



## THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

### Members' Etiquette – Frequently Asked Questions

#### A. Dress code, medals and badges

##### What is the dress code for Legion members on formal parade occasions?

On formal parade occasions Legion members should be appropriately dressed. There is a general consensus that ideally each member present should wear a dark suit/blazer [or for Women's Section a suit or dress, overcoat (if necessary) hat (preferably)], black shoes, etc. A person in a brightly coloured outfit on such a formal occasion seems somewhat out of place.

##### When should gentlemen remove their hats during Legion events?

The Patron has decided that, in view of the inclement weather frequently experienced at Legion parades many of which take place in the winter, hats will be removed only for the National Anthem, the Last Post and the Silence.

##### What are the general rules for wearing medals?

The official rules for wearing medals allow only official awards to be worn. Unofficial purchased medals and foreign medals which do not have the Sovereign's permission to be worn are not allowed. Standard Bearers, Parade Marshals and other officials on Legion duty are bound by this ruling and unofficial medals must not be worn when on Legion duty.

##### For gentlemen:

The following notes are based on the "Guide to the Wearing of Orders, Decorations, Miniatures and Medals" published by the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood:

- Medals are worn parallel to the ground just above the level of the top pocket of a jacket (or on a pocket insert). The Royal British Legion membership badge is worn on the lapel one inch above the medal bar. The medals may be mounted "Court" fashion (sewn to the ribbon which extends behind the medal to roughly halfway down) or "swinging" (where they hang loose from the medal bar). In either case, the bottom edge of each medal should be level, the ribbons should not exceed about one and half inches from the top (medal bar) to the bottom (medal suspender). In some cases the length of the ribbons will vary to ensure the bottom edge of the medals are level. Medals are worn side by side unless there are more than five in which case they are overlapped with the first one (to the centre of the body) fully visible and subsequent ribbons being only partly visible. The medals themselves are overlapped in the same way with the obverse (often the Sovereign's head) to the front.
- On Legion occasions, such as parades and social events, when medals are worn with lounge suits, full size insignia mounted on a medal bar or pocket insert are worn on the left side. One neck decoration, suspended on a miniature width ribbon, of an Order, may be worn under the collar.
- With overcoats, only those full size Orders, Decorations and Medals normally mounted on a medal bar or pocket inserts may be worn, on the left side.
- Full size orders, decorations and medals normally mounted on a medal bar or pocket insert should be worn with morning dress, when required.
- When invitations specify decorations with dinner jacket, it is correct to wear miniatures, and only one star (or the badge of a Knight Bachelor) and one neck decoration.


- With evening dress, one sash and sash badge, one neck decoration, up to four breast stars plus miniature medals on medal bar or pocket insert may be worn.
- The medals awarded to a deceased Service/ex-Service person may be worn on the right breast by a near relative. Not more than one group should be worn by any individual.

#### For ladies:

The same rules apply for ladies where the "neck decoration" from bows and tails is restricted in the same way as men's neck decorations, but they are worn below the medal bar. Ladies who have been awarded medals suspended from bows and tails, but which normally fit on the medal bar, wear them in the normal men's method with straight ribbons if they have more than one. For example a lady with a CBE only, or a CBE and Golden Jubilee Medal will always wear her CBE on bow and tails on her left side and above that her Jubilee Medal from a bow. If this lady is also an Officer of the Order of St John she wears her CBE as before and her OStJ and Jubilee Medal from straight ribbons, as for men, on the medal bar. In miniature all three will be from straight ribbons on the medal bar. If she is promoted to CStJ that remains on the miniature bar but in day dress she may only wear one "neck decoration" so would normally revert to her CBE and her Jubilee Medal, from either a straight ribbon or bow and tails, in full size above it.

#### What are the general rules for wearing Legion Badges?

The general rules for wearing Legion Badges are:

- **Membership Badge (The Royal British Legion):** This badge should be worn on the left lapel by the position of the button hole. It may be worn upright or in line with the lapel.
- **Gold Badge:** Members who have been awarded the Gold Badge, National Life Membership or National Certificate of Appreciation may wear the appropriate badge instead of the standard membership badge. Only one badge should be worn at any time.
- **Affiliated Unit Badge:** This is a cloth badge which may be worn by uniformed youth organisations on their own uniform when they are affiliated to a Legion Branch. The position of the badge is determined by the individual youth organisation.
- **Poppy Awards:** These badges may be worn by members to whom they have been awarded but should NOT be worn by Standard Bearers when in uniform.
- **Standard Bearer (Flag) Badges (The Royal British Legion & Royal British Legion Women's Section):** These badges may be worn by both past and present Standard Bearers when not in uniform.
- **Veteran Badge:**  except competitions.
- **Blazer Badge:** This badge should NOT be worn by a Standard Bearer when in uniform.
- **Long Service Badges (Royal British Legion Women's Section):** These badges may now be worn by Women's Section members who have completed 25 or more years' service. They may NOT be worn by a Standard Bearer when in uniform.
- **Competition Bars (Royal British Legion Women's Section):** Awarded to the Winner and Runner Up at County/District, Regional and National competitions. These are worn on the left lapel by Standard Bearers but are NOT worn in competitions. Once attaining 5 individual bars at the same level these should be removed and replaced with a 5 year bar.

#### Does the Legion provide any guidance on the wearing of medals outside Legion events?

The Royal British Legion has no jurisdiction to issue any guidance on medal wearing at non-Legion events.

## **B. Funerals**

### **What is the guidance for funerals of Legion members? How is the Legion represented at such funerals?**

If the relatives wish, arrangements should be made wherever possible for the Branch to be officially represented at the funeral of any of its members. It is important to ensure that the clergy and funeral directors are also informed.

The Union Flag is not paraded at a funeral service, however, many Branches keep a large Union Flag which is used to drape the coffin. Where this is done it is normal to place a wreath of poppies on top of the flag.

It is also customary for the Branch Standard and for that of the Women's Section Branch (if there is one) to form part of the procession, both into and from the church, chapel or other sacred building. The Standard should precede the coffin in the procession and, if space permits, stand abreast of it during the service. The same procedure should be followed at the place of burial, and the Standard should dip as an act of homage as the coffin is lowered into the grave.

When the Standard is carried at a cremation the same procedure, if space within the building permits, should be adopted as at a burial. Alternatively, the Standard Bearer should stand six paces inside the entrance to the Crematorium, facing the coffin. The Standard should dip as an act of homage as the curtains are closed removing the coffin from view.

In some parts of the country there is also a practice to have the Last Post, Exhortation and Reveille with the Legion Standards present. After the coffin has been lowered into the grave, (or at a cremation – from view) and the officiating clergy has pronounced his committal oration, the sequence is usually:

The Last Post (Standards dip).  
The Exhortation and Response.  
If a burial, members drop their personal poppies into the grave.  
Reveille (Standards return to the Carry on the first note).

It should be remembered, however, that all the above suggestions may be implemented only after full consultation with the family and the officiating clergy.

The Board of Trustees recommend that, if with the consent of the family and the officiating clergy the Legion is officially represented at the funeral, there should be no distinction between the funeral procedures outlined above for members/Life members or Women's Section members. It is appreciated, however, that because of local conditions and circumstances, it may be appropriate to make amendments. The family's wishes together with the solemnity and dignity of the occasion are paramount.

### **Who is entitled to have the Union Flag draped on their coffin?**

The Royal British Legion Ceremonial Handbook does not offer guidance on the general use of the Union Flag at funerals, but some Branches do keep the Union Flag for use during the funerals of serving or ex-Service personnel and drape them over the coffin.

### **Can the Last Post be sounded at a member's funeral if they are not veterans?**

The general procedure of the Legion is to leave funerals to be dealt with on a local level in accordance with the wishes of the family, officiating clergy and local traditions. Guidance is the same for all members. There is also a practice to have the Last Post, Exhortation and Reveille with the Legion Standards present. After the coffin is lowered into the grave, (or at a cremation – from view) and the officiating clergy has pronounced his committal oration, the sequence is usually:

The Last Post (Standards dip).  
The Exhortation and Response.  
If a burial, members drop their personal poppies into the grave.  
Reveille (Standards return to the Carry on the first note).

It should be remembered however, that all the above suggestions may be implemented only after full consultation with the family and the officiating clergy.

### **What is the dress code for Escorts?**

Escorts should be dressed as Standard Bearers, save that instead of gauntlets they should wear white cotton gloves and they should not carry a sling.

### **Can Army Cadets be used as Escorts or Standard Bearers at a Service?**

If a Service takes place within the Branch Boundaries, Cadets of Affiliated Units can be used as Escorts or Standard Bearers. However, it should be remembered that if the Cadets are not Legion Members, they fall under the sole responsibility of the affiliated organisation. Therefore, if Cadets who are not Legion Youth Members are used as Escorts or Standard Bearers, it is the Cadet Unit that is responsible for their protection.

## **C. Flags**

### **What is the protocol for flying the Union Flag at Legion properties?**

There are no rules stating that The Royal British Legion must fly the Union Flag on the same days as the Government buildings. It is up to a County/District/Branch Committee to decide whether to fly the flag on some or all of the fixed days each year on which the flag should be flown.

### **What are the general procedures for flying flags?**

Flag flying is under the jurisdiction of the Department for Culture, Media and Sports. More information can be found at [www.culture.gov.uk/flagflying/protocol.html](http://www.culture.gov.uk/flagflying/protocol.html)

### **When should the Union Flag be flown at half-mast?**

For the list of specific occasions when the Union Flag should be flown at half-mast go to FAQ section at: [www.culture.gov.uk/what we do/honours/7125.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/honours/7125.aspx)

### **Is there a service for the Union Flag dedication used by The Royal British Legion?**

The Royal British Legion does not dedicate the Union Flag, but recommends arranging a suitable service of blessing.

### **How many Union Flags can be carried at a parade?**

There should be only one Union Flag (usually carried by the senior Standard Bearer) on any parade.

### **When is the Union Flag dipped?**

The Union Flag and Legion Standards are dipped for the National Anthem, a Royal Salute and for an Act of Homage (Last Post, Silence, and Exhortation).

The Union Flag and Legion Standards are not lowered for a march past. In the special event of the Queen or a member of the Royal Family taking the salute at a march past, special instructions will be issued.

### **Where can I obtain a copy of the Ceremonial Handbook?**

All Legion Branch Secretaries have received a copy of the Ceremonial Handbook and your Branch should be able to provide you with any information you need. Your local County Office should also be able to help you with any queries on ceremonial matters.