



Central News – July 2024

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Important dates	
23 July 2024	Festival of Remembrance evening tickets on sale
30 July 2024	Festival of Remembrance afternoon tickets on sale
13 - 14 September 2024	Autumn County Chairs' Seminar
30 September 2024	Deadline to submit Branch Accounts

General Election 2024

In just two days, there will be a UK General Election. This is an important opportunity for us to ensure that the next UK Government understands the needs of the Armed Forces community and acts on this during their time in office. The Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland's 2024 manifesto, [Supporting those who Serve Us](#), outlines our top five priorities for the next Government to better support the Armed Forces community.

We are grateful to all our members who have already contacted their local candidates and asked them to pledge their support for our manifesto; you've helped us reach more than 2,100 candidates. If you haven't already contacted your candidates, please consider doing so by [clicking here](#).

To keep up to date with our campaigning work, sign up to our [Campaigner Community](#). We will have other ways for you to get involved and campaign with us soon.

Membership Fee Increase

At Annual Conference 2024, the motion to increase membership fees was carried. We fully understand that nobody likes to see price increases, but there has not been one for a few years and this change will help us provide the best service to our valued members.

Starting this September, the membership fee will increase by £2 each year for the next five years, until 2028. This means that from the 4th of September, new members and those renewing will pay £20. The change will take place automatically at renewal. **For any Branch that collects fees on behalf of their members (consolidated payments), please ensure you make preparations to collect the correct new membership fee amount.**

Branch, County, District and Section Chairs, and Clubs were sent communications around this increase 20 - 21 June, and all members for whom we have an email received an email notification 24 - 26 June. Hard copy letters are being sent to members who we are unable to contact digitally or via our usual communication channels.

If you or your members would like to know more about these changes, please visit rbl.org.uk/membershipfees2024.

If you have any questions or concerns about the fee increase, please reach out to us at membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk or call us on: UK: 0800 307 7773 (free); Republic of Ireland: 1800 911 936 (free); Overseas: +44 (0)207 191 1091 (full rate).

Branch Annual Returns 2024

As we approached the Branch Financial Year End for 30 June 2024 all the branches should receive the year end Accounts Pack either by post or email from your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) by 3 July 2024. [The pack is also available on MAP](#). The Branch Accounts Team has provided a series of FAQs on this year's process.

1) Is everything the same as last year?

Broadly speaking, yes. For a full list of changes made, please see the page 3 of the Branch Return Guide 2024, which is part of the [Accounts Pack](#).

2) What are the benefits of completing the electronic Excel template return rather than a paper copy?

- Totals will be populated automatically throughout meaning you cannot make a mistake when adding up!
- There are number of built-in checks which will alert you to any identifiable errors/omissions when you are preparing the return so these can be fixed before you submit and will reduce the chances of your MEO/Finance having to reach out to you later with follow up queries.
- Reduce processing time for the Finance team, which will improve the response time for queries from Finance where they are necessary.

3) Who is your point of contact for queries?

- Contact your MEO in the first instance with all queries.
- Contact branchaccounts@britishlegion.org.uk if you are unable to reach your MEO or they are unable to help you.

4) Where to send the completed return?

- E-mail to your MEO wherever possible. Even if you have completed a hard copy form, if you are able to scan/take a photo and email that helps us to reduce the amount of physical post we have to process at head office.
- If you are unable to email completed returns to your MEO, send your return by post using recorded delivery, addressed to:

<MEO Name>
(Annual Return enclosed)
Membership Directorate
Royal British Legion
Haig House
199 Borough High Street

London
SE1 1AA

(You should keep a copy of the Branch Return and recorded delivery receipt with you just in case of postal delays or loss)

5) [Is it ok to wait for the deadline of 30th September to submit the accounts?](#)

Please do not wait until 30 September if at all possible; send your documents as early as you can. Your MEO needs to review the documents and upload to the Finance system by 30 September and therefore your MEO needs time to do their checks and query anything with you.

6. [We have more than £5000 in our bank account. What should we do with the surplus funds we cannot spend?](#)

Any surplus balance over £5,000 that you cannot spend or donate to the Poppy Appeal should be deposited into the branch's BFI in line with the requirements of the Membership Handbook.

[We've simplified our enquiry process](#)

As we've been communicating over the past several months, the membership enquiry process has been simplified.

Please ensure all general membership enquiries, including those around membership events and Annual Conference, membership communications and IT / MAP / Umbraco support, are sent to membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk and not other mailboxes, which will begin closing down. You can still contact your Membership Engagement Officer as usual for enquiries around branch and county management, local membership matters and compliance queries.

Our [online FAQs](#) have been updated to help with some of the most common members questions. Please encourage your members to visit this page if they have a question or issue with their membership. We'll be continually reviewing and updating these to ensure they are as useful as possible. Thank you for your support as we work to improve the membership experience.

[Improving membership communications](#)

We are working on a plan to improve our communications with all members at all levels. In order to make meaningful, positive improvements, it is important we have a clear understanding of what is going well, what is going less well and what is in need of addressing.

To help us understand this, please use [this short survey](#) to share your thoughts on our current communications and engagement. We encourage you to share this link with other members. Your feedback is vital and will help develop our new communications strategy and improve the membership

experience. [The survey](#) closes at 5pm on Monday 8th July.

Membership Handbook feedback

The Membership Compliance team is currently working on updating the [Membership Handbook](#) for September 2024. As part of this process, there is the opportunity to send your feedback to help shape the next edition.

If you wish to provide comment or recommendation(s), please complete [this feedback form](#), clearly and in full detail, by Monday 8 July 2024. We appreciate your time and thank you in advance.

Centenarian Membership update

We are pleased to announce that the first group of centenarian memberships have now been awarded. All those members 100 years and older should have received their new membership and certificate in the post. This work has been undertaken following the passage of [Motion 2 at Annual Conference 2022](#).

Centenarian membership awards those who reach 100 years old with membership free of charge to honour and celebrate achieving such a remarkable milestone in their life. If a member in your branch is entitled to centenarian membership and has not yet received their certificate, please contact membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.

Festival of Remembrance 2024 tickets

The RBL Festival of Remembrance will be held in the Royal Albert Hall, London on Saturday 9 November 2024 with performances at 2pm and 7pm. Tickets will go on sale to RBL members online via [See Tickets](#) on **23 July and 30 July** for the evening and afternoon performances respectively. Tickets will not be available until these dates.

For the specific time that tickets will go on sale, please refer to the RBL Festival of Remembrance [webpage](#) closer to the date. A Festival of Remembrance holding page will be available in due course through the [See Tickets link](#). Once live, festival tickets can also be found by searching on the See Tickets website.

Further information about Festival of Remembrance 2024 can be found in the [Special Circular](#). Please share ticketing information with your fellow members. We would also encourage members to support those who are unable to use the online booking system.

As per previous years, tickets are not available to purchase over the phone as See Tickets do not have this as an option. We use an external ticket provider due to a Metropolitan Police requirement that everyone attending must have a named ticket due to the security around this event.

Should you have any questions about Festival of Remembrance, please contact festival@britishlegion.org.uk.

Help us to raise £2 million more this Poppy Appeal!

Thanks to the incredible support of our Poppy Appeal Organisers and collectors, 2023 was a fantastic year for the Poppy Appeal raising £50 million, enabling us to provide much needed support to the Armed Forces Community.

Our key focus now is recruitment. We currently have 325 districts without Poppy Appeal Organisers. If we can fill these empty slots, it will enable us to raise over £2 million pounds more, providing even more support to our beneficiaries.

How can you help?

- Do you know anyone in your community who might be willing to support us?
- Do you have a network on social media and would be willing to share our social media content which appeals for volunteers?
- Would you be prepared to take on an organiser role, or become a Poppy Appeal collector?

If yes to any of the above questions, or if you want to find out more about the incredible volunteering roles or the districts we need to fill, the Poppy Appeal team would love to hear from you! Call them on 0345 8451945.

Remembering Kosovo – 25 Years On

On 23 June we recognised both former serving personnel as well as those currently serving who have supported the peace-keeping mission in Kosovo with a commemorative event at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in Staffordshire.

June saw the significant milestone of the 25th anniversary of the end of the War in Kosovo and the deployment of the NATO peace-support force, KFOR. For a quarter of a century, British forces have been dedicated to support the maintenance of peace and stability in Kosovo.

The event – held within the Armed Forces Memorial at the NMA – remembered the service and sacrifice of veterans, their families and currently serving personnel. The *British Army Band Catterick* provided music, and former personnel from each of the services recounted their memories of

supporting the peace in Kosovo and gave a sense of the wide-ranging duties of British personnel.

Among those giving their testimonies was former marine Royal Marine Commando Harris Tatakis who was on his first operational deployment. Harris remarked: "I learned things that have stayed with me and have been useful in situations I found myself in later, on deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan... British forces won hearts and minds in Kosovo; the experience of working with civilians made me a better Marine; and I feel we had saved a lot of lives and left Kosovo in a better place".

Celebrating the Armed Forces in Warwick

Warwick, Warwickshire

Warwick RBL Branch, in collaboration with Warwickshire and Birmingham County President, Elaine Butler and Warwick District Council, held a community event for Armed Forces Day to celebrate and thank current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families.

Developed around the theme of 'our allies', the event was bigger than usual and aimed to engage a diverse community with Armed Forces Day. The day included a Sikh Gatka martial arts display and Khukuri Gurkha dance, while catering options included a Sikh Langar. Additionally, displays from local military museums, Commonwealth War Graves, the Sikh Soldier, and Why Are West Indians were on offer, as well as diverse musical performances and free children's activities and food.

Planning of the event was undertaken with the support of Warwickshire and Birmingham County President, Elaine Butler, who previously worked on the Solihull Armed Forces Community Garden, which was recently featured in ITV's Alan Titchmarsh's Gardening Club. Discussing the event, Elaine said: "Warwick wanted to go for an AFD event but hadn't been very successful in previous years, so asked if I would join them and assist with the planning. Consequently, this became a very large Event."

Elaine continued: "The RBL is now associated with a new group of people, previously not so high profile, and I am thrilled for us and the public who hopefully see us in a new and innovative local role. Encouraging Councils and organisations to partner on projects is so beneficial to everyone and forms excellent relationships."

D-Day Commemorations in Germany

Paderborn, North Rhine-Westphalia

To commemorate D-Day 80, the RBL District of Germany held a Memorial Service attended by members of the local garrison, the Anglo German Club, the English Language Christian Mission in North West Europe and veterans.

The service began with a parade of standards by the District Standard Bearers under the command of Robert Thompson, District Parade Marshal. An Act of Remembrance was recited by Robert Millar, District Chairman, with two minutes silence and dipped standards. After this, Paderborn Branch President Lieutenant Colonel David Crimmins recited a bible reading, followed by a reflection held by the Reverend Richard Downes BEM, Royal British Legion Germany Chaplain.

After the Service, the District Chairman awarded Robert Thompson with the runners up certificate of the Lewis Shield, a National RBL Award presented to a disabled person who has inspired people to observe the objects and values of the Legion. The event concluded with a buffet prepared by Bryan Seal, Paderborn Branch Treasurer. Overall the event was a good success and raised €124 for the Poppy Appeal through donations.

Robert Millar would like to thank the Branch for hosting the event, and the Standard bearers for doing what they do without any fuss. A big thank you is extended to Padre Richard for stepping in at short notice and preparing an interesting service.

For further information regarding the Royal British Legion Overseas, contact Robert Millar, Overseas Membership Council Representative, on rmillar@britishlegion.org.uk.



Remembering D-Day in South Wales

Gwent, South Wales

A recent event in Gwent got a mention in the Senedd and was picked up by local press.

To commemorate 80 years since D-Day, Blackwood RBL branch organised a morning of remembrance, with more than 100 people, including Veterans, serving personnel and local school children, paying their respects in a ceremony at Cefn Fforest Cenotaph. Afterwards, there was a chance of pace, with school children singing both national anthems and a choir performing old classics like *Run Rabbit Run*. Food, a wartime memorabilia display, 1940's hairstyling and more were on offer to attendees, creating an engaging event for all.



The event was a big success and well attended, including by local politicians and dignitaries, including Lord Don Touhig.
