

**Minutes for the Annual General Meeting of**  
**The Royal British Legion Newent & District Branch:**  
**Memorial Hall - 24 October 2024**

<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Post</b>
Keith Urch	Vice Chairman/Branch Community Support Officer/Youth Liaison Officer
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Rick Axon	Entertainments & Bar Member
Dace Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
David Sass	Branch Secretary
Susan Urch	
John Price	
Pat Price	
Jan Sologub	
Gordon Thorogood	
Steve Doyle	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p><b><u>1. Act of Remembrance.</u></b> The Vice Chairman opened the meeting at 1900 hours and asked that we spare a thought for those who could not be with us due to ill health. He then read the names to the memory of the fallen from the Parish of Newent during WWI &amp; II for the months of November &amp; December followed by the exhortation.</p>	
<p><b><u>2. Apologies for Absence.</u></b> Apologies had been received from Richie Balding, Elaine Balding, Graham Barton, Simon Mason, Tom Heseltine, Adrain Dover, Terry Bourne, Ashley Martin, Brian Billingham, Mary Curtis, Colin Britt, Susanne Britt, Viv Miles, John Miles, Jim Gardiner and Shaun Westmoreland.</p>	
<p><b><u>3. Chairman's Opening Remarks.</u></b> The Vice Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed his thanks to those who turned out.</p>	
<p><b><u>4. Adoption of Minutes from the previous AGM.</u></b> The minutes from the AGM held on 27 October 2023 had been circulated to all members before the meeting and were noted by all present. They were proposed as a true record of the meeting by Rick Axon and seconded by John Price. The motion was passed unanimously.</p>	
<p><b><u>5. Matters arising from previous minutes.</u></b> Item 8a : The adoption of the 2023 accounts were completed and agreed. The Military Wives Concert proceeds for the Poppy appeal were noted and approved.</p>	
<p><b><u>6. Chairman's Report.</u></b> The Chairmans report had been circulated to all members by email before the meeting and were noted by all present. See Annex A</p>	

## **7. Individual Officers Reports.**

### **7.a. Vice Chairman/Branch Community Support/ Youth**

**Liaison.** The vice Chairmans report was circulated to all members by email before the meeting and was noted by all present. See Annex B

**7.b. Branch Padre Report.** The Branch Padre's report was circulated to all members by email before the meeting and was noted by all present.

**7.c. Parade Marshal Report.** The Parade Marshal's report was circulated to all members by email before the meeting and was noted by all present. See Annex C

**7.d. Entertainments & Bar Member Report.** The entertainments & bar member reported that the Bar is maintaining a healthy balance and has paid for tonight's food. The remaining entertainments are: November's Branch meeting in Cobblers 19:00 hrs, followed by a social, the Innsworth Military Wives Choir concert on the 24th November, and the Branch Christmas meal in the Alma, Linton at starting at 19:00 hrs.

**7.e. Treasurers Report.** The Treasurer asked if everyone had chance to peruse the Lomas end of year report. At 1st July 2023 the balance was £1286.41. At 30th June 2024 the balance was £1004.41. As a small branch, our income is mainly from branch subscriptions by our members. Our outgoings have been for poppy wreaths and a contribution to the Memorial Hall for our rent. As we have a few more members recently joined, we can expect our income to be a little more in the coming year.

**7.f. Raffle Coordinator's Report.** A total of 12 raffles were held from October 2023 through to September 2024.

**7.g. Secretary's Report.** The Secretary stated that he had enjoyed the last year of activity and was grateful for the support of the Officers and members whilst carrying out the various tasks during the year. He was happy to carry on in the post unless there were any nominations or volunteers to replace him.

**7.h. There were no further reports.**

<p><b><u>8. Presentation and Adoption of Accounts.</u></b></p> <p><b>8.a. Adoption of Accounts.</b></p> <p>The Treasurer presented the Branch accounts for the year end 30 June 2024. It was proposed by the Secretary and seconded by GT that the accounts be adopted for this year, the motion was carried unanimously</p> <p>The MS1 form had been filled in and signed by all relevant parties and presented to the Vice Chairman for processing and dispatching.</p>	<p>Secretary And Vice Chairman</p>																										
<p><b><u>9. Election and Committee Members.</u></b></p> <p>There were no new nominations for any of the committee posts, Therefore the Branch Committee for the next 12 months is as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="225 770 1102 1267"> <thead> <tr> <th>Position</th> <th>Name</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Chairman</td> <td>Mr Richard Balding</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deputy Chairman</td> <td>Mr Keith Urch</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Secretary</td> <td>Mr David Sass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Treasurer</td> <td>Mrs Helen Axon</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Branch Community Support</td> <td>Mr Keith Urch</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parade Marshal</td> <td>Mr Graham Barton</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Membership &amp; Youth Liaison</td> <td>Mr Keith Urch</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Raffle Coordinator</td> <td>Mr David Pollock</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Entertainments</td> <td>Mr Rick Axon</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Meetings Bar Member</td> <td>Mr Rick Axon</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Padre</td> <td>Rev Simon Mason</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deputy Padre</td> <td>Rev Pat Phillips</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Vice Chairman thanked all the Committee Members on behalf of the Chairman for their continued support and looked forward to working with them over the coming year.</p>	Position	Name	Chairman	Mr Richard Balding	Deputy Chairman	Mr Keith Urch	Secretary	Mr David Sass	Treasurer	Mrs Helen Axon	Branch Community Support	Mr Keith Urch	Parade Marshal	Mr Graham Barton	Membership & Youth Liaison	Mr Keith Urch	Raffle Coordinator	Mr David Pollock	Entertainments	Mr Rick Axon	Meetings Bar Member	Mr Rick Axon	Padre	Rev Simon Mason	Deputy Padre	Rev Pat Phillips	
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<p><b><u>10. Nominations to National Office.</u></b></p> <p>There were no Nominations to National Office.</p>																											
<p><b><u>11. Motions and Charter Motions for the Annual Meeting of the County Conference.</u></b></p> <p>There were no Charter Motions.</p>																											
<p><b><u>12. Appointment of Delegates to the Annual Meeting of the County Conference and Annual Conference.</u></b></p> <p>The Chairman and Deputy Chairman would be attending the National Annual Conference remotely this year.</p>																											
<p><b><u>13 Date of Next Meeting.</u></b> The Meeting closed at 19:42 hours. The next meeting will be the November monthly meeting which will take place on 28 November 2024 Starting at 1900 hours in Cobblers Ale House.</p>	<p>All</p>																										

**Agenda for The Newent & District Branch Royal British Legion**

**Meeting 28 November 2024**

**in Cobblers Micro Pub**

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

Newent and District Branch TRBL

Annual General Meeting in the Memorial Hall - 24 October 2024

Chairman's Report

**Introduction**

Apologies for not being there, but at our 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt Elaine and I have finally managed to get on to a Danube Cruise. This year as every year has started out a struggle to recruit new members and retain them, however, due to the unfortunate closure of the Minsterworth Branch we did receive a boost in numbers, but more about that later. The Branch has achieved much this year and continues to foster good relationships within the local community, which I hope will continue growing.

**Welfare**

This year has seen the Branch welfare support go into overdrive especially during the start and middle of the year, your Branch Community Support (BCS) representative achieving his usual high standards and as usual taking it in his stride. Keith who as most of you know works tirelessly to make sure any non-beneficiaries or beneficiaries receive as much help and support the Branch and the wider Royal British Legion can give them, which includes some noticeable results this year. However one of my goals, which should also be a Branch goal is to see Keith receive some support from Branch members, no matter how low key the support is anything would be a help.

**Membership**

As is the case most years the membership numbers have fluctuated, however as mentioned in the introduction we have benefitted by the tune of 12 new members when the Minsterworth Branch folded, several of those members have attended meetings and we obviously welcome them in to the fold. My recruitment strategy remains at a minimum uplift of 10%, however, with the ever-increasing age demographic of our members a more realistic target of 20% would be a better, with an emphasis on bringing in a younger age group to become more actively involved in the Branch and therefore future proofing the continuing development of the Branch. You probably get a bit fed up of me going on about membership, but without it we don't exist.

**Affiliations**

The Branch continues to have excellent working relationships with Newent Town Council the Air Cadets, Newent Community School and the local Girl Guiding movement and Cobblers Ale House who adopted the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal as their charity of choice in 2022 and have continued with its support. It is my intention to continue the excellent work achieved by your committee over the past year and to expand the Branches affiliations and liaisons to the wider Newent voluntary and young people's activity groups, but this can only be achieved by every member taking an active role in promoting and pushing the Royal British Legion and the Branch forward in to the community.

**Finances**

The Branch bank balance continues to remain healthy with very little movement throughout the year and Helen who has updated our Branch banking practices will give an update on the latest figures and issues faced during her report.

**Poppy Appeal**

As mentioned earlier the Branch has been adopted by Cobblers Ale House as their charity partner of choice, and during this year has raised significant funds for the Poppy Appeal, several events have been scheduled which are: a Cider and Sausage night on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and Pancake night on Shrove Tuesday 4 March 2025, it would be great if the Branch could

support both events.

### **Other Activities**

Some of the other activities the branch has been involved in this year include but are not limited to: Participation and attendance at Newent Community School's Remembrance Service and Newent's Remembrance Parade and Service in November, attendance at the County Conference in January, as well as attending the RBL Annual Conference. The Veteran's Coffee Mornings have continued throughout the year, we have supported several endeavours not least the War Memorial Restoration project and the Poppy Appeal and of course the John Edward Whitehorn trophy.

### **Thank You's**

My report would be a little bit remiss without a few thank you's, the Branch could not exist without the hard work and dedication shown by your Branch Officials, David who stepped in last year when we needed a secretary and has steadfastly supported me during the year. Rick has risen to the difficult and thankless task of running the bar each month and of course organising any social events partaken by the Branch throughout the year, ably supported by his wife Helen who of course has had the incredibly difficult task of getting to grips with the peculiar RBL accounting system LOMAS and bringing the Branch bank account in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, thank you both for everything you've done this year. I tease Graham about being the Branch 'Standard Bearer' which he takes with good humour, because as everyone knows he is actually the Parade Marshal but does often volunteer to carry the Standard when not performing his Parade Marshal duties, both things make the Branch visually stand out on Parades, Services, Funerals and flag raisings, so once again thank you Graham. David P continues with the thankless task of putting on the monthly raffles, which takes a lot of organising especially without a recognised revenue stream to fall back on, but with very limited resources he does an excellent job, so once again thank you. Simon and Pat are the moral arm of our little branch and often work hard in the background, the support they give me helps to keep me on an even track. It seems like I'm always having to say thank you to Keith and I am because he has so many hats to wear in the Branch that he is always up to something, simply put I could not Head up the Branch without the continued support from the whole committee but especially Keith.

Nearly finished; thanks also goes to Newent Town Council, Manna Coffee House, and Cobblers Ale House for their continued support to both the Branch and the Poppy Appeal and Newent Community School for helping in their own way to keep remembrance and the Poppy Appeal in the forefront of the local community.

Last but not least to all our members, whether they are able to make events and meetings or not, it is always lovely to see so many of you turn out, this is such valuable support mechanism for such a small branch, so thank you all.

**Richard Balding**

**Chairman**

**Newent & District Branch**

**The Royal British Legion**

## Branch Community Support Annual Report for the Period 2023/2024

### Annual Report from the Branch Community Support Representative(s)

Dear Branch Members, Veterans, Families and Supporters of the Newent & District Branch of The Royal British Legion.

It is with pleasure that we present to you the BCS Annual Report.

### RBL PATRON

The Royal British Legion (TRBL) are pleased to announce that King Charles III has been confirmed as our new patron.

The charity has held Royal patronage since it was founded in 1921 and The King will be the fourth monarch to serve as patron of the RBL following his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, and George VI and Edward VIII before her.

### NATIONAL NEWS

New National President

The Branch has recently been informed by TRBL HQ that Vice Admiral (Rtd) Paul Bennett CB OBE will be our next National President. He is stated to be a passionate advocate for those who serve and have served and will bring his insights and significant experience to our work during his term. He joins TRBL ahead of this year's Remembrance period to represent the RBL at this year's Remembrance events and beyond.

National RBL Notice re Meet-ups and Roadshows paused for review

Following feedback from County Chairs about the importance of clear communication and effective engagement, the recent change in Executive Director in the Membership Directorate, Membership Meet-ups and Roadshows planned for later this year and early into next year have been cancelled. TRBL will look into the best approach going forward.

### GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY NEWS

Following past difficulties, and being placed into administration, we are pleased to report the formation of a new RBL County Committee. The Newent Branch extends its support to the County Executive, welcomes this change and looks forward to its successful future.

### BRANCH NEWS

Overview

As your representative having the combined roles of Vice Chairman, Branch Community Support and Youth Liaison Officer, one wishes to express sincere thanks to Branch colleagues, those manning the Veteran's Gateway, various Newent community organisations, schools, and our Town, District and County Councils for their continued support.

This past year has not been without its issues but with the significant support of Branch Members, we have again continued to meet the needs of veterans and their families within our community.

Following the raising of awareness of veterans' needs and The Covenant in particular, Newent Health Practice has appointed a Veterans' Support Representative, Practice Nurse, Phil Conway - we thank Phil and The Practice for their continuing commitment.

We also welcomed new members following the unfortunate closure of the Minsterworth Branch, enjoyed a number of interesting evening presentations and attendance at various Newent community events to promote the Branch and the works of TRBL.

Members are reminded of the ongoing support available via The Branch, TRBL Helpline and now via Forces Connect South West. This is a local authority initiative that supports the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant to the military community across the South West through effective partnerships. See: [forcesconnectsouthwest.org.uk](https://forcesconnectsouthwest.org.uk)

Supported by a number of Town Councils and their Veteran Representatives such as District Cllr Julia Gooch (Newent), the FoDDC Armed Forces Network has been established to further the aims and objectives of The Covenant within The District. It is lead by District Council Representatives as part of a community initiative: its appointed Armed Forces Champion is Cllr Alan Preest, represents both Gloucestershire County and Lydney.

As in previous years, this Annual Report covers the three main areas encompassed within the

role of Branch Community Support and Welfare Officer.

### **BRANCH MEMBERSHIP**

Members may recall that Branch Membership numbers have fluctuated significantly over past years but is now stable at its current level of 52 members. Despite a number of colleagues moving away to pastures new, many have remained Branch members and we recently had the pleasure in welcoming a number of new members over the past twelve months: we look forward to their attendance at our monthly meetings.

The Branch is justifiably proud of its membership, the friendships forged, reinforcing its uniqueness and links within our local community.

### **BRANCH WELFARE**

TRBL having developed new Branch processes and procedures for BCS training, your Chairman and BCS Representative are formally registered to provide BCS support.

They have recently announced a number changes to be instigated over the next couple months, including that of a new Branch Community Coordinator role, new BCS resources, and BCS ID Cards, the impact of which, we hope will aid reporting systems and streamline the delivery of BCS to our Members.

During the year 2022/2023, a total of 60 welfare visits were made to members, their families, and locally based veterans, with a corresponding number of contacts of support being made through the Telephone Buddy network. This represented a decrease from previous years, but still reflected the need to support our colleagues and their families, primarily focused around aspects of health and mobility with a far lesser request for advice on financial matters.

Notwithstanding the proposed changes, it is considered beneficial that we measure this years summary data against that of previous periods included in ( ), and as such, the Branch data for this period in accordance with the new RBL National Reporting System is as follows:

#### **The 2023/2024 Reporting Period**

The current reporting period presents yet another changing picture of the Branch, a summary of which follows:

Total Number of Welfare Visits	<b>55</b> (60) visits
Beneficiary visits:	<b>31</b> (35)
Branch Community Supporters:	<b>36</b> (48) (Note that this represents an average of 3 BCS per month)
Total Welfare Expenditure was:	<b>NIL</b> (NIL)
Total Telephone Buddy calls made:	<b>131</b> (124)
Beneficiaries called:	<b>38</b> (35) (Note that monthly numbers have varied from a maximum of 6 to a lower number of 2 beneficiaries)

### **YOUTH LIAISON, BRANCH AFFILIATIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

Regular communications have continued to be maintained with local youth organisations, schools and community organisations throughout this reporting period.

Please note that this year's Commemorative Service at Newent Community School by kind permission of the School's Head, Mrs Dawn Burke, is scheduled to occur on Friday, 8th November: all members are welcome.

In addition to the above, the Annual Service of Remembrance is taking place on Sunday, 10th November at St Mary's Church and supplemented by a short service being held at Newent's War Memorial on Monday, 11th November.

The Branch continues to support the family wishes of the late John Edward Whitehorn having established a youth award in his honour: we currently await the outcome of a call for nominees. Interest in Branch Affiliation continues but unfortunately RBL National have yet to finalise the new arrangements for the award of such affiliations thereby enabling The Branch to present many of those overdue Affiliation Certificates.

Sales of the Newent Local History Society's book highlighting the great loss that Newent and District families had suffered in both World Wars, "We Will Remember Them", continues. This year, again in support of the refurbishment to Newent's War Memorial, books will be available at The Remembrance Day Service for a donation towards The War Memorial Fund.

The planned programme to refurbish and add the names of the fallen that are missing from Newent's War Memorial has commenced: the Memorial has been cleaned and the addition of those missing names is pending.

Cobblers, a local hostelry has also planned a Cider & Sausage evening on Sunday, 27th October with all proceeds being donated to this year's Poppy Appeal.

**RECOGNITION**

Special thanks are extended to the following:

Newent Memorial Hall Committee, Local Businesses, Newent Local History Society, Schools and other Community Groups for their continuing support and raising funds for both The Branch, The Poppy Appeal, and the Refurbishment of Newent's War Memorial. However, we must all remember that the ongoing success of the Branch is due to its Committee, Branch Members, the many other unsung heroes within our local community, without whose support the Royal British Legion would not be the success that it is today.

Report Prepared By:

Keith C Urch

BCS representative

Newent & District Branch (BR3063)

## Annex C

### Parade Marshal Report for year 2023/2024

Since the AGM in October 2023 the Branch has been involved in several events:

- Remembrance Service at Newent Community School on 10 November where the Branch Standard was paraded.
- Remembrance commemoration by the War Memorial on Saturday 11 November where the Branch Standard was paraded.
- Remembrance Parade and Service on Sunday 12 November. This was very well supported by uniformed groups, civilian organisations and the public. The rain held off long enough for the Parade to get to Saint Mary's in the dry. Unfortunately, the weather then took a turn for the worse so it was agreed with the Vicar that the Act of Remembrance would take place inside the Church. Feedback after the Service was that almost everyone felt this was a better way of doing things as it meant there was no interruption to the Service while everyone made their way outside.
- On Wednesday 6 December several Members of the Branch attended the Aden Veterans Christmas Lunch where the Branch Standard was on display alongside those of the Aden Veterans and the Grenadier Guards Association
- D-Day80 was commemorated at two events on Thursday 6 June. At 0700 there was a Service outside Saint Mary's Church where a D-Day80 flag was flown on the Church flagpole and the Branch Standard was paraded. This was followed by a light breakfast in Saint Mary's Church room. At 0930 outside the Library another D-Day80 flag was raised and the Branch Standard was again paraded.
- On Monday 24 June the Branch Standard was paraded outside the Library where a flag was raised to mark the start of Armed Forces week.

Plans for marking Remembrance this November are at an advanced stage.

**Graham Barton,**  
**Parade Marshal.**