

Royal British Legion Oxfordshire August 2026



August 2026

(This Newsletter is produced quarterly Apr, Aug, Dec annually)

In This Issue

- ***Message from the New SE Midlands Membership Council Representative - Paul Mckay***
- ***Message from the County Chair - Fiona Lovesey***
- ***County Committee***
- ***Legion Staff***
- ***Annual Conference Motion Results***
- ***County Committee Vacancies***
- ***RBL Policies and Guidance Updates***
- ***National Memorial Arboretum to become Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens***
- ***Poppy Appeal 2025 Update - Yanto Evans***
- ***Annual Branch Financial Submission (Mandatory) - Andrew Bowes County Treasurer***

- ***Annual Branch MS1, MS1b and MS1CSB Submission (Mandatory) - Rob Lovesey
County Secretary***
- ***Knowledge Burst for Branches - Motions for Annual Conference***
- ***Ceremonial Update***
- ***County Recruitment Officer Update - Brian Leach***
- ***Précis: Policy Differences (2022 vs June 2026 Ceremonial Handbooks) and Changes
to the Dress Policy***
- ***Washbag Initiative to Support Serving Personnel and Create Awareness of RBL***
- ***County Branch Training Records Completion***
- ***"Discover" The RBL's Training Portal***
- ***Branch Training Requirements***
- ***Keeping in Contact - RBL.Community E-Mail Addresses***
- ***Diary Dates***
- ***Events***
- ***Roll of Honour***
- ***Join our Facebook Page***
- ***Royal British Legion New Facebook Group***
- ***RBL Oxfordshire Webpage***
- ***Oxfordshire Veterans Group***
- ***Cadet Force Affiliations - South East Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations***
- ***The Variety of Reserve Service - South East Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations***



*Message from the New SE Midlands Membership Representative -
Paul McKay*



It is a few months since I took up the role of your Membership Council Representative, and it is certainly proving busy, demanding and thoroughly enjoyable although I am beginning to suspect the diary may have a mind of its own.

Sitting alongside Trustees and Executive colleagues, helping to unpick some of the challenges and shape the RBL's future strategy, has already been a fascinating experience. The real challenge is how we adapt to a changing world and ensure the RBL remains fit for purpose in the years ahead, without losing sight of our core purpose and the people we are here to support.

There are no easy answers and, sadly, I have yet to attend a committee meeting in all my career where someone produces a magic wand. But that is part of what makes the role so interesting.

So, a little about me.

I spent a full career in the Royal Navy, serving in naval aviation, warfare and command appointments. This was followed by project management delivering Government to Government programmes overseas, diplomatic and commercial roles, and latterly senior executive appointments as a Chief Strategy Officer and Chief Executive Officer. Throughout, my approach has remained simple: listen, understand the problem and try to find a practical way forward.

My wider charity experience spans the Royal Naval Association, RBL Branch leadership, Branch Community Support and membership of the Royal Air Force Association, together with many years supporting UK Armed Forces charities through overseas fundraising.

For me, camaraderie, connection and joining the dots between people and organisations in our communities is what it is all about. I firmly believe RBL membership is more than holding a membership card; it is about belonging and pride in the good our organisation does.

I also speak from personal experience. At a difficult time in my own life, I benefited from support connected to the RBL and wider Armed Forces charity community. That experience has stayed with me and is a powerful reminder of why the work we do, and the connections we make, really matter.

My commitment to you is simple: to listen, represent members honestly and support open, constructive two-way communication. I may not always have an immediate answer, but I promise I will listen, ask the question and do my best to ensure your voice is heard.

I look forward to meeting many of you during my tenure in the role.

Paul McKay

Message from the County Chair - Fiona Lovesey



I would like to extend a warm welcome to Paul McKay, our new Membership Council Representative. We are delighted to have Paul join the team, and I look forward to working with him in the future as we continue to strengthen the Legion across Oxfordshire and support our members throughout the county.

As we move through another busy and memorable year for the Royal British Legion in Oxfordshire, I have been privileged to represent our County at several significant events, each reminding us of the importance of remembrance, service and fellowship.

One of the highlights was attending the Turning of the Pages Ceremony at Christ Church College, Oxford, a wonderful occasion steeped in tradition. It was made even more special

when our National Chair, Lynda Atkins, presented Oxfordshire Treasurer, Andrew Bowes, with his Gold Badge. This prestigious award is recognition of Andrew's many years of dedication and service to the Legion, and it was a proud moment for Oxfordshire to see one of our own honoured in such a distinguished setting.

The county has also come together to mark several important anniversaries this year. I was honoured to attend the VE Day commemoration at the grave of Sir Winston Churchill in Bladon, where representatives from the Legion joined members of the local community and the Parachute Regiment in paying tribute to the generation that secured victory in Europe 80 years ago. Standing at the resting place of one of Britain's greatest wartime leaders was a poignant reminder of the courage, sacrifice and determination shown by so many during those difficult years.

The spirit of remembrance continued at the D-Day Commemoration at the Harwell Stone. These annual events play a vital role in ensuring that the legacy of those who landed on the beaches of Normandy, and all who served during the campaign, is never forgotten. It is always heartening to see Legion members, veterans, young people and local residents coming together to honour their memory.

I know also that the County Ceremonial Team has been very busy both with training and leading the Royal British Legion contingent at the Banbury Armed Forces Day. I was also very pleasing to hear of the activities of John Green President and Standard Bearer for Henley on Thames attending a number of events. Branches are also minded of the mandatory change for Branch Standard Bearers to attend annual training and I hope you will take advantage of the training session laid on by the Ceremonial Team.

I am currently considering the impact of the recent policy change regarding the maximum term of service for Branch Chairs, which has been highlighted within my Branch and faced by many across the county. While we all recognise the value of encouraging new people into leadership positions, smaller branches can face unique challenges. Branches like mine has a limited number of active members and recruiting volunteers willing to take on leadership roles is increasingly difficult. We will therefore need to carefully examine our future options, which may include operating with greater County support or, regrettably, considering closure if suitable successors cannot be found. This is an issue that I believe may affect other smaller branches and one that deserves close attention in the coming months. I am aware that Oxfordshire County has raised the implications of this policy change with the Membership Council Representative. Further clarification is necessary if we are to ensure that our smaller and medium Branches with succession issues survive this policy change. I will report directly with Branches if there are any developments.

The coming years may require us to think creatively about how we continue to support our members and maintain a strong Legion presence locally. Whatever the future may hold, I

know that the dedication and commitment shown by our volunteers will continue to be one of our greatest strengths.

As always, I would like to thank every member, volunteer, supporter and branch officers across Oxfordshire for everything you do. Whether organising events, supporting veterans and their families, fundraising, or simply giving your time to help others, you are the reason the Royal British Legion remains such a valued and respected organisation.

Together, we continue to uphold the Legion's values, honour those who served, and ensure that remembrance remains at the heart of our communities.

Fiona

Oxfordshire County Committee

County Committee Members

County President

Mrs Ann Mid-Winter Oxfordshire.President@RBL.Community

County Chair

Chair -Mrs Fiona Lovesey Oxfordshire.Chair@RBL.Community

County Vice Chair

Vice Chair - Mr Tjark Andrews Oxfordshire.ViceChair@RBL.Community

County Secretary

Mr Rob Lovesey Oxfordshire.Secretary@RBL.Community

County Treasurer

Mr Andrew Bowes Oxfordshire.Treasurer@RBL.Community

County Parade Marshal

Mr Peter Clarke Oxfordshire.ParadeMarshal@RBL.Community

County Training Officer

Mr Derek Bradshaw Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community

County Recruitment Officer

Mr Brian Leach Oxfordshire.Recruitment@RBL.Community

County Community Support Co-ordinator

Vacant

Oxfordshire Club Liaison Officer

Vacant

County Standard Bearer

Mr Tjark Andrews **Oxfordshire.StdBearer@RBL.Community**

County Branch Liaison Officers

- **County Chair – Fiona Lovesey (Oxfordshire.Chair@RBL.Community):** Benson and District, Watlington, Thame and Stanton Harcourt
- **County Treasurer – Andrew Bowes (Oxfordshire.Treasurer@RBL.Community):** Bix, Shiplake, Nettlebed, Ramsden, Headington and Standlake & Northmoor
- **County Recruitment Officer - Brian Leach (Oxfordshire.CRO@RBL.Community):** Bicester, Kidlington, Kirtlington, Heyford and Deddington
- **County Training Officer - Derek Bradshaw (Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community):** Littlemore, Yarnton, Eynsham, Cassington and Islip
- **County Parade Marshal – Pete Clarke (Oxfordshire.ParadeMarshal@RBL.Community):** Chipping Norton, Bloxham, Kingham and Banbury
- **County Standard Bearer – Tjark Andrews (Oxfordshire.StdBearer@RBL.Community):** Burford, Bampton, Charlbury, North Leigh and Carterton
- **County Secretary – Rob Lovesey (Oxfordshire.Secretary@RBL.Community):** Dorchester, Henley, Peppard, Wheatley and Chinnor



Legion Staff

Membership Engagement Manager (MEM)

Mr Chris Jones Central.MEM@RBL.Community

Membership Engagement Officer (MEO)

Ms Lebo Nyoni Oxfordshireshire.MEO@RBL.Community

Poppy Appeal Manager (Oxfordshire)

Mr Yanto Evans YEvans@britishlegion.org.uk

Annual National Conference Motion Results

Detailed below are the results of the Motions presented below Conference earlier this year. Please note that these motions now need to be ratified before inclusion into the Membership and Ceremonial Handbooks.

One of the Motions has already been reported on to all County Branches regarding the mandatory training of all Branch/CSB Standard Bearers. However, there is also a motion relating the wearing of Poppies for Standard Bearers and Parade Marshals which will affect all Branches and CSBs. Another which was passed was for County, Branch officers and committee members complete the necessary training which is considered essential to ensure that they understand the workings of a branch and how do manage their role within the branch. The MS1 should be amended to contain a signed declaration to that effect.

Please ensure that all your Branch Officers/Parade Marshals and Standard Bearers are made aware of these significant changes.

The details of the motion their status are as follows:

National Conference 2026 Motion Results

Motion 1

Proposer Guiseley Branch

This conference requests that the Ceremonial Working Group consider abolishing the procedure of wearing a disassembled Poppy behind the RBL cap badge for Standard Bearers and Parade Marshals. ***Motion was not passed***

Motion 2

Proposer Mawdesley Branch

The Mawdesley RBL Branch requests that the Board of Trustees canvas the Prime Minister and HM Government to make good on a pre-election pledge to support Veterans, and their

dependents, who during the nuclear testing programme during the 1950's were exposed to high levels of nuclear radiation, and have suffered health problems because of this. ***Motion was passed***

Motion 3

Proposer Plympton & District Branch

This conference requests that the membership handbook is updated to reflect the need for all County, Branch officers and committee members complete the necessary training which is considered essential to ensure that they understand the workings of a branch and how to manage their role within the branch. The MS1 should be amended to contain a signed declaration to that effect.

Motion was passed

Motion 4

Proposer Worksop Branch

This conference asks the Royal British Legion to introduce a National Award for individuals who are not members of the RBL family, to recognise exceptional work that actively supports the work of the legion. ***Motion was passed***

Motion 5

Proposer Guiseley Branch and Skegness Branch

This Conference requests that the Royal British Legion amend the Ceremonial Handbook and associated policy to require all Standard Bearers to undertake a mandatory Standard Bearer training session annually. ***Motion was passed***

Motion 6

Proposer Torquay Branch

This Conference proposes that the Legion undertakes a review of its procurement policy to explore opportunities for sourcing its merchandise within the UK or Commonwealth.

Motion was passed

County Committee Vacancies



The County Committee has some vacancies which need to be filled from the membership these are:

- County Community Support Coordinator
- County Training Officer
- County RBL Club Liaison Officer

If these are areas which you feel you might like to contribute to the running of the County, please get in touch with the County Secretary to discuss further. Training and support will be provided for all posts where necessary

RBL Policies and Guidance Updates

The following changes to RBL Policies and Guidance Updates have been announced:

Change to Branch Chair tenure

Following the April Membership Council meeting, it has been agreed by the MC to align Branch Chair tenures with those of County Chairs. It is hoped this will stimulate innovation in branches and encourage leadership development. Branch Chairs will now be able to serve a maximum of three three-year terms (nine years in total).

We recognise that some Branch Chairs have served longer than nine years due to difficulties in recruiting successors. To prevent branches entering county administration, a revised approach has been agreed. Where no suitable candidates come forward following the completion of a nine-year tenure, the existing chair may continue for one additional year. In these circumstances, elections must be held annually to allow opportunities for new officers to take on the role.

Any Branch Chairs who have served for more than nine years will therefore be required to stand for election at the next AGM period starting in October, regardless of previously agreed tenures.

Branch Standard Bearer Mandatory Annual Training

At this years Conference a motion was passed to amend the Ceremonial Handbook and associated policy to require all Standard Bearers to undertake a mandatory Standard Bearer training session annually.

Standard Bearers are the public face of the Royal British Legion and represent the organisation's values, standards, and professionalism whenever on parade. Mandatory training is essential to ensure standard bearers are adhering to the correct dress as laid out in the Ceremonial Handbook and the standard bearer is handling the Standard in a safe and correct manner and conduct.

Further details are included in the County Parade Marshal's report.

Changes to expenses policy for mileage

Following the recent announcement from the Chancellor regarding mileage rates, the RBL has updated the expenses policy (SOP 42) to reflect the new mileage reimbursement rates for travel undertaken on RBL business.

Updated mileage rates are as follows:

Colleagues, volunteers, and trustees using their own car:

- 55 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles
- 25 pence per mile thereafter

Colleagues in receipt of a car allowance:

- 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles
- 25 pence per mile thereafter

Retrospective adjustments:

The Finance team will review mileage claims that have been paid from 5th April 2026 onwards.

Where the date of travel is on or after this date, any applicable increases will be applied automatically through a retrospective adjustment. There is no need to submit a backdated expense claim. You will automatically receive the payment week commencing Monday, 8 June.

If you have any queries, please contact membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk

Changes to Branch Return criteria

To make compliance simpler, particularly for smaller branches, some branches will see changes to year-end returns criteria, for the year ending 30 June 2026.

In summary:

- The Small Branch Return eligibility criteria is increasing from £500 to £1,000 annual income and spend (excluding transactions to/from other parts of the RBL). The £5k branch / £15k county bank balance limit remains the same.
- Some branches submitting a Full Return that meet certain new criteria will only need to undertake Independent Examinations every other year.

Membership Fee Increase

A gentle reminder to Branch and County Officers that the £2 membership fee increase comes into effect on **Friday 24 Sep 24**.

New members and those renewing from that date will pay £24. The change will take place automatically at renewal. **Note:** The RBL Payment Provider is Charles Novacroft and this may appear on your statement. Branches that collect fees on behalf of its members (consolidated payments), please ensure you prepare to collect the correct new membership fee amount.

The fee increase follows the Motion passed at Annual Conference 2024. This will help the RBL provide the best service to our valued members and ensure that the membership remains at the heart of our charity.

Youth Policy - Supervision of Young People

The RBL is continuing the development of our Youth offer which will be led by our new Head of Youth, Kelly Wales, who is joining the team on 01 Sep 26. Kelly is an experienced youth engagement and education professional with a passion for supporting Armed Forces children, young people and families.

We would like to take this opportunity to reinforce our shared responsibility to young people engaging with the RBL. All persons under 18, including Youth Musicians/Standard Bearers and members of youth groups, must remain under the supervision of their responsible adult for the full duration of any RBL activity or meeting.

A responsible adult should be a parent/legal guardian or an adult member of staff or volunteer from the youth organisation. It should be made clear to them that the young person remains their responsibility throughout the duration of the activity or meeting, and that the RBL takes no responsibility for young people attending meetings, events or activities. We appreciate your support in ensuring that young people remain safeguarded when engaging with us.



National Memorial Arboretum to become Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens

Dear Members

Following my update in February about our ambition to build on the incredible work of the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) by integrating it into The Royal British Legion, I'm pleased to say that we have successfully completed the change.

As part of Our Strategy to 2035, we will evolve Remembrance and widen participation to support our vision of bringing society together to recognise, remember, and support the Armed Forces community. This wonderful site, which is at the heart of this work, will be known as the Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens from September 2026.

The RBL National Remembrance Gardens will continue to provide a dedicated place to commemorate service and sacrifice by members of the Armed Forces, emergency services and civilian organisations for generations to come. Our collection of more than 420 memorials will continue to grow and we will announce our vision for investment to enhance the site's position as the nation's year-round place to remember later this year.

RBL National Remembrance Gardens describes a place that invites people in, not just to reflect, but to take an active part in Remembrance. I'm very pleased that this important new chapter is supported by its founder, Commander (Rtd) David Childs CBE.

We will be announcing the name to the public later this week and sharing it with members in April's E-newsletter.

Best wishes

Lynda

Lynda Atkins DL

National Chair



Poppy Appeal 2025 Update - Yanto Evans

Poppy Appeal 2025 Raises Record £56.6 Million

The Royal British Legion's 2025 Poppy Appeal has achieved an incredible milestone, raising £56.6 million—the highest total since before the Covid-19 pandemic.

This outstanding result is a testament to the continued generosity of the public and the dedication of thousands of volunteers across the UK. A record-breaking 59,000 volunteers took part in this year's Appeal, distributing over 32 million poppies and 135,000 wreaths nationwide.

Communities across the country, from small villages to large cities, played their part in supporting the Appeal. Fundraising efforts included sponsored walks, runs, and bike rides, alongside raffles and traditional street collections, all contributing to this remarkable total.

The funds raised are vital in enabling the Royal British Legion (RBL) to provide lifelong support to members of the Armed Forces community. This includes veterans, serving personnel, their families, and those who are bereaved.

Thanks to the success of the 2025 Appeal, the RBL has been able to make a significant difference. During the year, more than 20,000 households were supported across the UK and in 65 countries worldwide. The organisation also secured £25.2 million in compensation and benefits for veterans.

Financial assistance continues to play a crucial role, with £9.3 million awarded in grants to Armed Forces families to help cover essential needs such as accommodation, food, and clothing. A further £6.8 million was granted to specialist organisations, reaching around 13,800 individuals.

The RBL's support extends beyond financial help. More than 1,600 people benefited from recovery and wellbeing programmes, while its call centre handled over 115,000 enquiries via phone, webchat, and email. In addition, dedicated dementia support was provided to more than 1,400 households through the charity's Admiral Nurses service.

The Royal British Legion also continues its wider work, including funding Team UK at the Invictus Games, operating six care homes across the UK, and supporting individuals with war pensions and compensation claims.

The success of the Poppy Appeal once again highlights the strength of public support for the Armed Forces community. Every contribution helps ensure that those who have served—and continue to serve—receive the care and assistance they deserve.

How Did Oxfordshire Do?

The Oxfordshire total so far for 2025/26 is an amazing £680,086.52 which is up 3.9% on the previous year. A massive thanks to everyone involved, especially the PAOs, DPAOs and all the collectors/volunteers.

Digital donations are continuing to increase and the Toucan App is now available so every volunteer can take digital donations for their area on their mobile phone.

These are the digital donations to date:

- Contactless Total 2025/26 - £229,080.56
- Toucan App Total 2025/26 - £11,960.50
- QR Code Total 2025/26 - £17,602.86

There is a 25% increase nationally in digital donations so it is important to utilise the technology available.

I have started to contact PAOs to arrange support visits for those who have completed their first year, but please remember that myself and Emma Gasson, Oxfordshire's Poppy Appeal Relationship Assistant (PARA) are here to support you.

Emma will be covering the East and West Berkshire for the next 6 months so Michelle Newton will be the POC for those managed by Emma

Please get in touch if you would any assistance or support.

My details are:

yevans@britishlegion.otg.uk

Tel: 07458086219

Michelle's details are:

mnewton@britishlegion.org.uk

Tel: 0345 845 1945 option 1, option 1

The current gaps are as below:

- Islip
- Garsington
- Eynsham

If you know anyone that would like to help with the PA in any of these districts or support current PAO's around Oxfordshire please ask them to email me at yevans@britishlegion.org.uk or call me on 07458086219.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers and everyone, especially the Poppy Appeal Organisers, who work so hard to deliver the appeal in their respective areas. I really appreciate all the time and effort that you give in supporting the RBL. I would also like to thank all those behind the scenes at county for their support.

Please remember that Michelle and I are here to support you.

Poppy Appeal Events

- **Armed Forces Day** parades and events took place during the week leading up to 27th June 2026. Many events were cancelled due to the weather and unavailability of many volunteers.

Many thanks to those who participated.

- **The Oxfordshire 2026 Poppy Appeal Seminar** is booked for Saturday 8th August 2026 to which PAO's have been invited. I have yet to hear from all PAO's with their attendance but would be great to see as many PAO's, Deputies and volunteers as

possible as it gives a great insight into the upcoming appeal. This will again be held at the Islip village hall.

Dates for the diary

- **The Oxfordshire 2026 Poppy Appeal Seminar** Saturday 8th August 2026
- **2026 Poppy Appeal** Thursday 22nd October 2026
- **London Poppy Day** Thursday 29th October 2026
- **Festival of Remembrance**, Royal Albert Hall Saturday 7th November 2026
- **Remembrance Sunday** is on 8th November 2026

Yanto



Annual Branch Financial Submission (Mandatory) - Andrew Bowes County Treasurer

Changes to Branch Return criteria

To make compliance simpler, particularly for smaller branches, some branches will see changes to year-end returns criteria, for the year ending 30 June 2026.

In summary:

- The Small Branch Return eligibility criteria is increasing from £500 to £1,000 annual income and spend (excluding transactions to/from other parts of the RBL). The £5k branch / £15k county bank balance limit remains the same.
- Some branches submitting a Full Return that meet certain new criteria will only need to undertake Independent Examinations every other year.

Branch Compliance

During the membership year, there are two key dates for which Branch Chairs, Secretaries and Treasurers need to prepare and that have an important role in ensuring your branch is compliant, these are 30 Sep for Branch Accounts submission and 31 Dec for MS1, MS1b (Standard Bearer) and MS1CSB submissions. With the end of the Financial Year at an end on 30 Jun 26, all Branches (not CSBs, this is undertaken by the County Treasurer) are mandated to submit their Annual Branch Submission with the **30th of September** as the cut-off date for your submission of Branch Annual Accounts.

Annual Branch Accounts Return

In order to streamline the year end audit and to reduce pressure on Branch treasurers close to the Poppy Appeal, the accounting period year end is now 30 June. Your return should be submitted by 30 September each year, at the latest, as stipulated in the Royal Charter. Do not wait until September to complete and file your Annual Branch Return; it is good governance to complete and submit as early as possible. Note: the submission of Annual Branch Accounts Returns is MANDATORY. CSBs will be completed and filed by the County Treasurer. If you are unsure on completion or submission please contact the County Treasurer (Andrew Bowes) on Oxfordshire.Treasurer@RBL.Community.

An Effective Branches should:

- attend branch accounts sessions alongside the Independent Examiner and MEO to ensure collaborative and supportive working.
- engage, through the Branch Treasurer, with the MEO who has oversight of submissions.
- through the Branch Chair, have oversight of the branch return.
- encourage Branch Treasurers to undertake necessary training ahead of time.
- encourage the use of the advanced accounts pack.
- keep branch accounts as a regular agenda item for branch meetings.

The County Committee has collective responsibility to ensure maximum compliance in its area. The County Committee will communicate with the Branch Chair, who leads on this at Branch level in close collaboration with the Branch Treasurer. All have a significant part to play when it comes to achieving compliance for the Branch annual accounts return.

Branch officers should be prepared to support the Branch Treasurer where required in the completion of the return. An example of this would be to ensure expenses are submitted on the correct SOP 42 form, with receipts attached for any expenditure claimed. Your MEO is there to support and advise you regarding branch accounts and is a direct link to finance. Queries relating to branch accounts can be sent to ***BranchAccounts@britishlegion.org.uk***.

Best practice would see your Branch submit its return as early as possible, with the 1st of September being a realistic and achievable date. This will provide ample time for the county, branch and MEO to carry out any checks, and request any further information from the branch that may be required.

Oxfordshire.Treasurer@RBL.Community

Andrew

Annual Branch MS1, MS1b and MS1CSB Submission (Mandatory) - Rob Lovesey County Secretary

MS1A and MS1CSB - Mandatory

To ensure and maintain Branch Compliance every Branch and CSB ***must*** complete annually a MS1A or for CSBs the MS1CSB which details the Branch Committee Membership or Points of Contact for CSBs. This is a mandatory requirement for all Branches. ***Note: Branches and CSBs must hold their Annual General Meeting between 01 Oct - 30 Nov annually without exception. This is the time that Branch Committee positions are ratified by the Committee and the MS1A/MS1CSB must be signed and completed. The MS1b(Standard Bearers) must also be completed at this meeting to ensure that the Standard Bearer is covered by the Public Liability Insurance - no completed and submitted MS1b to the MEO and County Secretary then your Standard cannot be paraded.***

In 2024 the MS1A/MS1CSB separated the MS1b(Standard Bearer) Forms, therefore Branches and CSBs must complete the two forms. It is recommended that Branches and CSB submit their completed MS forms two weeks prior to the 31 Dec deadline. In 2025 the forms were further undated with only certain roles that need to sign the forms, but still requires Branch Officers to be listed.

The ***31st of December*** is the cut-off date for the return of the fully completed MS1 Forms. In addition a Compliant Branch that has submitted their MS1 forms can:

- propose a motion at the county AGM for Annual Conference.
- send delegates to both county and annual conferences.
- apply for county grants.

- vote in elections for the Trustees and the Membership Council.

It is every branch's responsibility to ensure that its members have a voice in shaping the membership for the good and benefit of our Armed Forces community. To summarise, achieving compliance means that your branch can play a full and active role in the governance of RBL membership.

MS1b(Standard Bearer) Return - Mandatory

Standard Bearers are you aware that you are required annually to complete the MS1b Form, you are required to complete your Branch MS1b following your Branch AGM. If not, ***you cannot carry out the duties of your Branch Standard Bearer.*** Branch Compliance under the terms of the Royal Charter and the Membership Handbook requires all Branches including County Supported Branches (CSBs) are to complete and submit the requisite MS1b Form, this ensures that you have read and understood the responsibilities and risks associated with Standard Bearing, including but not limited to:

Standard bearing is a physical activity and so a self declaration that you both physically fit and strong enough to carry a Standard in all reasonable weather conditions. As a Standard Bearer you will be expected to be able to carry a Standard which is 8ft long and up to 3.5kg in weight (in wet or windy weather conditions Standards may become heavier and difficult to hold upright). Some actions such as Dips may put a strain on the back and shoulders. Competitions and Remembrance events may prove demanding and stressful for some.

- Your confirmation if you are in receipt of any disability related allowance or benefit, you will inform the appropriate authorities of your intention to undertake the role of Standard Bearer/Deputy Standard Bearer as this may affect your eligibility status.
- You have no physical conditions or disability that could potentially put me or others at harm whilst performing my duties as a Standard Bearer/Deputy Standard Bearer. If I have, or suspect I have, a health problem which means I may not be able to fulfil all duties required of the role safely, I undertake to inform the appropriate Ceremonial Officer in charge of the competition/Remembrance event.

Additionally, if you have not completed the MS1b you may not be covered by the Public Liability Insurance.

On Completion these Forms are to be submitted to the County MEO (Lebo Nyoni - ***Oxfordshire.MEO@RBL.Community***)) and the County Secretary (Rob Lovesey) on ***Oxfordshire.Secretary@RBL.Community***.

Rob

Knowledge Burst for Branches - Motions for Annual Conference

Royal British Legion branches must hold their **Annual General Meetings (AGMs) annually between October 1st and November 30th**. This timeframe ensures the meeting takes place within two months of the Legion's corporate financial year ending on September 30th. One element of the Branch Annual General Meeting is for the Membership to Propose potential Motions for Annual Conference. The following process steps will help Branches understand what is required:

Step 1 - Member with an Idea - The motion process starts with a member having an idea to improve membership or support for our Armed Forces Community. They should first put feelers out amongst branch members to test the idea.

Step 2 - Branch AGM - The member should then pitch their idea at their Branch AGM which should be held between 1 Oct - 30 Nov every year.

Step 3 - Branch Votes on Motion - The branch will need to then vote on the motion with a majority required to carry the motion.

Step 4 - Prepare Motion for County Conference Committee - Once the motion has been carried at branch level, it will then need to be prepared to present at county level. The certificate for motions template should be provided by the County Conference Committee. **All motions must be seconded by another branch.**

Step 5 - Motion Submitted to the County Conference Committee - The County Conference Committee will then review the motion against the standing orders. If passed, the motion will then be heard at County Conference.

Step 6 - Motion is Pitched at County Conference - The motion will then be heard at the County Conference, which should be held in January of each year (best practice). Once carried at county, the motion must be submitted **to the Conference Committee by 5pm on the Friday 12 weeks before Annual Conference.**

Step 7 - Motion Goes to Conference Committee - Should a motion be passed at County Conference, it must then be submitted to the Conference Committee, who will do a thorough check to ensure the motion meets the requirements to be a motion. The form for submitting a motion to Annual Conference can be found in the October circular. If a motion requires amending the **amendments need to be submitted by 5pm on the Friday at least five weeks before Annual Conference.**

Step 8 - Annual Conference - At this point the motion is now ready to be heard at Annual Conference and be voted on.

Step 9 - Resolution Booklet - Should the motion be carried at Annual Conference it will then form part of the resolution booklet which will inform the formations and its members of the actions to be taken on the motions carried.

Further information can be obtained from the Membership Handbook, and by Branch Officers having completed the **Motions for Annual Conference** on the L&D "Discover" portal. This also offers some basic understanding for the writing of a Motion and points the membership to the various Motion Types and how to prepare a Motion



Ceremonial Update Pete Clarke

The following is an advance notice that will affect each Branch that has a Standard Bearer. The following Motion was passed at Conference which will impact every RBL Standard Bearer.

The Motion

This Conference requests that the Royal British Legion amend the Ceremonial Handbook and associated policy to require **all Standard Bearers to undertake a mandatory Standard Bearer training session annually.**

Reason for inclusion Standard Bearers are the public face of the Royal British Legion and represent the organisation's values, standards, and professionalism whenever on parade. Mandatory training is essential to ensure standard bearers are adhering to the correct dress as laid out in the Ceremonial Handbook and the standard bearer is handling the Standard in a safe and correct manner and conduct.

Effect if passed All Standard Bearers should be at a competent level, or above, for their safety and the safety of the public. When charged with the Standard, the Standard Bearer agrees to participate in at least one mandatory session annually as part of the Charge. The Legion will ultimately benefit from increased consistency, uniformity, safety, and professional presentation.

Main argument Mandatory training ensures that Standard Bearers meet a consistent standard of competence, safety, and dress - regardless of branch size, location, or frequency of participation - as outlined in the Ceremonial Handbook. Professionalism must be maintained across all events, from local parades to major national ceremonies. Incorrect

dress (e.g. wrong tie, incorrect beret, grey trousers, or missing uniform items) or unsafe standard handling undermines the image and reputation of the Legion. The reputational and safety risks of not making training mandatory are significant and adopting this motion directly mitigates them. Standard Bearers must be trained to a competent level to ensure both their own safety and the safety of the public. They must understand and apply the correct methods for carrying and controlling a Standard in all types of weather conditions and in a variety of locations. Proper handling is essential not only to prevent injury to themselves or damage to the Standard, but also to ensure that members of the public are protected.

For anyone who missed the motion which was debated and passed at National Annual Conference 2026.

The Ceremonial Handbook will be updated following the ratification of this passed motion and will affect every County/Branch/CSB Standard Bearer. This advance notification is to advise each Branch/CSB of the mandatory changes that are pending. It is uncertain at this early stage in the change what the ramifications will be for Branches/Standard Bearers if they fail to attend annually training. Evidently the Branch will not be permitted to parade their Standard unless the Standard Bearer has completed the annual mandatory training and I would assume that the Public Liability Insurance will not be available to those that have not completed their annual mandatory training. This could have significant implications for Branch Officers and Standard Bearers if an incident occurs.

The County Parade Marshal will be responsible for conducting the mandatory training and the monitoring of those Standard Bearers that have attended. It should be noted that where we have had incidents within County where a member has stepped in at the last minute to parade the Standard at Remembrance or at an Event due to the non-availability of the regular Standard Bearer, this will not be permitted unless the member has completed annual mandatory training, completed a MS1B and meets the full requirements of the Ceremonial Handbook.

The County Parade Marshal - Pete Clarke - already runs training sessions in Stanton Harcourt Village Hall unless otherwise stated. The remaining training programme for 2026 is:

- 27 Sep 26
- 25 Oct 26

Whilst this change has yet to be introduced, it is suggested that Branch Standard Bearers start attending these sessions in preparation to the forthcoming mandatory requirement.

The County Parade Marshal also maintains a forum on "Whats App" for County Standard Bearers to update them on training/events and ceremonial matters, and I would advocate that your Branch Standard Bearer joins this forum to be apprised of all matter's ceremonial. Pete can be contacted on Oxfordshire.ParadeMarshal@RBL.Community.

You are requested to share this mandatory change with your Branch Officers and especially your Standard Bearer. It is also recommended that they are encouraged to attend the training sessions listed above ahead of the mandatory changes.

Training Dates

- 27 Sep 26
- 25 Oct 26

Further changes that effect Standard Bearers and their training is the RBL youth membership policy. It is now the ***responsibility of the County Parade Marshal to train Youth Standard Bearers***; this means that no other members can train them, unless they hold an A grade Parade Marshal's qualification, and in date enhanced DBS and have completed, and are in date with their RBL online safeguarding training. Only in very EXCEPTIONAL circumstances will the National Parade Marshal and the RBL Ceremonial Working Group give permission to someone other than the CPM to carry out the training and this will be a one-off exception, provided they meet the requirements/qualification's just mentioned.

Official RBL Standard Suppliers

Guidance for branches about RBL Standard Suppliers for a number of enquiries to Membership Services, there are two official suppliers that have been checked and verified by the Royal British Legion's Procurement Team. These are:

- AA Flags
- Newton and Newton

When purchasing a new Standard please only do so from either of the two mentioned suppliers.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible throughout the year.

Pete



County Recruitment Officer Update - Brian Leach

The County Recruitment Officer (CRO) for the Royal British Legion is a key volunteer role focused on driving membership, supporting struggling branches and boosting local engagement.

The responsibilities and context of the role include:

- **Primary Duties:** CROs actively seek opportunities to promote the RBL. They manage recruitment budgets, distribute promotional material, support branches at local events and assist with retention strategies.
- **Training:** New CROs participate in specialised programs including webinars, that review engagement timelines, membership statics, and best practice for reversing branch declines.

Haig House has announced that they are in the process of creating Branch Recruitment pack, which will be free to order, to support branches with acquiring new members.

Each branch can request one Recruitment Pack, which includes:

- 10 x Become a Member posters
- 500 x Contact Centre Business cards,
- 250 x Become a Member leaflets

- 200 x Branch Community Support leaflets and
- 1 x pull-up banner (optional)

If your branch would like a pack as soon as they become available, please either contact myself or Membership Services or complete the expression of interest form. The link is:

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=FpkbnJBIP0Whw6YPIqebwCHd9SO9BhxMiVzSaxnhRWVUQloyM00wWIJTUxQQzhXMDM4MkpDQUxGSC4u&route=shorturl>

As I develop in the role you can contact me for promotional material and I am available to attend Branch meetings across the County (although not Tuesday's).

I can be contacted at Oxfordshire.Recruitment@RBL.Community

Brian

Précis: Policy Differences (2022 vs June 2026 Ceremonial Handbooks) and Changes to the Dress Policy



1. Structural and Governance Changes

- The **2026 handbook formalises governance structures** more clearly, particularly:
 - Expanded role and authority of the **Ceremonial Working Group** and Membership Council.
 - More detailed **selection, grading, and governance of Parade Marshals**, including training requirements, DBS checks, and formalised appointment panels.
- The 2022 version provides **simpler governance guidance**, with fewer formal accountability and safeguarding requirements.

Policy shift:

From guidance-based governance (2022) to **formalised, professionalised oversight and accountability (2026)**.

2. Safeguarding, Inclusion, and Compliance

- The 2026 edition introduces explicit policies on:
 - **Safeguarding requirements** (e.g. DBS checks for marshals).
 - **Accessibility and disability inclusion** in venues and participation.
 - **Equal opportunities and data protection** as dedicated policy areas.
 - Recognition of **LGBTQ+ inclusion**, including guidance on flying the Rainbow Flag.
- The 2022 handbook contains:
 - Limited equality references and **no explicit safeguarding framework or inclusion policy detail**.

Policy shift:

From minimal reference to equality (2022) to **explicit safeguarding, inclusivity, and compliance standards (2026)**.

3. Standardisation and Professionalisation of Ceremonial Practice

- The 2026 handbook:
 - Expands **standard operating procedures (SOP-style guidance)**.
 - Introduces structured **training, competency expectations, and grading systems** for marshals and judges.
 - Provides more detailed **risk assessment and health & safety guidance**.
- The 2022 handbook:
 - Focuses on tradition and recommended practice.
 - Provides less formalised **risk, safety, and training frameworks**.

Policy shift:

From traditional guidance to **codified, standardised operational procedures**.

4. Updates to Language and Terminology

- The 2026 version:
 - Uses **gender-neutral language** and removes assumptions (e.g. replaces gendered phrasing with inclusive wording).
 - Updates references (e.g. to the **King**, not the Queen).
- The 2022 version:
 - Includes statements such as “male includes all genders” and uses predominantly gendered language.

Policy shift:

Transition to **modern, inclusive language aligned with contemporary standards.**

5. Enhanced Operational Detail and “Living Document” Approach

- The 2026 handbook:
 - Explicitly defines itself as a **“living document”** with structured feedback mechanisms (e.g. central email submission process).
 - Includes expanded procedural detail across ceremonies, competitions, and event planning.
- The 2022 version:
 - Also allows updates but with **less formalised revision and feedback processes.**

Policy shift:

From periodic revision to **continuous policy development and iterative updating.**

6. Ceremonial Policy Additions

- The 2026 handbook introduces or expands policies on:
 - **Operation London Bridge**, including clearer flag, mourning, and participation instructions.
 - Detailed **event management, safety planning, and risk assessments.**
- The 2022 version contains these elements but:

- In a more **basic and less integrated form**.

Policy shift:

Broader integration of ceremonial policy with **national protocols and operational planning**.

Overall Conclusion

The 2026 Ceremonial Handbook represents a **modernised and formalised evolution** of the 2022 version. While core ceremonial practices remain largely unchanged, key differences lie in:

- **Governance and accountability**
- **Safeguarding and inclusivity**
- **Professionalisation and standardisation**
- **Modern language and compliance frameworks**

In essence, the policy direction shifts from a **tradition-led guidance document (2022)** to a **regulated, inclusive, and operationally rigorous framework (2026)**.

Dress Policy Comparison (2022 vs 2026)

1. Overall Approach to Dress Guidance

- **2022:**
 - Dress guidance is **prescriptive but relatively general**, emphasising tradition, appearance, and appropriateness for formal occasions.
- **2026:**
 - Retains the same core standards but expands into **more detailed, standardised and enforceable rules**, especially for specific roles (e.g. Standard Bearers).

Policy Change:

Shift toward **greater precision and uniform enforcement**, not just general expectations.

2. Standard Bearer Dress Regulations

Key Differences

- **Facial Jewellery**
 - **2022:** Completely prohibited (“none”).
 - **2026:** Permits **single small plain stud earrings**.
- **Badge Restrictions**
 - **2022:** General restriction on additional badges.
 - **2026:** Explicitly states Standard Bearers **must not wear any other lapel badges**, with clearly defined permitted badges and placement.
- **Shoes (Women)**
 - **2022:** Specifies low-heeled lace-up shoes without toe caps.
 - **2026:** Allows flexibility where toe-cap shoes are unavailable, acknowledging supply realities.
- **Medals**
 - **2022:** Allows medals, with restrictions mainly on relatives’ medals.
 - **2026:** Adds clearer rules (e.g. prohibition on wearing relatives’ medals by Standard Bearers/Marshals and judging implications).

Policy Change:

Dress policy becomes **less restrictive in minor personal expression (earrings)** but **stricter and clearer in uniformity and compliance**.

3. Religious and Cultural Dress Inclusion

- **2022:**
 - Allows religious head coverings but with limited detail.
- **2026:**
 - Explicitly allows religious head coverings for Standard Bearers and Marshals and requires:
 - **Colour conformity (black/dark navy)**
 - **RBL badge to be worn on the covering**

Policy Change:

More **formal inclusion policy with defined standards**, rather than simple permission.

4. Clarification of Uniform Components

- **2022:**
 - Describes components individually (beret, tie, suit, etc.) but with some **ambiguity across roles**.
- **2026:**
 - Provides **clear, role-specific breakdowns** (Standard Bearers, Women's Section, Youth, Marshals).
 - Adds detailed rules on:
 - Beret positioning and badge use
 - Sling positioning and sizing
 - Weather dress (raincoats directed by Parade Marshal)

Policy Change:

Increased **clarity, consistency, and role-based differentiation**.

5. Dress Control in Operational Contexts

- **2022:**
 - Limited operational direction (e.g. general raincoat allowance).
- **2026:**
 - Introduces:
 - Parade Marshal authority over **weather dress decisions**
 - Consideration of **risk to standards and conditions**
 - More explicit coordination of uniform appearance on parade

Policy Change:

Dress becomes **part of operational command and safety planning**, not just appearance.

6. Members' Dress (General RBL Attendees)

- **Both versions:**
 - Maintain the same core requirement:

- **Dark suits/blazers, appropriate formal attire, black shoes, etc.**
- **Minor updates in 2026:**
 - Clearer categorisation of:
 - **Formal parade**
 - **Formal social**
 - **Informal social dress**
 - Additional emphasis on maintaining organisational image.

Policy Change:

No major policy shift—just **clearer classification and consistency**.

7. Equality and Modernisation in Dress Policy

- **2022:**
 - Includes older phrasing such as “male includes female” and gender-based dress structure.
- **2026:**
 - Moves toward:
 - **More inclusive, gender-neutral wording**
 - **Removal of restrictive assumptions**
 - Allows broader participation while keeping uniform conformity.

Policy Change:

Dress policy aligned with **modern equality and inclusivity standards**.

Overall Assessment

The **core ceremonial dress standards remain consistent** between 2022 and 2026 (formal dark attire, disciplined uniformity, and emphasis on smart military bearing).

However, the **2026 handbook introduces important policy developments:**

- **Greater precision and enforceability**
- **Formal inclusion of religious and minor personal expression**
- **Clearer restrictions ensuring uniformity**

- Integration of dress into operational control (e.g. weather, events)
- Modernised and inclusive language

Washbag Initiative to Support Serving Personnel and Create Awareness of RBL

Washbag initiative to support serving personnel and create awareness of RBL

Increasingly, RBL's Armed Forces Engagement team has heard from Directing Staff across the Services of recruits being unable to afford basic equipment required for phase 1 training.

Growing numbers of recruits are coming from impoverished backgrounds or even homelessness, and struggle to bring the large list of items they need.

For equity, RBL aims to provide all recruits including officers with a branded washbag, with everything they need for the first four weeks before being paid. The initiative aims to also make RBL visible to serving personnel and will follow up with presentations, informal information evenings and a calendar of service briefings.

Awareness drives engagement, and the more touchpoints during their military careers that we can provide to demonstrate our offer, the more inclined serving personnel and their families will be to get involved.

We would like to invite branches to get involved in this initiative by pledging financial support to ensure that we are able to demonstrate our relevance to the serving community from day one of service. The process of donating funds will follow shortly. In the meantime, if anyone would like further information, please email membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk and put 'washbags' in the subject of your email.

County Branch Training Records Completion

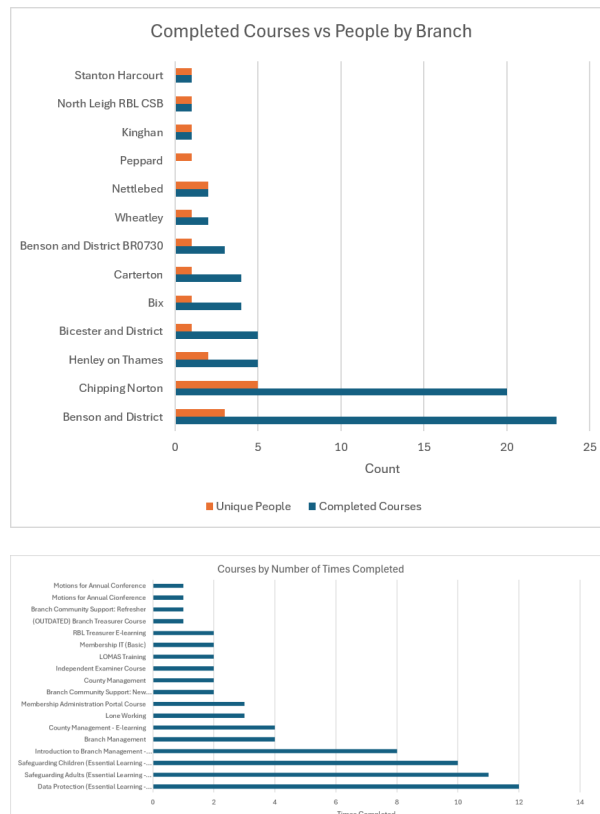
Training Response Needs Improvement

The latest Oxfordshire training figures show that branch engagement remains a concern.

Although 71 of 86 course enrolments have been completed, only 12 of the county's 33 branches have recorded completed training.

This means 21 branches have no completed courses recorded, highlighting a poor response across much of the county. Activity is concentrated in a small number of branches, with Benson and District and Chipping Norton accounting for a large share of completions.

Branches are encouraged to review their training position and ensure members complete the required courses as soon as possible.



Training - "Discover" Portal



The Royal British Legion (RBL) is incorporated by a Royal Charter, which serves as its governing document, outlining its objectives, powers, structure, management, and rules. It functions similarly to a constitution and is a legally binding document recognised by the Charity Commission and the government.

Key aspects of the RBL Royal Charter

- **Incorporation:** The Charter incorporates the RBL, making it a single legal entity rather than an association of individuals under the Companies Act.

- **History:**

1. The first Charter was granted to the British Legion in 1925 by King George V.
2. The organisation received "royal status" and became "The Royal British Legion" in 1971.
3. The original Charter has been updated over the years by various Supplemental Charters to adapt to the changing needs of the ex-Service community.
4. The most recent version of the Charter (version 17) is dated 17 Jul 25

Purpose and Objects:

The Charter sets out the RBL's charitable objects, which broadly include relieving the need, suffering, and distress of beneficiaries and their dependants, promoting education and resettlement, and commemorating those who have died in service.

Governance:

The Charter details how the organisation is to be run, including the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees, the Annual Conference, and the membership.

Amendments:

Motions for amendments to the Charter can be put forward by members at the Annual Conference and must be subsequently ratified by the Board of Trustees. Any changes only take effect if approved by the King in Council.

You can view the full Royal Charter and Rules on the official

Branch Training Requirements

All Branch Officers and Committee members should attend training sessions commensurate to their role in the Branch. A useful guide to Branch (and County) Roles including the relevant Terms of Reference can be found at the embedded document.

The County Training Officer (CTO) can be contacted Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community

TRAINING NEWS

There is now a great selection of development and management training which members may find beneficial, especially if you are new to an Officer or Committee post in your branch. All these are now available on the Discover Training Portal which everyone can register on and then book those courses you would like to do. Some are on-line only whilst others might need you to attend face-to-face. The following are currently available:

- Branch Management (***mandatory for all Branch Officers***)

- County Management (***mandatory for all County Officers***)
- County Training Officer
- County Recruiting Officer
- Branch Recruiting Advisor
- Branch Treasurer (***mandatory for all Branch Treasurers***)
- LOMAS (recommended for all new users of LOMAS)
- Independent Examiner (mandatory for all IE prior to registration with the County)
- Secretaries Course (Branch and County) (***new***)
- Branch Community Support Branch Community Support Coordinator (***mandatory for all BCS Coordinators***)
- Branch Community Support (BCS) - New Coordinator (***mandatory for all new Coordinators***)
- Branch Community Support Refresher (***to be completed every 2 years by BCS Staff***)
- Informal Resolution
- Outlook Navigation
- Safeguarding Adults (***mandatory for all Branch Officers and Standard Bearers***)
- Safeguarding Children (***mandatory for all Branch Officers and Standard Bearers***)
- Data Protection (***mandatory for all Branch and County Officers***)

For further details including Course Prospectus, guidance on how to register and use Discover, please contact Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community

Keeping in Contact - RBL Community E-Mail Addresses



All County and Branch officers whose role requires access to sensitive information are required to use an RBL-issued email when communicating on behalf of the charity, and to use provided tools for sharing and storing this information.

This is to keep our charity, our members and our beneficiaries safe from cyber crime and identity theft, and to comply with the law.

All qualifying County and Branch officers without access to an RBL.Community email account can now register for an account.

Registering for your account is easy. All you need to do is contact the Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) Oxfordshire.MEO@rbl.community who will get you started.

Training support is available from the County Training Officer (CTO) once your account is activated, in addition to using it for communicating on behalf of RBL. You will be able to receive direct RBL communications, access important county and/or branch information, and interact with other branch and county officials around the UK and overseas via the RBL-exclusive social network, Viva Engage.

The following are eligible for accounts at Branch level:

- Chair (**mandatory**)
- Vice Chair
- Secretary (**mandatory**)
- Treasurer (**mandatory**)

- Standard Bearer Branch
- Community Coordinator (BCC)
- Events Mem Sec (subject to review)

This applies also the County Supported Branches and the requirement for the Point of Contacts for have an official email address:

- Point of Contact 1 **(mandatory)**
- Point of Contact 2 **(mandatory)**

To obtain your Branch RBL.Community accounts please email Lebo our Oxfordshire Membership Engagement Officer at

Oxfordshireshire.MEO@rbl.community

Diary Dates



County Forthcoming Events and Key Dates

- **01 Aug 26** – Release of the August Edition of the County Newsletter
- **13 Sep 26** Battle of Britain Parade and Service Banbury.
- **30 Sep 26** - Last date for submission of Branch Accounts to MEO (although 31st August preferred if possible).
- **01 Oct – 30 Nov 25** – Branch Annual General Meetings to be held between these dates. MS1/MS1B/MS1CSB to be completed. (Branches Note: MS1B must be completed in addition to MS1 or MS1CSB otherwise Branch and Standard Bearer not compliant)
- **21 Oct 26** – RBL Oxfordshire County Committee Meeting
- **01 Dec 26** - Release of the December Edition of the County Newsletter

- **31 Dec 26** – Deadline for the submission of all **MS1s or MS1CSBs and MS1Bs** to the MEO and County Secretary by email
- **30 Jan 27** – 102nd Oxfordshire Annual County Conference – Carterton Community Hall

County Standard Bearer Training

The training will be held at Stanton Harcourt Village Hall unless notified of any changes:

- 27 Sep 26
- 25 Oct 26

Poppy Appeal Key Dates

- **The Oxfordshire 2026 Poppy Appeal Seminar** Saturday 8th August 2026
- **2026 Poppy Appeal** Thursday 22nd October 2026
- **London Poppy Day** Thursday 29th October 2026
- **Festival of Remembrance**, Royal Albert Hall Saturday 7th November 2026
- **Remembrance Sunday** is on 8th November 2026

Events

81st Anniversary of the End of Hostilities in Europe Commemoration Bladon

The 10 May 2026 marked the 81st Anniversary of the end of hostilities in Europe (8 May 1945), commemorated with a Service at the Parish Church of St Martin, Bladon. The event was organised by the Parachute Regiment, led by John Hall, with support from the Oxfordshire County Royal British Legion Chair, Fiona Lovesey, assisted by County Parade Marshal Pete Clarke. Standard Bearers from across the county were proudly represented, including: Tjark Andrews – Oxfordshire County Standard Bearer Natallie Buxton – Bampton RBL John Green – Henley on Thames RBL David Mannering – Nettlebed and District RBL Trevor Butler – Carterton and District RBL. The commemoration also included a solemn tribute at the graveside of Sir Winston Churchill, adding particular significance to the occasion. Following the service, The White House Bladon generously hosted honoured guests, veterans, and cadets, providing a fitting setting for reflection and remembrance.



Remembering Checkendon: Polish Heritage Fete Marks 80 Years

On Saturday 30 May 2026, the community gathered at the Black Horse, Checkendon, for a moving and vibrant commemoration marking the 80th anniversary of the arrival of Allied Polish troops and the establishment of the camp that would later become home to generations of displaced families. The 1940s Polish Heritage Fete combined remembrance with celebration. The formal ceremony featured a convoy of wartime vehicles, prayers, a two minute silence, and the singing of both Polish and British national anthems. Attendees included veterans, their families, and descendants of those who once lived at the camp, some returning for the first time in decades. The commemorative programme also featured Polish folk dancing, wartime songs, and live performances celebrating the shared cultural heritage of the Polish and British communities. The Henley on Thames and Nettlebed and District Branches supported the event with branch members attending along with Standard Bearers John Green, Henley on Thames Branch and David Mannering from Nettlebed and District Branch. Checkendon Polish Camp itself holds a significant place in local and national history. Established in 1948 as a resettlement hostel, it provided basic accommodation in Nissen huts for Polish refugees displaced by the Second World War. Despite modest conditions, the camp developed into a thriving community with its own church, school, and social life, where Polish traditions were maintained and shared with the surrounding villages. The camp remained active until the early 1960s, and while only fragments of the site survive today, its legacy continues to resonate. The anniversary event highlighted not only the hardships faced by those who passed through Checkendon, but also the strong bonds formed between the Polish community and local residents—ties that continue to this day. As one descendant reflected during the commemorations, remembering this history is vital because it “defines our future.” The fete forms part of a wider effort to preserve and share the story of the camps at Checkendon, Nettlebed and Kingwood, including plans for plaques and heritage initiatives. Eighty years on, the events of 30 May served as a powerful reminder that the story of Checkendon is not only one of wartime displacement, but also of resilience, community, and lasting friendship between nations



D-DAY Service at the RAF Harwell Memorial Stone

On the Saturday 06 Jun 26 in the early evening, a parade and service is held at the RAF Harwell Memorial Stone at the Harwell Campus. The stone marks the departure point for Servicemen who were amongst the first to land on D-Day. This is organised by the Royal British Legion Harwell Branch and supported by the Harwell Campus management.

Although Harwell is in Oxfordshire, the RBL still holds to the pre 1974 County Boundaries, the event falls within the RBL Berkshire County area, however the Oxfordshire County Chair Fiona Lovesey was invited to attend along with the the County Secretary Rob Lovesey, County Parade Marshal Pete Clarke, the Oxfordshire County Standard Bearer Tjark Andrews and Branch Standards from Stanton Harcourt (Jacqui Graves), North Leigh (Jeremy Taylor), Nettlebed and District (David Mannering) and Bampton (Natalie Buxton).

RAF Harwell played a vital, spearheading role on D-Day as the headquarters for No. 38 Group RAF and the primary departure point for key airborne assaults. On the eve of D-Day at 2303hrs the very first RAF aircraft to deliver airborne troops took off from Harwell. It carried pathfinders of the 6th Airborne Division. Operation Tonga continued throughout the night, forty-five Albemarle aircraft and twenty-five Horsa gliders departed to transport additional troops and equipment behind enemy lines to secure landing zones. In the early evening of 06 Jun 1944, forty Horsa gliders were towed from Harwell to Normandy to reinforce the initial landings.

The Harwell Memorial Stone is located at the end of the main runway. The inscription reads:
*"THIS STONE MARKS THE END OF THE RUNWAY FROM WHICH AIRCRAFT OF No. 38 GROUP
ROYAL AIR FORCE TOOK OFF ON THE NIGHT OF 5 JUNE 1944..."*



1 - Copyright Simon Haycox



2 - Copyright Simon Haycox



3 - Copyright Simon Haycox



4 - Copyright Simon Haycox

Banbury Marks Armed Forces Day with Community Celebration

Banbury came together in proud celebration on Saturday 27 June to mark Armed Forces Day, with the event supported by local Royal British Legion branches and RBL Oxfordshire County. The day provided a meaningful opportunity for the community to recognise and honour the dedication and service of the Armed Forces.

Armed Forces Day is an annual moment of appreciation for all those who make up the Armed Forces community—from currently serving personnel to veterans, service families, and cadets. In Banbury, the event formed the highlight of a week-long programme of activities that began on Monday 22 June.

Throughout the week, residents and organisations across the area showed their support and gratitude. A key date within the programme was Reserves Day on 24 June, which recognised the vital role played by Reserve Forces and their contribution to national defence.

This year's event, organised by Banbury Town Council, was particularly special. In addition to celebrating the Armed Forces, the Council took the opportunity to recognise Banbury's Emergency Services. For the first time, a dedicated area was introduced on the event site to highlight the work of local emergency service teams.

The inclusion of the Emergency Services added an extra dimension to the day, reinforcing the importance of all those who serve and protect the community, both at home and abroad. Visitors were given the chance to learn more about their work, engage with service personnel, and show their appreciation for their commitment.

The event once again demonstrated the strong community spirit in Banbury and its ongoing support for those who serve. With a mix of reflection, celebration, and education, Armed Forces Day highlighted the town's respect and gratitude for its Armed Forces and Emergency Services alike.

Members of local RBL Branches as well as County Ceremonial Officers participated in supporting the event in the hot weather. The County Parade Marshal Pete Clarke led the Standard Bearers from, County Tjark Andrews carrying the County Union, Natalie Buxton from Bampton carrying the County Standard, Vanessa Page from Banbury Branch, Tony Davis from Banbury Branch carrying the Chipping Norton Standard and Trev Butler from the Carterton and District Branch.





Henley-on-Thames Marks Armed Forces Day 2026 with Pride and Community Spirit

Henley-on-Thames came together in vibrant style this year to mark Armed Forces Day 2026, celebrating the dedication and sacrifice of the men and women who serve—and have served—in the United Kingdom’s Armed Forces.

The town centre was alive with activity as residents, families, and visitors gathered along the riverside and in Market Place to take part in a day filled with remembrance, gratitude, and community spirit. Highlights included a ceremonial parade featuring local veterans, cadet groups, Royal British Legion and representatives from the Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force. The march was met with warm applause as it made its way through the town, reflecting the community’s deep appreciation. The Henley on Thames Royal British Legion was represented with their stalwart Standard Bearer and Branch President John Green.

Throughout the day, attendees enjoyed interactive displays and stands showcasing military equipment, recruitment information, and the work of charities that support service personnel and their families. Younger visitors were particularly engaged by hands-on activities, offering a glimpse into life in the Armed Forces while fostering a sense of respect and understanding.

Local dignitaries and organisers spoke of the importance of recognising not only those currently serving, but also veterans, reservists, and military families who make vital contributions behind the scenes. A short service of reflection provided a moment to pause and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The event also highlighted Henley’s strong sense of community, with local businesses, volunteers, and organisations playing a key role in hosting a successful and meaningful day. From live music and refreshments to family-friendly entertainment, the celebration struck a balance between commemoration and festivity.

As Armed Forces Day 2026 drew to a close, the message was clear: Henley-on-Thames remains proud to stand in support of its Armed Forces community—today and every day.



5 - Henley President and Standard Bearer John Green

Oxfordshire County Conference 30 Jan 27



RBL
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
OXFORDSHIRE

COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES

OXFORDSHIRE RBL

COUNTY CONFERENCE

WE ARE PROUD TO WELCOME
**COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION**
AS OUR GUEST SPEAKER

JOIN US ON
★ **30TH JANUARY 2027** ★
FOR OUR COUNTY CONFERENCE

REMEMBERING THEIR SACRIFICE.
HONOURING THEIR MEMORY.
SUPPORTING THEIR FUTURE.

📍 **CARTERTON COMMUNITY CENTER**
MARIGOLD PLACE, CARTERTON

The poster features a background image of a war cemetery with a large cross in the distance and red poppies in the foreground. The design uses a color palette of blue, red, and white.

Roll of Honour



- **Late Maurice Warsop BEM – RBL Carterton and District Branch former Standard Bearer and Poppy Appeal Organiser** – funeral held on 06 May 26 at Thamesdown Crematorium Swindon.
- **Late - John Holland - RBL Stanton Harcourt - Branch former Standard Bearer and Branch Chair-** funeral held on 26 May 26 at St Martins Church Stanton Harcourt.

[Join our Facebook Page](#)



[Oxfordshire County Royal British Legion](#)

Royal British Legion New Facebook Group

Our new Membership Facebook Group goes live!

We are thrilled to announce the launch of our membership-exclusive Facebook group! The group has been created so that members can share their good news stories, share thoughts and ideas, and hear updates from RBL.

To join, you need to have a Facebook account. You will be asked to verify your RBL membership and, once approved by admins, you are in!

There are house rules, which you will see on joining but we hope that this will be a new and fun way for our members to connect with each other.

Kindly note, questions about your membership should be send to **membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk**.

Find and join the group by searching on Facebook for Members of the Royal British Legion or using <https://www.facebook.com/groups/membersoftheroyalbritishlegion?>

You may share the link with other members. From July, we will begin sending out email invitations to members, in stages by region, to ensure that as many as possible have the opportunity to join. See you in the group!

RBL Oxfordshire Web-Page



6 - Keep updated with RBL Oxfordshire information at

<https://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/oxfordshire>

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Oxfordshire Veterans Group



Cadet Force Affiliations - South East Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations



Behind every great cadet is a dedicated Cadet Force Adult Volunteer. From inspiring confidence and leadership to teaching new skills and creating life-changing opportunities, our volunteers make a lasting difference to young people every day. Hear from cadets across the Sea Cadets, Army Cadets, RAF Air Cadets and Combined Cadet Force as they share why their volunteers matter so much.

Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs) are essential to the South East RFCA because they are the people who make the cadet experience possible. Everything SERFCA delivers for young people — skills, confidence, community connection, and opportunities — depends on committed adult volunteers

Core reasons CFAVs are so important

They deliver the cadet experience, SERFCA supports more than 24,000 cadets and 4,800+ CFAVs across the South East. CFAVs are the ones who run training nights, organise activities, teach skills, and mentor young people. Without them, the cadet movement simply could not function.

They provide safe, structured leadership. CFAVs give cadets a stable, positive environment where they can learn discipline, teamwork, resilience, and leadership. This is especially important for young people who may not have access to similar role models elsewhere.

They connect Defence with local communities. One of SERFCA's core missions is to maintain strong relationships between Defence and society. Adult volunteers are often the most visible and trusted link between the Armed Forces community and local towns, schools, and families.

They support youth development and opportunity. CFAVs help cadets access:

- Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- First Aid qualifications
- Fieldcraft and navigation
- STEM activities
- Music, sports, and adventurous training

These experiences build confidence and broaden horizons — often changing life trajectories.

They embody the volunteer ethos. SERFCA highlights and celebrates volunteers through events like the Lord-Lieutenant's Awards, which recognise exceptional service and commitment. This reinforces the value CFAVs bring to their counties and communities.

They strengthen the wider Defence family. By supporting cadets, CFAVs help nurture the next generation of:

- Reservists
- Regular service personnel
- Skilled, community-minded citizens

If you are interested in becoming a CFAV look further at the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5fDWCx2kkg>

The Variety of Reserve Service - South East Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations

The Variety of Reserve Service

Reserve service offers far more than many people expect, providing individuals with the chance to develop skills, explore new experiences, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Whether balancing civilian careers or education, reservists can take part in a wide range of opportunities that enrich both their professional and personal lives. One of the most appealing aspects of reserve service is its diversity. From adventurous training and overseas travel to competitive sport, reservists are encouraged to challenge themselves in new environments. These experiences not only build confidence but also foster teamwork and resilience. In addition, reserve service provides valuable training and qualifications. Participants can gain both military and civilian-recognised skills, enhancing career prospects and personal development. The structure and discipline of service often translate into improved leadership, problem-solving, and organisational abilities. Ultimately, reserve service is about more than commitment—it's about opportunity. It allows individuals to serve their country while gaining skills for life, creating a unique pathway that combines purpose, adventure, and personal growth.

Learn more at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f52AHn3schE>



Championing the Value of Reserve Service