

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

23 January 2025 – Memorial Hall

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Richard Balding	Chairman
Keith Urch	Deputy Chairman, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Simon Mason	Padre
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Rick Axon	Bar, Entertainment Member
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Tom Heseltine	
David Sass	
Adrian Dover	
Jim Gardiner	
Jim Payne	

1. Act of Remembrance.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 19:00 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 of Newent who lost their lives in WW1 and WW2 during the month of February. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Graham Barton, Gordon Thorogood, Elaine Balding, John Price, Pat Price, Colin Britt, Susanne Britt, John Miles, Viv Miles and Susan Urch.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman welcomed everyone to a brand New Year, and continued with the following items:

3.1. Civic Carol Service – 10 December 2024

Several Branch members attended the Newent Town Council (NTC) Annual Civic Carol Service at St Mary's Church on the 10 December 2024. As usual the Civic Carol Service was superb with an excellent sermon from our Branch Padre and several readings from leading members of the town and of course mince pies and mulled wine after.

I'd like to give thanks to the Town Council and Mayor for the invitation to attend, to St Mary's for being excellent hosts to all the performers and everyone who attended.

3.2. Army Cadets Open Evening – 12 December 2024

For those of you who don't know the Army Cadets are re-forming in Newent and as such I was invited along to one of their open evenings on 12 December 2024 to meet up with the Detachment Commander (Lt Andrew M Barraclough) and some of his staff. It was a real positive evening and great to see the capabilities and enthusiasm on the night. The Troop will be re-starting on 23 January 2025 and I sure will be a great success. My thanks to Lt Barraclough for the invitation and Adrian D for the back up on the evening.

3.3. Branch Christmas meal – 19 December 2024

The Branch Christmas Meal this year was held in the Alma Inn at Linton which is always a welcoming place, as usual in my opinion the standard of fayre was excellent with tremendous service in such a small space. I believe all those who attended had a great time.

My thanks obviously go to the Alma and staff for their excellence on the night, to our raffle coordinator for his efforts, to SU for arranging the subsidies and of course to the Entertainments member for arranging an excellent evening.

3.4. County Conference – 18 January 2025

The Deputy Chairman and myself attended the County Conference at Tuffley Community Centre on the 18 January 2025, the format was as previous years and well attended by County Branches. Nothing of real interest to report, apart from after the 3rd time of asking County did not recognise someone from our Branch I had nominated for an award, even though they appeared to give the whole of the County Committee members a certificate of recognition.

3.5. Veteran's Coffee Morning – 28 January and 25 February 2025

Don't forget that the next Veterans Coffee Morning will be next Tuesday 28 January and next month's will be on 25 February 2025 starting at 10am in Manna Coffee House, everyone is welcome to attend. JP asked if the Coffee Morning was for anyone, the Chairman stated that it was.

3.6. Branch Secretary Vacancy

I'm sorry to say that our Branch Secretary has tendered his resignation due to personal reasons, I wish him well in his future endeavours. However, with that said the Branch now need a Secretary, I would be very happy to talk through this pivotal post with any volunteers, please just let me know.

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

With no Matters arising from the previous meeting, KU proposed and RA seconded that the minutes were a true and accurate record. **Decision:** Passed Unanimously.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for November 2024

5.1.1. Welcome

With our excellent Branch Christmas Meal over and thoroughly enjoyed by those attending at The Alma in Linton: grateful thanks to Rick for arranging this event. This year begins the proposed changes to National RBL processes, and especially in delivering its services to veterans. Here in Newent, we look forward to reconnecting with our many local veterans and serving members of our Armed Forces community.

5.1.2. Branch Remembrance

We remember those friends, veterans, and Branch colleagues who are unable to be present this evening. Members are reminded that The Branch is here to assist and support veterans and their families; you only need to contact one of your Committee.

5.1.3. 100th Birthday Celebration

On a brighter note, family, friends, and residents of Stokes Mews, Newent, were able to celebrate the 100th Birthday of John Vasselo, a former member of the Intelligence Corps.

The Branch sent him a card as did a number of other RBL linked organisations. We wish him continued good health and prosperity as he enters this, his 100th year.

5.1.4. TRBL Gloucestershire AGM

Last Saturday (18th January), our Chairman and I attended the County Conference and AGM in Tuffley. While the Agenda was extensive, there was little of specific note for our Branch but I summarise key points as follows: Dignitaries included Lord Henry Elwes, Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Roger Deakes, The Lady Mayoress of Gloucester and TRBL Board Member Mrs Jan Buxton.

It transpired that a Collector of RBL Memorabilia was aiming to sell, by public auction, a total of 7

Standards: fortunately withdrawn following legal representation.

Poppy Appeal for 23/24 raised £49.2m of which £685k was raised in Gloucestershire. The figures for this year should be publicly available the end of March '25.

Many RBL County and National vacancies exist - nominations invited, in particular that of Trustees and Assistant National Parade Marshal.

The 2 Motions presented to County were both unanimously passed - further details available upon request.

5.1.5. TRBL National Activities.

There continues to be changes within the structure and operation of TRBL HQ and the way in which it delivers its services to Branches. At this time, a number of Membership Meet-ups and Roadshows planned for this year remain cancelled: more information will be available in the near future.

5.1.6. Branch Welfare

The Branch continues to aid and support its members, veterans and supporters.

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

Your BCS Representatives will continue to utilise their local and regional experience to assist wherever possible.

Armed Forces Support Network - The Veterans Covenant

The success of the newly formed FoD Armed Forces Support Network over the past year continues to be supported by the FoDDC: more information is available upon request.

5.1.7. Branch Membership

Branch Membership has reduced by three members due to one non-renewal and two transfers to another Branch: Branch recorded as having a total of 49 Members.

5.1.8. Branch Statistics

This period has been very quiet when compared to previous Christmas and New Year months, albeit we continue to be supportive of our local veterans and another two within our surrounding area. 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.

We would remind members that given the ongoing cold weather, you can support others in need by signposting them to TRBL helpline or by reference to the Branch BCS representatives at the earliest convenience: all communications are confidential.

Branch Statistics for this period are therefore as follows:

Total Number of Welfare visits	4
How many beneficiaries visited	2
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	2
Total Welfare Expenditure	NIL
Telephone Buddies:	
Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive	6
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	4
Telephone – How many telephone buddies:	2

5.1.9. Branch Community Support and Youth Liaison Activities

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

5.1.9.a. The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy

Application forms have been resent to all secondary schools and youth organisations serving Newent and its wider community, seeking nominations for this unique award to a young person providing outstanding community services: we are informed that nominations replies via the Branch Secretary are imminent.

5.1.9.b. Newent War Memorial

The majority of requests for public funding have now been received. The Newent War Memorial Committee await The Stonemason's planned completion date that includes the production of the Memorial Stone, Time Capsule and Memorial Plaque. The total cost of the project currently remains at circa £10k. Details of The Rededication of the War Memorial will be available in the coming months.

Grateful thanks are extended to everyone that has donated to date as part of the unique community project.

5.1.9.c. Veteran's Forum

Further to a recent FoDDC Veteran's Forum, please see a number of new email links that may be of interest:

[Samaritans](#) freephone **116 123** ROI 1850 609090 (24/7) or [email](#) – to access confidential emotional support for feelings of distress, despair or suicide thoughts

[Togetherall](#) – a safe **online** service providing access to millions with anxiety, depression and other common mental health issues. Free for serving personnel, veterans, family members and carers

[Shout](#) – a crisis **text** support service for people in the military community who are struggling and need immediate support to get through a crisis.

Text CONTACT to 85258. [#TextCONTACT85258](#)

[Forcesline](#) **telephone** helpline: 0800 7314880 (Monday – Friday 10.30 – 19.30) or [email](#). For serving personnel, former members of the Armed Forces and their families

[NHS 111](#) – to access medical help fast but when it's not a 999 emergency, **telephone** 111 (available 24 hours). To access information from the NHS on conditions, treatments, local services and healthy living following the link to [NHS Choices](#)

[Veterans UK](#) - to seek information on claiming AFCS, Armed Forces Independence Payment, Medical Discharges and Pension Forecast Requests: www.veterans-uk.info/pensionscompensation.html

5.1.10. Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

5.1.10.a. Branch Coffee Morning

Tuesday morning, 28th January 2025 at Manna House, Newent

5.2. Newent Treasurer's report for Nov 28

The current account balance stands at £1151.31.

Since our last meeting in November we have spent:

£100 for the Memorial Hall

£18.50 for a poppy wreath and

£114 in ticket refunds for the cancelled concert. More yet to be refunded as our Chairman has refunded some ticket holders in cash.

5.3. Branch Padre

5.3.1. VE Day, VJ Day and War memorial re-dedication

The Branch Padre started a discussion around Victory in Europe (VE), Victory in Japan (VJ) Days and the forthcoming re-dedication of the Newent War Memorial. Some concern was raised that VJ day because it is later in the year (15 August) tends to get over looked because of a perceived

priority is given to VE day, therefore the consensus of opinion was that instead of having 3 separate events spread out over the Summer period we should consider combining all 3 into 1 unique event anyone who wanted to could commemorate. MT had also mentioned that on the 17th May a 40s big band dance was booked in the Memorial Hall diary, which she thought could be for VE Day, MT promised to let the Chairman know who the organisers' were and the Chairman said he would make further enquiries once known.

Decision: The Branch Padre volunteered to look at the Church Calander to find a suitable date whereby a service could be held for the re-dedication and VE/VJ day event. Once a suitable date is found, it will be promulgated and Plans put together to hold a suitable event.

There were no other Officers or Committee Members Reports

6.0 Any Other Business

6.1. Woodland Trust – Annual Service of Remembrance. The Chairman stated that the Branch Parade Marshal had sent him information about this year's Woodland Trust, annual Service of Remembrance, which will take place at Thornbury on Wednesday 11th June 2025

“The Service is an open occasion, originally conceived as an act of remembrance for those who had fallen in the new millennium, the occasion quickly grew to serve as an occasion where all wishing to remember, both service and sacrifice or give thanks can attend and are welcome. The Chapel service is led by a military Padre and usually starts at 11am, followed by a walk to the Memorial where the acts of dedication, prayers the last post and the laying of the wreath's take place.”

After some discussion it was decided that this was an event the Branch could/should get involved with as it is a slight departure from the traditional WWI/WWII remembrance services. As soon as the Parade Marshal receives the full details they will be published to Branch Members, the Chairman stated that if available he would attend and offered car places to those who required them.

6.2. Jetage Museum.

The Chairman informed the members present that he had received information from one of the tour guides for the Jetage Museum just outside of Cheltenham. He asked if the members would be interested in a visit being arranged, which was warmly received. After some discussion it was decided that the Chairman would ask for a suitable tour date and then pass on the details to the members, however to garner the interest could anyone who is interested in attending a visit to the Jetage Museum please register their interest with the Chairman, so that he can gauge approximate size of the group.

6.3 NTC Civic Carol Service.

PP stated that the evening Civic Carol Service was excellent and all involved should be proud of their achievements.

6.4. Newent Veteran's 100th Birthday

DS stated that the 100th Birthday celebrations in Stokes Mews went very well, with some of his family attending, JG presented the Plaque and gave a small speech, however, JG did state that the Branch residents who lived in Stokes Mews thought that representation by one of the Branch Officers at the celebrations would have been appreciated.

The plaque was purchased on behalf of the Branch by GT who will give the Treasurer the invoice/receipt once he is feeling better. GT was thanked by the Branch for sourcing and purchasing the plaque.



6.5 Chairman's Jewel.

The Deputy Chairman asked what the status was with regards to the updated Chairman's Jewel. The Chairman stated that up until this evening the RBL shop were selling off the old merchandise, however just prior to the meeting the Chairman had briefly saw that on RBL social media it had been mentioned that some items had been produced with the Kings Cypher and that when he had time he would look on the RBL shop for confirmation.

7. Next Meeting date

There being no further business the meeting closed at 19:55 with the next meeting set for 27 February 2025, starting at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

Meeting Agenda

Newent and District Branch The Royal British Legion

27 February 2025 in Newent 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.