

We rounded off the day with a group photograph in the Blesma



Garden – it has either been a bad year for apples or many had already been picked by visitors! However, there were still some on the trees so we didn't leave completely empty-handed!

*Mike Gallagher*

*Hon Secretary, Midlands Area*

## SUTTON, MERTON AND DISTRICT

The Sutton, Merton and District Branch would like to thank the local residents who attended the Banstead Village Fair and Waitrose Cheam for their recent generous donations which help us to support

Members both new and old. The Branch Members would also like to thank our Branch officers for their fantastic and tireless work behind the scenes, keeping us all in order and maintaining our Branch.

As we approach our 70th anniversary year, work is already underway (supported by our BSO Paul Findlay and Blesma Chadwell Heath) to ensure we celebrate the occasion appropriately and that it is accessible for Branch Members new, old and potential, as well as our supporters and guests.

We must also thank Bryony Stevens at Chadwell Heath who is hoping to secure her TA centre in Morden as a potential location for the celebration. We are sure it would be more interesting and appropriate than another location.

We would like to remind all Blesma Members that whilst our branch name is Sutton, Merton and District Branch, we have many Members from beyond this area as our Branch is open to all Blesma Members who wish to attend.

**“The Branch Members would like to thank our Branch officers for all their fantastic and tireless work behind the scenes, and for keeping us all in order and maintaining our Branch”**



Members from the Midland Area visit the National Memorial Arboretum,

So we would encourage and openly invite any Blesma Member to pop along and join in any of our meetings, which are usually held over a pie and a pint. Please don't be shy as we would really like to meet and welcome you to our friendly and very sociable Branch.

We work with our BSO Paul Findlay and Blesma Outreach Officer Alida Horne, whom we thank for their help and continued support, to ensure that Members are able to attend. So don't let concerns about accessibility or transport put you off. If you have any questions or are considering popping along, contact our **Branch Ambassador Steve on 07917 177 336 or [steve@geniuns.co.uk](mailto:steve@geniuns.co.uk)** so that we can answer any questions you may have and ensure that we look out for you.

### PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

On the weekend of 17 June, Branch Members attended a fundraising event at Tesco in Fareham. Thanks must go to Janet Riddell and her partner Elmo for their tireless fundraising, and for organising a superb raffle that raised more than £1,000.

On 30 June, Branch Members travelled to Portsmouth Dockyard for Armed Forces Day, where we handed out leaflets explaining about Blesma and managed to raise more than £100. We also met some Blesma Members who were unaware that there is an active branch in Portsmouth.


On 08 August, David Bland kindly hosted a BBQ in his garden for Branch Members. Although there were only 12 of us we had a very enjoyable afternoon. David

has just been to New Zealand where he completed a 12,000ft assisted parachute jump, again raising funds for the Branch.

Our Christmas Lunch will be held on Sunday 02 December, and all Members in the South Area are welcome to attend. For more details, contact **Sheila Brown on [sheilabrown831@outlook.com](mailto:sheilabrown831@outlook.com) or write to her at 36 Priorsdean Crescent, Havant, PO9 3AT.**

# NHS mental health service for veterans in Wales

An NHS service for veterans with a 'Service-related' mental health condition living in Wales  
[www.veteranswales.co.uk](http://www.veteranswales.co.uk)

 Each Local Health Board (LHB) has appointed an experienced clinician as a Veteran Therapist (VT) with experience of or an interest in military (mental) health problems. The VT will accept referrals from health care staff, GPs, veterans charities and self-referrals from ex-Service personnel. The appropriate VT can be contacted by going to your LHB page on the website [www.veteranswales.co.uk](http://www.veteranswales.co.uk) and using one of the contact methods including telephone, email or fax.

Appointments will be arranged as close to the veteran's home as possible in a suitable venue. The service is not able to respond to emergency referrals. Veterans in crisis should contact their GP or the Out of Hours Service. There is a psychiatrist on call at all Accident and Emergency Units in District General Hospitals. Alternatively, you can call a 24/7 helpline on 0800 132 737.

Following the assessment, the veteran may be offered treatment by the VT or referred to other NHS teams or departments for further treatment. The VT will also refer to veterans charities for help with debt management, benefits, and War Pension/ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme claims as indicated. The service is unable to provide a diagnosis for Armed Forces Compensation Scheme claims.

*If you would like to discuss a referral or you require further information about the service, please contact 029 2183 2261 or send an email to [admin.vnhswwc&v@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:admin.vnhswwc&v@wales.nhs.uk)*

Referral advice is given to organisations such as Social Services, Veterans UK, RBL, CAB, SSAFA and Blesma, The Limbless Veterans.

1. Veterans or Reservists with mild mental health difficulties should be encouraged to present to their General Practitioner for assessment and appropriate management.
2. Veterans and Reservists with Service-related needs that are believed to require more specific care should be referred to Veterans' NHS Wales via the online referral form.
3. Veterans or Reservists requiring urgent or emergency assessment (e.g. posing a significant risk to themselves or others) should be referred to their GP, local mental health crisis service, or local Emergency Unit.
4. Veterans or Reservists with non-Service related mental health difficulties or conditions requiring input from other specialist mental health services (e.g. dementia, psychosis, substance dependence) should be encouraged to present to their GP for assessment and appropriate management.
5. Veterans or Reservists who fall under points 1 and 4 who are not willing to present to their GP, despite encouragement to do so, can be referred to Veterans' NHS Wales if it is felt that this is necessary to help them engage with appropriate NHS services.

*Self-referral and other information can be found at the Veterans' NHS Wales website: [www.veteranswales.co.uk](http://www.veteranswales.co.uk)*

# Meet Andy Barlow GM

## The new Outreach Officer South

### How did you find out about Blesma?

I've actually been a Blesma Member for 12 years. When I woke up in Selly Oak hospital as an amputee, two Blesma Members came to visit me. They told me about the Association and signed me up there and then!

### How were you injured?

I was serving with 2nd Battalion The Royal Fusiliers in Kajaki, Afghanistan. On 06 September 2006, I was helping two injured colleagues when a landmine was triggered and exploded. I lost my left leg above the knee.

### What activities have you done with the Association?

I started off by trying sailing and then experienced the world of skiing for the first time on Blesma's Ski Spectacular activity, which was phenomenal! I think it gives the younger generation an insight into disabled sport and recovery. It opens up the whole recovery process, transitioning from an able-bodied life into a less able life, but with an outcome that I can still live life. I think that's important.

### Why did you decide that you wanted to work for Blesma?

When I retired from professional skiing, I wanted to get back into a community and a charity that



delivers what it says on the mission statement. That's why I applied to Blesma. I have worked with young adults and people with disabilities all over the world, and have dealt with welfare cases that have focused on different aspects of people's lives, whether that be mental health or amputation.

### What are you hoping to achieve in your new role?

I would like to have a positive impact on people's lives. I have an understanding of the recovery process, so I want to be able to visit people on a daily basis and make sure they are getting what they

are entitled to. I think that's really important, as is listening, understanding and making sure that the charity goes forward in a positive way.

### Tell us a little bit about you?

My passions are sports and my two young sons. We enjoy spending most of our time playing sports, so on weekends we'll go for walks and bike rides, we go kayaking or take part in a number of other extreme sports. I've been away skiing professionally for a lot of their lives, so now it's time to work within the Blesma community and spend time with the boys, too.

# Seniors' Week

## An action-packed week in the North West

**S**eniors' Week started with everyone arriving at the impressive Alvaston Hall nestled in the Cheshire countryside. We had a wonderful mix this year, a 93-year-old D-Day veteran, a Chelsea Pensioner, two Widows and four seniors, three of whom attended with their partners. The group instantly got on and were excited by the week of activities that the BSOs had planned for them, not to mention the entertainment that Warner's had planned in-house.

**SATURDAY** – We embarked on a vintage steam train ride and had reservations in their wonderful dining car. Each Member enjoyed a three-course roast dinner during the scenic ride, which even happened upon a pheasant shoot. Len Shorthouse said that this was an item ticked off his Bucket List.

The evening was spent watching the National Symphony Orchestra playing in the ballroom at Alvaston Hall. The spectacle was based on the Last Night of the Proms and was enjoyed by all.

**SUNDAY** – A relaxing day that included a visit to a local steam industrial museum that was hosting a classic and military car rally. The Members enjoyed reminiscing and telling stories about the cars they had once owned. The visit finished with a lovely afternoon tea.

**MONDAY** – A day off that ended up with a trip to see the famous Poppies 'Wave' at the Imperial War Museum (North). A very poignant day that was enjoyed by all. With





our Members having served in a number of conflicts, the various exhibitions struck chords and invoked meaningful conversations on the bus on the way home.

**TUESDAY** – We had the pleasure of visiting the beautiful city of Chester. We enjoyed a private tour of the Cheshire Military Museum followed by the Grosvenor Roman Museum. It was one of our spouses (Muriel's) 83rd birthday, so we celebrated by going to a Belgian chocolatier where we enjoyed a lovely lunch before everyone had a few hours to shop and sightsee.

**WEDNESDAY** – Everyone's favourite day; a trip to the National Memorial Arboretum, where we had a tour of the Blesma Gardens and each Member's regimental memorial. Following lunch, we spent an hour at the Armed Forces Memorial, many finding names of those with whom they served.

**THURSDAY** – An organised shooting competition was enjoyed by all – especially by the ladies as Carol Smithers (spouse) topped the charts with an amazing 83 points out of 90. Our Chelsea Pensioner Lawrence Jablonski came second, with Diane Townsend in third.

**FRIDAY** – Depart.

*The next Widows' Week will run from 01-08 April 2019 in Cricket St. Thomas, Somerset. The next Seniors' Week will be held the following week (08-15 April) in the same location.*

*To apply for either event, please contact Emily Mizon on 020 8548 7094 or at meo@blesma.org by 01 January 2019.*

## What did you think of Seniors' Week

### LEONARD (AND MURIEL) SHORTHOUSE

#### Why did you apply for Seniors' Week?

Our BSO invited us to a local event and we thought it was amazing to meet other Blesma Members. I didn't know I was eligible for Blesma membership as I thought it was only for war wounded.

#### What was the highlight of the week for you?

Going to the National Memorial Arboretum. I'm lucky to have travelled the world, but I can't get over the impact the NMA has on everyone who visits. Seeing the number of names on the wall of those who have perished since the end of WWII is an eye opener.

#### What would you say to those who have not tried a Blesma event?

You must make the most of opportunities that are presented to you. If you get the opportunity to go away with Blesma, please take it up!

### MARGARET CHENIER

#### As a Blesma Widow, why did you apply for Seniors' Week?

I love the activities and the good company; the Widows, seniors, and couples. It makes for amazing conversation and it beats going on holiday on your own!

#### What was your highlight from the week?

I can't name one; the evening at the Last Night of the Proms, the food, the company... it's been one fantastic thing after another.

### BOB (AND CAROL) SMITHERS

#### How long have you been a Member?

Just over a year, and it's already changed my life! My wife and I went to Members' Weekend and heard how wonderful these weeks are.

#### What did you think of the week overall?

The Last Night of the Proms and the trip to the NMA were amazing. The staff at the hotel made us feel very welcome and having a fully accessible wet room meant Carol, my wife, could really relax.

#### Would you go on another Blesma trip?

Without a doubt! Without Blesma, I'd be stuck in my armchair at home. Knowing someone is a phone call away puts us both at ease.

### ROY (AND DIANE) TOWNSEND

#### If you could do one of the days again, what would it be?

The NMA was so poignant for both of us, although Diane loved the steam train and the Roman museums.

#### What impact has this week had on you both?

The people we've met have been amazing – I've never met a group like it on any activity. My confidence has grown so much. Diane said that seeing me make friends and socialise just blew her away. This has truly been a break for her as well, knowing that I was in good hands just gave her complete peace of mind.

# The Frankland Moore Mixed Golf Competition

*Background to the Frankland Moore Mixed Golf Competition, which started in 1964*

**M**ajor Charles Frankland Moore and his wife Violet Elizabeth Moore MBE joined the Roehampton Club in September 1954. The trophies that bear their names were introduced in 1964 following several golf committee meetings recorded in the Club archives from 1963.

The minutes of one particular meeting – on 10 November 1963 – refer to a charity golf event held at the Roehampton Club on behalf of the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association, with which the Frankland Moores were involved.

The event itself is featured on the Blesma website in the form of a black and white *Pathé News* film clip including the voice-over from newsreel announcer, Bob Danvers-Walker and footage of Sir Douglas Bader. (To see the film, go to [www.blesma.org/about-us/our-history](http://www.blesma.org/about-us/our-history) and scroll to *1963 War Heroes Compete in their own Golfing Championship*.)

After several more meetings, the committee agreed to hold a Mixed Competition for the Frankland Moore Cups on Sunday 19 April 1964. The competition entry fee was three shillings, with an optional sweepstake of two shillings per person to be donated to Blesma. There would also be

a putting competition at a cost of one shilling per score card.

The format for the Mixed Competition was agreed as 18 holes Stableford, with a maximum handicap of 30 for the ladies and 21 for the men. Major Moore and his wife agreed to provide a silver salver and candlesticks as prizes as well as the two cups. The records show that 104 players entered the inaugural event and a total amount of £17 shillings and 12 pence was collected and sent to Blesma.

With a great deal of help and grateful thanks to the current Chief Executive of Blesma, the club is now in possession of a book called *Out on a Limb* celebrating their Golden Jubilee from 1932-1982. Within these pages, the remarkable contributions from the Frankland Moores and their life-long support of good causes makes for some very interesting reading.

The book is startling in its praise for the fundraising skills of Violet Elizabeth Moore and her ability to generate significant amounts of money. Her upbringing had been influenced by the loss of her fathers' sight when she was eight years old, meaning she spent much of her childhood acting as his eyes, especially on visits to hospitals.

She cemented her reputation in China, becoming the honorary organiser of the British Aid to China Fund, raising a staggering £3 million. This was also where

she met her husband, Major Charles Frankland Moore, who was working for the Sino-British Fellowship Trust helping scores of Chinese students fund their education.

Major Moore had been a war veteran of both World Wars. He was injured in a tank battle at Cambrai in 1918 and survived being half buried alive to serve again in the Second World War on the staff of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) working behind enemy lines.

Working tirelessly with his wife for the benefit of others, the Major also found time to design a Coat of Arms for Blesma in 1958. While the couple are no longer with us, the Frankland Moore Mixed Golf Competition provides a timely reminder to those who cared.

*By Steve Riedlinger  
Club Archivist, Roehampton Club*

# A focused local activity: Isle of Man photography

**T**he Blesma Members who attended the recent local photography activity on the Isle of Man would like to say a big thank you to John Francis and Terri Hunt for a great week.

The entire activity was extremely well organised and structured, and brilliantly improvised to ensure accessibility for all. The days were busy, active and varied, which helped to maintain the interest of the entire group.

There was a great deal to do and photograph, and the group was also blessed with John Masson

(our perfect host) and all his additional local knowledge. The photographers also got to visit some exclusive places including private grounds and gardens, and had access to a herd of highland cattle, as well as horses, donkeys and bee hives. They also met up with, and were given tips from, local professional Isle of Man TT race photographer Steve Babb.

“We were all really pleased that we got to try different types of photography from changeable light in the daytime to dark and challenging night shoots,” said

Steve McNeice. “We also got to practice the use of fast and slow shutter speeds and changes in aperture, particularly around water to create different photographs.”

Hosts John and Helen were absolutely fantastic and nothing was too much trouble. “The group and banter was as good as ever, and it was great to make new friends and pick up a few more tips and mobility skills,” said Steve. “And a final thank you has to go to Patricia who allowed us to fly to the Isle of Man and back using her aeroplane!”



# Dealing with loss as we age

**A**s the years progress it is inevitable that we will experience the loss of loved ones, relatives, friends and pets. We may also experience loss in other ways, such as retirement or moving from a familiar area. Taking part in long-held interests and hobbies may become difficult or impossible, and new interests can be hard to cultivate.

## What events create loss?

Death, divorce, retirement, relocation, changes in fitness, dexterity and general functionality, effects of illness, relationship breakdowns, estrangement of family members.

## How to deal with loss

- Talk to family and friends and, if at all possible, people who have had a similar experience; they will tend to be more empathic.
- Accept that it is not your fault.
- Accept that you may experience emotional pain, and that this is perfectly normal.
- Don't let doors shut on you. New doors will open and you never know where they could lead.
- Remember the good times without dwelling too much. Sadly, nothing lasts forever. You will have fond memories of people as well as activities you once enjoyed, and these do become more important as we age. Cherish the good times

and feel lucky to have had that person in your life for as long as you did.

- Look to the future. Having a positive 'can do' attitude will help to take on new challenges.
- Try to avoid people who are negative, unsympathetic or don't have any empathy with your situation. You can reconnect when you feel stronger.
- Make sure you are ready to take the next step. Once you feel ready for new challenges, start slowly and set yourself goals.

## Dealing with unfamiliar emotions

- Few people actually like change, but we can learn to embrace it.
- Sometimes we find ourselves 'living in denial' when faced with a difficult situation. By accepting your situation, you will find the loss easier to deal with.
- Don't feel guilty when you lose a friend, and don't feel guilty about establishing a new friendship with someone else.

## Filling the gap

- Set aside a quiet time on your own to consider your options. Think about activities you might have always wanted to do but have never had the time or the opportunity. Write a list to prioritise these options. Now might be the time to take up that hobby. This might be learning a musical instrument, painting,

or reading more. It's never too late to learn new skills.

- Scour the local paper as it may give information on day courses at a local college, reading or writing groups, church activities, and other local events.
- Consider getting a pet – it doesn't have to be a dog or cat. Owning a pet can bring health and social benefits but is an expense and a tie, so it is not suitable for everyone's domestic circumstances.
- Remember that some activities may be seasonal and certain times of the year may be more challenging.

## Being prepared

Loss of any kind cannot always be predicted but if it is possible, make preparations in advance to help smooth the way. For example, not many people prepare for retirement, and not all employers are sympathetic to reducing working hours prior to retirement. However, you can take steps to prepare for retirement and there is plenty of advice online.

Preparing for the expected loss of a loved one is a completely different matter, and this is where planning is key. Waiting until a crisis unfolds isn't the best way to make important decisions, though some people find it difficult to face the inevitable. Discussions with children, family, friends

and trusted neighbours will be very useful when making plans, whatever the situation.

### Living alone

Perhaps you find yourself living alone for the first time and are wondering how to cope, or you have a relative or friend who is in this position and you want to help.

There are no set rules or timelines for adjusting to living alone. In parallel, there may be emotional issues to deal with, especially following a bereavement, so take things at your own pace.

You may need extra help with managing daily tasks if your partner assisted with your care.

Know your limitations and don't go too long without human contact; you could organise a reciprocal arrangement with a friend to ring a few times a week.

### What support is available?

Blesma Support Officers can help you connect with other Blesma Members and support services including Social Services and Adult Services departments. Age UK runs a befriending service ([www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)) and you can ring the helpline on **0800 055 6112**.

### Longer term

'Moving on' is an overused, ambiguous phrase, but it doesn't mean forgetting the person you have lost. It takes time to adjust and you may feel under pressure to 'get over' your loss in a time frame generally set by others. Moving into unknown territory takes time and will often seem scary.

### Dealing with bereavement

Following the loss of a loved one, you may experience emotions you

have never had to cope with before. There will be feelings of emptiness and loneliness, fear of the unknown, grief and sadness. You may even feel anger or guilt, but all of these emotions are normal and should you feel you need it, you can seek help to learn how to deal with them.

### Summary

Loss cannot always be predicted and we may not have the luxury of being able to prepare for it. If you are able to make plans in advance you will find it time well spent.

Don't be afraid to grieve for who or what you have lost. Involve family and friends, as they will want to help. Seek professional help if you feel it is appropriate.

When you are ready, set some personal goals, such as seeking new friends and discovering new activities. Setting small goals can be very rewarding and energising.

### Sources of help

**Family and friends** are the people who know you best and will be the first to offer advice and support. Don't be afraid to ask for help and don't turn offers of help away. At first, support may be forthcoming, but inevitably people return to their own routines and their visits or calls may dwindle. That does not mean those close to you will no longer want to help, so ask if you feel like you need further support.

**Your GP** can prescribe medication to help you during the initial stages of grief should you need it, and may suggest (you can request) a referral to a grief counsellor.

**Counsellors** offer professional help. Try not to view this as a failure of your ability to cope.

Whether just a few counselling sessions or a more long-term approach, it might be the very thing you need to help in dealing with your unfamiliar emotions. Being able to speak to someone will prevent you from bottling up your feelings, which could make your situation worse.

**Blesma** provides a free Listening, Advice and Counselling service. For details, contact your local BSO or the service on **0300 0120 369**.

**Age UK** has a range of useful fact sheets, including one covering the subject of bereavement. Visit [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

**The Samaritans** helpline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is free to call from any phone – **116 123**. You do not need to be suicidal to call. The service is there to offer support and help you talk through your feelings so that you can find the answers that are right for you.

**The University of the Third Age** is an organisation that offers learning and development courses specifically designed for older people. Find out more by visiting [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

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*This article was first published in Forward magazine (Spinal Injuries Association, [www.spinal.co.uk](http://www.spinal.co.uk)) and authored by Ageing Well Consultant, Joy Sinclair ([www.age-confident.com](http://www.age-confident.com))*

## Change of Area names and personnel

**T**he South East area, until recently under the care of Bill Gillett, will now be known as 'South'. Bill retired in September after 13 years of service to the charity. He joined Blesma after a full career in the Army and during his time with the Association had a huge impact on the lives of those he supported. He will be missed, but we're delighted to welcome his successor, Pat Donnachie (BSO South). Pat isn't new to Blesma as he was previously the Outreach Officer for the area. We're delighted to welcome Andy Barlow as the new Outreach Officer South. Andy is a Blesma Member and you can read more about him on p15.

The London & Kent area has been renamed London & South East. The North area name has also changed, to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland (S, NI & ROI). The boundaries for these areas have not changed, but the new names more accurately reflect the geographical areas of responsibility. Please see p32 for a detailed map.

## The best fun on the Great North Run

**H**ot on the heels of the great Sir Mo Farah, 15 Team Blesma runners took to the streets of Newcastle in September for the Great North Run half marathon. This iconic run is the best attended half marathon in the world and Team Blesma rose to the occasion!

Adele Miller, Blesma's Outreach Officer North East, led the cheering squad, taking up a position near the halfway point on a bridge over the course. She was joined by volunteers and a Blesma team member who was unfortunately injured and unable to run. The team have so far raised £6,200 for Blesma.



## Blesma rides from London to Brighton

**T**wenty cyclists, including Member Nick Franklin and a team from corporate supporter Blackstone Consultancy, took on the 55-mile cycle ride between London and Brighton in June. This was the first time Blesma had entered a team into the event. The route started on Clapham Common in London and finished on Brighton's iconic Madeira Drive, taking in some infamous hills along the way! To date, the team have raised an amazing £12,609.



Nick Franklin (far left) and friends arrive in Brighton

## Hearing support for veterans in Wales

**D**o you struggle to hear conversations or the TV? Do you have tinnitus? If so, and you or a family member was born before 1950 and has served in the Armed Forces (including National Service), Action on Hearing Loss can visit you at home to talk about any issues you may be facing, and to look for solutions.

You can also be referred via your Blesma Support Officer if AoHL support is required. For more information, or to arrange a visit anywhere in Wales, please contact:

**Nicky Darton, Regional Outreach Worker**

**Tel: 02920 033 3034**

**Email South Wales:**

[agedveterans@actiononhearingloss.org.uk](mailto:agedveterans@actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

**North and Mid Wales:**

[nicky.darton@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:nicky.darton@hearingloss.org.uk)

# Members invited to the International Tattoo

**M**embers Graham and Cathy Kelly and Isabella Law were given the VIP treatment at this year's Belfast International Tattoo. Firstly, they were greeted by The Royal Mounted Canadian Police for a perfect photo opportunity.

Then they enjoyed a bird's eye view of the afternoon's spectacular performances, which included an international line-up of both military and community related performances. Among the many highlights were The Band of the Irish Guards, The Band of the Gurkha Rifles, and the VIP Dholies and dancers.

The build-up to the grand finale of the Massed Pipes and Drums was electric and made even more special by the appearance of the Chelsea Pensioners. An afternoon of celebration, quiet reflection and feelings of immense pride!



## NEWS BRIEFS



There is also information about training opportunities. *You can find the pages at [www.blesma.org/employment](http://www.blesma.org/employment). Please email [ico@blesma.org](mailto:ico@blesma.org) with any feedback.*

### CHANGE IN ACTIVITIES TEAM PERSONNEL

Activities Executive Lorena Diaz-Smith has left the Association to pursue a change in career. Amy Le Grys has joined the team on a temporary basis to assist during the busy Autumn period.

### BLESMA DIRECTORY

The Blesma Directory is out of date and no longer in use. If you need the contact details of your local Branch Secretary or Welfare Rep, please contact your BSO.

### GARDEN GRANTS

It can be difficult for Members to maintain their gardens, whether it's mowing the lawn or weeding the flowerbeds. **We award an annual grant – which has been increased to £300 this year –** which can be applied for with the proforma that has been inserted into this Bulletin. The application must be accompanied by receipts or a signed statement from your gardener. We can't award grants to Members who have paid a relation to maintain their garden. ***If you've mislaid the Gardening Grant form, or there wasn't one inserted into your copy of this Bulletin, please contact Susie at Blesma Chadwell Heath on 020 3954 3022 or at [grantsadmin@blesma.org](mailto:grantsadmin@blesma.org)***

### TfL COLLECTIONS

We have had another great year with our Transport for London Station Bucket Collections. So far, we have raised £17,839. These collections have been well supported by Members and volunteers alike, without whom we could not make them so successful. A final collection will take place at Canary Wharf on 05 December. ***If you would like to get involved contact Abbi on [fundraisingrelexec@blesma.org](mailto:fundraisingrelexec@blesma.org) or on 020 8548 7084.***

### LOOKING TO 2019

We are busy planning our Events Calendar for 2019. Be sure to look out for our new calendar in the next *Blesma Magazine*, due out just before Christmas.

### EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND EDUCATION

There is a new section on the Blesma website dedicated to signposting Members towards opportunities and organisations that can assist with getting back into employment, whether in a voluntary capacity or as a career.

# GP practices to become ‘Veteran Friendly’

**G**eneral Practitioners are signing up to become ‘Veteran Friendly’ under a new national scheme to improve medical care and treatment for former members of the Armed Forces that has been backed by NHS England and the Royal College of GPs.

Practices can qualify for ‘Veteran Friendly’ status by offering extra support for ex-military personnel who face additional challenges when they return to civilian life.

Dr Mike Brookes, a North Yorkshire GP who served in Iraq, came up with the idea when a patient told him he had specifically joined his practice to see someone who could understand his needs as a veteran.

The scheme, called the Military Veteran Aware Accreditation, has now been adopted by NHS England and the Royal College of GPs as a nationwide initiative so that family doctors can better identify and treat veterans, ensuring they get access to dedicated care where appropriate.

Dr Brookes said: “It made me reflect on a potential unmet need for our veterans. I could see how pivotal a GP practice could be at identifying ex-Service personnel to help ensure they receive care and treatment that is considerate of their time in the Armed Forces. It is great to think that a conversation with a patient at a GP practice

in the Yorkshire Dales could lead to a national project to improve veterans’ health.”

While healthcare for veterans is already prioritised, the NHS wants to improve the way in which veterans are registered at their GP practice, and support GPs and practice teams to ensure veterans are fully aware of the dedicated help that is available to them.

The expansion follows a successful pilot in the West Midlands – initiated by the Royal College of GPs Midlands Faculty – where 90 GP practices have so far signed up. The nationwide rollout will be a phased approach and it is hoped that over the next few years every veteran will receive the best possible NHS care from their GP, regardless of where they live.

## **To become accredited, GP practices need to:**

- Have a lead for veterans’ issues within the surgery.
- Identify and flag veterans on their computer system.
- Undertake dedicated training and attend Armed Forces healthcare meetings.
- Increase understanding of the health needs of veterans amongst both clinical and administrative staff.

Dr Jonathan Leach, a GP who served in the Army for 25 years and chairs the NHS England

Armed Forces Clinical Reference Group, is calling for GPs across the country to sign up.

“We are committed to providing veterans with a seamless, high quality service when it comes to their health needs,” he said. “Our priority is to make sure that no matter where a veteran lives in the country, they will have access to a GP who understands their military related health needs and supports them to get the right treatment and support. We are therefore urging every GP practice to sign up to this important scheme.”

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chair of the Royal College of GPs said: “Veterans often have unique health needs, and this new scheme is a fantastic way of ensuring that when they visit their GP, for whatever reason, these needs are flagged up, considered and accommodated.

“It’s great to see successful local initiatives being rolled out nationally so that they can benefit patients across the country. I’m incredibly proud of the College’s Midland Faculty, of which I am a member, for identifying a good idea, turning it into reality, and taking the lead on this.”



# Members' Weekend 2019

08-10 June 2019, Crowne Plaza, Heythrop Park

**N**ext year's Members' Weekend will head to a new venue; the Crowne Plaza in Heythrop Park, Oxfordshire. If you would like to come along to meet old friends and make some new ones, find out what Blesma Members have been up to, and have your say on what Blesma should be doing to support Members in the future, please put the date in your diary now and apply straight away using the application form that has been inserted into this issue of the Bulletin.

As always, the event is free to Ordinary and Associate Members, as well as their partners or carers. We hope to see you there!



# Benefits Update: Get what you're entitled to

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

## VEHICLE TAX EXEMPTION

Disabled people can be exempt from vehicle tax for one vehicle if receiving one of the following benefits:

- Personal Independence Payment enhanced rate mobility component
- Disability Living Allowance higher rate mobility component
- Armed Forces Independence Payment
- War Pension Mobility Supplement

A 50% discount can be applied if the disabled person receives the following benefit:

- Personal Independence Payment standard mobility component

A vehicle is only exempt / discounted 'when it is being used, or kept for use, by or for the purposes of the disabled person'. The vehicle must be registered in the disabled person's name or their nominated driver's name. Just being entitled to the relevant benefit is not enough to get your vehicle exempt. You will still need to apply.

### How to apply for an exemption or discount

If you have a Motability Vehicle the exemption process is automatically handled by Motability unless you have chosen to pay your vehicle tax privately. As there

are no longer tax discs to display in your car, you can check online whether your car is taxed. **Visit [www.gov.uk/check-vehicle-tax](http://www.gov.uk/check-vehicle-tax)**

If you do not have a Motability car, you should receive a re-useable 'Certificate of Entitlement' when your benefit is awarded. This will last for the duration of your mobility award. You will need to show this certificate the first time you apply for vehicle tax. When you renew the tax, you just need the serial number of the certificate. If your circumstances change – eg. you change your vehicle, you will need to apply for a new certificate.

For Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance, if you have not been sent the certificate, contact the relevant benefit office. The number will be at the top of your award letter. For War Pension or Armed Forces Independence Payment, contact **Veterans UK on 0808 191 4218**.

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## HELP WITH HEATING COSTS

After a glorious Summer for many of us, the weather has started to turn, and the Winter weather will soon be with us. In this edition, we thought it would be helpful to remind you about some of the ways the government can help with fuel costs.

### Winter Fuel Payment

This is an annual lump sum payment to help pensioners with heating costs. To be eligible, you need to have lived in the UK for at least one day during the week of 17 to 23 September 2018. For those born on or before 05 May 1953 the Winter Fuel Payment is a tax-free lump sum payment of between £100 and £300 to help with the costs of your Winter heating bill.

You should automatically receive a payment without making a claim if you meet the criteria, if you received a payment last year and your circumstances have not changed, or if you are getting a State Pension or other social security benefit (excluding Universal Credit, Child Benefit or Housing Benefit) in the qualifying

week (week beginning 17 September 2018). You should receive your payment by 04 January 2019.

Otherwise, if you meet the criteria and do not receive a payment, you can make a claim on **0800 731 0160**. You may be sent a claim form which will need to be completed and received by the Winter Fuel Payment Centre by 31 March 2019.

Some people are not entitled to a payment if in the qualifying week they are in hospital and have been for the previous 52 weeks, are in custody, or are in a care home and receiving Pension Credit (other exclusions can apply).

If you are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment and your only government paid income is from a War Pension or War Widows Pension, your Winter Fuel Payment will be processed by Veterans UK. For queries please contact **0808 191 4218**.

If you did not live in the UK during the qualifying week, you might still get the payment if both the following apply:

- You live in Switzerland or a European Economic Area country
- You have a genuine link with the UK social security system, such as having lived or worked in the UK for most of your life

You cannot get the payment if you live in Cyprus, France, Gibraltar, Greece, Malta, Portugal or Spain because the average Winter temperature is higher than the warmest region of the UK.

### Warm Home Discount Scheme

This is a £140 credit to your electricity bill. You can also qualify if you use a pre-pay or pay as you go electricity meter. You qualify for the discount if, on 08 July 2018, all of the following applied:

- Your electricity supplier was part of the scheme
- Your name (or your partner's) was on the bill
- You were getting the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit

This is known as the 'core group'. If you do not qualify under the core group you may be able to apply directly to your electricity supplier for help if you don't qualify because you don't get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit but:

- You are on a low income
- You get certain means-tested benefits

This is known as the 'broader group'. If you are in the broader group your electricity supplier decides who can get the discount. Check with your supplier to see if you're eligible and how to apply.

### The following suppliers are part of the scheme:

- Angelic Energy
- Atlantic
- Boost
- Bristol Energy
- British Gas
- Bulb Energy
- Citizen Energy
- Co-operative Energy
- Ebico
- Economy Energy
- EDF Energy
- E.ON
- First Utility
- Flow Energy
- GB Energy
- Great North Energy
- Green Start/Hudson
- Liverpool Energy Community Company
- Lumo
- Manweb
- M&S Energy
- Npower
- Our Power
- OVO
- Powershop
- Ram Energy
- Robin Hood Energy
- Sainsbury's Energy
- Scottish Gas
- Scottish Hydro
- ScottishPower
- Southern Electric
- Spark Energy
- SSE
- SWALEC
- Utilita
- Utility Warehouse
- White Rose Energy
- Your Energy Sussex

## BENEFITS

### COLD WEATHER PAYMENT

This is an automatic payment of £25 for each qualifying week if:

- The average temperature recorded or forecast over seven consecutive days at the designated weather station for your area is 0°C or less and you have been awarded one of the following qualifying benefits:
  - Pension Credit
  - Income Support, income based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance, and you are responsible for a child under five, or you are getting Child Tax Credit that includes the disabled child element
  - Income Support, income based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) that includes one of the disability or pensioner premiums (for ESA this also includes the support component or work related activity component)
  - Universal Credit and have a child under the age of five, or which includes an addition for a disabled child, or you have been assessed as having limited capability for work or work related activity, and you are not in employment or self employed (unless you have the disabled child addition)
  - You must not be living in a care home

You do not need to make a claim for a Cold Weather Payment. The Department for Work and Pensions should automatically pay you if you qualify, as they will be aware of your means tested benefit entitlement.

### CARER'S ALLOWANCE

Carer's Allowance is for people who regularly spend at least 35 hours a week caring for a severely disabled person. It is intended to compensate someone who is unable to work because they are a carer. However, some people may be able to carry out a small amount of work whilst caring. It is paid at £64.60 per week.

You can claim Carer's Allowance if:

- You are aged 16 or over and;
- You are caring for a severely disabled person for at least 35 hours per week and;
- You are not in full time education (21 hours or more per week) and;
- You are not earning more than £120 net per week

The Department for Work and Pensions considers a person to be severely disabled if they are receiving one of the following:

- Personal Independence Payment daily living component
- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance middle or highest rate care component
- Constant Attendance Allowance (of £69.90 or more) paid with Industrial Injuries Benefit or War Pension
- Armed Forces Independence Payment

You will need to have been living in the country for two out of the last three years and not subject to immigration control. Carer's Allowance overlaps with a number of other benefits including contributory Employment and Support Allowance and State Pension. As these benefits are usually paid at a higher rate than Carer's Allowance, you cannot receive the two benefits at the same time.

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*If you would like to discuss Carer's Allowance in more detail, please contact your Blesma Support Officer or Liz Watling in the Independence and Wellbeing team by email at [iwabenefits@blesma.org](mailto:iwabenefits@blesma.org) or on 020 8548 3516*

## SOCIAL SECURITY (SCOTLAND) ACT 2018 UPDATE

In the Summer 2017 Bulletin we wrote about the Social Security (Scotland) Bill. This has now been passed as an Act of Parliament.

Eleven benefits have been devolved to the Scottish government, including benefits for disability and carers. Any changes to these benefits will be gradually brought in. The Scottish government will not be allowed to make changes that would result in claimants being financially worse off than in other parts of the country. Blesma will be keeping Members updated as any changes are announced.

### Carer's Allowance Supplement

One of the first changes to be announced is the introduction of a Carer's Allowance Supplement. This is to bring payment of Carer's Allowance in Scotland in line with Jobseeker's Allowance.

Carer's Allowance Supplement will be £221 and paid in two payments per year. The first payment will be from mid-September and is to cover the period from April 2018 to September 2018.

You do not need to make an application for the payment. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will continue to pay Carer's Allowance in the usual way to you. The DWP will pass your bank details to Social Security Scotland who will arrange the twice yearly Carer's Allowance Supplement.

If you are a tax payer, you will need to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs of the income.

Further changes have been announced for carers, but the finer detail is yet to be arranged.

A Young Carer Grant will be available from Autumn 2019. You may be able to get a Young Carer Grant of £300 if you are not getting Carer's Allowance and are:

- Caring for someone for 16 hours a week and for at least three months
- 16 or 17 years of age
- 18 and still at school

### Universal Credit (Scottish Choices)

Universal Credit is a UK-wide benefit reserved to the UK Government. It is a single monthly payment that's replacing the following six benefits:

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

Universal Credit is gradually being rolled out nationally. From the end of September 2018 all areas in Scotland will be classed as a 'Full Service' area. This means that new claimants will be required to claim Universal Credit rather than claim under the old system of the benefits listed above. People still receiving one or more of the older benefits listed above after September 2018 will continue to do so.

They will be required to claim Universal Credit by 2022, after which their old benefits will cease to be paid. The Department for Work and Pensions will inform these claimants when they are required to claim Universal Credit. Universal Credit remains a Department for Work and Pensions benefit. However, claimants in Scotland have choices in the way they receive their payment of benefit:

- Being paid Universal Credit twice a month rather than monthly
- Having their Universal Credit housing element being paid directly to their landlords

# Useful contact numbers across the Association

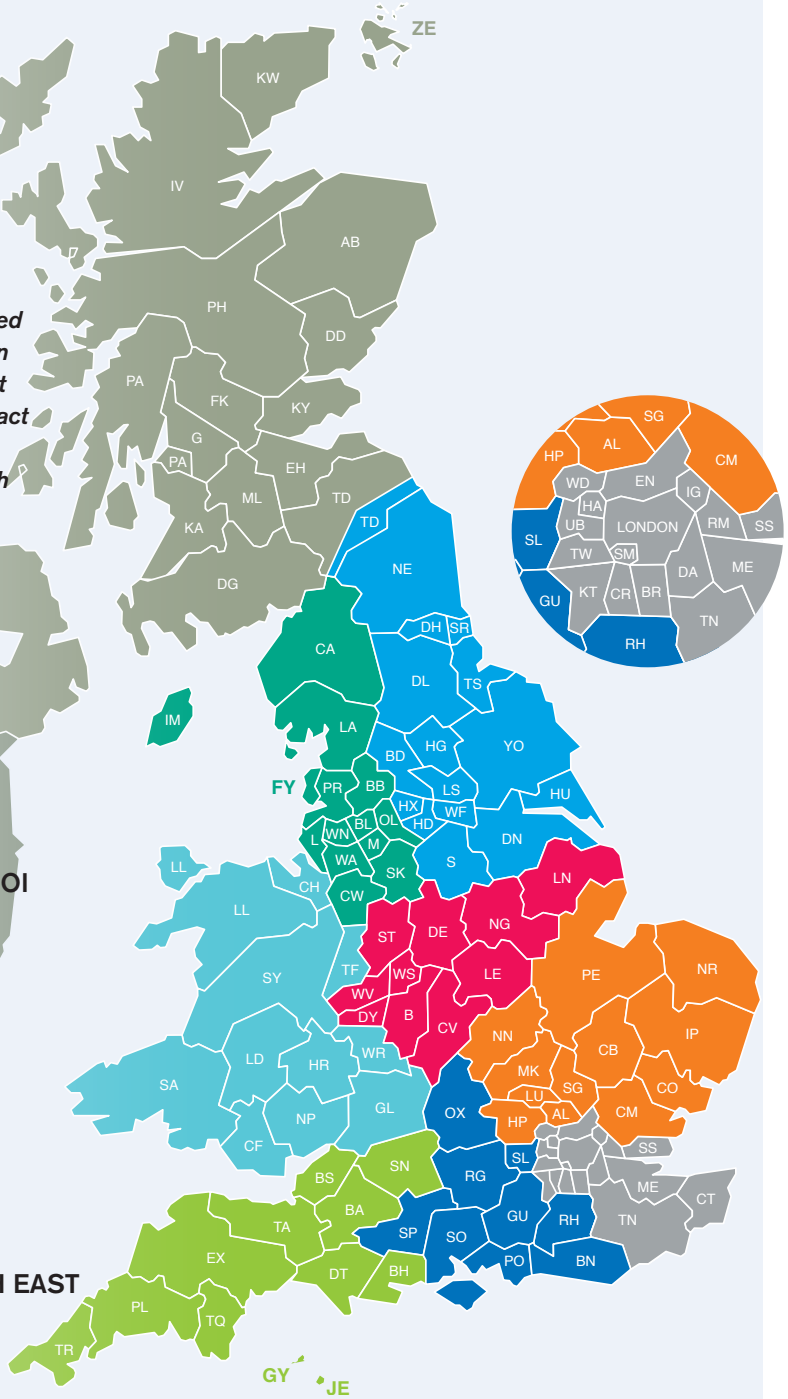
TITLE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
<b>BLESMA SUPPORT OFFICERS</b>			
BSO (Prosthetics)	Brian Chenier	020 8548 7080 07796 715908	bsoprosthetics@blesma.org
BSO Eastern	Kevin Long	020 3954 3020 07825 536364	bsoeastern@blesma.org
BSO London & South East	Paul Findlay	01268 415290 07469 242277	bsolse@blesma.org
BSO Midlands	Sam Wileman	020 8548 7095 07825 536363	bsomid@blesma.org
BSO Scotland, NI & ROI	Steve Burton	0131 2262910 07766 258461	bsosniroi@blesma.org
BSO North East	Pete Shields	01469 532176 07908 667219	bsone@blesma.org
BSO North West	Mike Downes	01257 795144 07825 536362	bsonw@blesma.org
BSO South	Pat Donnachie	07741 846106	bsosouth@blesma.org
BSO South West	Steve Fraser	01278 789393 07788 312747	bsosw@blesma.org
BSO West	Tom Hall	020 8548 7098 07780 165085	bsowest@blesma.org
<b>BLESMA OUTREACH OFFICERS</b>			
National Outreach Coordinator	Martin Gwillim	07741 891632	outreachcoord@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Eastern	Darren Fuller	07741 661159	outreache@blesma.org
Outreach Officer London & South East	Alida Horne	07741 845793	outreachlse@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Midlands	Vanessa Lucas	07741 845429	outreachmid@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Northern Ireland	Fiona Morrison	07741 744617	outreachni@blesma.org
Outreach Officer North East	Adele Miller	07741 847211	outreachne@blesma.org
Outreach Officer North West	Kirsten Morrissey	07741 846674	outreachnw@blesma.org

TITLE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
<b>BLESMA OUTREACH OFFICERS Cont</b>			
Outreach Officer South	Andy Barlow	07384 834449	outreachsouth@blesma.org
Outreach Officer South West	Rupert Lucas	07741 737563	outreachsw@blesma.org
Outreach Officer West	Jason Suller	07741 744141	outreachw@blesma.org
<b>INDEPENDENCE AND WELLBEING</b>			
Members Support	Liz Watling	020 8548 3516	iwabenefits@blesma.org
Members Admin	Elaine Hems	020 8548 7093	memberadmin@blesma.org
Grants Admin	Susie Grainger	020 3954 3022	grantsadmin@blesma.org
Welfare – Direct Line		020 8598 9459	
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>			
Activities Manager	Jess March	020 8548 3519	activities@blesma.org
Membership Engagement Officer	Emily Mizon	020 8548 7094	meo@blesma.org
Activities Executive	Amy Le Gry	020 3954 3021	ae@blesma.org
<b>FUNDRAISING</b>			
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Community & Events Manager	Sophie Allen	020 8548 7089	communityeventsmngr@blesma.org
Community & Events Officer	Molly Watson	020 8548 7087	communityeventsofficer@blesma.org
Fundraising Relationship Executive	Abbi Wilkins	020 8548 7084	fundraisingrelexec@blesma.org
Corporate Partnership Manager	Mike Allen	020 3954 3029	corporate@blesma.org
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Operations Director	Ian Waller	020 8548 3513	od@blesma.org
Director Independence and Wellbeing	Heather Betts	020 8548 3515	diw@blesma.org

# Blesma by region

*Have you got a question or need advice? Don't hesitate to get in touch with the Blesma Support Officer in your region. The contact numbers for all BSOs, as well as those of each new Outreach Officer and the relevant members of staff at Chadwell Heath, can be found on p30.*

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



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