



Central News – March 2024

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Important dates

28 March 2024	Closure of Annual Conference registration and Jim Prince Fund applications
4 April 2024	Appeals and amendments to Motions deadline
10-12 May 2024	Annual Conference 2024

A peek at the Annual Conference agenda

The deadline to register for Annual Conference as a Delegate or visitor is less than a month away – 28th March 2024. Delegates and visitors can attend in-person or online – registering [via the RBL website](#). In the next few weeks, you can expect to receive our March Special Circular – detailing more information about Conference and what to expect, including the provisional agenda. In advance of this, we are delighted to share some details about two pieces of the agenda.

Membership Forum

This year our Membership Forum will be held on Sunday 12th May - instead of Saturday as is usual. This change has been made as a direct result of the feedback received following last year's Membership Forum and a common desire for more time to be allocated to the Membership Forum. The 2024 forum will be shaped by four key themes which will be identified as the top priorities from members, based on feedback from engagement events across the past year – with the fourth and final theme being a fully open discussion. There will also be the opportunity for questions to be submitted in advance, with more details on how to do this shared in due course.

Dedication of new National Standards

Also on Sunday 12th May will be a dedication of the new Standards, which will see the Standards blessed by Rev. Scott Brown, RBL National Chaplain. Three Standards will be dedicated in Newport – the National Standard, National Youth Standard and National Women's Section Standard. This is the first time in RBL history that these three Standards are to be dedicated together.

Register your place as a Delegate or visitor [via the RBL website](#) before 11.59pm 28th March.

Revised Membership Management Handbook availability

Please be advised that the revised Membership Management Handbook (MMH) will be made available on 25th March 2024. Should you have any urgent questions, please contact membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.

County Chairs Seminar

Last weekend, 1st - 2nd March 2024, the County Chairs Seminar took place in Birmingham. The seminar was a great opportunity for County Chairs, Staff, the Board of Trustees and Membership Council to gather in person and discuss a range of topics together, which proved fruitful and informative for all.

To all our County Chairs and representatives who attended - we thank you for your time, engagement, and feedback. We will have the briefing packs out to you shortly with summaries from the speakers' presentations and key points from the breakout sessions. A questions and answers

document from the weekend is currently in progress and will be shared with County Chairs in due course.

April Specialist Officer Away Day

Are you an active County/District Training, Recruitment, Youth or Community Support Officer? Registration is now open for next Specialist Officer Away Day – taking place Saturday 20th April 2024. This is an in-person event taking place at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, providing the opportunity to come together to network and share best practice through presentations and breakout sessions.

Registration closes Wednesday 20th March. Please register your place [using this form](#).

Remembering the Service and Sacrifice of the Generation of 1944

This year sees the 80th anniversaries of momentous turning points of the Second World War. Marking the service and sacrifice of the generation of 1944, RBL is encouraging members, Branches and communities to get involved. A pack to support this is available [by clicking here](#).

To help you engage with your community we have produced display units exploring the themes being commemorated in 2024. Those who attended the County Chairs Seminar will have had the opportunity to see an example of the four-sided tower option. Also available are one- and two-sided pull up banners and the option of a large poster. A poster and leaflet will also be available for our Remembrance Learning Programme.

For 2024, you will be able to order the following display units:

- Exploring D-Day and the Battle of Normandy.
- Exploring the 80th anniversaries of 1944 including D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, Monte Cassino, Kohima, Imphal, Operation Market Garden and the Battle of the Scheldt.

An [online portal](#) has been set up where you can explore the range on offer and order units, paying by cheque. More information about ordering and how to pay can be found [on MAP](#) or on the online portal. Any use of Branch funds must be authorised by your Branch Committee prior to ordering.

D-Day 80 Commemorations

We will be marking the 80th anniversary with events in the UK and Normandy on 5th and 6th June 2024, as well as with community events around the UK. Veterans of the Normandy campaign will be at the heart of the anniversary commemorations.

Service of Commemoration to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landing

RBL will be holding an event on 5th June at Bayeux Cemetery, which will be open to both Normandy and WW2 veterans, their guests, and descendants of Normandy veterans. Registration is open [through our website](#). Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis as spaces are limited. Registration closes 25th March or when capacity is reached. Members of the public can enter a public ballot [through our website](#) to attend. Spaces will only be allocated if capacity is not reached through veteran registration.

British National Event to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landings

Along with the Ministry of Defence, RBL will hold the British National Event to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landings on 6th June at the British Normandy Memorial. This will be broadcast on UK National Television. This will be open to Normandy Veterans and their guests. If you are a Normandy veteran and would like to attend, please contact us at: remembranceevents@britishlegion.org.uk.

Members of the public may enter a public ballot to attend, with information available on [the RBL website](#). Spaces will only be allocated if capacity is not reached through veteran registration, with priority given to families of the fallen and descendants of Normandy veterans.

2024 County/District Grants

The application window for 2024 County/District Grants will be 22nd April 2024 - 26th May 2024. Updated application forms and full guidance will be shared in early April, with the decision and payment date to be confirmed by end of May. Counties may prepare in the meantime by ensuring their County Plans are updated and agreed and they have access to their accounts - as this information will need to be submitted along with the completed application form.

All applications and supporting information should be submitted to membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk by the County Chair or County Secretary only. We will be unable to accept applications received outside of these dates. Please contact your Membership Engagement Officer for support in completing the application where required and ensure they are aware of the submission so they can provide support. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.

Requests for support from Beneficiaries who come direct to branches

The Royal British Legion exists to support all members of the Armed Forces Community, whether they are members of the RBL or not. As we have a presence in many communities across the UK and overseas, branches may get approached directly for support by individuals or organisations on behalf of them. Where this happens, please refer them to the contact centre on 0808 802 8080 (+44 (0)20

3376 8080 if overseas) or info@britishlegion.org.uk and we will do all we can to help. They can also contact us via Live Chat [on our website](#).

Even if the RBL is unable to help directly, we will still ensure that the individual is supported to access the help they need by referring them to other service charities and/or organisations that may be able to assist.

Upcoming Survey Notice

As County and Branch Officers, you are a vital part of RBL's mission and, further to the recent membership survey you may have taken, we would like to know a little more about how you feel about RBL more generally.

Please be on the lookout for the general feedback survey arriving via email on March 11th. This is separate from the membership survey you may have already completed. We estimate that it will only take you 10 minutes, but your responses will be helpful for RBL as we develop the way we communicate with you.

BCS Contact Card

We will shortly be offering a new contact card designed to enable members to signpost potential beneficiaries in need of support to the RBL Contact Centre. Once released, please encourage your branch members to use this if they meet veterans and/or their families requiring assistance.

Hard copies of the new contact card will be available to order this month, with more information to be shared by email in due course.

Volunteer Voice newsletter

As members of RBL, we would like to invite you to receive the *Volunteer Voice*. Celebrating the work of RBL and its volunteers, members and supporters, *Volunteer Voice* is a great way to see what else is happening in the charity and how you can further get involved. If you would like to receive this, you can [sign up here](#).

Census data on our Armed Forces Community

Following RBL's successful [Count Them In campaign](#), the 2021 Census in England and Wales, and the 2022 Scottish counterpart included a question on service in the Armed Forces for the first time in their history. The census data is available on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website [here](#). Information is searchable by location via a map feature.

The RBL Campaigns, Policy and Research team (CPR) has also produced briefings on particular

aspects of the data focusing on a range of characteristics captured by the census including veteran age, sex, health, living arrangements, and information about their caring roles, spouses and children. Please contact campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk if you would like a copy of these briefings. CPR colleagues will be attending Annual Conference in May with an exhibition stand providing access to the ONS website and availability to answer any of your questions.

To understand more about the broader work of the CPR team, view their [2023 Impact Report](#), join the [Campaigner Community](#), or get in touch via the above email. campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk.

Credit their Service update

Last year, RBL launched the *Credit their Service* campaign. Armed Forces compensation (such as a War Pension) is often treated as an income source when national and local benefit rates are calculated, whilst civil compensation is not. Many veterans and their families often receive less or no Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payments and Disabled Facilities Grants as a result.

We believe that all councils should honour the Armed Forces Covenant and its principle of 'no disadvantage' by ensuring that compensation awarded for injury or bereavement in HM Armed Forces is never treated as income across benefit means tests.

RBL is asking its members to write to their local councillor to ask how their council treats military compensation when means testing for benefits. A template and more information is [available on MAP](#). You can easily write to your local councillor by inputting your postcode into the [Write To Them website](#). If you are unsure about who to contact, please get in touch with the Public Affairs team at PublicAffairs@britishlegion.org.uk.

Good Practice

Blackwood, South Wales

A new committee that came into post at Blackwood RBL Branch has seen great success in its active community outreach and membership recruitment efforts. In making a greater effort to get involved with the wider community and actively promoting the Branch activity on Facebook, they have seen a positive reaction, including strong growth of their Facebook page and an increase in membership numbers. We posed several questions to the Branch Chair, Andrew Doody, about their approach - here's what he said:

Q: [Since coming into post have you changed how the branch is promoted? If so, how?](#)

A: "We have made a great deal of progress in promoting the branch both in person and online. In person we have attended clubs, churches, warm hubs, cadets and more. We explain what we do,

what we offer, and show interest in the community - not just asking for help but offering help where we are able.”

Q: You have a very active Facebook group with 3 times as many followers as branch members – how have you achieved this?

A: “Our Facebook page has grown through actively promoting the branch in the community and the Facebook page to follow what we do. This is especially helpful for existing members who are unable to attend face to face meetings and actively participate due issues such as mobility.”

Q: Are you actively promoting membership to your Facebook members?

A: “All members of our Facebook page are offered membership, but we also understand times are tough with the cost of living - the final decision is left with the individual.”

Q: What advice would you give to those forming a new committee for the first time?

A:

1. “Communication is key.”
2. “Everyone must have a voice and that voice is entitled to be heard.”
3. “Many members are military and with that comes a loud, proud and regimental way of dealing with things. However, we also have to remember that many members are non-military and can find this behaviour intimidating.”
4. “Allow a natural flow in the meetings to encourage discussion and constructive criticism, but all in a controlled and productive manner.”