

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

**28 May 2026 – Memorial Hall**

| <b><u>Attendees</u></b> | <b><u>Post</u></b>                                  |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Richard Balding         | Chairman                                            |
| Keith Urch              | Deputy Chair, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership |
| Graham Barton           | Parade Marshal/Standard Bearer                      |
| Simon Mason             | Padre                                               |
| Helen Axon              | Treasurer                                           |
| Adrian Dover            | Secretary                                           |
| Pat Phillips            | Deputy Padre                                        |
| Elaine Balding          |                                                     |
| Tom Heseltine           |                                                     |
| James Cunliffe          | Guest                                               |

### **1. Act of Remembrance.**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1903 hours and asked everyone to think of the people who couldn't be with us due to ill health or for any other reason. He then read out the names of the members of the Parish of Newent who lost their lives in WW1 and WW2 for the month of June. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

### **2. Apologies for Absence.**

Apologies were received from Terry Weaver, Jim Gardiner, David Pollock, Jon Miles, Viv Miles, Colin Britt, Sue Urch, Pat Price, John Price, Jim Paine, Sue Colborne.

### **3. Chairman's Report**

#### **Introduction**

Good evening, everybody:

#### **Thanks**

During the past month and the next couple of months the Branch Standard Bearer has taken on a commitment to promote and keep the Newent & District Branch of the RBL in the public eye. Graham has volunteered to attend several Memorial events and funerals, which he does with a great deal of professionalism and pride and for this I would like to extend my thanks for all that he does.

#### **Membership Newsletter for April**

Last month's newsletter announced that the Poppy Appeal made over £56 million for all the great causes we support, and that the National Memorial Arboretum will, from September, be known as the Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens.

#### **Newent Cemetery Heritage Project**

Last month Newent Town Council (NTC) contacted me to see if the Branch would be interested in supporting and potentially participating in a scheme they have to restore the historic chapels and lodge at Newent Cemetery and to enhance the site as a place of remembrance, heritage and community engagement. I have taken the

liberty of writing back to say that the Branch would be interested in supporting this endeavour. As more information becomes available, I will let you know and I will attach the request to the minutes when they have been completed. The Chairman then asked if Members were happy for the Branch to support the project – the response from Members was very positive.

The Branch Padre mentioned the Pauper's grave that is in the cemetery and said that he would like to find a way of marking it.

### **Newent Celebrates D-Day Event 6 June 2026**

The Newent Celebrates team have asked the Branch to become involved in the event on 6 June. We asked for volunteers and I'm pleased to say 4 people have committed their time to stand behind our stall and parade the Standard. The Newent Celebrates Team have agreed to help out with a gazebo and table and Graham will be taking the contents of our stall and the Standard. My thanks go to our volunteers; Graham, Helen, David, Tom and Jim.

The Chair then invited our guest, "Jimmer" to run through the main points of the proposed programme for the event.

### **Donation to the Branch**

Graham has been liaising with the family of Betty Powell who died recently at the age of 103 and they have very generously donated a sum to the Branch. We are just waiting to hear what the family would like the donation to be spent on. As soon as I know more information I will send a letter of thanks to Betty's family, Graham also tells me that Betty's parents were involved with the start-up of the Branch (see attached details about the Clifford Family). GB was able to let the meeting know that the Family had recently spoken to him and would like the money to be used for something Branch-related, such as the Centenary pennant. They also have a date for interring Betty's ashes in Newent Cemetery: 22 July at 1400.

### **Armed Forces Week/Day**

I have contacted NTC to ask if they will be honouring this year's Armed Forces week, and they have agreed to hold a flag raising ceremony on the morning of 22 June. I will let you know further information as I receive it.

### **Veteran's Coffee Morning**

The next Veteran's Coffee Morning will take place in the Red Lion on Tuesday 23 June 2026 starting at 10am. This is an excellent venue with a lovely outside space, great coffee and a good breakfast. We've had a good start with this new venue but I would love to see more people turning up. It's a great opportunity to get out of the house and meet some new people over a coffee, so if you know anyone who might benefit from this type of casual event please let them know.

### **Telephone Buddies**

I've recently refreshed/renewed my Branch Community Support courses and as part of that it explained what tools are at a Telephone Buddy's disposal, which I thought I would share with you.

Yes it's talking periodically to a beneficiary over the telephone but it also can be talking to them via email or text messaging or whatsapp facetime or if you are so

inclined Zoom or Teams. So essentially it's not all about talking and can combine various social media forms to suit both the BCS and Beneficiary.

### **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**

The Minutes of the April meeting had been circulated. HA proposed and KU seconded that they be accepted as a true record of the meeting. Passed unanimously.

There were no matter arising.

## **5. Reports by Officers**

### **5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for May 2026**

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

We have pleasure in presenting this month's BCS Report as follows:

#### **5.1.1 General Information**

Welcome to our May Meeting and General RBL Update.

At this time of exceptionally hot weather, you are reminded to continually hydrate and keep as cool as you are able,

We continue reconnecting with our local Veterans, serving members of our Armed Forces community, Cadet Units in Newent and the FoD, Armed Forces Community Network.

You may note via the media that TRBL have joined forces with the managing organisation of The National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire and are aiming to rename it with a national focus on the RBL.

More information will be made available to Members during the meeting.

#### **5.1.2. Branch Remembrance**

At this time we remember those unable to be present at our monthly meeting due to varying reasons and offer our support to those in need.

#### **5.1.3. Branch Welfare, Membership and Statistics.**

This reporting period has again been exceptionally quiet, with a minimal number of formal requests for advice or support.

#### **Branch Welfare**

Aside from the support available via your BCS Representatives, Veterans and Branch Members are encouraged to 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>

#### **Branch Membership**

The current Branch Membership this reporting period totals 41 members.

New members are always encouraged and welcomed.

### Branch Statistics

We continue to be supportive of our local Veterans and others within our surrounding area.

The Branch continues to provide support to Branch Members, other Veterans and their families in our community and a 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.

Please note that all communications are confidential.

Branch Statistics for this period are therefore as follows:

Total Number of Welfare visits: 4

How many beneficiaries visited: 4

How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters): 2

Total Welfare Expenditure: NIL

Telephone Buddies:

    Telephone – How many beneficiaries called: 4

    Telephone – How many telephone buddies: 2

Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive in support of Branch Members and local Veterans: 20

### **5.1.4. Branch Community Support, Youth Liaison and Community Activities.**

#### Community Support and Youth Liaison

Your Branch BCS representative(s) has received a small number of requests seeking further information on the Branch and the support it is able to provide.

Members may recall that the inauguration of the Imjin Memorial took place at The Cyril Hart Arboretum, Speech House on Friday, 24 April 2026: many thanks to Graham our Branch Standard Bearer for representing Newent and District..

The Branch continues to await further information regarding the date for the Service for the Dedication of the Newent AC Standard: this continues to be progressed.

Your Branch Representative(s) also continues to liaise with the many varied groups and youth organisations within our community.

#### The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy - Nominations

Unfortunately, there is nothing further to report this period albeit it is hoped that the Cadet forces and local schools will submit a suitable candidate(s) following the period of local holidays and national examinations.

#### Newent & District Branch Centenary February 2027.

Members are continually invited to submit ideas for next year's planned Branch Centenary Event.

Currently the date(s), venue for the event(s) and attendees are confirmed as being:

Sunday Morning Service on 21 February 2027 at St Mary's Church, Newent for the rededication of the Branch Standard.

A ticketed community event at Newent's Memorial Hall the following Sunday, 28 February 2027, involving the Innsworth Military Wives Choir and the Barbershop Group, "Something For The Weekend" accompanied by refreshments from 1430hrs to about 1700hrs.

Representatives of The Lieutenancy will attend, marking this very special occasion for Newent.

Other aspects for consideration include Community School Poster Competitions and a display of the Branch's history.

#### **5.1.5. Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary**

Members and colleagues are invited to note the following planned events:

Saturday, 6 June, Newent's D-Day anniversary celebrations.

Wednesday, 10 June, the Woodlands Memorial service at Earthcott Green, near Almondsbury, north of Bristol. Please note that those wishing to attend must forward their contact details in advance in support of administrative arrangements.

Please note that the Veteran's Breakfast and Coffee Morning are now being held in the Red Lion on the last Tuesday of the month, commencing 10 am: everyone welcome.

For further information please see the reports issued by our Branch Chairman, Branch Officers and Standard Bearer.

#### **5.1.6. Notification Regarding Safeguarding from TRBL BCS Team**

Branches have been requested to publicise that if you have a Safeguarding concern, in the first instant contact your Branch BCS Representative and then, as appropriate, your Membership Engagement Officer directly.

If your MEO is out of office, please

email [Safeguarding@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:Safeguarding@britishlegion.org.uk) copying in your BCS Representative and MEO.

If you have a Veteran in need of support, please call our contact centre on **0808 802 8080** (8 am – 8 pm, 7 days a week).

In the event of an emergency, please contact 999 without delay.

#### **5.2 Parade Marshal/Standard Bearer Report**

On Friday 24 April the Branch Standard was paraded at the dedication of the Imjin Memorial at the Forest Arboretum.

On Saturday 6 June the Branch Standard is due to be on parade as part of Newent's D-Day anniversary celebrations.

On Wednesday 10 June the Branch Standard will be on parade at the Woodlands Memorial service at Earthcott Green.

The Standard Bearer was given permission to take the Branch Standard to the funeral of David Riis-White, a former warrant officer in the Royal Navy, on Friday 29 May 2026.

#### **5.3 Branch Padre Report**

SM said that as the Newent Celebrates event on 6 June starts with a time of remembrance at 1300, he had decided not to go ahead with a gathering at the War Memorial at 1100.

He is proposing to use the Remembrance Service in November as a way of introducing the Centenary Service and looking back at the work done on the War Memorial. If it had not been arranged for an earlier date, he said that the dedication of the Cadet Standard could take place on Remembrance Sunday.

#### **5.4 Treasurer's Report**

Income this month:

|          |         |                          |
|----------|---------|--------------------------|
| RBL      | £ 4.00  | Membership subscriptions |
| RBL      | £370.00 | Centenary allowance      |
| HMCTs    | 0.45p   | Poppy box payment        |
| D Powell | £450.00 | Donation                 |

Outgoings:

|                |        |                     |
|----------------|--------|---------------------|
| Military Wives | £50.00 | Deposit for concert |
|----------------|--------|---------------------|

Current Account Balance; £1,789.47

There were no other reports.

#### **6. Branch Centenary, 18 February 2027**

It was agreed that final costings, timings, refreshments etc. should be discussed at the July Branch Meeting.

The Branch Padre said that he would like to start the Service on 21 February at 1000 and that he would like to arrange a small group to discuss the format of the Service.

RB agreed to find out how and when we need to apply for a Centenary pennant to go on the Standard.

Other options still under consideration include:

- Slide show of Branch activities over the last 100 years, Newent History Society have been asked for their advice.
- Providing a case in which to permanently exhibit the original Minutes book
- Possibly involving students from NCS to digitalise the names of Branch Members from the Branch's founding in 1927.

Members were asked to keep coming up with ideas.

#### **7. Any Other Business**

**7.1** SU is no longer able to run the Social Account as the local branch she used is closing. HA agreed to take this on.

**7.2** GB suggested that we ought to be having a meeting to plan Remembrance events. RB agreed to contact NTC to arrange a meeting.

#### **8. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Thursday 25 June 2026 in the Memorial Hall starting at 1900.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 2017.

**Agenda for the Newent & District Branch Royal British Legion  
Meeting 25 June 2026 at the Memorial Hall**

1. Act of Remembrance.
2. Apologies for Absence.
3. Chairman's Opening Remarks.
4. Adoption of Previous Minutes and Matters Arising
5. Reports by Officers.
6. Branch Centenary, 18 February 2027.
7. Any Other Business.
8. Date of Next Meeting.

## **The Clifford Family**

Henry Thomas Clifford was born at Linton on 17 March 1895.

At the time of the 1911 census he was living in Gorsley.

At the outbreak of WW1 he joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment and was sent to France as one of "The Old Contemptibles". By the end of the War he was a corporal.

In August 1918 he married Gertrude Rose Archer (born 9 May 1897) at the parish church, Dymock.

They set up home at 8 Lancaster Terrace, Newent (now Hill Top Lane).

Henry was a founder member of the Newent Branch of the British Legion (it didn't become "Royal" until 1971) and in WW2 he served as a sergeant in the Home Guard. He died in July 1973 and his funeral was held at Saint Mary's.

Gertrude was a founder member of the women's section of the British Legion, holding the office of vice chair for many years. She died in July 1960 and her funeral was held at Saint Mary's.

The eldest son, Hubert, joined the Gloucester regiment when he left Newent Grammar School and in February 1940 he was sent to India as a sergeant-instructor. In March 1941 he was commissioned into the Green Howards.

The second son, Reginald, served as a Lance-Bombardier in the Royal Artillery from 1940.

The third son, Leslie, joined the Royal Navy when he left Newent Grammar School in October 1941 and served as a signaller in the submarine service.

The only daughter, Elizabeth (known as Betty), became a nurse after leaving Newent Grammar School. She joined the ATS in November 1940 and became a corporal then a Sergeant serving at radio location units in Eastern England. After the war she married and lived in and around Newent where she joined the British Legion. She moved to Highnam in 2010.

The youngest son, Frank, was in the Cadet Training Corps during the war.