

Royal British Legion Oxfordshire January 2026 (Special Edition - County Conference)



January 2026 - Special Edition County Conference

(The County Newsletter is produced quarterly Apr, Aug, Dec annually with Special Editions periodically)

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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

RBL Oxfordshire County Conference

The following are the Reports and speeches from the 101st RBL Oxfordshire County Conference held on 31 Jan 26 at Carterton Community Centre.

County President Ann Midwinter

This year I must pay tribute to our members. Ladies and Gentlemen 2025 has been a very busy year for the Legion, and I would like to say a grateful thanks to you the members of this great organisation and your Branches across Oxfordshire for all the hard work that went into organising events like the VE and VJ Day. Also, the Poppy Appeal due to the hard work and organisation during these hard times, with the result being much better than expected. Things happened this last year that was not expected, our Chair who was appointed at last years conference Mr Steve Kingsford unfortunately had to stand down for personal reasons and our Vice Chair Mrs Fiona Lovesey had to take over as County Chair and has done a tremendous job and has worked very hard for the county. I would also like to say a big thank you to all the members of the County Committee for the sterling work each one of them has done during the year on our behalf it is very much appreciated. Madam National Chair – the last two weeks has been a disgrace by the attitude shown to our veterans by the US President who then had to eat his words, although did not apologise – these words should not have been said in the first place. Parliament too had a chance to give the veterans from the Irish conflict and later conflicts more protection and I think a time limit should be brought in against accusations that might lead to prosecutions if incorrect actions had taken place. This would give more credence to the Armed Forces covenant and I hope and I am sure the Royal British Legion will do all it can to bring pressure to bear to get new amendments through to help and give more protection to our veterans and will support and defend all those involved in whatever circumstances they happen to be in now. We in Oxfordshire will whole heartily support any action you take to support our veterans for a fairer and realistic deal. We thank you all for your support you give us all through the year and we are very proud of you as the National Chair as you are one of us from Oxfordshire. Thank you

County Chairs Report - Fiona Lovesey

Introduction

I would like to begin by acknowledging that I have only been in the role of Interim County Chair since July. It has been a privilege to step into this position, and I am deeply grateful for the support I have received during this transition.

Acknowledgements

I want to say a few words about our previous County President, David Mason who unfortunately passed away earlier this year, David was a prominent figure in the county and was president of the Oxfordshire Royal British Legion from 2006 to 2022. David did not suffer fools gladly and had an acerbic tongue. I think there are a few of us around who remember some of his president addresses, with trepidation, as you were never sure what David was going to speak about.

My sincere thanks go to **Mr. Steve Kingsford**, the previous Chair, for his dedication and leadership albeit all too short. I also want to thank **Mr. Pete Eldridge**, who served as County Chair until the last conference, for the guidance and assistance provided to me as I settled into this role.

My immediate focus has been on ensuring financial reports from the Branches are in order, and I am happy to say that Oxfordshire received 100% returns, well done to all the branches, our County Treasurer Mr Andrew Bowes, the County Secretary Mr Rob Lovesey and County Committee Branch Liaison Officers in their efforts to achieve this. It has not happened before to my knowledge, so we now must keep this up, and addressing MS1 submissions. These operational tasks are essential to maintain stability before moving forward with strategic objectives.

National Developments

Over the past year, there have been significant changes at the national level. Notably, the Royal British Legion now has a new National Chair—**our very own Lynda Atkins**. This is a proud moment for our county and reflects the strength of leadership within our ranks.

County Strategy

Looking ahead, our County Strategy will focus on strengthening branch engagement, improving compliance, and supporting our members in delivering the Legion's core objectives. Collaboration and communication will be central to achieving these goals.

Compliance and Voting Changes

A major decision by the Board of Trustees now allows branches, including CSBs deemed non-compliant, to vote and send delegates to National Conference. This change was driven by challenges in administering numerous branches and ensuring data accuracy. Importantly,

there is no evidence that voting rights compromise MS1 completion, as non-compliant branches rarely vote or attend conferences.

Compliance will now be approached differently. Strong engagement with County and Membership Engagement Officers (MEOs) typically leads to better compliance, and this will remain a focus. A reshaped compliance section will appear in the updated Membership Handbook. Legal requirements still apply—branches must remain compliant to access RBL Public Liability Insurance (PLI), for example, for Standard Bearers. It has also helped several Branches that the required number of mandatory Branch Officers has been reduced from 7 to 5; this has enabled several Branches to maintain their status.

Over the last 12 months, we have made significant strides in several areas:

Membership & Branch Support: We have seen a modest increase in active participation across several branches, with targeted support provided to those facing challenges. The County Committee Branch Liaison Officers have worked closely with Branch Chairs to ensure continuity and engagement.

Remembrance & Ceremonial Activities: Oxfordshire maintained a strong presence at national and local remembrance events. The County Parade Marshal coordinated successful parades, and our volunteers ensured dignified representation. Pete Clarke also officiated as one of the Parade Marshals at the National Act of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. Equally, the County Standard Bearer Tjark Andrews also represented the County at the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall.

Poppy Appeal & Fundraising: Despite economic pressures, our Poppy Appeal Organisers have delivered commendable results. You would have seen from the County Newsletter some of the imaginative initiatives that some Branches have achieved this year and increasing their annual contribution significantly.

County Plan

The County Plan remains a key priority for us. However, as I only took over as Interim Chair in August, progress has been slower than anticipated.

Looking ahead, the County will focus on:

Strengthening Branch Resilience: Supporting branches with governance, succession planning, and digital tools to ensure long-term viability.

Youth Engagement: Expanding our outreach to youth groups to foster awareness of the Legion's values and history.

Volunteer Development: Enhancing training and recognition for volunteers, including Standard Bearers, Branch Community Support Officers and encourage recruitment to County and Branches.

Standard Bearer Competitions: We held this year our first County Standard Bearer competition for many years and it was a brilliant event, thank you to all the Standard Bearers who took part and congratulation to the winner Mr Tjark Andrews, from Chipping Norton Branch, I am also pleased to say that Oxfordshire will be the host for the Regional Competition in February, good luck to Tjark in this. The Ceremonial Team are working hard to promote the Standard Bearer training, and I look forward to more Branch Standard Bearer's coming to the training and taking part in future competitions. I ask all those present here today to go back to your Branches and encourage your Standard Bearers participation.

Communication: Improving internal communications through our Newsletter which has been heralded as an exemplar to other Counties. Utilise the initiative I brought in as Interim Chair of the County Branch Liaison Officers which has enabled County to reach out and support Branches. This has been hugely successful and moreover many Branches have said that they now feel inclusive and better supported. Encourage more Branches to take up the use their RBL.Community which will help Branches have greater access to their Membership Records, governing documents and will help with the management of your respective Branches.

As County Chair, my personal objectives for the coming year include:

Facilitating Collaboration: Encouraging Cross-Branch and County cooperation and shared initiatives to reduce duplication and increase impact, developing best practice between Counties and Branches.

Improving Transparency: Ensuring that County decisions and plans are communicated clearly and inclusively to all Branches.

Supporting Legacy Projects: Helping Branches manage historical items such as Standards and providing guidance to Branch Legacies with dignity and purpose.

Championing Inclusion: Promoting diversity and inclusion across all County activities, ensuring every member feels valued and heard.

ELECTION DATES

At a national level there are 4 Trustee Roles and 7 Membership Council Roles up for election this year. So please look out for the voting packs coming to your RBL.Community email addresses. The voting window will run from 2nd March to 9th April 2026, please be mindful that the Easter Holiday falls within these dates.

All branches are eligible to vote, so please have your say. The candidate information will be available online but remember to minute any decisions in your Branch minutes.

Please note that **Civica Election Services** are running the voting process, they will be sending the Ballot papers – the email will come from takepart@cesvotes.com NOT from RBL.

All queries are to be directed to elections@britishlegion.org.uk

INVICTUS GAMES

It costs £26,500 to get an athlete to the Invictus Games which in 2027 is being held in Birmingham, would Branches and County in Oxfordshire like to club together to support an athlete through their journey to the Games?

Did you know that Branches/County can use Legacy monies for this support.

We could go and cheer on 'our' athlete in Birmingham.

Finally, I remain deeply grateful to all our volunteers, members, Poppy Appeal Organisers and supporters who continue to uphold the values of The Royal British Legion in Oxfordshire. Together, we honour the past and build a stronger future.

Thank you

Fiona Lovesey

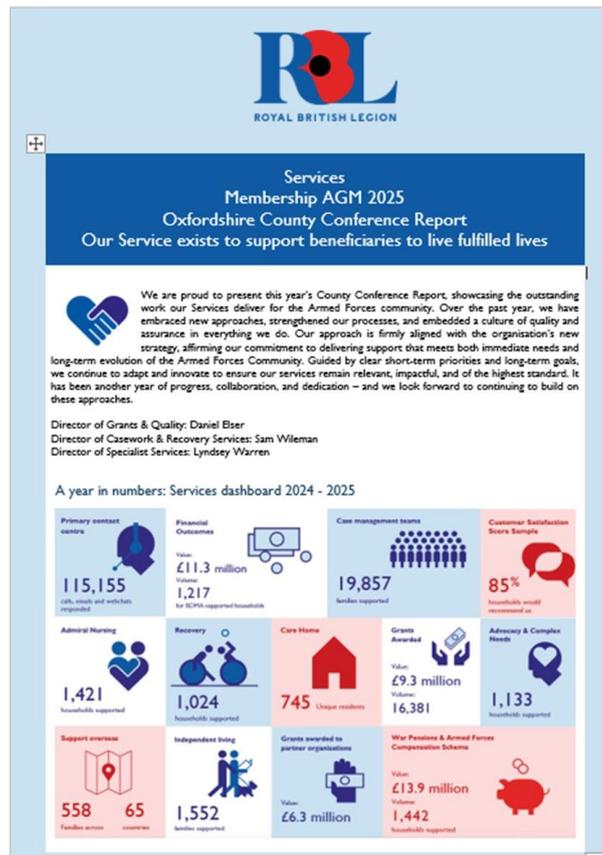
[Director of Casework and Recovery - Sam Wileman](#)

Sam spoke initially of the Royal British Legions value and welfare and the Aspire Leadership Programme which is now open to all members to apply. The Aspire Leadership Programme helps to develop and equip a cadre of leaders in waiting who may, in the future, be elected to leadership position. Since inception the programme has been a huge success. Another initiative the Sir Clive Johnstone Award is a prestigious, newly established award honouring the late Vice Admiral Sir Clive Johnstone, who passed away in May 2024 shortly after becoming National President. The award recognizes individuals, teams, or groups who embody unity, following Sir Clive's passion for collaboration within the RBL. The Inaugural Winner: Lt Cdr Steve Cass was named the first winner in June 2025 for his contributions to uniting the Royal Navy and the RBL. Sam went on to showcase the tireless work of the Royal British Legion in supporting its membership. Some of the details of the dashboard of success for the 2024-2025 period are:

- Circa 20k families were supported
- £11m was used to support beneficiaries
- £14m was used to support for veterans and service personnel claiming for injuries or illnesses caused by service.
- The RBL Care Home satisfaction 97% rating through operating to very high standards, achieving a group review score of 9.5 out of 10 based on 307 reviews on [carehome.co.uk](https://www.carehome.co.uk)

Sam spoke with passion about was the RBLs support for the Invictus Games and encouraged the membership to support the athletes and games. 220,000 children took part in the 2025 National Remembrance with over 54000 volunteers helping the 2025 Poppy Appeal across the country. Work continues on RBL 10-year Strategy to support the Armed Forces Community through uncertain times. To underpin its commitment to provide lifelong support to those who serve the country, the RBL has set out its vision for the next 10 years which reflects the changing face of today's Armed Forces community in a changing world. The new strategy to 2035 will see Britain's largest military charity adapt to meet the future needs of those it supports over the next decade, and beyond.

There was a Q&A session where a question from the floor asked what the RBL is doing to support rough sleeping service veterans. Sam stated that there are mechanisms in place through support services and the RBL is committed through outreach teams however recognised that further work needs to be undertaken, with the RBL looking through media campaigns to highlight the issues and acknowledge the work of the RBL.



Area Team Update

The Royal British Legion provide expert information, advice and support. Patricia Chudwick, Casework Services Manager, leads the Area team in Oxfordshire. The Area Team work closely with a number of other RBL Advisors, also based across the area, to ensure people receive the best information, advice, support and guidance possible and can advise in areas such as - financial assistance, emotional support, benefits and debt, support to access a war pension or armed forces compensation, housing, living independently, challenges with substance abuse and addiction and caring for someone with Dementia. Our Services team include both current and former service members and bring extensive experience across welfare advice and will work with individuals and their families to achieve the best outcomes possible.

Grants Summary for Oxfordshire for the Period 1 Oct 24 – 30 Sep 25

Category	Volume of grants	Value	Average (Mean) of Age
Annuity	2	£1,170	75
Brown Goods	20	£12,179	50
Crisis	39	£12,026	56
Debt	1	£825	45
Funeral	3	£3,493	54
Housing	16	£14,007	40
Immigration	1	£1,416	39
Medical	1	£356	46
Misc	5	£566	41
Mobility	7	£8,053	63
White Goods	25	£3,590	46
Grand Total	118	£84,823	51

Spotlight on Recovery Services

2025 has marked a major step forward for Recovery Services. Following a comprehensive restructuring and the launch of our new Recovery Strategy, we are now building a stronger, more consistent service that reflects the evolving needs of the Armed Forces community.

Our purpose remains clear: to deliver high-quality, person-centred pathways that help individuals rebuild confidence, independence, and wellbeing, wherever they are on their recovery journey.

Key Developments and Progress

- 2025 Vancouver Invictus Games: 62 Team UK competitors took part in 11 sports across 11 incredible days. Team UK showed resilience every step of the way from the initial training camps to coming together as a team in Canada.
- Beneficiary Journey: A redesigned Pathway now provides a clear and consistent route from referral and assessment through to programme engagement and onward support.
- Multi-Activity Courses (MACs): The Battle Back Centre remains the national hub for delivery of our evidence-based recovery model. From 2026-27, 8 courses will be devolved to the Personnel Recovery Centres (PRCs) at Catterick and Tidworth House to extend reach and meet the needs of serving personnel on Recovery Duty (PRD).
- Programme Pathways: Development continues on courses across sport, adventure training, and the arts, enabling beneficiaries to explore new interests, discover passions, and progress through their recovery journey.
- Digital Access and Resources: Work will shortly begin on an online Recovery Resource Hub, designed to give beneficiaries access to podcasts, webinars, and practical tools.
- Momentum is already building for the next Invictus Games in Birmingham in 2027. With the Games taking place on home soil in Birmingham, this event will shine a powerful spotlight on the Royal British Legion, our Team UK athletes, and the extraordinary resilience of the Armed Forces community.

We want to recognise and thank our membership for helping to share the great work that Recovery Services delivers. Your voice across branches and communities is vital in helping us reach veterans who need us most. Your continued support ensures that those who could benefit from recovery support know we are here for them.

Case Study 1

Mr B was referred to the RBL for assistance with his Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeal and household repairs. Mr B lived alone following the traumatic loss of his brother who was also his carer. It became clear that Mr B had been struggling for some time, with his mental health, and disrepair within the home. He had no boiler or hot water, no working bathroom, water coming through the roof and needed a house clearance. The visit highlighted concerns about cognitive issues including memory difficulties, understanding information, and challenges with completing tasks. We also discovered that Mr B's brother was the legal homeowner and Mr B needed help and advice to obtain grant of probate.

Our Casework team and our Benefits Debt and Money Advice service worked together collaboratively on Mr B's case and were careful not to overwhelm him. The Case Officer liaised with a local support agency to arrange essential repairs to the property, a new bathroom, boiler and a house clearance. The RBL also provided kitchen appliances as the beneficiary had been using a plug-in electric hob for years. The Case Officer also assisted with legal advice to obtain grant of probate for his home and supported with a grant for the legal fees.

Our Benefits Debt and Money Advice service represented him at his PIP tribunal where he was awarded Enhanced daily living and Enhanced mobility for an ongoing period, backdated to August 2023. He received a backdate of circa £18,000 and additional income of £749.80 every 4 weeks. He also received a back date of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) of £8641.

Case Study 2

Jack is the main carer for his wife, Alice, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's over six years ago. Alice was often disorientated and unsettled in mood, particularly during the night which meant Jack got very little sleep. Alice experienced hallucinations and called out for him in a state of distress. Alice had also become incontinent, and Jack struggled to cope with the volume of washing and support that Alice needed. Alice also had collapsed discs in her spine and used to be prescribed injections and Morphine patches which were stopped, leaving them to manage any pain with paracetamol.

Jack contacted the Royal British Legion and was referred to the Admiral Nursing Service. Jack was in need of urgent respite at the point of his assessment and although he very much wanted to care for Alice at home her care needs were so significant that Jack felt he could no longer cope. Jack felt let down by health professionals as he struggled to liaise with his wife's GP to get the support needed. He also had concerns about the financial implications of paying for care and whether he would be expected to sell their family home.

The Admiral Nurse (AN) liaised with Alice's GP and asked for a referral to be made to the NHS Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) for a review of Alice's mood and mental state and to the continence team for assessment. The AN also asked the GP to review her pain relief. Emotional support and advice and information about dementia and how to manage its symptoms was provided, as well as support to Jack who expressed feelings of guilt and carer strain. AN liaised with the GP and asked them to prescribe medication to support Alice's distress during the day and refer Alice back to the CMHT when the night sedation prescribed failed to improve Alice's sleep pattern and distressed behaviours.

Alice's medication was reviewed and the management of her symptoms was brought under control, this helped Jack to cope with his caring responsibilities, including pain management which helped with some of Alice's distressed behaviours, and night sedation. Alice improved both physically and mentally which meant that Jack felt able to cope and she remained in her own home. Jack improved in mood and mental state and was able to care for his wife which was his wish.

RBL Oxfordshire County Conference Photos



1 - Charging of the County Standard - County President charges the Standard with Tjark Andrews County Standard Bearer



2 - Lynda Atkins (Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire and RBL National Chair) and County President Ann Midwinter present John Green (Henley on Thames Branch) with his National Lifetime Award



3 - Chipping Norton Branch winners of the Colonel H E Duc Norris Cup for Branch Efficiency



4 - Lynda Atkins (Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire and RBL National Chair) and County President Ann Midwinter present Tjark Andrews (County Standard Bearer and Chipping Norton Branch) with the T Miller Challenge Cup



5 - Lynda Atkins (Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire and RBL National Chair) and County President Ann Midwinter present David Mannering (Nettlebed and District Branch) with the Novice Standard Bearer Trophy



6 - Lynda Atkins (Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire and RBL National Chair) and County President Ann Midwinter present Stephen Radham (Bampton Branch) with a County Certificate



7 - Lynda Atkins (Deputy Lieutenant of Oxfordshire and RBL National Chair) and County President Ann Midwinter present Pete Eldridge (Benson and District Branch) with a County Certificate



8 - Oxfordshire Trophies and Awards



9 - RBL Oxfordshire County Top Table



10 - Standard Bearers - John Green (Henley on Thames Branch), Robert Deforges (RAFA Carterton), Trevor Butler (Carterton and District Branch), Jacqui Graves (Stanton Harcourt Branch), Jeremy Taylor (North Leigh Branch) and David Mannering (Nettlebed and District)



11 - Lynda Atkins (Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire and RBL National Chair) inspecting the Standard Bearers



12 - Lynda Atkins (Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire and RBL National Chair) enjoying a moment with the Standard Bearers





13 - Lynda Atkins (Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire and RBL National Chair) and County President Ann Midwinter present Cyril Kerry (Charlbury Branch) with a National Gold Badge

Standard Bearer Training Dates

Standard Bearer Training Dates – held at the Stanton Harcourt Village Hall unless otherwise stated:

- 22 Mar 26
- 26 Apr 26
- 31 May 26

- 21 Jun 26
- 26 Jul 26
- 27 Sep 26
- 25 Oct 26

Pete



Diary Dates



General Branch and County Dates

- **21 Feb 26** – RBL Regional Standard Bearer Competition hosted by Oxfordshire – Carterton Community Centre
- **01 Apr 26** – Release of the April Edition of the County Newsletter
- **26 Apr 26** – RBL Oxfordshire County Committee (face-to-face) Yarnton RBL Club 1200hrs
- **18 Jul 26** – RBL Oxfordshire County Committee (face-to-face) Time and Venue TBC
- **01 Aug 26** – Release of the August Edition of the County Newsletter
- **30 Sep 25** - 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 (MS Team) 2000hrs
- **01 Dec 26** - Release of the December Edition of the County Newsletter
- **31 Dec 26** – MS Forms from Branches to be returned
- **30 Jan 27** – 102nd Oxfordshire Annual County Conference – Carterton Community Centre

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

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Oxfordshire Veterans Group

