

Editor's Notes

Welcome to the April Edition. As we edge to the start of the reporting season, we have included guidance for Treasurers in preparing accounts plus a pointer toward new and updated policies for Secretaries



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County Chair's Message

Very soon, too soon Treasurers might think, Legion financial end of year will be upon us.

Thanks to all Branches who submitted their accounts on time in 2025; to those who had problems please think ahead, ask the County Treasurer or myself (a humble Branch Treasurer) for advice if you are having issues with balances, spreadsheets or the bank. I would like if possible to end this accounting year with only one bank account per branch (it is in the rules after all for at least the last quarter century!

Congratulations to all the PAO's in the county. Giles Coleman the Poppy Appeal Manager for this county informed the last County Committee that our Poppy Appeal across the county went up by 2.1% overall. County Secretary Steve Thatcher reports the actual figure elsewhere in this newsletter. Some counties around us saw a decline last year. Thank you - having been a PAO I understand the weeks nay months of activity prior to the appeal period.

The Almonisation figures elsewhere in the Newsletter are the latest figures available to us; branches are free to contribute to this expenditure by making a direct contribution to the County Welfare fund via the County Secretary.

I look forward to seeing all Chairs at the Branch Chairs Seminar (on MS Teams) on either the 8th or 15th April - the County Secretary has issued details.

Editor's Contact: Northamptonshire.Secretary@rbl.community

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR ALL THE LATEST INFORMATION

[HTTPS://COUNTIES.BRITISHLEGION.ORG.UK/COUNTIES/NORTHAMPTONSHIRE/](https://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/northamptonshire/)

COUNTY COMMITTEE

President - Colonel John Royle MBE TD (contact via County Chair)

Chair - Ian Byrnes (Northamptonshire.Chairman@rbl.community)

Vice Chair - Allan Short (Northamptonshire.ViceChair@rbl.community)

Secretary - Steve Thatcher (Northamptonshire.Secretary@rbl.community)

Treasurer (interim) - Steve Thatcher (Northamptonshire.Treasurer@rbl.community)

Parade Marshal - Nick Fall (Northamptonshire.ParadeMarshal@rbl.community)

Training Officer - Vacant

Recruitment Officer - Ian Byrnes (Northamptonshire.Chairman@rbl.community)

Community Support Co-ordinator - Vacant

Youth Officer - Peter Armstrong (Northamptonshire.CYO@rbl.community)

Club Liaison Officer - Robbie Paice (GreensNorton.Chair@rbl.community)

Standard Bearer - Faith Cosgrove (Kettering.Secretary@rbl.community)

Committee Members - Pat Cutting, Eddie Edmunds and Peter Higgs

County Committee Branch Links

Ian Byrnes - Desborough, Kingscliffe CSB, Thrapston and Warmington CSB Branches

Allan Short - Guilsborough & Hollowell, Duston and Northampton Branches

Steve Thatcher - Burton Latimer, Corby, Nether Heyford CSB, Oundle, Raunds CSB, Wappenham CSB and Wellingborough Branches

Peter Armstrong - Deanshanger & Wicken, Weldon and Roade Branches

Robbie Paice - Brackley, Daventry, Greens Norton, Middleton Cheney and Towcester Branches

Faith Cosgrove - Kettering, Rothwell and Rushden Branches

Pat Cutting - Finedon & Irthlingborough Branch

Eddie Edmund - Brixworth Branch

Peter Higgs - Mears Ashby & Sywell Branch

County Correspondence

Whenever possible, all correspondence should be sent by email to the individual above.

Any post should be addressed to: The County Secretary, 9 Eastlands Road, Finedon NN9 5DZ. Telephone queries should be made to the Secretary on 07954 160777.

Please note that the County Office is now closed. If you wish to arrange a face to face meeting, please contact the County Secretary who will make the necessary arrangements.

Legion Staff

Membership Engagement Manager (MEM) - Chris Jones (Central.MEM@rbl.community)

Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) - Lebo Nyoni
(Northamptonshire.MEO@rbl.community)

Membership Engagement Administrator (MEA) - Ruby Duce (Central.MEA@rbl.community)

Poppy Appeal Manager - Giles Coleman (GColeman@britishlegion.org.uk)

County Committee Meeting 5th March 2026 - Key Points

- Committee agreed to donate £1,000 from BFI Welfare funds towards the Invictus Games and branches would be contacted to see if they wanted to donate any funds as well, possibly for a local athlete (yet to be identified).
- Agreed that County will purchase a new County Youth Standard.
- County will contribute £329.82 towards almonisation for the period April to June 2025 (see report below).
- The full report of the inspection of County accounts for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 has now been received. All recommendations of the report were accepted by County Committee, including the transfer of money from the County account to the BFI Welfare fund for donations.
- The report included all branch accounts and a series of comments were raised which had now been passed to the branches concerned for action where necessary.
- Committee agreed that all branch accounts should ideally be checked by an RBL Independent Examiner to avoid any errors in incorrect expenditure and other areas which had been identified by the RBL Audit & Compliance Team, possibly due to the person inspecting the accounts not knowing how the RBL accounts system works.
- It was reported that the current figure for the 2025 Poppy Appeal was £568,944.57 which is a 2.13% increase on the previous year.

The next County Committee meeting will take place on Thursday 7th May 2026.

If you have any topics you would like to be included, please contact the County Secretary.

There is still one vacancy on the County Committee, and also two appointed positions which need to be filled from its members as follows:

- County Community Support Coordinator
- County Training 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 asap to discuss further.

Furthermore, we need to appoint a replacement County Treasurer (currently being filled by the County Secretary). Please get in touch if you are interested.

Training and support will be provided for all posts where necessary.

DIARY NOTES

- Monday 6th April - Deadline for remote registration for the National Conference.
- Wednesday 8th April - Branch Chairs' Seminar
- Thursday 9th April - 2025/2026 National Elections window closes.
- Wednesday 15th April - Branch Chairs' Seminar
- Thursday 7th May - County Committee Meeting
- Friday 8th to Sunday 10th May - RBL National Conference.
- 30th June - End of the Branch Financial Year - accounts to be closed, agreed by the Branch Committee and inspected where required before submission to MEO (see guide below)

RBL POLICIES AND GUIDANCE UPDATES

All Branch Secretaries are asked to review the following policies and guidance located in the MAP Documents Library, some of which have been recently published or updated, and advise their Branch Committees as appropriate:

- Youth Policy (In Youth Policy and Affiliation folder).
- Changes to cheque processing (in Branch Finances folder).
- Various safeguarding policy and guidance updates (in Governance and Policy folder).
- Updated Membership Application Form and Youth Band Member/Standard Bearer Application Forms (in Recruitment and Retention folder).
- Aspire Leadership Programme Overview 2026 (in Training folder)
- Revised Application Form for Meritorious Service (in Membership Forms Library).

FINANCIAL YEAR END

The Membership Financial Year End will soon be upon us and some simple preparation by all Branch Treasurers will make the end of year process easier.

1. If it is expected that the branch will not have any transactions in June, trigger an end of June Bank statement by depositing a penny into the account. Not having an end of month bank statement is always a reason for account query.

2. Contact your usual Independent Examiner now to confirm that they will be willing and available to carry out the Examination so you can make the return before 30 September.

Note: We strongly recommend that all branches use a qualified RBL Independent Examiner as they understand how the RBL accounts system works whereas some auditors may not. Even if your local accountant does your books for free, they must read the guidance notes issued for Year End.

3. Speak to the Branch Chairman to ensure that there will be a suitable meeting in July or August where the Account can be accepted by the Branch Committee and signatures obtained for the Accounts and Authority to Disclose certificates.

4. Consider if the Branch could make use of the Small Branch accounts form if *“the income received did not exceed £500 and the expenditure incurred did not exceed £500 in total for the year; excluding receipts and payments from the Royal British Legion Head Office (i.e BFI Interest, WS Benevolent fund & Poppy appeal transfers); and the total bank balance reported (excluding the Branch BFI) does not exceed £5,000.”*

5. If you think there will be problems with the Branch Accounts ask for help now from the County Treasurer in the first instance.

Use of RBL Funds - What follows are some key points but the full text can be found in the Membership Handbook:

- Reasonable expenses from funds are allowed for Branch business including the purchase of relevant equipment.
- All funds held by RBL Branches, including CSBs, are charitable funds and as such fall within the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. They do not “belong” to the Branch. Should a Branch cease to exist, the funds remain an asset of the RBL.
- The MEO is obliged to inform Head Office of any donation received by a Branch of more than £5000 (but these funds will be retained at local level).

- Branches are permitted to use Branch funds to undertake Remembrance events, but a Branch must attempt to secure services at little or no cost. Expenditure must be reasonable and proportionate. Local Authorities must be encouraged to bear the cost of any Civil Act of Remembrance (i.e., Remembrance Sunday Services), even if the RBL assists in the organisation.
- If a Branch is made aware of a beneficiary requiring support, they must encourage the beneficiary to get in touch with the Contact Centre.
- No funds may be expended on the upkeep/ maintenance of War Memorials unless the Memorial is owned by the Branch.
- No fundraising activity should run at a loss as expenditure incurred would not qualify as charitable. All surplus funds should either be donated to the Poppy Appeal or Branch funds (depending on the stated purpose of the fundraising activity. The donor must always be clear about what they are donating money for).
- Any funds raised specifically for Welfare may only be used for that purpose in accordance with the Royal Charter. A Branch must not “hold” funds when they can be used to provide support to our beneficiaries. Donations are given in the expectation that they will be used for charitable work, not for being held in a Branch account. It is suggested that any considerable funds are forwarded to the Poppy Appeal or the County Welfare Fund.
- Branches may not make donations to other Charities unless permission has been granted by the External Grants Team or the Board of Trustees. RBL members may not raise money for other charities whilst declaring themselves to be RBL members (i.e. by wearing the RBL membership badge, whilst standing at a RBL branded stand).
- Social events must not be subsidised . Expenditure incurred and income received may pass through the Branch but must be earmarked for that purpose only. Surplus funds left over after the event must either be transferred to Branch funds or the Poppy Appeal.
- Any funds held in Trust at Head Office may only be used for the purposes specified within that Trust document. Please ensure that if applicable, your Branch is fully conversant with those terms.
- If a Legacy is left to a Branch this must be referred directly to the Legacy team at Head Office as they have the legal expertise to deal with it. Failure to refer to Head Office could result in the loss of the Legacy. If a Legacy is £5000 or less, the funds will be transferred directly to the Branch funds. If it is a larger amount then the Legacy will be held in Trust at Head Office and its funds can be accessed with help from the MEO. • Branches, including CSBs, must not subsidise RBL Clubs in any form. To do so would be a misuse of charitable funds and might result in being required to personally reimburse the Charity.
- Branch Property Trusts are not assets of the Branch but are separate Trusts linked to the Branch and usually require their funds to be used for the benefit of beneficiaries in a specific geographical area.

CEREMONIAL UPDATE

There have been some changes that effect Standard Bearers and their training, most notably 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.

So, if you have youths who carry your Branch Standard, please encourage them to come to our training sessions, where the policy will be adhered to. It should however, be noted, that the youth's parent or legal chaperone must be present throughout the training.

ALMONISATION

The County receives quarterly reports showing how much money has been paid from central welfare funds for supporting beneficiaries across the County. The report below shows the latest information received:

RBL NORTHANTS ALMONISATION APRIL TO JUNE 2025

Northamptonshire	£1,000.00	NN1	Northampton	Housing
Northamptonshire	£150.00	NN13	Brackley	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£3,000.00	NN14	Kettering	Mobility
Northamptonshire	£80.00	NN15	Kettering	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£120.00	NN15	Kettering	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£240.00	NN15	Kettering	Mobility
Northamptonshire	£100.00	NN15	Kettering	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£50.00	NN15	Kettering	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£50.00	NN15	Kettering	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£50.00	NN15	Kettering	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£68.98	NN16	Kettering	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£1,620.00	NN16	Kettering	Employment
Northamptonshire	£70.46	NN16	Kettering	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£20.00	NN18	Corby	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£770.30	NN18	Corby	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£150.00	NN18	Corby	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£100.00	NN3	Northampton	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£40.00	NN3	Northampton	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£100.00	NN5	Northampton	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£100.00	NN5	Northampton	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£100.00	NN5	Northampton	Crisis
Northamptonshire	£381.60	NN5	Northampton	Misc
Northamptonshire	£904.95	NN5	Northampton	Brown Goods
Northamptonshire	£640.00	NN6	Northampton	Brown Goods
Northamptonshire	£480.98	NN6	Northampton	White Goods
Northamptonshire	£630.45	NN6	Northampton	Brown Goods
Northamptonshire	£894.15	NN6	Northampton	Brown Goods
Northamptonshire	£136.80	NN8	Wellingborough	Brown Goods
Northamptonshire	£1,144.00	NN9	Wellingborough	Brown Goods
TOTAL	£13,192.67			
2.50%	£329.82		CONTRIBUTION FROM COUNTY WELFARE	

BRANCH NEWS

RBL Rushden Branch - please visit the Rushden Branch website to view their latest Newsletter which features lots of great information and articles. The link is:
<https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/rushden/newsletters/>