



## Central News – April 2025

### Membership information, updates and engagement

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#### Important dates

Annual Conference virtual attendee registration closes	22 April 2025
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## Aspire Leadership Programme 2025

We are delighted to launch the 2025 Aspire Leadership Programme, which is now open to **all members** to apply. The programme is designed to develop and equip leaders in-waiting who may, in the future, be elected to leadership positions such as branch and county officers, Membership Council or even Trustee!

The programme aims to support and equip participants with the skills and development required for a leadership position. Applications are welcome from members of national and local branches, counties / districts, the Women's Section and overseas branches.

Find out more about the programme [here](#). If you aspire to be a leader in the future then please apply [using this form](#). Applications close 5pm 16 May. Should you have any queries, please contact the Learning and Development team at [L&D@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:L&D@britishlegion.org.uk).

## Join us online for Annual Conference!

Registration to attend Annual Conference in person has now closed but if you would like to share the experience, it's not too late! Online registration is open until 22 April; enabling you to watch events from the comfort of your own home or together with a group of your fellow members and friends. The following agenda items are available to all online attendees:

### Saturday 17 May

09:30 – 10:50 Opening Ceremony  
11:15 – 12:15 RBL updates  
13:30 – 15:30 Motions debate  
16:00 – 17:00 National Awards Ceremony

### Sunday 18 May

11:00 – 12:30 Membership forum  
14:00 – 15:30 Closing ceremony

Join us to share our membership experience. Register to attend via the portal [on the RBL website](#). If you have any questions about Annual Conference 2025, please contact [membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk).

## Protecting the impartiality of RBL

On May 1st many parts of England will be holding local elections. RBL has a long tradition of campaigning to improve the lives of the Armed Forces community and it is entirely legitimate for us to undertake political campaigning in support of our charitable objectives.

Our members are our most valuable campaigning force, as politicians are more likely to listen to someone local to them.

Please remember RBL is bound by charity and electoral law so avoid making any statements or holding or participating in any events that suggest our support for a particular party or candidate.

If you are an active party-political campaigner or elected representative e.g. a councillor, or you will be standing for election as a councillor, please make sure you separate your party-political activities from your role at RBL.

Generally, please consider whether any activities you take part in or content that you produce would either deliberately or inadvertently suggest RBL's support or endorsement for one political party or candidate over another.

If have any questions, or if you are involved in any political visits or events involving RBL members and volunteers, please inform [publicaffairs@legion.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@legion.org.uk) so we can monitor RBL's balanced engagement accurately. Thank you.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with the team at [campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk)

### Campaign update – how supporting MPs to help the Armed Forces community

Last month, MPs held the first full meeting of the [Armed Forces Community All-Party Parliamentary Group](#) (APPG), which discussed challenges faced by non-UK Armed Forces personnel and their families.

The Group provides an opportunity for parliamentarians to learn more about the issues affecting the Armed Forces Community to better advocate for change. RBL assists the group by acting as the Secretariat.

Since 2022, RBL's [Stop the Service charge](#) campaign has called for the removal of Leave to Remain fees for families of non-UK Armed Forces personnel serving in the UK Armed Forces. Experts presented research to attendees on the challenges faced by non-UK personnel in the British Armed Forces. Their research shows that some non-UK personnel face particular challenges with career progression, family life and finding employment after service.

As a result of the meeting MPs undertook to raise issues with the Minister for People and Veterans. RBL are committed to ensuring all members of the Armed Forces community receive the

support they deserve.

To read about the APPG and our involvement, [click here](#). If you have any questions, please get in touch with the team at [campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk)

### “What membership means to me”



When Pat Chrimes OBE, Cheshire County’s WS Chair, joined the RBL’s Women’s Section in 1978, she could not know that one day she would be writing half a million pounds on a large ceremonial cheque.

Representing money raised by the Women’s Section for families to accompany athletes to the Invictus Games, the cheque was handed over by the National Chairman at Annual Conference 23. The moment, says Pat, “spoke volumes”.

Pat joined the Women’s Section because she wanted a hobby in addition to being a homemaker and mother of two. Village buses stopped at 6pm so choices were limited but the local RBL Women’s Section caught her eye.

It appealed to Pat, she says, because her grandfather had served in WW1. Her father had also served in WW2 – landing on Sword Beach June 6, 1944 and continuing to Holland and Germany.

“I felt I may be able to give back to say, ‘thank you’ for the life I and others have due to the sacrifices my grandfather, my father and all those who fought and gave the supreme sacrifice for our freedom,” she says.

Since then, she has taken on various roles. As the Women’s Section National Chairman, she sat on RBL’s Board of Trustees. As a Standard Bearer, she took part in the Festival of Remembrance. “What an honour and how poignant that evening was.”

She’s also worked for the Poppy Appeal since 1976, was a Poppy Appeal Organiser for a decade and, before the role changed, served as an RBL Case worker for 17 years.

“I cannot pick a role that has been most rewarding,” she says. “Each has its own highs and lows and rewards in different ways.” But benevolent work is particularly important to her.

“The benevolent work the Women’s Section does for wives, widows and children of our serving

and ex-service community is vital, especially with today's financial climate," she explains. "As a former case worker, I have seen first-hand how much the Women's Section's quarterly annuity means to a widow."

The Women's Section's President Award also means a great deal to her, as it helps to support young people with a service connection with university costs.

In 2020, she received an OBE for "Services to the Serving and Ex-Service Community", receiving her award from HRH The Princess Royal. "How appropriate," says Pat, "the President of the Women's Section!"

There is a fun side too, such as sitting in a bed and being pushed around the village by Women's Section members dressed as poppy dollies. "What laughs and fun we had," she says, "plus raising the profile of the Women's Section."

For Pat, the meaning of membership has many parts. "It brings greater knowledge, comradeship and friendship. The latter is precious, just knowing someone is there when you need an ear is very appreciated for many – myself in particular. I have to say the RBL – and the Women's Section in particular – have been a life saver.

### Did you know?

Did you know that Legion magazine is also available for anyone to read as a PDF on the RBL website? If you haven't yet caught up on the latest stories, [visit our website!](#)

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Thank you for reading! The May edition of Central News is due to be published  
Tuesday 6th May.