

3542



The Riders Newsletter

Welcome to 3542

The very first branch-wide newsletter of the Royal British Legion Riders Branch. Each quarterly edition of 3542 will include a mix of branch news, forthcoming events, regional contributions, and other items of interest to members.

As 3542 grows, I hope it will become something that members look forward to finding in their mailbox and reading — a place to catch up on what has been happening, see what lies ahead, and enjoy a snapshot of branch life from around the country.

As this is the first issue, the newsletter will no doubt develop and improve as it grows. Future editions will be shaped not only by branch news and official updates, but also by members contributions, photos, stories, and suggestions for articles sent in by members. If you would like to submit an article please use the news uploader on the forum.

We hope you enjoy this first issue and thank everyone who has helped make it possible. The next issue will be sent near the end of June 2026.

Martin Moyse, Webmaster / 3542 Editor

Coming up

Reps Seminar

28 Mar - 29 Mar 2026

NI Regional Meeting

26 Apr 2026

All Wales Meeting

02 May 2026

Memorial Run

16 May 2026

RBLR1000

05 Jun - 07 Jun 2026

National Rally

24 Jul - 26 Jul 2026

Branch AGM

14 Nov 2026

Branch Birthday

27 Nov 2026

The Chairmans Writes

Can you all join me in thanking Martin Moyse for all the time he is spending working behind the scenes updating and implementing new forms of comms all for the benefit of the Branch, this Newsletter being an example.

It goes without saying, Newsletters can only function if “News” is submitted and I would urge everyone to send items in for the information of the membership.

Kindest regard
Simon Appleby-Somerville
RBLR Branch Chairman

Top Tip

The **Quick Links** drop-down in phpBB is a simple but very useful tool that helps members move around the forum more easily. It provides fast access to areas such as unread posts, active topics, your own posts, and the members list, making it quicker to find new discussions and keep track of conversations without searching through the whole forum.

☰ Quick links 🖥 Website

📄 Your posts

📄 New posts

📄 Unread posts

📄 Unanswered topics

📄 Active topics

🔍 Search

👥 Members

🏠 The team

Riders Branch National Rally 2026



The Riders Branch Annual National Rally will return this summer, with members set to gather in Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire, from Friday 24 July to Sunday 26 July 2026 for what promises to be another memorable weekend of friendship, entertainment and riding.

This year's event will be based at Wilton Fields, Cleethorpes, DN36 4AW, where rally-goers will have access to toilets, hot showers, on-site food, and a well-stocked bar.

Camping will be available throughout the weekend, with limited space also set aside for camper vans and caravans. Although electric hookup is no longer available, the site's facilities and nearby shops and cafés should ensure a comfortable stay for all attending.

Advance tickets are available at £27.50 per person until 30 June 2026, after which the price will increase to £35. Members are reminded that, once payment has been made, they should email the rally team with the full names of all attendees, their membership numbers, and details of any dietary requirements or camper/caravan parking needs.

The rally team can be contacted at Rally2026@outlook.com. Confirmation emails will be issued after booking, this confirmation will serve as your tickets for the event.

A full weekend programme is promised, with live entertainment on both evenings. Mollys Chambers will perform on Friday night, followed by Slim & The Dude on Saturday night. A ride out to Mablethorpe is planned for Saturday, giving members the chance to enjoy both the coastline and the surrounding Lincolnshire countryside.

The ever-popular fancy dress competition will return on Saturday evening, once again with no fixed theme, leaving plenty of room for imagination and the usual variety of colourful interpretations.



For long-standing members, the National Rally remains one of the most anticipated events in the Riders Branch calendar. For those yet to attend, Cleethorpes 2026 offers the perfect opportunity to experience the atmosphere, camaraderie and character that have made these weekends such a success year after year.

Vice Chair's View

Well, that's the end of what seems to be an endless winter and for most of us we're now looking forward to dusting off our trusty steeds and getting some Spring miles under our belts in



preparation for the coming sunshine season. Last year was another productive year with The Riders Branch once again stepping up to what we do around the country engaging with the public and raising respectable annual sums for the Poppy Appeal in support of the RBL beneficiaries, something close to my heart personally as an active Welfare Support Officer for a local military charity in my area. I see the good work that the money gets spent on in some cases and take pride in mine and the Riders Team I work with that offer their time as a small part in earning those donations that enabled the RBL to help when and where needed.

That's not all we do though.... Some of us coming from a service background (and those without) didn't chose to join the RBLR just to raise funds for the Poppy Appeal. It was the opportunity to get together with like-minded people of similar interests in supporting the Armed Forces Community, but also to have fun and enjoying getting

together on our bikes and riding or attending rallies together and the usual fun ensuing over the summer weekends!

Sadly since the COVID restrictions whilst our contributions to the Poppy Appeal have remained constant, if anything increasing in value at times; I have been monitoring a steady decline in membership since the lockdown. To a point now where the membership has declined by as much as a third since COVID. When I've been out and about and come across some of these ex-members I have been very interested to know the reasons for their departure, and whilst some are down to the inevitable character clashes with individuals locally the main has been that 'We don't get out much on our bikes'.

Continued on page 4

Vice Chair's View (continued)

This is something now that I would ask all counties to be mindful of. It's great that I'm seeing paperwork coming in for attending fund raising events, but when enquiring as to whether there's much going on in your areas as to getting out riding together, having a bit of fun and engaging with other biking communities I'm often met with black looks or rejections as to why 'they don't'. I'm sure you guys all know some great biking roads near your area's - why not get the word out to other members in your area when you are going out for a ride and with enough notice using either The Forum or your local county social media or Reps I'm sure you won't be riding alone!

Simply put, if we do not look inwards at the main reason as to why people chose to join The Riders Branch over their local branches, together with the usual saga of a steady aging biker membership we will continue declining in numbers. Eventually manning the stands at fund raising events will become ever more difficult in the future let alone the very existence of a Riders Branch within the RBL. Lets get out there, re-build that camaraderie of having a few Riders that will get out and ride together at any opportunity, engaging with other bikers to raise awareness - not just the general public on stands when donating to the Poppy Appeal and hopefully rebuild that interest in becoming a Rider!

Rep's, consider running recruitment style events at local bike meets, biker cafe's or even on event days at some of your larger motorcycle outlets, that's where you are going to meet tomorrow's Riders. Supporting non-PA events too is a must, such as perhaps joining in on the RBLR 1000 - there is a 500 mile route if like me you are physically not up to the 1000 mile challenge or by attending the RBLR National Rally our riders across the country take on each year to organise in different area's providing the fun, chaos but more importantly the camaraderie of the Branch that you could perhaps introduce a riding mate into and potentially joining our 'special kind' of mayhem & banter in the future, securing the re-growth of The Riders Branch...

Keep the rubber side down and stay safe riders, cya on the road or in a field drinking a beer somewhere!!

Kindest Regards

AJ Wilcox

Riders Branch Vice Chairman

I told my wife I was only popping out for a short ride.

Three counties later, I realised "short" is a very flexible word on a motorcycle.

What's the difference between a biker and a dog?

The dog knows when to stop sticking its head out in the wind.



The All Wales Meeting

Here is what Phil Jones, Regional Rep for Wales has to say about the all Wales Meeting:

Around three years ago, the idea was put forward to create an all-Wales meeting and social event at Llandrindod Wells. With its central location, it makes an ideal meeting point for members travelling from both North and South Wales, and having the Royal British Legion club there adds to the appeal.



Since it began, the event has enjoyed modest but encouraging support, with around 20 to 30 members attending each year. The aim has always been simple: to give Riders Branch members from across Wales

the chance to get together, have a catch-up, and enjoy a social afternoon over a couple of beers.

This year's gathering will take place on **2 May**, and it would be great to see even more members come along and support it. One of the real attractions of the event is the ride itself — no matter which direction you are coming from, the journey into Llandrindod Wells offers the chance to enjoy some excellent Welsh roads and scenery along the way.

It promises to be a relaxed and friendly get-together, so why not come along and join us?

Counting the Pennies

The branch Treasurer, Heide Hansford says

Please ensure that if you pay any funds into our RBLR PAO account, that you use the paying in form, which can be found on the forum.

This form will have all the details on, that I require to account accurately on our accounting system LOMAS and to allocate funds to the correct county / region.

Poppy appeal totals to date:

(Figures are after reconciliation of accounts on 28th February 2026.)

Total so far £71,226.97

Since Branch formation £2,161,217.00



New RBLR Members Shop now Open



We are pleased to announce that the RBLR Members shop is now back open! The shop has a whole new modern and sleek look to it.

There is currently the biggest sale the shop has ever had on. So come register and grab yourself a bargain. The sale is on to make way for some brand new products. You'll have to keep an eye out for them coming.

Why it was closed for so long? This was down to the old website not being able to be secured. But with the help of Martin Moyse and Kelsea, they both sent countless hours (more than the 1 hour a week) to choose, design and build our new website.

The way payment was taken in the past has changed too. The shop now operates as a card payment only, this means on the website you'll put your card details in just like any other business and pay online. It will be card only at this year's national rally and also the branches AGM in November. Please remember this, no cash will be accepted.

In the past the shop has had issues around non members, so from now on, in order to buy from the shop you'll need to be a member of the riders branch. When you register you'll put in your RBL membership number (NOT 3542) this will then be checked against the current membership list, to see if you are eligible to

The shop is now in new hands and we are going to be bringing out now products for you the members. When you login you'll see a sample for new products coming soon. As the shop is for members only, if there is anything you would like to see on the shop please email us at: Shop@riders-mail.com, and we can see if it is possible.

Lastly thank you all for being patient while the shop was closed, it's been a mammoth task to get it back open, but we have only been open a week and already had so many orders. We hope you like the new look and the new products that will be coming.

Happy Shopping!
Matt and Kelsea

Up for an unforgettable challenge? Then the RBLR1000 is right up your street!

The RBLR1000 is far more than just another rideout — it is one of the most inspiring and rewarding events in the Riders Branch calendar. Since 2009, riders have taken on this epic sponsored challenge to raise vital funds for the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal, combining endurance, camaraderie, and a cause that truly matters.



Starting and finishing at Squires Cafe Bar near Sherburn in Elmet, West Yorkshire, the event gives riders plenty of choice. The Northern and Southern routes are each just over 1,000 miles, while a shorter 500-mile route is also available. With clockwise and anti-clockwise options, there are six routes in total — six different ways to take on an unforgettable adventure.

And what an adventure it is. This is not simply about distance; it is about the experience. Depending on the route you choose, you could find yourself riding through some of the most memorable scenery Britain has to offer. In Scotland, the roads open out into dramatic Highland landscapes, with sweeping views of lochs, glens, and the mighty Cairngorms, part of the UK's largest national park. In Wales, the route can reward riders with striking stretches of beautiful coastline, adding yet another unforgettable backdrop to the challenge.

Along the way, there are also some remarkable sights to take in. In Scotland, the famous memorial most riders think of is the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge in Lochaber, near Fort William, standing proudly with superb Highland views. Farther south, Stonehenge lies in Wiltshire, near Amesbury on Salisbury Plain — one of Britain's most iconic landmarks.

But make no mistake — this is still a serious challenge. Long hours in the saddle, changing weather, daylight, darkness, and fatigue all play their part. That is why preparation matters. A few practice miles, the right mindset, and proper riding kit can make the difference between simply getting through it and genuinely enjoying it.

The rewards, though, are enormous: the thrill of the open road, the friendship of fellow riders, the sense of achievement at the finish, and the knowledge that every mile ridden helps support a truly worthwhile cause.

Push yourself. Enjoy the ride. Take in the views. Ride with purpose.



The branch website at rbl.org.uk continues to grow as an important shop window for the Riders Branch, helping members and potential new members find information quickly and easily. Recent work has focused on keeping the site updated while also making it easier to use. The site brings together branch information, news, events, regional pages, the forum, calendar, awards and joining information in one place.

One of the biggest recent additions is the **all-new chatbot**. Its job is simple: to help visitors find answers more quickly without having to hunt through menus and pages. Whether someone wants to know what the RBLR is, how to join, where to find key information, or where to go next, the chatbot points them in the right direction and makes the website easier to navigate.



Another major improvement is the new **easy-to-follow joining pages**. These have been designed to make the joining process much clearer, especially for those unsure how the Riders Branch fits within the wider Royal British Legion membership system. The site now explains in plain English that the Riders Branch is a national branch of the Royal British Legion, that existing RBL members can join without transferring branches, and that new members can select the Riders Branch during the standard Legion joining process.

As ever, the work continues behind the scenes. Websites are never really “finished” and ours is no exception. They are more like motorcycles: if you want them to keep performing properly, you keep maintaining and improving them, and occasionally muttering at them. The aim is to keep the RBLR website useful, welcoming and a reliable front door for the branch.

Martin Moyse, Webmaster



How well do you know your motorcycles? Can you answer these simple questions?

Answers on last page

1. Which Suzuki road bike used a Wankel rotary engine in the 1970s?
2. What does “Desmodromic” refer to in motorcycle engine design?
3. What does the name Hayabusa mean in English?
4. Which motorcycle became the first 500cc machine to average over 100 mph for 24 hours?
5. Which rare Brough Superior model used an Austin 7 car engine?

Yorkshire Round-Up.

Jay Moreman, Yorkshire Regional Rep, shares what Yorkshire has been up to:

January saw our annual trip to Bridlington for the East Meets West late, late Christmas bash and what a weekend we had! We all met on Friday night for dinner at the Monarch Hotel, followed by what seemed like the longest quiz in the world. Funnily enough, the East Yorkshire Reps' table managed to fluke the most points and took home the winning pot of £45. The hotel kindly laid on a game of bingo, followed by a singer who crooned his way through several songs before the final bell rang at 11:00.

Following a full English breakfast on Saturday morning, we held our first regional meeting of the year and discussed what we have planned for the next 12 months. We also awarded the former West Yorkshire Rep, Roy Kirkham, with the Yorkshire Shield in recognition of all his hard work and dedication to the branch. Unfortunately, Roy was unable to attend the meeting so Tony Anderson accepted the award on his behalf.



Saturday afternoon was spent exploring the delights of a freezing cold Bridlington before returning to the warmth of a three-course meal at the hotel. The evening's entertainment included a bizarre game of charades hosted by Pete Matthews, *Play Your Cards Right* hosted by a Bruce Forsyth/Jay Moreman look-alike, and headlining the evening – making their debut in the music industry – our very own RBLR band, "Laminated Biff Chit." With the raffle and auction, we also managed to raise a whopping £751.20 for the Poppy Appeal.



Our South Yorkshire Rep, Marie, hosted our first Meet & Greet of the year at Wheels Café, The Old George Inn, Sykehouse and what a place it is too. The food was outstanding and the hospitality was top notch. 18 made the journey from across Yorkshire for a bite to eat and a brew. Unfortunately, Scooter Paul came off his bike on the way in and was taken to hospital by a passing Police car. Torn tendons/ligaments are the result which is going to put him out of action for a while. We all wish you a speedy recovery Steve.

March saw Jay and Marie host the National Transition Event at Silverstone. This was the first time not only the Branch had been present but also the RBL and we did everyone proud. Paula Stroud (East Mids Rep), David Stroud and Jim Haines (Northampton Rep) came to help run the event and I have to say what an event it was too. Big things are being planned for next year so watch this space.

East Midlands: Breaking Borders, Building Branch Spirit.

As with many other Regions, we have had a quiet start to the year and a well-deserved break following a busy one. But that is all about to change, with Counties already getting events into their diaries from April and moving rapidly into the summer months.

What has been good to see is that Counties are taking the opportunity to actively promote the Branch. It is important to remember that we are not just about fundraising. We are also about having fun and spreading the word about the RBL, and how we can support current and former service personnel and their families.

A good example of this was Yorkshire and East Midlands running a collaborative event at a recent National Transitional Event for service personnel at Silverstone Race Track. The event was initially set up by the Yorkshire Regional Rep and supported by East Midlands representatives. It is encouraging to see collaboration across the Branch, with borders being broken down. We are a National Branch, and we work best when we work together. Derbyshire County has also identified an opportunity to work with CMC in Chesterfield to promote awareness of the Branch and the RBL as a whole.

Recently, a group of Riders from across the Region got together for a cold ride to Northants to meet up for breakfast with the Northants Crew, doing what Riders do best: riding, eating, drinking tea, and enjoying laughter and banter. By



the time they got there, the sun had come out, and they all had a nice ride back through the various villages and country roads to get home, blowing away some of the winter cobwebs.

As a Region, we are planning to come together in May to ride to the NMA for the Branch Memorial Ride. The support that we can offer each other on a day such as this is so important, and meeting up to ride in together has become an important tradition in our Region.

Last but not least, the Region will be hosting the National Rally at Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire, in July, and we look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

Stay safe all, and enjoy the ride.

Paula Stroud

East Midlands Regional Rep

A busy start of the year in NI

Tracy Beare, NI Regional rep says her first meeting of the year was with the County Reps at a lovely Airbnb in Portstewart. It was a productive start to the year, with plans made for the months ahead and updates shared on forum news, the Reps Manual, GDPR, branch history, RBLR1 forms, counting sheets, branch by-laws, poppy stock, and changes to the forum gallery and calendar. We also drew up a draft events calendar, with reps taking responsibility for specific events, and discussed membership lists and future opportunities to promote the Riders Branch across more counties. For me, as the new Regional Rep, it was also a valuable chance to get to know the County Reps better and continue building the team.



Sadly, on 15 January 2026, one of our long-term members, Paul Mooney, passed away. A number of Riders attended his funeral, and I would like to thank Tommy Hill for organising this.

Our first regional meeting of the year was held at Randalstown Bowling Club on 25 January, with 24 members attending. It was a great opportunity to look back on our 2025 events through a PowerPoint presentation of photos and videos, while also sharing a provisional calendar for 2026.



On 1 February, I visited the Ex-Prison Officers Club at the Maze in Lisburn with our County Antrim Rep to view the facilities for our August 2026 meet-and-greet camping weekend. The deposit has now been paid, and more details will follow. Then, on 9 February, one of our members, Peter Barton, sadly lost his daughter, Tiffany. Our thoughts are with Peter and his family at this difficult time.

At the end of the month, on 27 and 28 February, Mid Ulster organised a Poppy stall at the Ballymoney Motorcycle Show. With the help of 10 volunteers, we also ran a used clothing stall, using items donated by members to raise money for the Poppy Appeal. Over the two days we raised £588.34, and my thanks go to Nigel, Billy, Michael, John, Arun, Will, Andrea, Sophia, Jimmy, and Mandy for their time and support.

I would also like to thank Tony Best, who has organised RBLR marshals for the North West 200 over the past few years. Although our participation is not required this year, we are very grateful for all his hard work and commitment.

With better weather hopefully on the way, we are now looking forward to social ride-outs, meet-ups, and more Poppy stall events.

Can you complete this crossword? Military and motorcycles are your clues!
 Answers on last page.



Across

- 2 whats left of the fortified wine
- 4 They made the RE5
- 8 VE Can deliver bombs
- 9 Historic British tank gets water from deep in the ground
- 11 Piston movement that your dog just adores
- 13 You can cook in one or ride one
- 14 You might find this at remembrance or at the end of a fence
- 17 Locked in but you can see through the walls
- 18 The lasting duty to remember
- 19 venturi mixer
- 20 This Ago was a champ
- 22 Airborne infantry soldiers may arrive by this
- 24 They made the Venom

Down

- 1 de Havilland might give you itchy lumps
- 3 Senior officer who apparently sells car insurance
- 5 Field of bright red flowers linked with remembrance poetry
- 6 Lucas component blamed in jokes about British electrics
- 7 Television control you pull
- 10 Speedy bird found in a bail with a buss
- 12 Floating apples, or stripped-down motorcycle
- 15 Pinser is accurate
- 16 Vincent stood in front of a light casting this
- 21 Container for transmission part?
- 23 Soldier's pack carried on operations

Motorcycles in the Military, where it all started.



British despatch rider 1914, Belgium with his Douglas 2.75bhp motorcycle behind.

One of the earliest recorded military uses of motorcycles is often linked to Pancho Villa's forces during the Mexican Revolution from 1911 onward. Their speed and mobility made them useful for carrying messages and moving quickly over difficult ground. Once war broke out in Europe in 1914, armies soon realised that the motorcycle could do a job that horses and foot messengers could not do as efficiently.

For Britain, the real military story begins in the First World War. The British Army needed a fast and reliable way to carry orders between

headquarters, artillery batteries and front-line units. Telephone lines were often cut by shellfire, and mounted messengers were slower and more exposed. The motorcycle became the ideal answer. British despatch riders, many serving with the Royal Engineers and later the Royal Corps of Signals, became a vital part of wartime communications. Riding through mud, darkness and enemy fire, they carried messages that could be crucial to the outcome of a battle.

In the early years, many military motorcycles were adapted from civilian machines. British forces used makes such as Douglas, Triumph and Royal Enfield. An Imperial War Museums image from October 1914 shows a British despatch rider with his Douglas motorcycle in Belgium, proving just how early motorcycles had entered British military service during the war. What mattered was not speed for its own sake, but reliability, simplicity and the ability to keep moving in dreadful conditions.

By the Second World War, motorcycles were being used not only for dispatch work, but also for escort duty, traffic control, reconnaissance and military police tasks. The BSA M20 became the standard British Army motorcycle of the war, valued for toughness and dependability rather than glamour. Britain also produced one of the most famous specialist military motorcycles of all, the Royal Enfield WD/RE 125, better known as the Flying Flea. Light enough to be carried by airborne forces, it showed how far the British military motorcycle had evolved from the muddy roads of 1914.



Royal Enfield Flying Flea

Silverstone NTE26

The Riders Branch proudly attended and exhibited at Mission Motorsport's National Transition Event, held at the iconic Silverstone Racetrack on Monday 3rd March.

Around 2,500 service leavers, veterans, and cadets explored opportunities as they move from military life to civilian careers. A wide range of veteran-friendly businesses and charities were present, including the RBLR. Notably, many were unaware they are eligible for free Royal British Legion membership while still serving.



Visitors to our stand received a goody bag, with a particular focus on the Riders Branch and how to join. We have been invited back next year, and hope to offer on-the-day sign-ups to better measure engagement and impact.

I had the pleasure of speaking with Royal Marine veteran Barney Barnet of Diama Security. He shared the history and tradition of the Challenge Coin. I also present him with a Riders Branch coin. Barney also generously donated £500 to the Poppy Appeal.

We have a valuable new relationship, and the beneficiaries of the RBL will feel the impact of one simple conversation. Next year, we hope to return with an even bigger Riders Branch presence, and perhaps a surprise or two.

In Memoriam

We remember here our comrades and friends who passed away while members of the Riders Branch.

Andrew Clewes 30th January 2026

Paul Mooney 15th January 2026

Jerry Smith January 2026

Stephen Price January 2026

Stuart Lawrence January 2026

Berry Estabrook January 2026

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.

The Legion

Changed your phone number?

Changed your email address?

Moved home?

Don't forget to update your membership details on the RBL portal.

<https://selfservice.britishlegion.org.uk/security/login>





1. **Answer:** Suzuki RE5. It was a rare 1970s production road bike powered by a rotary engine rather than a conventional piston engine.
2. **Answer:** It is a valve system where the valves are both opened and closed mechanically, instead of relying on springs to shut them.
3. **Answer:** Peregrine falcon. Suzuki chose the name to reflect speed and performance, as the peregrine is one of the fastest birds in the world.
4. **Answer:** Velocette Venom. It achieved the record in 1961 at Montlhéry in France, earning a lasting place in motorcycle history.
5. **Answer:** Brough Superior Austin Four. It was an unusual machine that used modified Austin 7 car mechanicals in a motorcycle frame.

