



## Central News – February 2025

Sharing operational information, engagement opportunities and news with RBL Counties/Districts, Branches and Sections around the world

### Key Information

Title	Page	Summary
<b>Membership merchandise</b>	2	Updated with the Tudor Crown
<b>Portrait of The King</b>	2	Now available to order
<b>Annual Conference 2025</b>	2	Celebrate our past, present and future in Harrogate
<b>We're here to help</b>	3	How to get in touch
<b>RBL.Community accounts</b>	4	Increasing the provision of accounts

### News and Updates

Title	Page	Summary
<b>RBL bands</b>	4	Support our work to improve RBL band relationships
<b>Help us Credit their Service</b>	4	End the unfair treatment of military compensation

### Branch Life

Title	Page	Summary
<b>“What membership means to me”</b>	5	Meet Paul, who campaigned to project poppies onto the Sydney Opera House
<b>A tribute</b>	6	Paris Branch remembers WW2 veteran Noreen Riols

### Important dates

14 February 2025	Annual Conference 2025 motion submissions deadline
14 February 2025	National Membership Awards 2025 nominations deadline

## New membership merchandise now available

We're delighted that updated membership merchandise is now available on [the Poppy Shop website](#). This updated collection features the Tudor Crown on items including jewels, beret badges, ties and more. Please see below for a message from the National Parade Marshal regarding the updated items:

"There have questions relating to the release of new ceremonial items from the Poppy Shop with the Tudor Crown. I hope that the narrative below explains the current ceremonial position."

"There is no requirement for branches / counties / districts to purchase new items, with the new crowns as a priority. It was requested that we take an environmentally friendly approach to the replacement of all items with crowns. Therefore, there is no requirement to purchase new membership items immediately. It is recommended that you only purchase new stock as and when your existing stock requires replenishing. The ask from the Ceremonial Working Group is that you have either all items with the Elizabethan (St Edwards) Crown or new item with the Tudor Crown, not a mixture of the two."

"We will notify you prior to May of a date when we anticipate that all Standard Bearers (SBs) and Parade Marshals (PMs) will be required to use items with the Tudor Crown."

"For the upcoming Regional and National SB competitions. SBs, PMs and judges can use both new and old items with either crown - competitors will not be penalised."

"If you have any questions relating to the above, please do not hesitate to ask any of the National team - we are here to support."

## Portrait of The King now available

We know that many of you have been waiting to obtain an official portrait of HM The King and we said in September's Central News that we'd follow up when we had further information. We are pleased to let you know that you can now order an image of The King in uniform, released to mark Armed Forces Day through Hugo Burnand at a reasonable cost by enquiring [via his website](#).

## Celebrate at Annual Conference

We're now a little over three months away from **Annual Conference 2025 in Harrogate, 16th, 17th and 18th May 2025**. This Conference is shaping up to be another exciting chance for us to come together and celebrate all things membership and RBL. Registration is open via the [Annual](#)

[Conference webpage](#), closing on 30th March for in-person attendees, and 22nd April for virtual attendees.

### [Celebrating hard work and achievement](#)

A key part of the Annual Conference agenda is celebrating our fellow members in the National Membership Awards. There are a variety of awards open for nominations each year, including the Haig Cup, Lister Cup, and Churchill Shield. These awards enable us to celebrate dedication and success together, and there's still time to submit your nominations for 2025! Each award open to nominations, along with criteria, is listed [on the application form](#). Please submit your nominations to [membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk) by Friday 14th February.

### [Help shape our future direction](#)

Discussion and voting of motions is a cornerstone of the Annual Conference agenda. This is your chance to make your voice heard in the decision making process and help to shape the future direction of RBL. Both in-person and remote branch delegates can vote for or against each motion that comes to Conference. Please note that motions must be voted for at County Conference. The deadline to submit motions is 5pm Friday 14th February.

### [Upcoming Annual Conference deadlines\\*](#)

Submission of Certificate for Motions: Friday 14th February

Nomination for National Membership Awards: Friday 14th February

\* Please note that the deadline for nominations for Place of Conference is 5pm Friday 11th of April 2025; not 5pm 14th February 2025 as stated in a previous communication to County Chairs.

### [We're here to help](#)

Last year saw the launch of our simplified membership enquiry process. We streamlined how you can get in touch with us. To ensure you get the answers or support needed, please send your general membership questions and enquiries, including those around Annual Conference, IT/Umbraco support and updating membership details to Membership Services at [membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk).

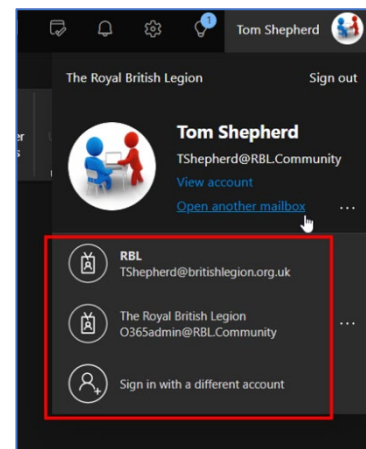
You can still contact your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) as usual for enquiries around branch and county management, local membership matters and compliance queries. Additionally, our [online FAQs](#) are regularly updated and a great way to get answers to some of the most common member questions.

## RBL.Community accounts

In January, we sent an email inviting county and branch officers to register for their RBL.Community email account and we're delighted in the interest so far.

Some recipients have since contacted us to let us know that they hold more than one role and already possess an account or accounts. We can confirm that county and branch officers should have an account for each role they hold. This helps to ensure that emails are sent from the appropriate account when acting in the capacity of a certain role, avoiding any confusion for the recipients. Additionally, it allows us streamlined communications with all holders of a specific role, for example Treasurers.

We appreciate that holding multiple accounts may seem onerous, however, switching between accounts is simple and can be done as demonstrated on the right. Thank you for your understanding and continued support. If you hold a role and don't currently have an email address for it, you can request one from your Membership Engagement Officer. More information is available [in the FAQs](#).



## Improving our relationship with RBL bands

For many years RBL has licenced local bands which represent us in communities and are often very active in supporting us and the Armed Forces community. Following a recent review of how we work with RBL bands, Alison Bunn, Head of Membership Engagement, is now leading on their oversight and will work to ensure we're better connected with them.

In 2025, we will be looking to renew and refresh our relationship our bands, celebrate what they do and improve the support that we provide to them. We will also be updating the Band Policy and giving bands opportunities to connect with each other.

Please help us understand how you interact with your local RBL band (where you have one), by [taking our short questionnaire](#). Thank you in advance for your participation; your insight will help to guide our exciting work.

## Help end to the unfair treatment of military compensation

Veterans like [Pauline Coleman](#), who served in the Royal Corps of Signals, face the unfair treatment of their military compensation as income when assessed for means-tested benefits. This undermines the [Armed Forces Covenant](#), which promises to ensure fair treatment for those who

serve and have served.

By treating military compensation as income, some of the poorest veterans and their families are pushed beyond the eligibility threshold for Pension Credit, unfairly missing out on thousands of pounds in support that civilians can access. For Pauline, this meant her Pension Credit dropped from £70 to just £10.42, leaving her in financial hardship.

Our [Credit Their Service](#) campaign is seeking to end this injustice by calling on the Government to exempt military compensation from means-tested benefit calculations at the national level. To do this, we need the help of you and your members to make sure all MPs are aware of Pauline's story and take a stand in support of our campaign.

Please [share this link](#) with your members, asking them to call on their MP to take a stand and raise this issue with Liz Kendall MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. If you've had similar experiences to Pauline, please contact us at [campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk) or [use this form](#). Thank you.

### “What membership means to me”



We featured this stunning photo of the Sydney Opera House last year in our feature *Reflections on Remembrance*. For those of you who missed it, for the last eight years, residents of Sydney, Australia have seen the city's iconic Opera House decorated in a stunning light show of poppies for Remembrance.

The brainchild of Paul Graham (David P Graham OAM JP), one of our many dedicated overseas members, the idea came to Paul when he was supporting the Poppy Appeal. “I was selling poppies in my local shopping centre and was asked many times what the poppies were for,” he says.

“I was quite upset about this. I came home and wondered what I could do to better educate people on what the poppy stood for.”

Paul decided that if he could get the poppies of Flanders Fields projected onto the sails of the Sydney Opera House, it would reach more people than he ever could. Taking up the challenge, he wrote to the Lord Mayor of Sydney. “They replied ‘nothing to do with us,’” he says. He also wrote to the Opera House without success.

But Paul didn’t give up. Writing to various government departments, he received negative responses. The tide finally turned when he wrote to the Premier of New South Wales who, says Paul, replied “What a great idea”. Last year, says Paul, a photo he took of the display got over a million hits on social media.

A Royal Navy veteran, Paul served from 1954 to 1970. After moving to Australia in 1970, he says he always tried to teach people what the poppy stands for. He joined RBL, he says, because he wanted to support an organisation that is trusted and meaningful. For him, membership also means connecting to fellow veterans and raising awareness.



“It is vitally important that the RBL remains strong and profitable in order to look after veterans past, serving, and their families,” he says.

(Photo: The British Consul General, Paul’s grandson and Paul laying a wreath on behalf of the RBL at St Andrew’s Cathedral.)

### A tribute to WWII veteran Noreen Riols

*One of the last surviving veterans of the World War Two Special Operations Executive (SOE), Noreen Riols (May 1926 – January 2025), was recently remembered by her friends in the RBL Paris Branch.*

Noreen played a unique role in the SOE’s French Section – chosen due to her excellent French. Socialising with newly trained agents at pub outings and cocktails, she would engage them in conversation to see if they would 'spill the beans' to a pretty young girl about what they had been trained to do. Her stories fascinated many and would be recounted with wit and humour. Noreen was awarded the Légion d'Honneur in 2014, and an MBE in 2023.

“Many things have been written about Noreen Riols and those of us who knew her will have fond memories of the lady she was. [...] a glass of ginger beer will be on the bar in your memory at our

next lunch.”

*Tribute thanks to Janet Warby, Richard Neave, M Yates.*

---

Thank you for reading! The March edition of Central News is due to be published  
Tuesday 4th March.