

2024 NEWSLETTER

Celebrating 5 Years of Impact and Growth!

This year marks a significant milestone for us as we turned FIVE 🎉

FIVE whole years inspiring recovery from brain injury and stroke through physical activity, all driven by the vision of our Founder Mark; who survived a massive stroke 10 years ago, and embraced by our amazing brain injured beneficiaries who we have the pleasure of working with each week.

It was great to see so many of our supporters at our BOWRA@5 party hosted at Bravery in Poole. What an incredible journey it has been, and we couldn't have reached this point without the amazing support of each and every one of you. Thank you for being a part of our story and for helping us make the last five years such a success. Your generosity, dedication, and belief in our mission have truly made a difference.

This year we've expanded our services, introducing new activities for our BOWRA Buddies (our brain-injured beneficiaries) offering more opportunities for growth and providing a platform for them to empower their own recovery journey. We have continued distributing BOWRA Bags to people at the early stages of recovery from brain injury and stroke, providing rehabilitation aids at the crucial point of impact, and are delighted that the BOWRA Bag project is now becoming a reality (read more on this further down).

We are thrilled that thanks to a generous new grant, we were also able to continue our vital work with veterans for another year, supporting their mental health and wellbeing.

We have also had the privilege of attending awareness events that helped us connect with new partners and communities. We've said goodbye to some of our team (you may have moved on but you'll always be 'BOWRA!'), and welcomed exciting new faces, all committed to helping us make an even greater impact.

Here's to the next 5 years of growth, change, and making a real difference together!

Read on to learn more about the progress we've made and the exciting plans we have for the future!

Andrew Tate - CEO



Since
2019



Huge thanks to all the BOWRA Foundation Staff, Trustees, Supporters, Volunteers and Beneficiaries for making this an absolutely brilliant year.

I'm very much looking forward to 2025 and being able to carry on with all our activities and support for stroke survivors across the UK.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year when it comes!

Mark Bowra - Founder



TEAM BOWRA:

In the summer we welcomed Helen Hobbs of Hobbs Rehabilitation onto the Board and are over the moon to report that she has thrown herself into BOWRA duties. Andrew Tate also joined Team BOWRA as CEO in March and has made great steps forward in securing BOWRA's plan for the next five years. This year Jim Patrick and Jim Searight made the choice to step away from their roles on the Board, we thank them for their time, commitment and heart over the last 5 years, we will miss you but know you will always be part of the BOWRA family (you can't get away that easily!). ❤️



IMPACT

- ☀️ We had a wonderful year with our BOWRA Buddies, listening, adapting and introducing new activities to ensure that we continue to provide a safe and friendly platform for our Buddies to empower their own recovery journey, inspiring confidence and reintroducing hope for the next stage of their lives.
- ☀️ For the second year running, our Beneficiary Golf Day at Ferndown Forest Golf Club welcomed teams to compete in a Texas scramble style competition alongside our Buddies, hosting family and friends to celebrate their progress.
- ☀️ Over 40 people joined us on the day to support our Buddies as we travelled to Dorney Lake to take part in the Marvel Superhero's Tri!
- ☀️ We hit the waves with Surfability UK in October, with 7 Buddies trying out surfing for the first time since their brain injury.
- ☀️ Venues hosting our activities continue to be incredibly supportive, with Bournemouth Bowling club acquiring two wheelchairs and steps to ensure the green remains accessible for all. We are so grateful to everyone that hosts us, we couldn't do it without you!
- ☀️ 2024 also saw our first podcast session! A group of dauntless Buddies visited FOUNDRY Poole to share their journeys and experiences of brain injury. You are FEARLESS and are the driving force behind our work - THANK YOU.



For 2024 BOWRA Foundation introduced the 'Buddy Advocates'; individuals who have experienced a brain injury and, through their involvement with our charity, have demonstrated incredible progress and resilience. They are a living example of determination, courage, and the power of personal growth. By pushing beyond their comfort zones and relentlessly striving to recover, Buddy Advocates inspire others in the community. They give back by mentoring and guiding the next generation of individuals on their own recovery journeys, offering invaluable support and encouragement. Their unwavering strength and bravery make them true role models, showing that with perseverance, anything is possible. Congratulations to:

- ★ Will Ripper
- ★ Donna Clift-Williams
- ★ Ali Kaille



number of BOWRA bags given new homes in 2024



We were over the moon to be awarded a grant from Greenwich Hospital, allowing us to continue to deliver our Veterans Programme. Embracing our success, we hosted Walkie-talkies across Dartmoor, adventures around Cranborne and yomps in Portland. These walks promote exercise, comradery and a safe place for like-minded veterans.

Big thanks to Pilgrim bandits who hosted our first ever First Aid training course, and to Help for Heroes, teaming up with us to put on a workshop for veterans. BOWRA were also invited to be a benefitting charity at a Falklands Seminar hosted at the RNLI. Thank you to the team running the event, and to everyone who attended for your continued support.

As well as our veteran activities, veterans are invited to participate in regular activities with our Buddies. The dynamic is spot on, with each group drawing inspiration from the other as well as lots of banter!

OUR COMMUNITY

2024 has seen outstanding efforts from some amazing individuals and organisations. Thank you to everyone that has taken the time to donate, raise awareness and support BOWRA. We are a small local charity and your contributions no matter how small are vital to ensuring the future of our work.

To note a few individuals:

Paul suffered a stroke, but a figure of resilience and determination, he went on to complete the Fan Dance walk with his sons (not being deterred by the Welsh weather!).

James completed three separate challenges in aid of several charities, including BOWRA Foundation.

James and Grace cycled London to Brighton!

Jimmy, Heather and Justine all completed the London Landmarks Half Marathon (we couldn't keep up with you along the course!).



Our success comes at a cost, and with this in mind we were delighted when Kat Cook approached us to volunteer with fundraising. We welcome her to the team and look forward to the new and exciting opportunities her arrival will bring.



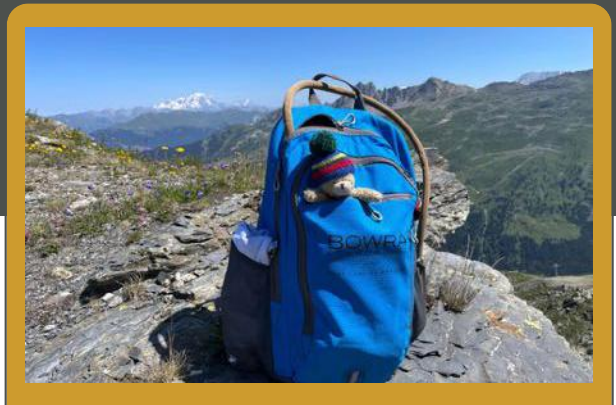
THANK YOU!

This year has seen BOWRA Foundation attend awareness events, hosting our own Brain Injury Awareness Event at J.P. Morgan and returning for their Armed Forces Day. We love sharing Mark's vision with others and look forward to visiting again in 2025!

FOUNDRY Poole have continued to provide us with a space to work as a team and a platform to spread awareness of the charity, we absolutely LOVE the community you have built, it is more than we could ever have anticipated and the fact you are opening new locations is a sign of your success.

We also launched our very own collection pots, already at several locations around the UK. Thank you to those that already have one in situ!

As part of his own recovery, Mark competed in the MuscleFood English Para Surfing Open, ranking 3rd in the pen prone mens division. Fellow BOWRA Buddy Will Ripper finished an impressive 4th! Congrats to both of you.



THE BOWRA BAG

Trustee Helen Hobbs joined the BOWRA family seamlessly in the summer, accepting the role of BOWRA Bag project sponsor, and driving the project forward with clear direction.

We aim to review the BOWRA Bag and its contents, using feedback and case studies from recipients to ensure that items are relevant, suitable and delivered at the critical impact point in their recovery.

Stage 1: we will look to place a BOWRA Bag Project Manager, who will engage with local rehabilitation units, delivering bags and obtaining vital feedback and case studies.

Stage 2: the findings will be analysed and the current process for ordering bags reviewed to ensure our beneficiaries are receiving bags tailored to their needs.

Stage 3: processes will be updated based on the latter two stages of the project, creating a robust BOWRA Bag process fit for the future of BOWRA Foundation.

The bag being at the heart of Mark's BOWRA vision, we are currently seeking support to deliver the project. Please do get in touch if you can help, whether with a case study or are interested in funding a project that will change lives.

OUR PEOPLE

We have received some lovely testimonials this year. We absolutely love being part of your recovery, thank you to everyone for continuing to inspire us.

.....On Surf2Recovery

On the BOWRA bag....

"The BOWRA bag is great, it's all good stuff and great for me especially the knork (a knife and fork in one) I no longer need **Sarah** to cut my food for me, it's brilliant all the other stuff in it is great and I can make a lot of use of it, (the items are) really good quality."

"If anyone had told me a year ago, just after his stroke, that this could happen, I would never have believed it was even thinkable! It was a challenge both mentally and physically however the benefits of taking part and achieving has greatly raised his confidence, strength, stamina and drive to further recovery. He now realises that he can live life in a different way and still enjoy activities."

On the Marvel Superhero Tri....

"Thankyou everyone for organising the swim bike and walk. Tent and chairs and food. A big thankyou to BOWRA. The day was brilliant although I'm knackered. It was nice to see everyone and thanks for helping me ❤️"

On the Walkie-talkies....

"Fabulous work! On a personal note the joy it gives my husband to be involved in something that re-connects him with him 'brothers' is great. Thanks from a happy wife! ❤️"

On Hamworthy park...

"Thank you to the BOWRA crew for getting me safely and well & truly strapped into a bike today, earlier this morning I wasn't feeling so good and positive but after the meet at Hamworthy, I am completely transformed, buzzing with positive vibes, so thank you all once again 😊"

.....On Adaptive golf

"Since golf last Friday, Roy hasn't used his wheelchair at all, it's been left in the boot of my car. He is now walking around the house and patio without me needing to assist him and today walked from his parents house to the coffee shop and back. We are both so pleased, seeing him regain some independence is fantastic."

Roy is determined to swing that club unsupported, he has asked our son for any old club so he can just try by himself to swing it without hitting a ball to begin with."

number of golf balls hit every week at adaptive golf

1,800



LOOKING AHEAD

The next 5 years...

In August we held our first ever Strategy day, allowing the Board and staff time to reflect on the last five years and look ahead to the next five. It was a great time to come together, ensure our mission and values are still current, and look high level at what we need to do to achieve our ambitions.

We are working hard to ensure we are delivering as efficiently and effectively as we can.

“What’s next?”

Mark has a vision for 2025, and in true BOWRA style he has set his sights on something big!

Although at planning stage, Mark has already started training for his next annual challenge: “EVERY MILE MATTERS”

He has set himself the challenge of walking part of the South West Coast Path, supported by BOWRA and engaging with supporters and beneficiaries.

Look out for more information on how you can be involved in the new year!



HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are inspired by Mark, our beneficiaries and the work we do, why not get involved!? There are lot's of different ways you can support our amazing charity.

Why not:

DONATE: every amount, no matter how small, helps us to support people living with brain injury and the armed forces community. Whether contributing to activity costs, travel costs, BOWRA Bags or wellness events, the money will be used to empower our beneficiaries.

FUNDRAISE: is there an event you've been itching to compete in? Do you have a goal you would like to achieve as part of your own recovery? Whether walking to the end of your road and back or cycling a set distance, you could choose BOWRA Foundation as your nominated charity, did I mention we are on JustGiving?!

HOST AN EVENT: are you hosting an event next year and our mission aligns with your values? As a small charity these events really do make a big difference.

CORPORATE SUPPORT: do you want to support a local charity, empowering people to live their best lives? Please reach out if you would like to work with us, whether donating money to fund transport costs or activity costs or hours to help run our social media, we'd love to hear from you.

CHARITY OF THE YEAR: a gesture from you may make a big difference to our community. Please reach out if this interests you.

We'd love to hear from you - info@bowra-foundation.org or through our website www.bowra-foundation.org



SCAN HERE TO DONATE



THANK-YOU once again for your incredible support – together, we are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those who need it most.

Do you know someone who has **suffered a brain injury** and might benefit from a **BOWRA Bag**?

Head over to our website www.bowra-foundation.org to find out more information on the BOWRA Bag and how to request one. We send BOWRA Bags all over the country to people in the early stages of recovery from brain injury and stroke, at no cost to the recipient.

Are you someone living with a **brain injury** and want to empower your own recovery journey through physical activity and peer support?

If you would like to take part in our **activities**, please email us on info@bowra-foundation.org or contact us via the website www.bowra-foundation.org.

Are you a **veteran** interested in being **active** and **reconnecting** with like-minded people? Would you like to support our brain injured beneficiaries at local activities, providing encouragement, sharing stories and empowering their recovery journey?

Reach out to find out when our activities are taking place. We host walkie-talkies local to Poole and also further afield. We also invite veterans to joint activities with our brain injured beneficiaries including water sports, cycling and bowling.

Contact us:

Website: www.bowra-foundation.org

Email: info@bowra-foundation.org

Registered charity number: 1185395

We honour the life and service of Tim Crossin, whose inspiring vision of the Cold Dip Commando Challenge continues into 2025 – please check out dates for the dips and carry forward his legacy.