

**Minutes from: Newent & District Branch of The Royal British Legion.**

**Held 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024 Newent Memorial Hall.**

<b><u>Attendees</u></b>	<b><u>Post</u></b>
Richie Balding	Chairman
Keith Urch	Deputy Chairman, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership Secretary
David Sass	Secretary
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Graham Barton	Parade Marshal
Rick Axon	Bar, Entertainment Member
Rev Simon Mason	Padre
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Tom Heseltine	
Gordon Thorogood	
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Colin Thomson	Poppy Appeal Organiser
Jim Gardiner	
Shaun Westmoreland	
Jan Sologub	

**1 Act of Remembrance.**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1900 hours and asked everyone to think of the people who couldn't be with us due to ill health. He then read out the names of the members of the Parish who lost their lives in WW1 and WW2 during the month of May. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

**2 Apologies for Absence.**

Elaine Balding, Adrian Dover, Jon Miles, Viv Miles, Susan Urch, John Price, Pat Price, Colin Britt, Susanne Britt.

**3 Chairman's Report.**

**Introduction**

Good evening All. This month was somewhat busier than last month with lots of letter writing and briefings, so to start:

**3.1 County Briefing and County Committee Meeting – 13 April 2024**

As mentioned at last month's meeting, the County Briefing was held at the RBL Hardwicke Branch premises in Green Lane, Hardwicke. Myself and the Deputy Chairman attended the briefing which is intended to convey the National Chairman's thoughts for the coming year and comes with a full set of PowerPoint (PPT) slides. However, the new County Chairman gave the attendees the chance to conduct a Question and Answer (Q&A) session in lieu of presenting the PPT verbatim. The County Chairman expressed his gratitude for all that the Branches are continuing to achieve during some difficult times even with all the 'barriers' put in front of us.

A large portion of the Q&A session discussed the 2 proposed motions with regards to the membership and how they might affect membership in the short and long term. The consensus of opinion was that the membership fee would have to increase and that in the opinion of those in attendance it would be better in small annual increases.

**3.2 Annual Conference – 10-12 May 2024**

I received only the one return on voting for this year's motions at the Annual Conference, so the Branch will go with those findings. I am slowly receiving more and more information about the Conference as we get closer to May. The Deputy Chairman and myself are ready for 2 days of 'Microsoft Teams', but the offer still holds if any Branch Members would like to join us in order to experience this annual event.

**3.3 Veteran's Coffee Morning – 28 May 2024**

Next month's Veterans Coffee Morning will take place at Manna Coffee House on 28 May 2024 starting at 10am, everyone is welcome to attend. We had a good attendance at April's Coffee Morning with 9 turning out. As I said my report this month is short and very sweet but if anyone needs to discuss anything please let me know.

### **Item 3.4. Innsworth Military Wives Concert**

I have informed NTC of our intention to host a Poppy Appeal event in the Memorial Hall on 24 November 2024 featuring the Innsworth Military Wives Choir.

### **Item 3.5. Newent Community School Remembrance Service**

I wrote to Dawn Burke the Principal of Newent Community School and asked her what plans they had for this year's School Remembrance service. The reply is below:

*"Thank you for emailing and asking. I would like to organise it on the Friday, I think so that students have the focus going into Remembrance Sunday. We will then have a silence on the actual Monday."*

I will of course keep the School informed of our plans.

### **Item 3.6. Armed Forces Week**

I also wrote to our Town Council Armed Forces Rep wrt any plans Newent Town Council might have during this year's scheduled Armed Forces Week 24-29 June 2024. The reply received:

*"Please accept my apologies for the late reply, NTC will arrange a flag raising ceremony on 24th June. Do you have any other suggestions."*

### **3.7. Finally**

Don't forget that as normal if anyone needs help in any way at all please do not hesitate to get in contact, and if we can help, we will.

## **4 Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising.**

No errors or amendments mentioned and were proposed by RA and seconded by GB that the minutes were a true and accurate record. The minutes were signed by the Chairman. Matters arising were as follows:

### **Item 6.2. May Hill Beacon**

Deputy Chairman stated that after some discussion with various authorities the May hill Beacon would not be lit for the D-Day celebrations on 6 June 2024 – the responsibility lies with the local council. However, the Chairman has circulated to Members details of the Blaisdon Beacon lighting which he is intending to attend.

### **Item 6.3. 100 year old Veteran commemoration**

GT has done some 'investigating' and has supplied the Committee with some more details. JV was born on 5 January 1925, served in the Intelligence Corps attained the rank of WO2 and served in WWII in India and the Middle East. The Chairman thanked GT for his investigative work and asked the meeting for suggestions or ideas of a suitable tribute from the Branch for discussion at our next meeting. The Secretary volunteered to enquire of his family of the sort of thing we could mark the occasion with.

### **Item 6.4 Military Wives Concert**

There was no conflict with the Newent Choral Society and NTC had been appraised of the date.

### **6.8. Armed Forces Week**

Newent Town Council have stated that they have a small flag raising ceremony on 24<sup>th</sup> of June and will keep it raised for the week.

## **5. Reports by Officers**

### **5.1. Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for April 2024**

#### **5.1.1. Newent Branch former Treasurer, Rex Debenham**

Rex Debenham, former Branch Treasurer, has received our card and sends his best wishes to The Branch and friends here in Newent.

### **5.1.2. Branch Remembrance**

We remember those Veterans, friends and Branch colleagues that are unable to be present this evening: please remember that we are here to assist and support both veterans and their families; you only need to contact one of your Committee Members.

### **5.1.3 Branch Welfare, Membership, Statistics, Community Support and Youth Liaison.**

As previously mentioned, there continue to be many planned changes within TRBL HQ and the BCS sphere in particular. An update of such matters will be provided at National Conference.

#### **5.1.3.1. Branch Welfare**

The Branch continues to aid and support its Members and Veterans.

Newent has a Veteran approaching his 100th birthday and it is anticipated that such a milestone will be celebrated.

In addition, significant effort is being provided to another local Veteran (a non-Branch Member) to aid their physical, mental and general welfare.

During this period, at the request of our County MEO, we have continued to provide support to two Gloucester based Veterans (neither of whom are Branch Members) as part of the RBL Telephone Buddy Network.

Veterans and Branch Members may also contact the RBL Helpline services via the national network 0808 802 8080 and The Veteran's Gateway: <https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk>

#### **5.1.3.2 Veteran Liaison and Support Grants**

Veteran Support Grants continue to be available albeit these are limited; HMG and Service grants also remain available for those suffering hardship.

#### **5.1.3.3. Branch Membership**

In accordance with TRBL records and subject to Member renewals, Branch Membership remains at 39 members.

The Branch welcomes new Members and encourages them to attend forthcoming events, especially our Branch Coffee Mornings at Manna Coffee House on the last Tuesday of the month.

#### **5.1.3.4. Branch Statistics**

The Branch continues to provide support to its current Members, new Veterans moving into our community and a small number via the Telephone Buddy Network.

In the event that Members identify a comrade in need, they are encouraged to contact a Committee Member or BCS Representative at the earliest convenience. All communications are confidential.

#### **Branch Statistics for this period are therefore as follows:**

Total Number of Welfare visits 2  
How many beneficiaries visited 2  
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters) 4  
Total Welfare Expenditure NIL (see Note 1)  
Telephone Buddies:  
Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive 14  
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called 4  
Telephone – How many telephone buddies: 4

#### **5.1.3.5. Branch Community Support and Youth Liaison Activities**

##### **5.1.3.5.1. Community and Youth Liaison**

- Your Branch Representatives continue to liaise with the many varied groups and youth organisations within our community.
- Members are reminded of the Newent Town Council Annual Assembly this coming Monday at Newent Community School, commencing at 7pm.

- The process for TRBL Branch Affiliation continues. Further updates will be available in due course but meanwhile the Branch will continue to progress this important area within our community.

#### **5.1.3.5.2. Newent War Memorial**

The Newent Initiative Trust has established a separate “ring-fenced account” specifically for this purpose: details will be available in the near future.

Public donations to complete the works will be welcome as we strive to seek additional grant aid from local, County and National organisations.

All works are currently planned for completion by the end of October 2024.

#### **5.1.3.6. TRBL HQ, County Liaison and Branch Communications (OS365)** **County Briefing and Committee Session**

This session occurred at the RBL Hardwick Branch (Green Lane, GL2 4QA) on Saturday, 13th April.

Further details are available within the Chairman’s Report.

For other matters relating to other specific HQ/County/Branch communications and local activities, please see your Chairman’s and other Branch Representative Reports.

#### **5.1.3.7. Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Diary**

##### **The 2024 RBL Conference**

The Conference will be held at the ICC in Newport, Wales during the weekend of 10th/12th May. Members are reminded that your Chairman and Deputy will attend The Conference virtually rather than expend additional costs.

##### **NOTE:**

Members have received details of the Motions being tabled and as such it is vital that your voting preferences may be counted: please respond with your preferences.

##### **D-Day Commemorations**

Events are planned to occur on the 6th June to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day; more details to follow.

##### **Remembrance Day Events**

November is going to be a very busy time for the Branch and Newent’s community: more details to follow.

##### **Military Wives Concert**

A repeat of last year’s successful event is planned to be held on 24th November in Newent’s Memorial Hall: more details to follow

#### **5.2. Treasurer’s Report**

We have received £26 from RBL. This brings our balance up to £1022.91

#### **5.3. Bar & Entertainments Member.**

Proposed Branch Events 2024. Schedule as reported at previous meeting.

#### **5.4. Poppy Appeal**

The local Poppy Appeal Organiser (CT) gave a brief overview of how this year’s Poppy Appeal was proceeding, the current figures published are:

Season:            22/23 = £9,431.57  
                         23/24 = £9,005.76 (with a few month’s still to go)

The Chairman thanked CT for the update and all his hard work this year and offered Branch help for when it is needed.

#### **6.0 Any Other Business.**

##### **6.1 Marie Curie Event**

The Chairman gave a brief report on the Marie Curie event that his wife (Local box collector and organiser) attended in Hereford. He stated that EB had requested a talk to be given at a future Branch meeting and would update the Branch at the next meeting.

### **6.3 Bar and Entertainment**

The Ent's member has researched and resolved an issue surrounding the selling of alcohol at Branch meeting, with the Chairman volunteering to write and explain his findings to the Newent Memorial Hall Committee.

### **6.4 D-Day Poppy Pins**

The Poppy Appeal Organiser reported that he has ordered the D-Day pins which should be available at our next meeting.

### **6.5 Branch Christmas Meal**

The Ent's member stated that the date had to be confirmed although it would possibly be at the Alma.

### **6.6 D Day Flag Raising by Newent Library**

The Chairman will ask the Veterans Representative on the Newent Town Council to liaise with the Town Clerk regarding flag raising on June 6.

*Action: The Secretary Volunteered to speak to NTC and Veterans Rep*

**6.8 Armed Forces Week – 24 – 29 June 2024.** The Chairman would ascertain if NTC are intending to celebrate Armed Forces Week and if so what are their intentions.

*Action: Chairman to contact the NTC Veterans Rep and ask the question.* After meeting note: NTC have asked the Branch Parade Marshal to purchase a flag on their behalf, NTC have also asked the following ViP's: Mark Harper MP, Annie Reid and Gary Mills.

**7. Date for Next Meeting.** The Meeting Closed at 20:00 with the next meeting to take place 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 in Newent Memorial Hall.

## **Meeting Agenda**

### **Newent and District Branch The Royal British Legion**

#### **23 May 2024 in The Memorial Hall**

1. Welcome and Act of Remembrance.
2. Apologies for Absence.
3. Chairman's Report.
4. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising.
5. Reports by Officers.
6. Any Other Business.
7. Date of Next Meeting.