



HELEN MATTHEWS

Army Cadet spoke to Helen Matthews, an above-knee amputee who tells us about her journey within the ACF and her life after limb loss

In 2011 Helen Matthews became a left leg above-knee amputee (AKA) following years of knee problems and a total of 13 operations. She now works as the County PRO and Internet Media Officer at Cambridgeshire ACF.

WORK

You obviously love being an adult volunteer, are you happy to be back?

Yes, my Commandant has been very understanding, and with this position I can undertake light duties, such as attending to website updates even at home while I recover from my latest surgery. It will be a challenge but it does allow me to be more creative. I also hope that with my amputation I can help inspire both cadets and Instructors. I think it's important to teach young people about knowing your strengths and weaknesses, and in my case disability. I want them to know that you may have to work harder but we all have the ability to achieve.

What made you join the ACF?

I had worked in the ACF many years before, originally in Bedfordshire back in 1990. With a move to Cambridgeshire and missing the ACF, I rejoined in 2005 as a way to meet people and get involved with the cadets as that's what I love most.

As your knee condition progressed, have you been given a lot of support from your ACF colleagues?

I have received incredible support from Cambs ACF through all of my knee issues. We had no disabled facilities at County HQ but East Anglia RFCA have been great and got the building up to spec so it will be more accessible for me in the wheelchair. There are not many disabled cadets, but it's important to remember to work with the person, not against their limitations which, I am happy to say, my colleagues do.

“WE ALL HAVE THE ABILITY TO ACHIEVE”

LIFE

What inspires you?

Creative people, art, photography... I love the idea of being able to tell a story in a single image.

However as much as I enjoy creating myself, I am always enthralled by what other people have made.

I explain further in my blog www.theamputee.co.uk; it may have been a negative experience for me but as long as a positive comes from a negative, then it is not a negative anymore.

"Cody, my dog, is a wonderful recuperation partner who will sit and watch *Despicable Me*, or martial arts films all day long"

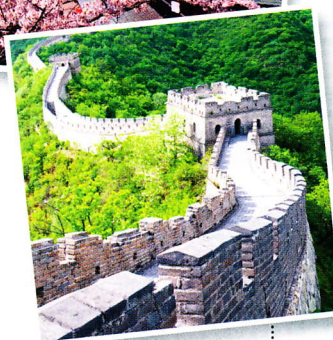
"With my love of photography, it is a dream of mine to meet the Army Photographic Team"



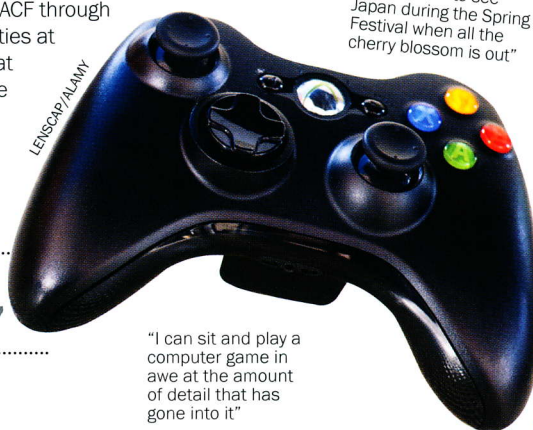
"I strive to get a unique picture of life in the ACF when I do my own photography. See my website: www.samuraistudio.co.uk, for more of my images"



"I would love to see Japan during the Spring Festival when all the cherry blossom is out"

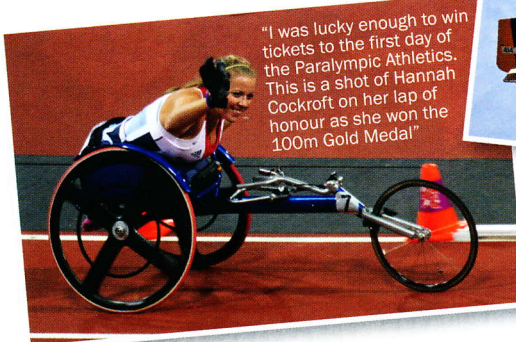


"I would also love to visit China. I find the culture so fascinating, with so many different facets of formalised structure. It reminds me of my own life, living by the structure of the ACF, balanced by my love of art"



"I can sit and play a computer game in awe at the amount of detail that has gone into it"

"I was lucky enough to win tickets to the first day of the Paralympic Athletics. This is a shot of Hannah Cockcroft on her lap of honour as she won the 100m Gold Medal"



"This was taken at the Ramsey 1940s weekend. There were a couple of vintage planes flying each day and after plenty of trial and error I managed to nail this shot, which I was really pleased with"

