



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION BANWELL

Patron: His Majesty The King

Newsletter – February 2026



Chair's Foreword

Dear Members,

Yes – although it's February, I hope you don't think it too late for me to wish you a prosperous and successful 2026 in all that you have set out to achieve.

Although we haven't had any Branch Meetings since the last Newsletter, activity continues behind the scenes.

I attended the County Annual Conference, and below key points that I took away from it:

Formal Affiliations - Somerset continues to be well regarded across the Legion for its engagement with the Armed Forces Covenant and have affiliations with:

- *RNAS Yeovilton* – HMS Heron strengthening our connection with naval aviation and the service community in Somerset.
- *HMS Somerset* - which has been tracking the Russian intelligence-gathering vessel *Yantar*. This serves as a timely reminder that today's Armed Forces continue to operate in a complex and demanding global environment.

Branch Community Support - Across Somerset, our welfare partners are dealing with significant and sustained demand. The local RBL welfare team manages a substantial caseload at any one time, supporting veterans and families facing challenges around mental health, housing, finance, loneliness, and transition to civilian life.

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Recruitment – Securing Our Future - Recruitment is one of the defining challenges facing the Legion nationally, and Somerset is no exception. We must be realistic: without new members, new volunteers, and new ideas, our ability to deliver Remembrance, welfare, and community support will decline.

Our Strategy 2025 - 2035 was launched which sets out RBL's vision, mission, values, and the outcomes it aims to deliver for the Armed Forces community over the next decade. The strategy responds to ongoing changes both in the external landscape and within our own community.

In the last year, the RBL provided direct **support** to 19,857 households across the Armed Forces community. It also helped to secure the extension of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty, which will be expanded to cover a wide range of public services. This will form part of the Armed Forces Bill in 2026. More than 50 councils have now changed policy following our 'Credit Their Service' campaign, calling for military compensation to no longer be counted in means-tested benefit assessments.

There were also presentations of various awards:

Mitford Slade Cup (Recruitment) **Bridgwater Branch – BR2465**
Mr Ray Dickinson, Branch Chairman

Branch Efficiency (up to 100 members)
Barnes Trophy **Weston Super Mare Branch – BR2544**
Mr Rob Bywaters, Branch Chairman

Branch Efficiency 100-500 members
Colin MacKenzie Cup **Taunton Branch – BR2545**
Mr Dave Moore, Branch Vice Chairman

The County Standard Bearer Mr. John Gallop (Wrington Branch)

County Certificates of Appreciation Mr Garry Hawkes (WSM Branch)
Mrs Kate Hurley - MEO

I make no apologies for the long introduction, but this should bring you up to date with what has been taking place during 2025.

Penny Mottram

Chair

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From the Secretary

I wish you all a happy New Year – as Penny says not too late in the year I hope. The snowdrops are coming out as is our first crocus and there is even a few daffodils in the garden. Spring is coming.

I know it feels a long time ago, but below is a photo taken after the service on the 11 November. As a few members were present, I used the opportunity to take the photo of those that had not already left, just for the record. Sometimes it is good just to take a photo for no apparent reason.



The dates for this year are in this newsletter Only 5 responses were returned in respect of the Options Paper with the majority in favour of remaining as we are ie: 4 x Formal Meetings, 2 x Informal Meetings and the Poppy Supper. Paul Harding, who did not want to see the Branch close has offered to make a donation to support funding the bar. I have now booked the Village Hall and the first Branch Meeting will be on 19 March. Please note the Poppy supper is on the 4th Thursday of the month due to Easter being early April.

Gill Fawcitt
Secretary

From the Membership Secretary

Further to my update at the AGM we have lost a further 4 members – reducing our current membership to 39. We continue to look at ways of gaining new members.

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Remembrance Day 2025

There was an excellent turnout from our Youth Groups including 2 Sea Cadets. It rained for the first time in 25 years, so it was a good idea to lay wreaths at foot of font in the church. They were later taken to the War Memorial.



Poppy Collection 2025

This year's Poppy Collection was a great success and so far has raised a total of £9,239.62. The bulk of this came from donations made at Morrison's, Locking Castle

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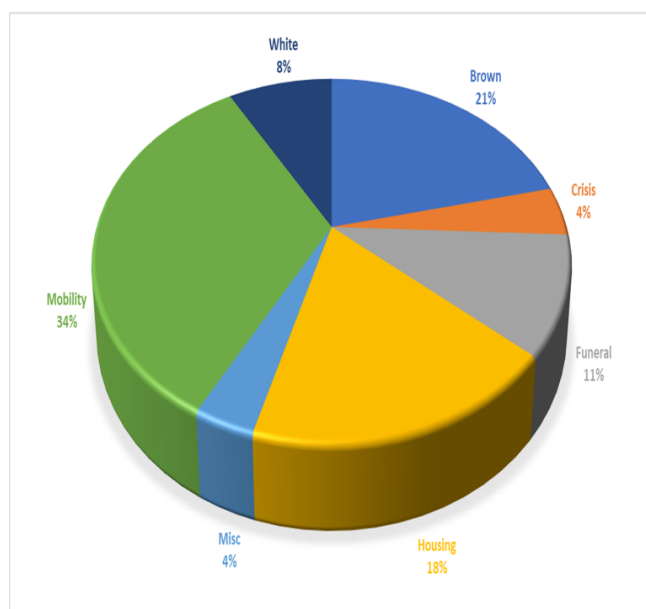
where our trusty volunteers took £8,728.62 in donations. Although it was a struggle to keep replenishing stock we moved more than 650 “2025 pin badges”. On our first weekend the Army Cadets raised a magnificent £1,275 in one day. The remainder came from collection boxes in local businesses topped off with a generous £264.09 from the Church Collection.












If you would or know of some who would be interested in taking part in this year’s Poppy Collection, please contact Tony Lyndon on 07886 292035 or e-mail to serie8@sky.com

Somerset Almonisation Report

Almonisation is the process of sourcing, combining, and coordinating funds from multiple benevolent organisations, charities, and, in some cases, local authorities, to provide a single, comprehensive grant to a beneficiary. It is primarily used by Armed Forces Charities (such as the Royal British Legion, SSAFA, and the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity) to ensure maximum impact and share the responsibility of providing welfare support. Last year’s Royal British Legion figures for Somerset are shown below:

Somerset



	£11,044.96		£9,425.88
	£2240.90		£0
	£0		£0
	£0		£1,827.13
	£5,469.67		£17,392.85
			£4,347.41

TOTAL = £51,748.80

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Diary Dates

	Branch Meeting	AGM	Comments
19 March	Formal		
30 April			Poppy supper
21 May	Informal		Speaker
18 June	Formal		Speaker
20? June			Possible lunch in June
17 September	Formal		Speaker
15 October	Formal	RBL AGM	Speaker
17? October			Possible Dinner in October
8 November			Remembrance Sunday
11 November			Remembrance Day
19 November	Informal		Fun Event: Pre-Christmas

Contact Us

RBL Website	The Royal British Legion
RBL Banwell Branch	Website Link Facebook
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