

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

22 May 2025 – Memorial Hall

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Richard Balding	Chair
Keith Urch	Deputy Chair, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership
Graham Barton	Parade Marshal
Simon Mason	Padre
Rick Axon	Bar, Entertainment Member
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Tom Heseltine	
John Price	
Pat Price	
Jim Gardiner	
Elaine Balding	

1. Act of Remembrance.

The Chair opened the meeting at 19:05 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 June. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Colin Britt, John Miles, Viv Miles, Susan Urch, Pat Phillips, Helen Axon, Sue Colborne, Terry Weaver, Jim Payne and Adrian Dover.

3. Chair's Report

Welcome everyone I hope you are all well. The main gist of my report this month is about all the VE Day 80 events that went on around Newent, but first an item from HQ:

3.1. National Chair's Briefing

This month I received the latest National Chair's briefing notes, of interest to our Members were the following stats:

Welfare Services Annual Review The Board received the report which provided an overview of welfare services provided over 2023/24. The Board found the report extremely positive and showcased the vast amount of support provided to RBL's beneficiaries. The year's numbers:

- *128,491 beneficiaries contacted RBL's contact centre;*
- *22,507 beneficiary households living in 66 different countries were supported through o Casework and Specialist teams (inclusive of Scotland);*
 - *Casework Services: 10,643 households*
 - *Benefits, Debt & Money Advice: 1,314 households*
 - *Independent Living Advice: 1,645 households*
 - *Advocacy & Complex Needs: 1,109 households*
 - *War Pensions & AFCS: 724 households*
 - *Admiral Nurses: 1,548 household*
 - *Care Homes: 781 unique residents*
- *22,682 Grants to individuals awarded, totalling £12.36m;*
- *Our grant funded (£715k pa) employment support programme delivered by the Forces Employment Charity supported 3,418 beneficiaries:*
- *Positive financial outcomes for beneficiaries of War Pensions & AFCS1 and the*
- *Benefits, Debt & Money Advice services total £34.3m.*

3.2. VE Day – 8 May 2025

Elaine and I had a fantastic couple of days down in London for the 80th anniversary celebrations for VE Day and by all accounts the various activities around Newent on this day also went very well. We'll hear more about this in the Deputy Chair's briefing later. My thanks to Newent Town Council, Sheppard House, St Mary's and the Memorial Hall for arranging both events on this day.

3.3. Other VE Day 80 Celebrations

(a) On the 10th May several Members attended a themed charitable event hosted in Cobblers Ale House. It was a fantastic afternoon of fun and raised over £400 for charity. My thanks to Graham at Cobblers, Simon and Ashley for all the food prep. and cooking and to all those who turned up and made it such a fun afternoon.

(b) The other charitable event happened on the 17th May arranged and hosted by Newent Rotary Club. This again was a brilliant evening of big band music, food and drink. It was also a fun evening and thanks have to go to Rotary for arranging the evening and to the Memorial Hall for decorating the Hall in Red, White & Blue.

3.4. Affiliation – Newent Platoon and Newent Branch TRBL

Last month we were awaiting the arrival of the affiliation badges from HQ. They have now arrived so arrangements are now being made to hold a ceremony to present both the certificate and badges. As soon as we have the details we will let you know.

3.5. Veteran's Coffee Morning – 27 May 2025

Don't forget that the next Veteran's Coffee Morning will be next week on 27 May 2025 starting at 10am in Manna Coffee House, everyone is welcome to attend.

3.6. Branch Secretary Vacancy

The Branch are still seeking a permanent Secretary so if anyone would like to take on this essential role please let me know, I will only be too pleased to describe the responsibilities etc. The Padre asked if the Secretary had to be over 18 years of age. **Action:** The Chair said he would find that out for the next meeting.

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

Matters arising:

item 5.3.d Woodlands Memorial – 11 June 2025, the Parade Marshal stated that he has received a total of 5 people from the area who would be attending the Memorial event on 11 June 2025 at the Woodlands Memorial, Earthcott Green.

With no further actions and no amendments the minutes were proposed by GB, seconded by RA. as a true and accurate record. **Decision:** Passed Unanimously.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report

5.1.1. Welcome

TBRL are now issuing BCS individual identification cards as part of their safeguarding programme: an example is available for viewing.

We continue to progress reconnecting with our many local veterans, serving members of our Armed Forces community and Cadet Units in Newent, having now finalised the first of our formal Branch Affiliations with the newly formed Gloucestershire Army Cadet Force (The Rifles) Newent Detachment and progressing affiliations with many other local organisations.

5.1.2. Branch Remembrance

We remember those unable to be present this evening due to various reasons and as usual, offer our support to those in need.

5.1.3. Branch Welfare, Membership, Statistics.

5.1.3.1. Branch Welfare

Due to the success of the FoDDC Veteran's Forum initiative last year, we have been informed that it will continue into the coming financial year.

This clearly shows the continuing commitment by County and District Councils following their original signing of the Armed Forces Community Covenant in 2012 (see attached).

Aside from the support available via your BCS Representatives, Veterans and Branch Members may continue to contact the RBL Helpline services as normal via the national network on 0808 802 8080 and The Veteran's Gateway: <https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk>

5.1.3.2. Armed Forces Support Network - The Veterans Covenant

The Forest of Dean (FoD) Armed Forces Support Network continues to be supported by the FoDDC: more information is available upon request.

As a Veteran, you are reminded to register your status with your local health service provider.

5.1.4.3. Branch Membership

With the current branch transfers nearing completion between Newent and Longhope Branches, due to the past closure of the Minsterworth Branch, Membership numbers are reducing to 45 Members: new members are always encouraged and welcomed.

5.1.3.4. Branch Statistics

We continue to be supportive of our local veterans and others 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 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	5
How many beneficiaries visited	5
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	2
Total Welfare Expenditure	NIL
Telephone Buddies:	
Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive	12
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	6
Telephone – How many telephone buddies:	3

5.1.4. Branch Community Support and Youth Liaison Activities

5.1.4.1. Community and Youth Liaison

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

Branch Representatives are currently finalising arrangements with the Newent Cadet Force of The Rifles to present their Affiliation Certificate and Platoon Badges: more information will be available to Branch Members in the near future. It was proposed by the Entertainments Member and seconded by the Padre that if the Affiliation ceremony takes place at a future Branch meeting that a sum not exceeding £50 is spent on "cheese and wine" to celebrate the event. **Decision:** After

some discussion it was **agreed unanimously** to spend £50 on food & drink if the ceremony was arranged for a Branch Meeting.

5.1.4.2. The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy

Your BCS representative recently met with Mrs Sarah Davey to inform her of the current status of their family community award.

The response to date has been extremely disappointing. Reminders have again been sent 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.

5.1.4.3. Newent War Memorial

The Newent War Memorial Committee is finalising arrangements for the Rededication Service planned to take place on Saturday, 21st June at St Mary's Church. Invitations are being sent to Individuals, Regimental Associations, Community Groups and Local Companies that donated funding. Public notices will be posted in the coming weeks.

The Stonemason's planned production of the Memorial Stone, Time Capsule and Memorial Plaque continues.

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

5.1.4.4. Commemorative Events

Newent Town Council, held a very successful VE Day Commemorative Event on Thursday, 8th May 2025, attended by the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire (Julie Kent MBE), Gloucestershire Lieutenancy and many other local dignitaries. Commencing with a meeting at The Flagpole by The Library, reading of the Royal Proclamation before moving onto the War Memorial for a short service and laying of wreaths, prior to journeying to Sheppard House for light refreshments and community singing with their clients.

Newent Memorial Hall hosted an excellent 80th VE Day Anniversary afternoon tea, on Thursday 8th May, including music from "Something for the Weekend", a local music group and varied refreshments. The event was attended by some 80 residents: your BCS Representative had the honour of reading The Royal Proclamation.

An extremely successful Charity Big Band Dance, organised by Newent & District Rotary Breakfast Club took place in the Memorial Hall on Saturday evening, 17th May 2025 in support of several local charities. Music was provided by the Big Band providing toe tapping 1940s music, with the evening being rounded off with a Fish "n" Chip Supper and community singing.

Thanks are extended to everyone involved in organising these wonderful community events.

5.1.4.5. Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

a. Veteran's Branch Coffee Morning will be held on Tuesday, 27th May 2025 at Manna Coffee House, Newent

b. Rededication of Newent's War Memorial, Saturday 21st June at St Mary's Church, commencing at 2 pm.

For further information please see the reports issued by our Branch Chair and our Branch Entertainments Officer.

5.2. Treasurer's report

Unfortunately the Treasurer was unable to attend this evenings meeting so the Chair read out the report:

The Branch has paid out £27.50 for the VE Day Wreath so the current account stands at £1,073.36.

5.3. Parade Marshal

a. War Memorial Rededication – 21 June 2025. The Parade Marshal stated that invitations to the various regiments have gone out and he has had some returns. He asked if the local RAFA & WRNA Standard Bearers could be contacted to see if they were available to attend. **Action:** The Chair volunteered to look up their email address and send off an invitation.

b. He also mentioned that Armed Forces Day flag raising is on Monday 23 June this year and asked if Newent Town Council (NTC) were going to raise the flag as in previous years. **Action:** The Chair agreed to ask the question of NTC and let everyone know the answer.

5.4. Branch Padre

The Padre stated that he was really pleased to be involved in the 8th May VE Day 80 events around Newent, and that the planned War Memorial rededication service was in the process of being finalised. He hoped to involve various groups in the service including some of the Youth groups and Regiments who were attending. It is proposed to hold one more meeting with the War Memorial Working group to finalise the proceedings.

6.0 Any Other Business

6.1. VE Day Photographs. TH mentioned that on VE Day several veterans were photographed with the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire (Julie Kent MBE) and wondered if copies of the photographs could be obtained. **Action:** The Deputy Chair volunteered to find out.

6.2. Cenotaph Parade 2025. The Chair informed all present about the eligibility criteria for this year's Cenotaph Parade in London, in case anyone was thinking of attending. The full criteria email will be attached with the minutes.

7.0. Next Meeting date

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1950 hrs with the next meeting set for 26 June 2025, starting at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

Meeting Agenda

Newent and District Branch The Royal British Legion

26 June 2025 in Newent Memorial Hall

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