



P&O Day 2021

Pat Parsons, patient

In 2008 while out on a mountain climb Pat Parsons fell 12 feet and suffered an incomplete T12 Spinal fracture. Pat was rescued by the very same mountain rescue team that he was a member of.

Pat had emergency surgery at Sheffield Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Post-surgery Pat went through an in-patient rehabilitation programme which left him frustrated but not unmotivated. After Pat's operation he was been told that it was unlikely that he would walk unaided again and in the unlikely event that he did walk unaided, he would never be able to enjoy his passions of climbing or skiing again. With Pat's Royal Marine mindset, and his "anything is possible" attitude he decided to push himself to his limits...again!

Six weeks after his surgery he decided to test himself in standing unaided next to his hospital bed. Pat was delighted that he managed to stand for approximately two minutes. The next day, he decided he wanted to look out of the hospital ward window in a standing position, rather than a supine position from his bed. He took the unaided steps needed to stand next to the window and back to his bed. He felt exhausted but elated. Following this, Pat enabled himself to mobilise and regain some confidence and independence, but it was limited by his adapted gait pattern.

Several years post Pat's hospital discharge, Orthotics had still not been discussed with him, so he continued to mobilise with pain and a compensated gait pattern. He did build his strength and endurance, but not enough to attempt his beloved hobbies.

Pat came across an ankle foot orthoses AFO BlueROCKER® that someone let him try on, and he felt that he could almost walk normally. The BlueROCKERS were not fitted and they were not customised to Pat, but he was amazed that he could stand with stability, walk better and he was thrilled that he could actually climb with them. However, it was not long before he experienced a sore on his foot and pain caused by the ill-fitting AFOs so he discontinued his use and put them on top of his wardrobe.

Pat returned to his doctor, who referred him for further physiotherapy. The physiotherapist gave Pat other Orthotics, that in his opinion were not durable enough and did not offer the support he needed. He also knew he could not attempt to climb in them. At this point he had still never seen an Orthotist and was still unaware of what an Orthotist was.

A few years later Pat started cycling, but due to his physical presentation he struggled with the foot positioning and pedals but remembered his BlueROCKERS and thought they may help keep his foot in position and assist with his loading when using his cleats. He tried his theory, it worked and resulted in him being able to return to cycling and eventually travel through the Pyrenes. The BlueROCKER® AFOs were worn, but only for cycling.

In 2017 Pat was talking to friends about the pain in his feet after activity. They advised him to get some custom insoles. He sourced a pair of Functional Foot Orthoses (FFO) from a private provider, and in conversation Pat mentioned the products he had tried and the problems he had. The Orthotic Technician recommend that he see an Orthotist and also contact Allard UK. After hearing Pat's experience Allard UK arranged for their Orthotic Clinical Specialist, Mike Vaughan to meet Pat. Pat was assessed and it was obvious that if he had properly fitted BlueROCKERS his problems of pain may be reduced. Pat was fitted with the BlueROCKERSs, along with the FFOs. He was also invited to meet Orthotist, William Munro and Physiotherapist, Jessica Parnevick-Muth a few months later for a follow up assessment at a live Gait Seminar.

On Orthotic clinical assessment, it was noted that Pat presented with:

Right limb

- Excessive dorsiflexion (Pat walked on his calcaneum if not wearing his BlueRockers)
- No subtalar restrictions
- Windless function present
- Plantar flexion strength 1
- Dorsiflexion Strength 4
- Mild Knee hyperextension

Left limb

- No excessive dorsiflexion
- No subtalar restrictions
- Plantar flexion strength 4
- Dorsiflexion Strength 4
- No knee hyperextension

Pat is unstable in barefoot and footwear alone and shifts his weight constantly from foot to foot. Pat explains that this has a negative mental effect on him, as people often thought he was intoxicated.

At the seminar Pat was advised on the most appropriate footwear and told how to use the products to get the best out of them. They were also fitted correctly. As Pat is very active the Orthotists tried the more flexible ToeOFF® Flow on him. Pat was amazed that he could jog in them. He was advised to use the BlueROCKERS for walking and other activities, and when he is doing activities where more flexibility is needed, he can change to the ToeOFF® Flow.

When wearing his AFOs Pat has a stable base of support, he no longer rocks from side to side. He has a functional corrected and repeatable gait pattern, with increased speed and efficiency and a decrease in knee hyperextension.

In Pat's words, he feels like having the correctly fitted AFOs has not just changed his life, but he truly believes his life has been saved. He is in a positive place mentally. He is active, he is taking part in all his beloved hobbies and even more amazingly than that, he is back with his colleagues as part of the Derbyshire Mountain Rescue Team. He has gone from being the rescuer, to the rescued and back to being the rescuer once again. Pat has not only taken part in trips to Mont Blanc and Kilimanjaro but has also led them.

Pat Parsons is a very motivated and determined individual who tries not to focus on the past. However, he does wish he was given an Orthotic referral a lot sooner in his journey to recovery. Despite this Pat is extremely grateful for what the Orthotists and carbon fibre ankle-foot orthoses have done for his life, and any opportunity he gets to tell people about his life saving experiences, he ensures he mentions Orthotists and what a difference they made!