



ROYAL
BRITISH
LEGION



RUSHDEN

Website <https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/rushden/>

We meet every second Monday of the month at The Athletic Club, 61 Newton Road, Rushden, NN10 0HF commencing 7.30pm. Visitors are welcome. It is **NOT** a requirement to have served in HM Forces to be a member of the Royal British Legion.

RBL RUSHDEN BRANCH NEWSLETTER FOR MAY & JUNE 2026

WELCOME

This is a larger than normal Newsletter that now covers two months as have the previous two editions this year. Listed below the page numbers you can turn to, to ease you in finding what you need at that moment; do treat this as a living document for the next two months, so you can refer back to anything. Articles are most welcome, so don't be shy, let's have some please.

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RBL WELFARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

DO YOU NEED ANY HELP, OR DO YOU KNOW A VETERAN OR RBL MEMBER WHO NEEDS HELP? IF SO, PLEASE CALL OUR BRANCH COMMUNITY SUPPORTER, PAUL MCKAY AT 07305 837099 OR VIA EMAIL (SEE THE WHO'S WHO SECTION OF THIS NEWSLETTER). YOU CAN ALSO CONTACT THE BRANCH COMMUNITY COORDINATOR, PETER ARMSTRONG ON 07498 243683. HIS EMAIL ADDRESS IS ALSO AT WHO'S WHO? REMEMBER, THE RBL IS HERE FOR YOU. IF THEY CAN'T HELP, THEY'LL GET YOU HELP. PLEASE BEAR IN MIND THAT EVERY SITUATION IS DIFFERENT.

IN MEMORIAM



Many members will now have heard of the passing of Branch Member David 'Lofty' Plattern; he was only 75 years of age. This was a terrible shock to many of us who had only recently seen him enjoying himself at the Royal Navy v Royal Air Force Rugby match at Northampton Saints grounds and of course the Breakfast Club the following Wednesday. He died at home on 23rd April 2026, St George's Day. The family has asked for no visits or flowers whilst they try to come to terms with their loss. Lofty was a very popular member of the Branch, the military community, Irthlingborough and wherever he went; at the peak of his membership, he was the RBL County Chair of Surrey. He will be sorely missed. Funeral details will be forwarded as soon as they are known, but it is not likely to take place until near the end of May at the earliest.

A COUPLE OF QUICK ADMIN POINTS

Please bring in your **Branch Survey** at the next Branch Meeting on 11th May - which is the closing date. With a membership of 119, returns are quite poor with only 27 received. There will be blank forms and a postal box made available so they may remain anonymised. This is your opportunity to say what you want.

Op VALOUR Survey – unusual to have two surveys on the go, but this is not a regular feature. This survey is about the Armed Forces Covenant and there are a few questions that could affect some members. Please see the email sent on 9th March, where the Chair encourages members to complete the survey. Here's the QR Code below to complete the survey. A great opportunity to air your views! Closing date is 31st May 2026.



A TRIP TO SKEGNESS

Friends of the Legion are organising a trip to Skegness on Tuesday 23rd June. Cost is £15. Can BCC Peter Armstrong have names ASAP and money due in May's Branch Meeting?

0300 323 0137 Mental Health Matters Helpline - Midlands & East Veterans Service

0800 448 0828 Northamptonshire Helpline for Veterans 24/7

ANZAC DAY – 25TH APRIL 2026

Anzac Day commemorates the anniversary of the 1915 Gallipoli landings in World War I, serving as a moment to honour members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) who lost their lives in conflict and all those who have served.



The Princess of Wales marked ANZAC Day by attending ceremonies at the Cenotaph and Westminster Abbey. She took part in the Wreath Laying and Parade Service at the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

More than 11,000 Australians and New Zealanders lost their lives in the Gallipoli campaign, which saw trench warfare, heat and disease inflict a toll as the Allies tried to take control of the Turkish straits against the forces of the Ottoman Empire.

The Princess placed a wreath on behalf of the King. The card in the centre of the wreath, signed “Catherine and William,” reads, “In memory of the Australian and New Zealand soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.”

Earlier that day, the Princess Royal joined members of the Australian and New Zealand Armed Forces at a solemn ANZAC Day ceremony at Wellington Arch in Hyde Park.



T BATTERY (SHAH SUJAH'S TROOP) ROYAL ARTILLERY FALKLANDS 1982 – Part 1 by Branch Committee Member Steve Miller

The anniversary of my journey from the UK to the Falklands; I thought I would share some of my experiences from that period.

It was Friday 2nd of April 1982, I saw on the news that Argentine forces had taken the Falklands by force. I must admit, I wasn't aware of where this country was, at the time.

On Saturday morning I was loading up the car at my parent's house, as we were going out for the day to start off my Easter leave. My sister Bren came out and said there is a phone call for you from your army camp. In this phone call I was told to report straight back to the regiment in Kirton Lindsey near Scunthorpe, some 2-to-3-hour drive away. No reason was given in the phone call, just a direct order to return to base. I concluded that the reason was probably due to the fact a lot of army personnel were on, or going on Easter leave.

On my arrival to the camp, I was ordered to report to the medical centre, plus the armoury, and then report back to the camp at 2am, as we are being mobilised for the Falklands. It felt strange to draw my weapon still in civilian clothing, as I never had time to go home and change.

The coach/bus journey should have taken around 6 to 7 hours. But the total time it took was 16 hours. This was a horrendous journey. I, along with others got the short straw, and our journey was on a bus, not a coach. Trying to get comfortable along with kit, weapons, and all other sorts of gear, made it impossible. The reason it took so long, was to stagger different arrival times for troops in Southampton and Plymouth.

Once in Plymouth we boarded a ship called LSL Sir Geraint on a late Sunday afternoon, and although we never knew at the time, this was going to be where we stayed until we landed in San Carlos in the May. Loading onto the LSL Geraint was the first of many firsts for T Battery. Rapier missile system is air portable. So, it was loaded by crane. But it was a challenge to get 12 x Rapiers down in the bowels of the ship on the tank deck along with all other equipment and armaments. At the time of loading, the general feeling was that we would not go to war, as a diplomatic solution would be found. But a task force was being assembled to show intent. This was how things stayed until we reached Ascension Island.

The plan once we reached Ascension Island, was to test fire the Rapier system, but that was cancelled at short notice, as the decision was made, that war was now on, as all diplomacy had failed. Now the Argentine forces would have to be removed by force. The atmosphere on board changed dramatically. Briefings after briefings happened, POW cards were issued. (I had never seen one until now). We were told to make sure Wills were up to date. I now knew it was on. Difficult letters sent back home on Blueys.

We all know now, the history of the war, and sadly lives were lost, and some carry injuries both physical and mentally to this day, which includes the Argentine forces. But the objective was achieved, and the Falklands was liberated.

In part two of my story, I will go through my personal experiences of the war right up to my home coming.



WHAT'S ON SHORTLY AND FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2026?

7th May – Friends of the Legion Coffee Morning
8th May – 81st Anniversary of VE Day
8th to 10th May – RBL National Annual Conference – Brighton
11th May – Branch Monthly Meeting
22nd May – 15th Anniversary of the end of the Iraq War (Op TELIC)
23rd May – Rush 2The Den Event – Healthwatch North Northamptonshire
28th May - Veterans Coffee Morning at Bilton Court Care Home – Contact Jake Baker
4th June - Friends of the Legion Coffee Morning
8th June – RBL Rushden Branch Informal Evening
11th June – 27th Anniversary of the end of the Kosovo War & start KFOR (12th June 1999)
14th June – 44th Anniversary of end of the Falklands War (Op CORPORATE)
27th June – Armed Forces Day and Drumhead Service organised by the RDVG
28th June – Yelden Strawberry Fayre
1st July – 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme
11th July – Party in the Park
23rd July – RBL Virtual Townhall Membership Meeting – see details in next newsletter
27th July – Anniversary of the end of the Korean War (1953)
31st July – End of Op Banner (Northern Ireland)
31st July – End of the 100 days Passchendaele War (known as the Third Battle of Ypres)
2nd August – Rushden Classic Car Show
15th August – 81st Anniversary of VJ Day
3rd September – Merchant Navy Day organised by RBL Rushden Branch
5th September – 132nd Dean & Shelton Country Show
6th September – Bark in the Park
14th September – RBL Rushden Branch Social
15th September – 86th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain
2nd (3rd) October – 86th Anniversary of the bombing of Alfred Lord Tennyson School
5th November – Schools Garden of Remembrance Ceremony Rushden War Memorial
8th November – Remembrance Sunday Parade & Service organised by the Town Council
11th November – Armistice Day organised by the Town Council
16th November – Branch AGM – 3rd Monday of the month
28th November – Rushden Christmas Lights Switch On
14th December – RBL Rushden Branch Social

0300 323 0137 Mental Health Matters Helpline - Midlands & East Veterans Service

RBL WELFARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

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THE REGULAR MONTHLY ACTIVITIES FOR MAY AND JUNE

First Monday of every month – Northants Breakfast Club – Hatton Hall Lounge, Hatton Hall, Hatton Avenue, Wellingborough, NN8 5AP commencing 9.30am. The next two meetings will be on **Tuesday 5th May (because Monday 4th May is a Bank Holiday Monday)** and Monday 1st June.

Second Monday of every month except March, June, September and December
– **Branch Monthly Meetings** at the Athletic Club commencing 7.30pm. The next Branch Monthly Meeting is on 11th May, which will be followed by the Speaker Tony Gibbs, CEO SERVE.

Fourth Tuesday of every month – The Community Social & Craft Group meet at the Rushden Athletic Club on Newton Road, between 1pm and 3pm. RAFA Members Free. Guests £3/entry or £20 per year. Open to any RBL Rushden Branch Member. For more information contact Carol on **07922 141589** or carol.easton12@gmail.com Next meets are on 26th May and 23rd June.

Every Wednesday & Saturday Morning – 9am start. Northants Breakfast Club (**NBC**) dine at The Needle and Awl. All Veterans are welcome. Families are invited to join on the last Saturday of each month, which will be on 30th May and 27th June.

First Thursday of every month – 10am to 12.30pm – **Friends of the Legion** meet at The Athletic Club, Newton Road, Rushden. Pop along for a cuppa and a chat any time between 10am and 12.30pm. The next meets are on 7th May and 4th June.

Second Thursday of every month - NGH Breakfast Club at Northampton General Hospital, Cliftonville, Northampton, NN1 5BD. **Eat Street** is the hospital restaurant on the main corridor through the hospital opposite the Chapel. The Breakfast Club is open to **all veterans (staff, patients and public)**. Attendees to purchase their own breakfast and drinks. The next **NGH Breakfast Club** meets are on 14th May and 11th June.

Last Thursday of Every Month – 10am -11.30am – Bilton Court Care Home would like to invite you to their **Veterans Coffee Morning** at Bilton Court Care Home, Queensway, Wellingborough, NN8 3FR. For more details phone **01933 401613** or pop in. The next **Veterans Coffee Mornings** are on 28th May and 25th June.

Last Friday of every month – 9am start – **KGH Breakfast Club** at Kettering General Hospital, Rothwell Road, Kettering, NN16 8UZ. The Basement Brassiere is located on the lower ground floor of the main hospital building. The Breakfast Club is open to **all veterans (staff, patients and public)**. Attendees to purchase their own breakfast and drinks. The next **KGH Breakfast Club** meets are on 29th May and 26th June.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED TO SUPPORT UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

27th June – Armed Forces Day organised by the Rushden & District Veterans' Group

28th June – Yelden Strawberry Fayre

11th July – Party in the Park

2nd August – Classic Car Show

5th September – 132ND Dean & Shelton Country Show

6th September – Bark in the Park

If you can help, even just for an hour or two, then please contact our Events Coordinator Ray Burke on **07853 085368** or ramondo4@yahoo.co.uk

IRAQ REMEMBRANCE – OPERATION TELIC

Millions of words have been written about the conflict in Iraq; its origins, the invasion, the efforts to stabilise the country and the legacy that followed. Much has been debated and will continue to be.

What is not in dispute is the professionalism, courage and dedication of the British Armed Forces during **Operation TELIC**.

In March 2003, British servicemen and women joined the US-led Coalition in the invasion of Iraq. Within weeks and under extreme and demanding conditions, they achieved their initial military objectives while facing determined and often deadly opposition. UK forces were tasked with securing southern Iraq including the key city of Basra, an area of significant strategic importance.

What followed was a prolonged and complex period of stabilisation. As the situation evolved, violence intensified and an insurgency took hold, later developing into a sectarian conflict that would claim tens of thousands of lives. Coalition forces, alongside Iraqi personnel who worked with them, became frequent targets.

Amid this, British Forces and their partners were also engaged in providing humanitarian aid, supporting local communities and undertaking the painstaking work of rebuilding and reconstructing both civil society and the Iraqi military often in austere and challenging conditions.

For years, those deployed faced constant danger, roadside bombs, sniper fire and mortar and rocket attacks both on patrol and within bases. Despite these conditions, they continued their duties with resilience, professionalism and an unwavering commitment to one another.

By the end of 2008, the situation had begun to stabilise, and British combat operations concluded in 2009. Most personnel withdrew, while a smaller number remained to continue training and supporting the Iraqi military. The final British personnel departed on 22 May 2011, bringing Operation TELIC to an end.

The duty in Iraq came at a high cost. Tragically, 179 British Armed Forces personnel lost their lives during Operation TELIC. Thousands more were wounded, many with life-changing physical injuries and others continue to live with the emotional and mental impact of their service.

Today, we remember not only the scale and complexity of the conflict but more importantly the service and sacrifice of those who served, those who returned, those whose lives were changed and those who did not come home.

On 22 May, the RBL will honour the extraordinary service and sacrifice of the British Armed Forces during operations in Iraq. An event will be held at the National Memorial Arboretum from 12 noon.

We remember how much we ask of our Armed Forces and we acknowledge, with gratitude and respect their enduring commitment to service.

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NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

Following its recent integration with the Royal British Legion, the National Memorial Arboretum is entering a new chapter in its history. From September 2026, it will become known as the Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens, marking a significant moment in the evolution of the nation's year-round place to remember.

Over the past 25 years, the 150-acre estate has grown from the seed of an idea into an inspirational living landscape of Remembrance. Welcoming more than 300,000 visitors each year, it has become a place where people can reflect, learn and remember the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces, emergency services and civilian organisations.

The Royal British Legion became the Arboretum's parent charity in 2003, with full integration completed in April 2026. The new name reflects the RBL's long-term commitment to the site and its ambition, set out in its strategy to 2035, to evolve Remembrance and widen participation.

The Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens will continue to invite people not only to reflect, but to take an active part in Remembrance, helping to bring society together to recognise, remember and support the Armed Forces community.

MORE ON THIS NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM NAME CHANGE

Members will be aware of some local commentary regarding the renaming of the National Memorial Arboretum from September 2026. This was discussed at the recent Town Hall, Membership Council meeting and the Director General, Mark Atkinson has issued national media comment.

Key points:

- **Not a takeover** — this is a continuation of the original vision of a national centre for remembrance, with the RBL always intended as its long-term custodian.
- **Already part of the RBL** — the Arboretum has always been within the Legion family; this is clarity of identity, not a change of ownership or direction.
- **Name reflects purpose** — it is more than a landscape; it is the UK's year-round national place of remembrance.
- **Nothing changes on the ground** — the site, memorials and experience remain the same. Entry remains free; there is a parking charge, as has been the case for some time.
- **Strengthens the future** — reinforces national recognition and supports long-term sustainability.
- **Inclusive by design** — it commemorates both military and civilian service, reflecting the contribution of individuals, organisations and communities across the nation.
- **Rooted in its origins** — what began with no land, funding or infrastructure became a national memorial through collective effort, but importantly it was established within the RBL, anchoring it from the outset as part of the UK's national remembrance framework.

On current concerns:

A petition has been launched and while people are absolutely entitled to their views, some concerns appear to be based on perception. From the outset, the project was secured on the basis that the RBL would accept the site within its family of charities as the nation's focus for year-round remembrance. The reality is that the Arboretum has always been part of the Legion and this change reflects continuity, not a shift in purpose.

The Arboretum was never solely about the Armed Forces. It was created to remember all who have given service to their community or country, including civilians; this remains unchanged.

Assurance:

Nothing is being taken away — this makes clearer what the Arboretum has always been: the nation's living centre for remembrance, held in trust by the RBL. In short, this is about clarity, continuity, and inclusion; not a change in purpose.

WHO'S WHO IN OUR BRANCH?

President - David Hawker: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community
Chair/Media Rep: Jake Baker rushden.chairman@rbl.community 07525 441267
*Vice Chair – Paul McKay: rushden.vicechairman@rbl.community 07305 837099
**Secretary – Lynne Baker: rushden.secretary@rbl.community
Treasurer – Janet Flowers: rushden.treasurer@rbl.community
Standard Bearer - Mark Taberner-Stokes: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community
Youth Member Standard Bearer - Theo Mizon: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community
Committee Member – Heather Phillip: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community
Committee Member – Sally Morton: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community
Committee Member – Ray Burke: ramondo4@yahoo.co.uk 07853 085368
Committee Member – Steve Miller: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community
Branch Padre – Pauline Cook: richardpaulinec@yahoo.co.uk 07871 923337
Deputy Branch Padre – Richard Cook: richardpaulinec@yahoo.co.uk 07871 923337
BCC – Peter Armstrong: rushden.bcc1@rbl.community 07498 243683
BCS & BCC – Paul McKay: rushden.bcc2@rbl.community or McKay.BCS@rbl.community 07305 837099
Poppy Appeal Organiser – Ruth Miller: poppyappealrushden@gmail.com
Deputy Poppy Appeal Organiser – Steve Miller: poppyappealrushden@gmail.com

* Position is vacant from 11th May 2026, however Paul wishes to remain on the Branch Committee.

** Position vacant from AGM on 16th November 2026.

SUCCESSION PLANNING – NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME. PLEASE CONTACT BRANCH SECRETARY OR SPEAK TO ANY OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS. See email sent to all members on 17th April.

RBL HELPLINE – 0808 802 8080 - CALL 8am to 8pm 7 DAYS A WEEK



TIME FOR A LAUGH – MILITARY STYLE

Courtesy of Branch Member Jim Doran who is the Chairman of the



SENIOR VETERANS CALL UP PLANS

Thinking about rejoining the military as a seasoned veteran? Well, dust off your medals and shine up those boots—because the call-up plans are in full swing! But before you start practicing your salute, let's take a light-hearted look at some of the unique challenges our experienced heroes might face on their way back to the barracks.

PARADES AND MARCHING ISSUES PLUS ZIMMER FRAME PROBLEMS

Of course, the biggest hurdle might not be the early mornings or the drills—it's making sure everyone's Zimmer frame is in formation and that the parade route has plenty of rest stops! And let's not forget the new marching pace: slow and steady wins the race. After all, experience counts for a lot, especially when it comes with a good sense of humour and a pocketful of hard-earned wisdom.

VETERANS' KIT

Zimmer Frames will probably require the latest fittings for rifle brackets, boots could be replaced with slippers, and some Veterans may be safer with Bows & Arrows or maybe Catapults.

The kit bag might be a tad heavier these days, filled as much with reading glasses and joint cream as with medals and a small stool; it's a long way down to the ground. And let's be honest, the most fiercely guarded Compo Rations to contain a secret stash of digestive biscuits rather than high-energy bars.

- "Rejoining the military? Great! Just remember, the only thing you'll be fighting is the urge to nap after lunch."
- "The only thing we're invading these days is the early breakfast at the local café."
- "Uniforms still fit—if you count elastic waistbands as regulation issue."
- "Marching orders now come with GPS, step counters, and a reminder to hydrate."
- "Saluting is encouraged, but high-fives are preferred (less risk of shoulder injury)."
- "If you hear 'Incoming!' it's probably just the dessert trolley."
- "Field exercises now include extensive research on the best local pubs and where to find the comfiest armchairs."
- "Camouflage works wonders—especially when blending in at the nearest garden centre café."
- So if the call-up ever comes, don't panic—After all, veterans don't get older—we just become *strategically experienced*.
- When you form up... nice and slowly... and remember: no rush, there's tea waiting at the end.
- If anyone says "stand easy," take it literally and lie down. There's tea waiting, biscuits have priority clearance and lights out is negotiable.

POSSIBLE RANKS FOR VETERANS:

- V - Veteran
- SV – Senior Veteran
- VSV - Very Senior Veteran
- SVRO – Senior Veteran Rifle Operative (requires eye test)
- SVT800 – Senior Veteran T80 Operative
- SVFPS60 – Senior Veteran FPS6 Operative (the last 2 may require Climbing Certificates – probably not a good idea)
- SVA – Senior Veteran Aircrew (requires suitable aircraft commensurate with age of SVA)



Pothole Olympics in Rushden

RECORD-BREAKING SUB CREW ARRIVES HOME



General Sir Gwyn Jenkins salutes the casing party, and they return from their record-breaking deployment.

After a record-breaking 205 days beneath the waves, the crew of a Vanguard-class submarine have finally returned to Faslane, greeted by waiting families after the longest unbroken patrol in the Royal Navy's deterrent history.

The deployment forms part of the UK's Continuous At Sea Deterrent, a mission running since 1969 that ensures at least one nuclear-armed submarine is always on patrol, hidden and ready.

Defence Secretary John Healey joined the First Sea Lord on the Clyde to welcome the crew home, describing the submariners as "the very best of Britain" after months of silent service.

With the current fleet set to be replaced by the next-generation Dreadnought-class submarine in the 2030s, this record patrol is a reminder of both the endurance demanded today and the evolution already underway beneath the surface.

VOLUNTEER CADET CORPS MAKES HISTORY TO ENACT ANCIENT TOWER OF LONDON CEREMONY

For the first time the Ceremony of the Constable's Dues at the Tower of London has been performed by the Volunteer Cadet Corps (VCC) to mark its 125th anniversary. The VCC, which first formed on 14 February 1901 and is part of the Royal Navy's Cadet Forces, is the first youth organisation to ever conduct the ceremony.

The ceremony traces its origins to the 14th century when the Constable of the Tower had the right to extract tolls from ships sailing past the Tower of London.

Veterans and People Minister Louise Sandher-Jones said it was wonderful to see the VCC make history, adding that they had some fantastic representatives and "the drill was spot on". She added "I think that's what's really great about the cadets the kids are fantastic, they do great stuff, it really brings together people from across all the generations. Joining the cadets really does change lives – truly they give you the confidence to know what you want to do. They can really show all the amazing opportunities that are out there; they give you skills, experiences that you won't get anywhere else."



Parade Commander Cadet WO1 Oliver, who's hoping to join the Royal Marines in September, said it was very special to be in such an historic location, taking part in such an important parade.

He said the ceremony was the culmination of much preparation, with "my parents forced me to be practising it each night".

"Then for the last few days, we've been at Woolwich Barracks practising every single day for a few hours."

He added: "So, that's doing my speech, giving the orders, just getting this parade absolutely pinpoint."

Although like the Sea Cadet Corps and Combined Cadet Force, the VCC is unique as it is only based at a limited number of naval establishments, where specialist logistical and training support can be provided.

The VCC is open to young people between the ages of nine and 18 and is managed and run by unpaid volunteer staff.

What is the Ceremony of the Constable's Dues?

During the Middle Ages, successive kings believed it was their right to demand tolls from vessels sailing up the Thames to the City.

Ships had to moor at Tower Wharf to unload a portion of their cargo for the Constable of the Tower of London, who was allowed to collect these tolls on the King's behalf.

In 1381 King Richard issued a grant that required every galley passing the Tower to present "two roundlets of wyne" (as spelt then) to the Constable.

Still today, whenever a Royal Naval vessel moors on the Wharf, the Captain must present the Constable with a barrel of wine – the 'Dues'.

The barrel is ceremoniously escorted into the Tower by the Yeoman Warders and presented to the Constable on Tower Green.

BUILDING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS: HOW BRANCH COMMUNITY COORDINATION SUPPORT CONNECTS VETERANS TO SERVICES by Paul McKay – Branch Community Supporter (BCS) and Branch Community Coordinator (BCC)

It often starts with a simple conversation. Many local councils, health organisations and community groups genuinely want to support veterans and their families, but they may not always know where the Armed Forces Community connects into their work. One of the most valuable things a branch or volunteer can do is start those conversations, introduce the Royal British Legion and other veteran organisations and help '**join the dots**' between services and the veteran community.

At a Glance

Location: Rushden, North Northamptonshire

Focus: Strengthening local partnerships to support the Armed Forces Community

Partners Engaged: North Northamptonshire Council, Integrated Care Northamptonshire, local civic leadership and Armed Forces charities

Outcome: Improved awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant, stronger referral pathways and better coordination between local services supporting veterans and their families.

Working with Local Government

In **December 2025**, representatives from Rushden RBL met with the **North Northamptonshire Council Stronger Communities Project team** to explore how statutory organisations and Armed Forces charities could work more closely together.

During the meeting, the Branch shared insight into the local Armed Forces community network, including strong local based organisations such as the **Royal Naval Association (RNA)**, **Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)** and the **Northants Breakfast Club**, which provide valuable camaraderie and peer support for serving and former Armed Forces personnel.

A key theme of the discussion was the **Armed Forces Covenant** and the importance of improving awareness across local services so that veterans and their families are recognised earlier and directed to the right support.

Joining the Dots Across Services

Building on this engagement, Rushden RBL was invited to participate in a **multi-agency community partnership session hosted by Integrated Care Northamptonshire**, bringing together organisations including community hubs, the Department for Work and Pensions, adult social care, health services and Northamptonshire Police.

At the session, Rushden RBL delivered a short engagement presentation titled '**Community Support – Joining the Dots.**'

The presentation explored how local welfare, wellbeing and community networks can connect more effectively under the **Armed Forces Covenant** to better identify and support members of the Armed Forces Community. The discussion helped raise awareness of the Royal British Legion's role and opened the door for further collaboration with several partner organisations.

Engaging Local Civic Leadership

More recently, the Branch also met with the **Mayor of Rushden**, recognising the important role civic leaders play as a gateway into local council and health networks.

Rushden forms part of the **East Northamptonshire Urban Local Area Partnership (LAP)**, covering Rushden, Higham Ferrers and surrounding rural communities. Engagement with local civic leadership helps ensure the Armed Forces Community is visible within wider discussions about community wellbeing, health outcomes and local support services.



Launch of SERVE Minibus: RBL Rushden Branch Committee, PAOs, PAM and CEO SERVE

Left to right: Paul McKay Branch Vice Chair and his wife Fiona, Sally Morton Committee Member, Janet Flowers Treasurer, Heather Phillip Committee Member, Ruth Miller Poppy Appeal Organiser and her husband Steve Miller Assistant PAO and Committee Member, Barbara Clark former PAO, David Hawker Branch President, Giles Coleman Poppy Appeal Manager, Lynne Baker Branch Secretary and her husband Jake Baker Branch Chair and Tony Gibbs CEO SERVE.

The Role of Branch Community Coordination and Support

These engagements demonstrate how the **Branch Community roles can extend beyond individual welfare cases into community partnership, awareness building and prevention.**

By developing relationships with councils, health partnerships and community organisations, branches can help ensure the Armed Forces community is included in wider discussions about health, wellbeing and social support. It also enables branches to identify emerging initiatives such as programmes tackling loneliness, financial resilience and bereavement support that may benefit veterans but might otherwise go unnoticed.

Ultimately, it is about **joining the dots between organisations so that veterans and their families receive the support they need within their communities.**

A Model for Local Engagement

While every community is different, the experience in Rushden demonstrates how local branches can play a proactive role in connecting the Armed Forces community with the wider support network around them. By engaging with councils, health partnerships, civic leaders and other Armed Forces charities, branches can help translate the principles of the **Armed Forces Covenant** into practical action at community level. This approach not only strengthens awareness of the Royal British Legion's work but also helps ensure that veterans and their families are better identified, supported and connected to services within their local communities.

Lessons for Other Volunteers

One of the most effective things any branch or volunteer group can do is simply start conversations with the organisations already working in their community (see SERVE Minibus Launch above). Local councils, health partnerships, charities and civic leaders often want to support veterans but may not always know where the Armed Forces community connects into their work. By introducing the Royal British Legion and maintaining regular dialogue with these organisations, branches can help improve awareness, coordination and support for veterans locally.

Sometimes the most important step in supporting veterans isn't creating a new service — it's simply connecting the ones that already exist.

RBL FESTIVAL OF REMEMBRANCE 2026 AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL - TICKETING

Following the announcement in the eNewsletter last month, the RBL are contacting you to provide further details about the ticketing process for the Festival of Remembrance 2026, which will take place on **Saturday 7th November 2026.**

Tickets will once again be allocated through a ballot to ensure all members have a fair chance to purchase tickets. **The ballot opens on Wednesday 27th May 2026 and closes on Wednesday 24th June 2026.**

The RBL have taken onboard our feedback from 2025 to improve the ticketing journey.

Overview of the process:

- Members will have **four weeks** to enter the ballot through an online platform. This is to ensure that as many members as possible have a chance to secure tickets.
- Members will have the option to enter the ballot for **either** the evening performance or the afternoon performance, **or both.**
- After the ballot closes, tickets will be allocated randomly by our ticketing agent. Members will then be able to purchase a **maximum of two tickets.**
- Unique links will be issued to successful entrants **one week before the booking site goes live** for each performance. Once the booking site is live, entrants will be

required to select their seats and will have 14 minutes to enter the details of themselves and a guest.

- Key dates and deadlines will be communicated in the Membership eNewsletter, Central News and Legion magazine to help members stay informed.

Key changes to the ballot in 2026:

- **The ballot will be open for an additional week**, giving members four weeks to enter the ballot for a chance to secure tickets. This is to provide members with more time to see our communications and enter the ballot.
- Members who have entered the ballot for both performances will be informed of the outcome for each performance. The RBL want their communications to be as clear as possible, so members are fully informed.
- **All ballot entrants will be informed of the outcome of their entry one week before the booking site goes live.** This allows members time to prepare the required information to purchase tickets.
- The booking site will go live for each performance on consecutive days, rather than one week apart.
- All successful ballot entrants will have **two weeks to purchase tickets** once the booking site goes live.

You will need the following information to enter the ballot when it opens:

- **Your RBL membership number** – this is the set of digits displayed above your name on your membership card (as shown below), you can also find this on your renewal letter. Your membership number contains only numbers. Please *do not* use your branch code (e.g. BRXXXX).



- **A valid email address** – ensure your registered email address is up to date, as all ballot communications will be sent via email. If you do not have your own email address, you can use one that belongs to someone else who has agreed to receive emails on your behalf e.g. a family member, trusted friend or neighbour.

Ballot rules:

- Each member is allowed to enter the ballot once.
- All entrants will be notified by email regarding the outcome of their entry.
- Unique links will be single-use and tickets must be purchased **within 14 days** of the date the booking site goes live.
- Other ballot rules can be found [here on our website](#).

Please find below the key dates for 2026:

- **Wednesday 27th May:** Ballot opens for both performances.
- **Wednesday 24th June:** Ballot closes for both performances.
- **Wednesday 8th July:** Evening ballot is drawn and entrants informed of the outcome.

- **Thursday 9th July:** Afternoon ballot is drawn and entrants informed of the outcome.
- **Wednesday 15th July:** Booking site for the evening performance goes live for successful entrants. Members have two weeks to purchase tickets.
- **Thursday 16th July:** Booking site goes live for the afternoon performance for successful entrants. Members have two weeks to purchase tickets.
- **Two weeks from the date the booking site goes live:** Payment deadline.
- **Wednesday 28th October:** Tickets posted out from this date.

All members are encouraged to review the process on the RBL website and keep an eye out for further updates, including the launch of the ballot in May 2026.

WITHDRAWAL OF THE BRITISH ARMY LANDROVER

About to begin is a phased withdrawal of the Land Rover after more than 70 years of service. The British Army's fleet of Land Rovers – a vehicle that entered military service back in 1949 – has begun to be phased out. The vehicle has been a cornerstone of military operations for more than 70 years, but all the Army's Land Rovers are expected to have left service by 2030. The Land Rover is widely regarded as being a simple and dependable workhorse and, as such, has been used for a range of duties, including patrol, command liaison and transportation of equipment and personnel.

A true icon



A commemorative event was held at the Armoured Fighting Vehicle School at Bovington to honour the legacy of the Land Rover and outline what the Army is looking for in its successor. Defence Readiness and Industry Minister Luke Pollard, who was at the event, said: "The Land Rover and British Army share an incredible history, and the image of a Landy in Army livery is truly iconic. "As we look ahead to the future of light mobility vehicles, it is fitting to pay tribute to this extraordinary fleet that has served our Armed Forces so faithfully. "I'm firing the starting gun on the replacement vehicle competition, seeking to put a modern vehicle in the hands of our personnel."

The Snatch Land Rover



As beloved and iconic as the vehicle may be, one variant, the Snatch Land Rover, made a name for itself for all the wrong reasons due to the way it was deployed in specific theatres. While it was designed for Northern Ireland, the vehicle found itself being used in both Iraq and Afghanistan, where its light armour offered little protection against roadside bombs and IEDs. Between July 2004 and July 2006, almost half of the UK's fatalities from hostile action, 20 of the 44 deaths, were personnel travelling in Snatch Land Rovers. The vehicle was eventually replaced by the Foxhound in Afghanistan, which offered superior protection.

The Specials



Over the decades, several bespoke Land Rover models were developed for military use. These include:

- Series IIA Ambulance – designed to carry four stretchers and a medic.
- Series IIA Pink Panther – designed for use in the desert by the Special Air Service; it was used for special operation missions and long-distance reconnaissance.
- Amphibious SIIA 109" – a prototype of a vehicle that could be used for sea landings.
- V8 Centaur Multi-Role Half-Track – created with track links taken from the CVR(T) Scorpion light tank; it represented an attempt to merge road vehicle with a tank.



The Light Mobility Vehicle Programme

In addition to the Land Rover, the Army also operates the Pinzgauer, another highly versatile vehicle that's used in a number of roles such as a tractor for the L118 Light Gun. The Army is now looking to equip its personnel with a modern, technologically advanced fleet to support future operations. Both the Land Rover and Pinzgauer will be replaced under the Light Mobility Vehicle programme. The LMV programme has not yet been formally launched but will offer opportunities to British based businesses through vehicle support and maintenance.

RBL HELPLINE – 0808 802 8080 - CALL 8am to 8pm 7 DAYS A WEEK

THINGS HAPPENING NEAR YOU – Note 2nd Poster – 14th May is still on.



Hatton Hall
COFFEE MORNINGS
 FOR ARMED FORCES VETERANS
 & BLUE LIGHT SERVICES

 Join us for a relaxed morning of chat, tea, biscuits!

 **Hatton Hall Lounge**
 Hatton Avenue,
 Wellingborough
 NN8 5AP

The first Monday
 of the month
 at 9:30am

All veterans and blue light service members welcome.
 Got ideas for guest speakers or activities? Let us know!

Contact: 07483 196566
 northplacedevelopment@northnorthants.gov.uk



Help shape arts and culture in Wellingborough

 Have your say on the next three years of the Made With Many programme by joining a Community Gathering

Saturday 18th April | 1pm – 3pm (Doors open 12:30pm)
 WACA, Rock Street, Wellingborough NN8 4LW

Thursday 14th May | 6pm – 8pm (Doors open: 5:30pm)
 Wellingborough Museum, 12 Castle Way NN8 1XB

Each session will include a FREE artist-led creative activity

Light refreshments will be available. Community Gatherings are primarily aimed at adults. Children are welcome if supervised throughout the event.

 Visit: www.madewithmany.org/whats-on
 Or scan the QR for more info

  

CALLING ALL FORMER & CURRENT ARMED FORCES & EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSONNEL



 **MODELS FOR HEROES**

MODEL MAKING

Waitrose, Crown Park
 Rushden, Northamptonshire
 NN10 6AR

13:00 - 16:00
 Every Thursday




MODELLING AND PAINTING PROMOTES POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING. GRAB A MODEL KIT OR BRING YOUR OWN.

m4hnorthants@gmail.com

Providing THERAPEUTIC activity for our Armed Forces & Emergency Service Personnel recovery organisations.



WITH YOUR HELP

The model making hobby promotes Focus, Confidence, Motor Skill, Behavioral Activation & MANY more positive mental health benefits.



 **MODELS FOR HEROES**

 **ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

  modelsforheroes.org.uk  Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

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THE FORCER PROTOCOL

Recently at the April Branch Meeting we were most fortunate to receive a brief spiel from PC James Sykes who is a Royal Navy veteran and Police Staff Supporter Lorraine Wickham about the Northamptonshire Police project where they are encouraging military veterans and their families to sign up to a potentially life-saving safeguarding scheme called **The Forcer Protocol**.

The Forcer Protocol was founded by Claire Lilly and is named after her former husband Lance Corporal Alan Forcer, a veteran who suffered with depression and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) following service in Kosovo and Northern Ireland. Tragically he died by suicide in 2020 after going missing. The Forcer Protocol enables police to ensure key information is available to them when searching for military veterans who are lost or reported missing. The service is free and run independently from police with the provider Safe and Found Online.

Veterans, their families and carers can complete an online form and provide a variety of information which is held digitally on a secure platform, including photographs, a physical description, any medical conditions, mobile phone numbers of the veteran and friends, vehicle details, whether they have gone missing before, and whether they pose a risk to themselves. The information, entered into the personal profile is completely confidential. Police can only access the profile, if the person featured is reported missing.

THE FORCER PROTOCOL
"WHEN THE GUNS GO SILENT, THAT'S WHEN THE BATTLE BEGINS"

Supporting Military Veterans

OP NOVA REFERRALS FORCER PROTOCOL

ARMED FORCES COVENANT
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE
NPCC
OpNOVA

THE FORCER PROTOCOL
"WHEN THE GUNS GO SILENT, THAT'S WHEN THE BATTLE BEGINS"

The Forcer Protocol is a form designed in consultation with the police and other specialist support organisations to ensure key information is available to the police when they are searching for people who are lost or have gone missing. It is being rolled out as national initiative with all UK police forces.

We have created a digital solution meaning in a missing person emergency, where every second can count, the police will have direct and instant access to potentially life-saving information. This is something completely new and unique to Safe and Found Online. The police only want, and we will only give them access to the profile you've create if the person featured is reported as missing.

The Forcer Protocol is a tool used by the Police to ensure key information is available to them when they are searching for service veterans who are lost or have gone missing. It is named after Alan Forcer who suffered with complex PTSD and debilitating depression following service in Northern Ireland & Kosovo during the height of the conflicts, subsequently taking his own life.

Service veterans, their informal and professional carers, family members and friends can complete a form which records vital information in relation to the veteran in case they go missing.

safeandfoundonline.co.uk

ARMED FORCES COVENANT
SAFE AND FOUND ONLINE
THE FORCER PROTOCOL
NHS
NPCC
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE

0300 323 0137 Mental Health Matters Helpline - Midlands & East Veterans Service

RBL WELFARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

DO YOU NEED ANY HELP, OR DO YOU KNOW A VETERAN OR RBL MEMBER WHO NEEDS ELP? IF SO, PLEASE CALL OUR BRANCH COMMUNITY SUPPORTER, PAUL MCKAY AT 07305 837099 OR VIA EMAIL (SEE THE WHO'S WHO SECTION OF THIS NEWSLETTER). YOU CAN ALSO CONTACT THE BRANCH COMMUNITY COORDINATOR, PETER ARMSTRONG ON 07498 243683. HIS EMAIL ADDRESS IS ALSO AT WHO'S WHO? REMEMBER, THE RBL IS HERE FOR YOU. IF THEY CAN'T HELP, THEY'LL GET YOU HELP. PLEASE BEAR IN MIND THAT EVERY SITUATION IS DIFFERENT.

0800 448 0828 Northamptonshire Helpline for Veterans 24/7

REQUEST FOR DONATIONS FOR BOTTLE TOMBOLAS

The Branch is very successful in fundraising events and especially in our Bottle Tombolas. It is intended to hold Bottle Tombolas at both the Party in the Park and the Rushden Classic Car Show. We are looking to building up a supply of bottle and jar goods, any bottled goods such as coffee, in date food produce, soft and alcoholic drinks, toiletries such as gels, shampoo, etc but not cleaning materials or detergents. Please bring your donations to any Committee Member or contact any Committee Member for collection arrangements. **Note:** Raffle Prizes are also always welcome at our monthly meetings too.

TRIPLE-AMPUTEE VETERAN WANTS TO SHOW WHAT'S POSSIBLE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE AFTER FINISHING THE 2026 LONDON MARATHON



Former soldier Andy Reid became the first triple amputee to complete the London Marathon
(Pictures: Army Benevolent Fund)

An Army veteran who lost three limbs in Afghanistan hopes completing the London Marathon can show what disabled people are capable of.

Andy Reid – who lost both legs and one of his arms in an IED incident in 2009 – completed the race in just over 12-and-a-half hours. The father of two was left with life-changing injuries after the incident in Helmand Province.

He was in the Yorkshire Regiment and seven members of his unit died during the same tour, so he wanted to show that his disability was no obstacle on a very special year for him. Andy said: "It's good to show the disabled people, injured guys, what can be achieved with the right mindset and the right support network around you. "So, absolutely amazing to be able to do it. "It was hard work, obviously, and the tiredness has just kicked in in the last half now, to be honest, but a great achievement."

The former soldier was one of nearly 60,000 runners who participated in the race from Blackheath and Greenwich before finishing at The Mall 26.2 miles later, but there was one point that was particularly poignant for him. Andy said: "We managed to stop at Mile 25 with the Iraq and Afghan Memorial. "So, we stopped there and had a quick minute's silence and said a few words. "And it just reflects on why we are doing this."

He was raising money for the Army Benevolent Fund, which helped him during his recovery, as well as the Standing Tall Foundation – a cause Andy set up with his friend, John Tabern – which provides mental health counselling, addiction, housing and welfare support to veterans and communities in his hometown of St Helens.

Andy stopped at mile 25 at the memorial to those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He added: "I'm 50 this year, and so [this is] one of them bucket list items, I think, that most people want to try and do, having been in the military and being fit and active, is maybe something I would have done if I'd not been injured once I left the military. "So, I think to be able to do things that you would have done if you'd not been injured and then to be able to do things beyond injury, I think it's just absolutely fantastic."

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