

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

Meeting Held 25th January 2024 in Newent Memorial Hall.

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Richard 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, Entertainments Member
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Sue Urch	
Jim Gardiner	
Tom Hestletine	
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Shaun Westmoreland	
Jan Sologub	

1 Act of Remembrance.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1900 hours and asked for all members present to take a few moments to think of all those who could not be with us tonight due to ill health. He then read out the names of the members of the Parish who lost their lives during WW1 and WW2 during the months of January and February, he concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2 Apologies for Absence.

Adrian Dover, Gordon Thorogood, Colin Calcutt, Clare Page, Terry Weaver, Susanne Britt, Colin Britt, Mary Curtis, Elaine Balding, Pat Price, John Price, Jon Miles, Viv Miles and Simon Mason.

3 Chairman's Report.

Introduction

It seems like an age since I last stood here and waxed lyrical, but I've managed to cram in a holiday, celebrate Christmas and New Year, contract the lurgy and attend loads of functions, so my report is mainly social this being the first month of 2024:

3a Aden Veterans Lunch – 6 December 2023

As predicted, this turned out to be excellent, with excellent food and great company, my thanks to Graham for all his liaison work and suggesting it in the first place.

3b Newent Town Council – Civic Carol Service – 12 December 2023

As usual the Newent Town Council (NTC) Civic Carol Service was very well attended with participation from various local groups. Simon again conducted the service with aplomb and the Tea & Mince pies were superb. My thanks go to NTC for putting on the Service and for the invitation, to St Mary's for their usual hospitality and of course to our very own big gun, Canon Simon Mason.

3c Branch Christmas Meal – 21 December 2023

As was the case last year, the food in my opinion was excellent and the staff very attentive. I would like to say thanks to our Entertainments Member, Rick, for organising everything which went very smoothly, to David for arranging the Raffle and to the Alma for another fantastic evening and to all those that attended and made it such a great evening.

3d Veteran's Coffee Morning – 23 January 2024

Thanks to Keith for agreeing to cover the Veterans Coffee Morning which took place on Tuesday and seemed to be well attended.

3e County Annual General Meeting and Conference – 27 January 2024

This year's County Annual General Meeting (AGM) is taking place at Tuffley Community Association, Windsor Drive, Tuffley on 27 January 2024 starting at 10:30am. So far the Branch Welfare Officer and myself will be attending but if anyone else would like to attend to see how County operates you are more than welcome. This is an all-day event but luckily Keith has to get back by 4pm, so a 3pm stop no matter what. Keith and I will report on the day at next month's meeting.

3f Other News

National have sent out the following message:

"I am writing to confirm some changes to the leadership of three BoT committees, namely Nominations and Governance, the Membership Council and the ROI subsidiary.

The changes are as follows:

I am standing down as Chair of NomGov and have been replaced by Patsy Wilkinson, effective January 1 2024. Patsy will retain her role as Vice Chair of the Membership Council for the foreseeable future.

John Boisson is standing down as Chair of the MC and will be replaced by Lynda Atkins, effective immediately.

Paul Harris is standing down as Chair of the ROI and I will nominate a replacement imminently once we have reviewed the needs of this subsidiary.

All other Chairs and board committee memberships remain the same to maintain continuity as we focus in on the priorities agreed by the Trustees pre-Christmas.

I wish to thank John Boisson for his time as Chair of the MC - it is an onerous task with any number of priorities to be juggled, especially alongside a full-time job. I also want to thank Paul Harris for his steady guidance in the ROI, which we are also benefitting from on some of the other BoT committees.

Lynda Atkins has dedicated many years of work across membership issues and will work alongside the Membership Council, Janet Talman, Executive Director: Membership and the Membership Directorate, the Board and the wider Executive Board to champion and deliver on our top priorities for membership this year, including:

- ***Delivering the future of membership proposition and an improved offer for all members, new and old.***
- ***Reducing and seeking to eradicate issues with the current membership experience.***
- ***Improved, more open communication and better working practices between members, the MC, the Exec Board and the Trustees.***

I am very much looking forward to the County Chairs Seminar in Birmingham at the beginning of March when we will update County Chairs on these projects and others, on our 2024

priorities, and how we will continue our shared work to improve the lives of our beneficiaries up and down the country.

Thank you for everything you do - you continue to make us a formidable force across the country. -

Jason Coward, National Chair"

3g. Branch Membership 2024

Membership continues to be stable, but with such a low number of members if anyone has any ideas on how to attract or recruit new members, I would love the opportunity to discuss any proposals.

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.

Previous minutes were proposed by GB and seconded by PP and accepted as a true and accurate record.

There were no outstanding matters

5 Reports by Officers.

5a Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for January 2024

Here we are having watched Christmas and New Year festivities pass almost in a flash before our eyes, we are forced to contend with the winter storms battering our area.

Our Branch Christmas Dinner at The Alma in Linton was again a great success, enjoyed by all: thank you to Rick A, David P and to our hosts for providing such excellent food and beverages.

The Branch will no doubt face many changes this year with old friends and members moving onto pastures new, and new residents joining our Newent RBL Community.

We send Colin C best wishes for his new life in Derbyshire and welcome back David S who has decided to further support the Branch by undertaking the role of Branch Secretary. Thank you, Mary, for helping the Branch out over the past months.

We once more 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.

5b Branch Welfare, Membership, Statistics, Community Support and Youth Liaison.

There continue to be many planned changes within the BCS sphere and the greater RBL organisation, most of which should be in place by the middle of next year.

You are encouraged to "watch this space" for further details.

5c Branch Welfare

The Branch continues to aid and support its members and veterans, initially by signposting them to the National RBL Helpline and by interaction with the local community and national organisations.

Members are reminded that although changes are planned, The National RBL Helpline remains as: 0808 802 8080 and The Veteran's Gateway: <https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk>

NOTE:

Please see my November 2023 Report for further information.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs has now launched a consultation to better understand veterans, the effectiveness of current policies and how to shape future policy. Notwithstanding these changes, Branch members are assured that moving forward, we will always continue to utilise our local knowledge and contacts to support our members and veterans.

Veteran Liaison and Support Grants

We welcome new veterans in our community and offer our support to those in need.

Members are reminded that HMG and Service grants continue to remain available for those suffering hardship.

5d Branch Membership

In accordance with TRBL records, current Branch Membership now stands at 39 members, an increase of three further members from that listed in November.

We welcome our new members and look forward to seeing them at forthcoming events.

5e Branch Statistics

The Branch has continued to provide support to its current members and new veterans moving into our community.

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	10
How many beneficiaries visited	4
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	4
Total Welfare Expenditure	NIL (see Note 1)

Telephone Buddies:

Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive	20
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	4
Telephone – How many telephone buddies:	6

5f Branch Community Support and Youth Liaison Activities

1. Community and Youth Liaison

Your Branch Representatives continue to liaise with the many varied groups and youth organisations within our community.

The process for TRBL Branch Affiliation continues to be addressed by TRBL HQ; further updates in due course.

2. Newent War Memorial

Having established a working committee, activities continue on works to upgrade Newent's War Memorial and incorporate those names originally omitted.

Tenders have been assessed and a contract placed. The next phase of the project is to secure suitable funding leading to completion of the Memorial's restoration.

Just over £400 was raised during the Remembrance Day Service held at St Mary's Church and we record our special thanks to Dood Pearce of the Newent Local History Society for donating copies of "We Will Remember Them" to raise funds in support of the works.

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

5g TRBL HQ, County Liaison and Branch Communications (OS365)

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

5h Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Diary

TRBL Gloucestershire AGM is being held at Tuffley Community Centre on Saturday, 27th January 2024.

The 2024 RBL Conference will be held at the ICC in Newport, Wales during the weekend of 10th/12th May - more information in due course

6. Treasurer's Report

Our starting balance was £954.91.

We have received £42 which is probably from members' subscriptions.

This leaves a balance of £996.91.

The cheque from us to Manna Coffee and creative 26th October for £40 has not yet been banked.

7. Bar & Entertainments Member.

Proposed Branch Events 2024.

October 24th, 19:00 – AGM - Cheese and Wine

November 28th, 19:00 – Branch Meeting and Social in Cobblers.

December – Branch Christmas Meal.

NOTE: There is a possibility of inviting the Innsworth Military Wives Choir to perform later on in the year, Entertainments Member to keep members informed.

8 Any Other Business.

8.a. Replacement Branch Secretary

The Chairman informed the meeting that David Sass had volunteered his services as Branch Secretary. After a short discussion the Chairman asked for a Proposer and Seconder on this motion.

Proposer: HA, Seconder: JS, with the vote unanimous in favour. David agreed to take over the role immediately and was welcomed onto the Committee.

8.b. Colin Calcutt Leaving card

HA suggested that the Branch send a good luck card to Colin who had finally managed to sell his house and move up to Derbyshire after many years in the Branch and the local area. The meeting agreed and this will be done as soon as we have his forwarding address.

8.c. Buchanan Trust Residence for Veterans

Deputy Chairman is in contact with the Buchanan Trust and as soon as a visit has been arranged will let members know.

9. Date of Next Meeting.

The meeting closed at 1950 hours with the next meeting taking place 22nd February at 7pm in Newent Memorial Hall.

Agenda for Meeting to Newent and District Royal British Legion Branch on 22nd February 2024.

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.