

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

26 March 2026 – 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/Standard Bearer
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Adrian Dover	Secretary
Tom Heseltine	
Jan Sologub	

1. Act of Remembrance.

The Chair opened the meeting at 1900 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 April. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Jim Payne, Terry Weaver, Jim Gardiner, Jon and Viv Miles, Colin Britt, Simon Mason, Elaine Balding, Sue Urch, John and Pat Price.

3. Chairman's Report

Introduction

Good evening everybody, not much this month, just a couple of things to tell you about:

3.1 Health & Wellbeing Event – 19 March 2026

The Health & Wellbeing Event took place on 19 March and unlike the last time had an incredible response from the local community, I've never seen so many people continually in the Hall. We had a good number of people come and talk to Graham, Keith and myself with several promises of new memberships. We also received £13 in donations to the Branch which was really nice. The stall was a lot of effort but very rewarding; my thanks to Graham & Keith for their support on the day.

3.2 Dedication of Newent Platoon Standard - 19 March 2026

Unfortunately, the rededication of the Standard for Newent Platoon Gloucestershire ACF (The Rifles) has been postponed until a later date. As more information comes in we will keep you all notified.

3.3 Membership Engagement Officer (MEO)

In November 2025 I told you that we have a new MEO for the Gloucestershire area. Unfortunately, she tendered her resignation this week so the process will to get a new MEO will start again.

3.4 Election of Royal British Legion Trustees

The election team sent through 6 CVs of potential RBL Trustees for the next 3 years. I sent out the CVs to the Officers of the Branch and the 4 candidates that received the highest votes from the Branch Officers are: Steven Lee, Helen Owen, Philip Davies and James Lambert. My thanks to those who voted.

3.5 Good Spend Workshop – 7 April 2026

We received the following email from Membership Communications:

“Branches and Counties play a key role in delivering the RBL's strategy and the three pillars of Connect, Remember and Support, but many often don't know how they can spend their funds on activities and events.

To support you we are pleased to be offering a Good Spend Workshop on 7th April from 7-8pm. This session will give you a clearer understanding of how branch and county funds can be spent and includes key principles and great examples. You'll also be able to ask questions via the chat.

There is no need to book, just [join the session via this link](#).”

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend this on-line workshop but if anyone else would like to attend and therefore report back to the membership at the next meeting please let me know.

3.6 Veterans Coffee Morning

As most of you will now know, Manna Coffee House has closed its doors due to ill health so Jim very kindly volunteered to speak with the Red Lion to see if we could hold our Veterans Coffee Morning in there. They said yes and those who came along will know it went well. This is a bigger venue so we have space to grow (and have breakfast if we so desire). The next one will be on **28 April 2026** starting at 10am, everyone is welcome to attend.

3.7 April Branch Meeting

I will be away on holiday for next month's meeting on the 23 April 2026, so the Deputy Chair has volunteered to take the meeting.

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 February meeting had been circulated. It was noticed that the Parade Marshal Report had been missed so, subject to this being included in a revised version, KU proposed and TH seconded that they should be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Passed unanimously.

There was one matter arising:

- 8.3 The meal at Manna did not go ahead as originally planned but some Members attended a “taster” event instead on the 11 March 2026.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for March 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 March Meeting and General RBL Update

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

Our Branch Affiliation with the Newent Branch of the RAFAC 186 (Newent) Sqn Air Cadets and the Newent ACF (The Rifles) continues, albeit TRBL Procedures for youth membership have changed. It is proposed to proceed with a local Branch Affiliation.

There continue to be wide-ranging concerns relating to the ongoing stability of smaller branches, especially as there is a further increase in the number of the smaller branches closing.

5.1.2 Branch Remembrance

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

5.1.3 Branch Welfare, Membership and Statistics.

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

5.1.3.1 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>

5.1.3.2 Branch Membership

The current Branch Membership this reporting period totals 43 members.

New members are naturally encouraged and welcomed.

5.1.3.3 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 in our community and an ongoing 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	6
How many beneficiaries visited	4
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	3
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 veterans: 6

5.1.4 Branch Community Support, Youth Liaison and Community Activities.

5.1.4.1 Community Support and Youth Liaison

The Branch attended the NHS sponsored Health & Wellbeing Event last week at the Memorial Hall, with reasonable interest being shown in the Branch and its activities.

Unfortunately the planned Service for The Dedication of the Newent AC Standard has had to be postponed: hopefully a revised date will be available in the near future.

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

5.1.4.2 The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy - Nominations

Unfortunately, nothing further to report this period albeit it is hoped that the Cadet forces will submit a suitable candidate(s).

5.1.4.3 Newent & District Branch Centenary Celebrations 2027

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

A number of worthwhile proposals were put forward for consideration - more information in the coming months.

In the meantime, a date and venue for the event(s) is being investigated including aspects of entertainment such as The Imjin Choir, a Big Band, Orchestra and local music groups, Community School Poster Competitions and a display of the Branch's history.

5.1.5 Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

Members are reminded of the inauguration of The Imjin Memorial at The Cyril Hart Arboretum, Speech House on Friday, 24th April 2026.

Due to unfortunate demise of the Manna Coffee House, future coffee mornings are currently planned to be held in the Red Lion.

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

5.2 Treasurer's Report

This month we have had a donation of £50 from Kevin Shayle of Three Choirs Vineyard which was the fee for a talk given to Newent Wine Circle. There was also a payment of 45 pence from His Majesty's Courts.

The current balance is £1027.56

5.3 Parade Marshal/Standard Bearer Report

Unfortunately, the Service to dedicate the Army Cadets new Standard on Thursday 19 March had to be postponed at short notice. As soon as an alternative date has been agreed Branch Members will be notified.

On Thursday 19 March the Branch Standard was on display at the Health and Wellbeing event held at the Memorial Hall.

On Sunday 22 March the Standard Bearer attended the training day for Standard Bearers held at Tuffley Community Centre.

Looking ahead, the Branch Standard is going to be paraded at the inauguration of the Imjin Memorial at the Cyril Hart Arboretum, Speech House, on Friday 24 April.

There were no other reports.

6. Branch Centenary, 18 February 2027

RB said that he had investigated the possibility of having a military band but for various reasons this would not be possible.

GB reported that the Innsworth Military Wives Choir is available for Sunday 28 February at a cost of about £300.00. It was agreed that he should make a definite booking.

KU and RB both felt that we could make the afternoon of 28 February into a bigger event by adding other entertainers. KU agreed to make contact with the local Barber Shop group and a sea shanty group.

KU has spoken to the Lord-Lieutenant who said that he was hopeful that a VIP might be able to attend.

There was a brief discussion about the rededication of the Branch Standard. It was agreed that this should be separate from the 28 February event – possibly on Sunday 21 February. The Branch Padre is to be asked if he would be happy having the rededication as part of the morning service at Saint Mary's on 21 February.

Other options are:

- Applying for 100 year pennant to go on the Standard
- Slide show of Branch activities over the last 100 years
- Providing a case in which to permanently exhibit the original Minutes book

RB asked Members to keep coming up with ideas.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 RB reported that he had received details for the proposed Christmas Tree Festival in Saint Mary's Church. It was agreed that the Branch should provide a tree and Members were asked to think about a possible theme for the decorations.

7.2 KU reported that a lady had approached the RBL stand at the Wellbeing event and asked for help finding out about her father's service in the RAF. KU had been able to find out a great deal of information which he has passed on to the lady who was extremely grateful. Members commended KU for his work on this and the speed with which he dealt with the request.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 23 April 2026 in the Memorial Hall starting at 1900.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 1955.

Agenda for the Newent & District Branch Royal British Legion Meeting 23 April 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.
8. Any Other Business.
9. Date of Next Meeting.