

October 2023

Membership Council

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ROYAL BRITISH LEGION



Foreword

Dear Fellow Members,

I am delighted to present to you this booklet, in which you will find details of those you have elected as your Membership Council Representatives. Just like you, they have committed their time, skills and efforts to supporting your formations in delivering the Legion's mission.

Alongside other RBL departments and teams, the Membership Council continues to focus on investing in the future of Membership under our One Legion Strategy, in accordance with our delegated authority from the Board of Trustees. Our focus being that as a community and network, we can continue to promote best practice, take the learning from the past and continuously strive to better the lives of our beneficiaries and members alike in the future.

As Legion people, our values are so important! I am proud to be a member of a charity where values are fundamental to all we do. They ground our decision making and root our actions to the charity's purpose. They matter to us, and they also matter to the public – even if they don't always think about them. I see our values in practice every day being acted out by our members, branches, counties, districts, and staff in their daily delivery of the RBL's objectives.

Membership is at the heart of both the Legion and the Poppy Appeal. The Poppy Appeal is one of the largest contributors to support the vital work of our charity in helping our Armed Forces community.

Today, 1,188 members currently volunteer as Poppy Appeal Organisers and last year thanks to their efforts, they helped raise a staggering £19.1m of the overall £47m collected. This, along with the many members who collect for the Poppy Appeal during Remembrancetide and throughout the whole year, is an incredible achievement and one to be truly proud of.

At Annual Conference 2024, we look forward to celebrating examples of Membership success through our Membership Awards. Alongside this booklet you will also have received the 2023 October Special Circular, which includes the Annual Membership Awards nomination forms. I hope that you will take time to put forward those whose work you believe is deserving of recognition through the various award categories.

Yours,

John Boisson

Chair of the Membership Council



The Membership Council

Composition of all elected members of the Membership Council is applicable from the conclusion of Annual Conference.

John Boisson

Membership Council Chair

JBoisson@britishlegion.org.uk

John joined the Membership Council in February 2019, which he has chaired since May 2022 when he was elected to the Board of Trustees. He is currently serving in the Army and has, so far, completed 37 years' Service in the Guards Division. During that period, he has been on numerous operation tours in all the main theatres of operation that the Army has been involved in. Since joining the RBL, John has taken up active roles as Branch Secretary, Principal County Recruiting Officer and County Chairman. When he held the position of Membership Council Representative for East Anglia, he also chaired the BCS Working Group and was the Membership Training Officer. He is passionate about growing the RBL's mission as extensively as possible through supporting counties and branches to work actively in their local communities for the benefit of their Armed Forces people.



Patsy Wilkinson

Membership Council Vice Chair

PWilkinson1@britishlegion.org.uk

Patsy is Vice Chair of the Membership Council. She was appointed to the RBL Board of Trustees in December 2021 and became an RBL member soon after. Before that she had a long career in the UK government, where she worked mainly on national security and defence issues and served on many senior boards. In her last role she collaborated with RBL on Remembrance activities and co-sponsored RBL fundraising. Patsy is also a trustee of the National Memorial Arboretum and a member of the Legion Nominations and Governance Committee.



Bob Chambers

Overseas

BChambers@britishlegion.org.uk

Bob joined the Membership Council in 2017 as the Overseas Representative and is presently on the sub-committee of the Ceremonial Working Group and the Annual Membership Awards Committee. He is also the Chair of the Overseas Working Group.

Bob served in the Royal Navy and saw action in the Falklands on HMS Sheffield. On leaving in 1992, he settled in Belgium and joined the Royal British Legion Antwerp Branch where he was involved in all aspects of the branch, becoming Chairman in 1994.

In 2015 he was appointed Hon. President. He worked first at the Embassy in Brussels and later as a Classification Surveyor based in Antwerp, travelling extensively in Europe, Africa, Russia and South America, retiring from full-time employment in 2014. He understands the difficulties that Overseas Branches face and is passionate about helping them achieve their full potential within RBL.



National Branches

The National Branches Membership Council Representative position is currently gapped after David Street's sudden passing.

As a temporary arrangement, Patsy Wilkinson the Membership Council Vice Chair is acting as the point of contact link between the Membership Council and the National Branches.



Emma Cox

Women's Section
ECox@britishlegion.org.uk

Emma joined the Royal British Legion in 1985, having grown up in a Forces family and moving to various postings in the UK and overseas. She was Secretary, then Chairman for the Branscombe Branch, working closely with the local and county Women's Section in Devon, joining the Women's Section before being co-opted onto the County Committee as the Women's Section representative.

Elected to the Membership Council in 2017, Emma has ensured members' voices are heard whilst, at the same time, seeking to find ways for our wonderful charity to continue its vital support for our beneficiaries in the community. Emma sits on various committees through the Membership Council, including the Future Thinking of Membership and Branch Compliance Board. As Chairman of the Branch Finance Group, working with Membership, Finance and Audit, Emma's focus is on how we can find ways to improve compliance whilst also reducing the administrative burden for members. Emma is a senior manager in the public sector with experience in a variety of roles from specialist auditing of large corporates, working with senior officials in Whitehall, project management and being responsible for national teams.

Marc Reynolds

Northumbria
MReynolds@britishlegion.org.uk

Marc was co-opted onto the Membership Council in January 2023 and remains in the County Chairman and County Training Officer roles for Northumbria. He left the Army in September 2022, having completed 35 years' Regular and Reserve Service with the last two years working at Army HQ.

Since joining the RBL, Marc has taken up active roles as Conference Delegate, Standard Bearer, County Vice Chairman and County Chairman. He is also currently covering the vacant County Training Officer role. Given a broom Marc has been known to sweep the floor. Outside of RBL work, Marc runs his own training company teaching children in schools Bikeability, a scheme otherwise known as the Cycle Proficiency Test. Additionally he runs first aid training, teambuilding, paddle sports, rock climbing and bushcraft for anyone from age four to 104.



Gerry Nunn

Dorset, Hampshire, Wiltshire and IOW
GNunn@britishlegion.org.uk

Gerry served 24 years in the Royal Navy before working as an electronic engineer in the oil exploration industry. On moving to Dorset, he assisted the local branch with the Poppy Appeal, eventually becoming the PAO. Later he served on the Branch Committee as Vice Chairman and Chairman and was co-opted onto Dorset County Committee as Vice Chairman and later as Chairman.

Having joined the Membership Council in 2018, Gerry has continued to support and encourage branch and club to develop closer relationships. To promote this at national level, Gerry is working closely with the Regional Club Relationship Managers and the Commercial Department.



Dilys Hooper

Cheshire and Merseyside
DHooper@britishlegion.org.uk

Dilys was co-opted onto the Membership Council for Cheshire, West Lancashire and Merseyside in late summer 2015 for a period of three years. She was elected in 2019 for a further three years and, in 2022, was re-elected for another three-year term. Dilys has been an active member for over 50 years. She started by being involved with the Poppy Appeal.

After moving to South Wales in 1971, she joined a local branch and continued with the Poppy Appeal. In spring 1995, she moved back to Cheshire joining a new local branch where she continued with the Poppy Appeal. In 1996, she was invited to join Cheshire County as Principal County Recruiting Officer, a post that she held for three years before moving on to County Training Officer for 15 years, until elected County Vice Chairman in 2015. This was for a short period due to being given the opportunity to be co-opted onto the Membership Council.





Adrian Wright

South West Midlands
AWright@britishlegion.org.uk

Adrian was elected to the Membership Council in May 2023 to represent the South West Midlands region of Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and Gloucestershire.

Previously, Adrian had been the Worcestershire County Chair, a post he held for two years, having taken over during Covid; before that, serving as the County Vice Chair for over five years whilst also being the County Training Officer since 2017. Having served with the Royal Engineers, Adrian also has first-hand experience of being a beneficiary, with the RBL helping him to get back on his feet, which has fuelled his passion for the work we do here at the Legion. He is dedicated to helping other beneficiaries and their journey, developing our branches and counties, and fulfilling his commitment to the RBL.

Kenneth Rowbottom

East Anglia and Essex
KRowbottom@britishlegion.org.uk

Ken served in the Army for 21 years including six years' service with The Brigade of Gurkhas in Hong Kong and Brunei. He left the Army in 1986 and then worked for two years with a leading firm of chartered accountants in the City of London. He then applied to join the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and was accepted as a Queen's Messenger, travelling with and escorting classified and non-classified diplomatic bags worldwide to United Kingdom Diplomatic Missions.

He served for 22 years with the FCO and finally retired from full-time employment in March 2011. He joined his village branch of the Royal British Legion in 1998 whilst he was working but was unable to carry out any committee appointments due to his constant travelling on duty.

On retirement, he was appointed to the Suffolk RBL County Committee and in 2014 became the County Vice Chairman, an appointment that he held for three years before being elected County Chairman for Suffolk in 2018. He steered the county through the Covid pandemic and was reappointed County Chairman for a further three years. He was co-opted onto the Membership Council in May 2023.



Kenneth Terry

Wales

KTerry@britishlegion.org.uk

Kenneth served in the Royal Air Force for 18 years. He joined his local RBL branch in 1978 and has held all branch officer positions in addition to several county positions. When his county joined with several other counties to form South East Wales District, Kenneth was elected Vice Chairman and later became Treasurer. He has served on the committee of several organisations, including Wales Festival of Remembrance, Wales Garden of Remembrance, Armed Forces Day and several Remembrance Day Parades, also acting as parade marshal.

Kenneth is an enthusiastic “poppy collector” and has worked to promote RBL’s comradeship and welfare work for 40 years. Kenneth was elected to the Membership Council in 2019 to represent the members of Wales.



Kelly Slark

South East/Greater London

KSlark@britishlegion.org.uk

Kelly works for the NHS in a local GP practice and is the Practice Veteran Champion. Previously employed with a large insurance company in various departments, Kelly is qualified to Financial Planning Certificate Level 3. She left the industry whilst employed within the audit department.

Kelly was co-opted onto the Membership Council in September 2019 and successfully elected to represent the South East and Greater London District from Annual Conference 2021. A member of the Royal British Legion since 2001, she was Sussex County Vice Chairman for six years and County Treasurer for 13 years. She has been Brighton PAO since 2007. Awarded National Life Membership in 2018, she serves on the Finance and Compliance and Clubs Working Groups, is Chairman of the County Grants Committee and co-Chair of the BCS Working Group

She is keen to actively encourage younger members and ensure that the outstanding work of the RBL and its membership continues within all communities.





Michael Challinor

West Midlands

MChallinor@britishlegion.org.uk

Michael has been a Royal British Legion member for many years. His family also had a long association with the RBL from its early days. On leaving school, he trained as a teacher and became involved with teaching and training for nearly 40 years. He moved through 'the ranks' from being a branch member to becoming County Vice Chair of Wiltshire County, holding various posts while a County Committee member – especially connected with the various events, including the County Conference. He retired from that post in 2019 as he and his wife moved to north Shropshire for family reasons. Since becoming a member of the Membership Council, he has been a member of the Membership Awards group, the Legion Complaints Committee and the County Grants group. Since June 2022, he has been the Chair of the Training Working group. In September, he became the new Chair of the Membership Awards Committee.

Philip Walden

East Midlands

PWalden@britishlegion.org.uk

Philip has been a member of the Royal British Legion since the early 1980s. He served with the Royal Air Force Regiment; Units that he served in were involved in active service in Northern Ireland and the Falklands conflict. Philip's first active officer role within the RBL was as a Branch Vice Chairman in 2008, progressing to Branch Chairman in 2010. In 2018, he was voted in as Leicestershire County Vice Chairman and, after a few months in post, was co-opted to County Chairman. In 2021, Philip was elected to the Membership Council. He has had a varied and successful business career working for the David S Smith packaging group and becoming the European Works Council representative (plastics division). In conjunction with employment with the D S Smith group, he also completed 12 years' service with the Graphical Print Municipal Union, specialising in health and safety risk management and general employment law, including European law. He formed his own transport business, which he ran until 2015. Philip is also a town councillor and has chaired the local borough council Housing Management Advisory Board for three years, which has included representing social housing tenants at local cabinet meetings. Philip is also a Trustee of a Military Memorial Homes Trust.



Bob Howard

Manchester/Lancashire
RHoward@britishlegion.org.uk

Bob became an active member of the Royal British Legion in 2017. He was first co-opted and then elected to his local branch committee in 2017. He then joined the Lancashire County Committee. Bob was elected to the Membership Council and took up his post in May 2020. At his branch, he has helped the Poppy Appeal Organiser with organising and setting up poppy appeal stands and collecting and counting the proceeds.

Bob is qualified to Cert Ed and BEng (Hons) degree level. Prior to retirement, for 18 years in the UK and Middle East, he was employed as a college/university lecturer delivering educational courses on aeronautical engineering. Prior to this, Bob served from 1974 until 2000 as a systems technician with The Royal Air Force, working on everything from older turbo prop aircraft to modern fast jets and as engine bay support for our helicopter fleet.



Steve Lewis

Cornwall/Devon/Somerset
SLewis@britishlegion.org.uk

Steve joined the Royal Navy in June 1981 and served for 23 years until being medically discharged in 2004.

After utilising the Royal British Legion's services, he immediately joined the RBL in 2007 becoming the youngest Branch Chairman soon after. He has also served as a Welfare Officer and CRO, as County Vice Chairman for two years, and as County Chairman of Cornwall for just under seven years. He has been the PAO in HMS Raleigh for the last 13 years and is well known by many (especially the Executive Board) for his casual appearance.

Since joining RBL, he has been passionate and proactive about its services and support and continues to push the need for youth affiliation through schools and cadet forces. He brings with him branch and county experience plus a little bit of common sense. Steve was elected to the Membership Council in May 2021 and is a member of the RBL Complaints and Centenary Awards Committees. He is keen to be easily accessible to all his constituents.





Albert Bell

Northern Ireland
ABell@britishlegion.org.uk

Albert served with the Royal Irish Rangers Territorial Army for 10 years and 34 years in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He joined the Legion in 1982, becoming the Standard Bearer of the Omagh Branch.

Following attendance at Annual Conference, Albert gained a keen interest in the Legion, taking up further roles as Branch Secretary, Branch Vice-Chairman, Chairman and President. He has also contributed to the work of the Legion as a case worker. Albert joined the Northern Ireland District Committee in 2016 and is currently a member of the Fintona Branch. In his spare time he likes to spend time with his granddaughter and enjoys gardening.

Hugh Ashton-Moore

South East Midlands
HAshtonMoore@britishlegion.org.uk

Hugh joined the RBL in 1992. He served for 23 years in the Army with the RCT and REME, and on retirement held the rank of S/Sgt Acting WO2. Hugh worked as a site security manager for two years until 1994, then joined the Royal Household at Windsor Castle as one of four Head Wardens responsible for all aspects of castle security during public access openings, also taking part in formal royal events and private events. He stood down from that post in late 2002.

From 2003, he worked as a department manager for Sainsbury's, taking early retirement in 2008. Since joining, Hugh has held many posts in the RBL; County Secretary, County Vice Chairman, County Chairman, County Training Officer, Branch Treasurer, Poppy Appeal Organiser and BCS Rep. He has also taken most of the RBL courses; County Conference, County Management, Independent Examiner, Qualified Panel Member and Panel Chair, County Training Officer (Train the Trainer) and County Youth Officer. Hugh has been awarded both his Gold Badge and National Life Membership of the RBL. He is very keen to involve youth at every level of membership and actively promotes the RBL to youth groups and cadet forces in his county and area.



Gordon Barker

Yorkshire

GBarker1@britishlegion.org.uk

Gordon served in the Royal Air Force for 34 years, serving in Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Macedonia, Germany, Sardinia, Cyprus, the USA, and in numerous UK tours, retiring in 2006. He joined his local branch in Featherstone, West Yorkshire in 2008 and has been an active Branch, Group and County Committee Member filling a variety of roles at various levels. He has been the Branch PAO for the last 16 years.

An active member of his local War Memorial Gardening Group for over 17 years, he is currently the Group Treasurer. He is also the Captain of a Charity Golf Society raising funds for local area causes.

In 2017, he was co-opted onto the Membership Council to represent the two County Areas of South & West Yorkshire and North & East Yorkshire. In 2019 he was elected to serve a three-year term in his own right and was returned unopposed in 2022 to serve a further three-year term. He has previously been the MC representative responsible for Northumberland, Cumbria and the Isle of Man. A former Chair of the Ceremonial Working Group, he now sits on the National Conference Committee and is the current Chair of the Legion Complaints Committee.





Registered address: Royal British Legion, Haig House, 199 Borough High Street, London SE1 1AA
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