



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION BANWELL

Patron: His Majesty The King

Newsletter – August 2025



Chair's Foreword

Welcome to the August 25 edition of your Branch Newsletter. I trust you are all enjoying the summer and are managing to remain cool in the heatwave. Thankfully we have had a drop of rain – but I wonder whether it is enough to turn the grass back to green!

I was more than a little disappointed that very few people turned out to our last meeting when we had our new County Chair attend to give a talk as well as presenting both Brian and Dennis (finally) Certificates of Appreciation for their loyal service to the Royal British Legion. Later in the newsletter you will see a precis of what the County

Chair had to say.

Since our last newsletter I have attended both the Women's Institute and Banwell Primary School events. Both were well attended and whilst we had nothing to "sell" I attended in the hope of raising awareness of our existence.

It is with regret that we had to cancel our plans to commemorate VE/VJ with a BBQ as no-one stepped forward to help with the organisation. However I would like to thank both Liz Cran - for the offer of her BBQs and Carmino for offering to source and prepare the food.

We continue to look for a Branch Community Officer to act as the key link between this Branch and Banwell Community to help promote the Branch and its activities and

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encourage new members. Do you know of anyone who would like to undertake this role? – they will be supported by both the Committee and County. Please let me know.

The County are finalising their 3-year Action Plan and once this has been released, I will look to produce and share our Branch 3-year Action Plan.

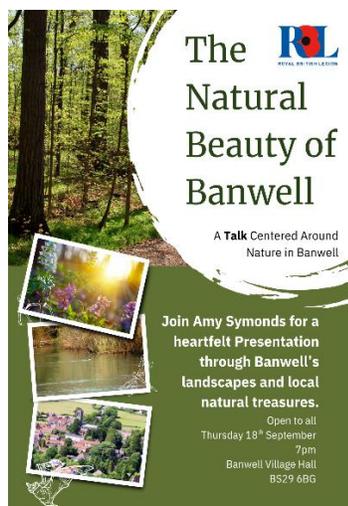
I look forward to seeing as many of you that are able to attend our future events – more about these from Gill later and I will discuss with your committee the future of our Branch meetings and how we can attract attendance and new members.

Penny Mottram

Chair

From the Secretary

I am going to keep my section short this time as there are a number of articles for the August newsletter. I shall stick to future events the first of which is the 18 September, and the poster says it all.



I shall send out a copy of the poster nearer the date and ask members to put it up in strategic places that would be noticed. I think Amy has done a superb poster.

Then there is the AGM on 16 October and lastly a November branch meeting on 20 November when hopefully we can have a more light hearted informal meeting. But don't forget the **DINNER** on 18 October at Puxton. This will be the first time at Puxton so let's make it a good evening.

Next year there will be some changes to the programme. The Committee is still working on them, and I'll get the final programme out in the Autumn in the November newsletter. Ideas and options are still being discussed so any feedback or suggestions would be very welcome.

Before I finish there are two further points of info I would bring to your attention. Chris Hynes's son is running in the Great North Run next month and he is raising money for the RBL. I know some members have already sponsored him, but this is a reminder that sponsorship is still available – so if you have not already done so - Chris Hynes can be contacted on hynes74@yahoo.co.uk or on **0774696960**.

Please note the Somerset Chairman's comment later in the newsletter with regard to the Banwell & Winscombe Family Practice. I hope that all veteran members registered

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with their GP Practice have made it known that they have served with the Armed Forces.

Gill Fawcitt
Secretary

From the Membership Secretary

Due to low membership numbers (which now stand at 45) and costs to keep the branch going it was proposed, seconded and carried forward that Branch subs would increase to £10 per year. This will be on top of the main subscription – due to increase at the next collection to £22.00. The net effect being that from your next annual collection the total amount will be £32.

Penny Mottram
Membership Secretary

From the Chaplain to the Royal British Legion, Banwell, Rev'd Andrew Bell

At the last Branch Meeting I was asked by the Chair to write a few words of introduction as I'm still relatively new to you all, so here goes.

Born in Sheffield, most of my early years were spent in Norwich where I attended the City Grammar School. On leaving school, I trained in Accountancy before moving to the Norfolk Market town of Attleborough to work as Financial Administrator at a family-owned garage complex in the town centre.

While at Attleborough I felt the call to become a Local Preacher within the Methodist Church to which I belonged and later responded to a call to Ordained Ministry.

Having trained at Wesley House Theological College in Cambridge I was sent to serve in my first five-year appointment at Reeth in Swaledale, North Yorkshire. From Reeth I was sent to the Colchester Circuit in North Essex before becoming Superintendent Minister of the newly-formed Tendring Circuit on the Harwich Peninsula.

After nearly thirty years of ministry I took early retirement and went to live in the lovely Georgian market town of Stamford in Lincolnshire, thinking that was to be my final move. I've since discovered that there's no such thing as retirement in God's Kingdom and I now find myself in Somerset, serving in five churches in and around Banwell.

I hope to meet with you all in due course, but in the meantime if you find yourself in need of pastoral care or Spiritual direction, please feel free to contact me at Churchill Manse. My contact details are held by the Membership Secretary.

Yours in His service, and with every blessing.

Andrew
Chaplain, RBL Banwell

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Award of Long Service Certificates

Congratulations and our thanks from the Branch to Brian Godden and Dennis Cruze.

Message from the County Chair

For those I haven't met before, I'm Michael Allison, County Chairman for Somerset. I'd like to take a few minutes to update you on what's happening in the wider Legion world, including some good news closer to home.

The Royal British Legion is more than just a charity—it's a family. A family built on our core values: **Service, Loyalty, Integrity, and Compassion**. Whether it's providing welfare support, offering comradeship, or upholding remembrance for future generations, these values guide everything we do.

They remind us that behind every headline or statistic is a real person—veteran, carer, widow, or a serving soldier—who deserves our support and respect.

The Armed Forces Covenant – National Commitment, Local Action

A key part of our mission is ensuring the Armed Forces Covenant is more than just a promise—it must lead to practical results. Thanks to the 2021 Armed Forces Act, public bodies like councils, NHS trusts, and schools now have a legal duty to consider the needs of veterans and their families when making decisions.

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- The government is continuing to strengthen this commitment. This year we've seen:
- The extension of the legal duty to central government departments.
- The launch of Valour, a new £50 million national support service for veterans and families.
- New funding for community projects, including support for servicewomen, suicide prevention, and mental health.
- Updated statutory guidance to help public bodies apply the Covenant in housing, healthcare, and education.

Here in Somerset, we're already seeing the Covenant in action.

The Winscombe & Banwell Family Practice is fully accredited as a veteran-friendly GP surgery. That means veterans registering there are identified, supported by a trained clinical lead, and can access priority care where appropriate. It's a clear example of how local services can make a real difference.

Many town and Parish Councils across the country have now done so. It's a straightforward but meaningful gesture of support for the Armed Forces community.

Local Support – Outreach and Touchpoints

The Royal British Legion works closely with local partners to ensure help is accessible across Somerset. Two key services are:

- The Armed Forces Outreach Service, helping veterans and families access housing, employment, mental health support, and advice.
- And the RBL Touchpoints, now available in Bridgwater, Weston-Super-Mare, Wells, and Yeovil—offering walk-in welfare support, signposting, and a friendly face.

If you know of someone in the community who could benefit, do encourage them to make use of these services—or better still, bring them along to a branch event. Sometimes, it just starts with a conversation.

Affiliations and Forces Connections

We're continuing to strengthen our links with the serving Armed Forces. Our affiliation with HMS Somerset has been formalised. Although changes in their operational programme have limited visits for the time being, the connection is in place and appreciated.

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Meanwhile, we are actively pursuing a new affiliation with HMS Heron (RNAS Yeovilton), and we're optimistic about what it could offer in terms of shared events and community engagement.

Remembrance – Still at the Heart of What We Do

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII, and Somerset is marking this historic milestone with a major county-wide event:

- Somerset Remembers – The Somerset Festival of Remembrance, to be held at Wells Cathedral on 1 November. We are planning to welcome up to 1,000 attendees, and I'm pleased to say we've already raised more than £8,000 in sponsorship. It promises to be a deeply moving and unifying occasion.

Earlier this year, the Cheddar Valley Festival of Remembrance, featuring the HMS Heron Royal Navy Volunteer Band and Cheddar Male Choir, was another example of remembrance at its best.

We also continue to support Somerset Wood, a living memorial near Taunton, which offers a space for peace, reflection, and education.

What Banwell Can Do

You already play a valued role here in the local community. But there are simple ways to build on that:

- Spread the word about local services like the GP surgery and the Touchpoints;
- Signpost veterans or families—even those who may not yet realise they qualify for help;
- Encourage Banwell Parish Council to consider signing the Covenant;
- And above all, keep offering a warm welcome—sometimes that's the most powerful act of support we can give.
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In Closing

Banwell Branch is an important part of the Legion family in Somerset. Your dedication to remembrance, support, and fellowship is appreciated more than you know—both by those you serve and by those of us working alongside you.

Thank you for all you do. And please don't hesitate to get in touch if I or the County team can be of any help.

We will remember them.

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Victoria Cross Presentation



Paul Harding has written to the Secretary advising that Mark Smith from the Antiques Roadshow is doing a talk about the Victoria Cross on Monday 20th October 19.30hrs at the Weston Playhouse.

<https://www.parkwoodtheatres.co.uk/playhouse-theatre/whats-on/mark-smith-for-valour---the-story-of-the-victoria-cross>

If anyone is interested then he has offered a lift to the event, you can contact him at hardingpj@hotmail.com.

Poppy Collection 2024

Income raised by our district between 1st October 2024 - 31 March 2025

Total income raised through your district QR code donations	£6
Total income raised through contactless terminal fundraising	£2199.21
Total income raised through supermarket donations who bank the money directly with us (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and ASDA)	£3542.05
Total of all other fundraising income not included in above breakdowns**	£594.84
Overall Total Poppy Appeal Income 1st October 2024- 31 March 2025	£6342.1

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Somerset Festival of Remembrance 2025

Join us for a powerful and moving evening of commemoration as Wells Cathedral hosts the Somerset Festival of Remembrance 2025, a one-off event marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. This is likely to be one of the very last occasions on which veterans who took part might be present. Organised by Somerset County Royal British Legion, this unique occasion will honour the courage, resilience, and sacrifice of Somerset's people at home and abroad during World War II. The evening will feature music, stories, and ceremony, including performances by the Central Band of the Royal British Legion and the Yeovilton Military Wives Choir, contributions from the County's cadet forces and tributes from veterans and civic leaders. Highlights include parading the Somerset Book of Honour, an Act of Remembrance with poppy drop, and a multi-themed programme tracing Somerset's wartime experience from mobilisation to liberation and legacy. The evening will be compered by former BBC broadcasters Clinton Rogers DL and Ali Vowles DL. This is a community-centred and inclusive event, both solemn and uplifting, and open to all. Early booking is advised. All proceeds support the Royal British Legion and Wells Cathedral.

Tickets are now available via the following Eventbrite link:

<https://somerset-festival-of-remembrance-2025.eventbrite.co.uk/>

Contact Us

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Dates for 2025

	Branch Meeting	AGM	Committee Meeting	Comments
15 August				80th Anniversary of VJ Day
18 September				Speaker see poster
16 October		RBL AGM		
18 October				RBL Dinner
9 November				Remembrance Sunday
11 November				Remembrance Day
20 November	Informal			Informal Fun Evening

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