

Minutes for the Annual General Meeting of
The Royal British Legion Newent & District Branch:
Memorial Hall - 23 October 2025

Attendees	Post
Richard Balding	Chairman
Keith Urch	Vice-Chair, BCS, Youth Liaison
Rev Canon Simon Mason	Padre
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Rev Pat Phillips	Honorary Padre
Rick Axon	Entertainments & Bar Member
David Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Graham Barton	Parade Marshal, Standard Bearer
Susan Urch	
Elaine Balding	
Terry Weaver	
Tom Heseltine	
Item	Action
<u>1. Act of Remembrance.</u> The 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 in memory of the fallen from the Parish of Newent during WWI & WWII for the month of November followed by the exhortation.	
<u>2. Apologies for Absence.</u> Apologies had been received from Adrian Dover, Jim Payne, Colin Britt, Jon Miles, Viv Miles, John Price, Pat Price.	
<u>3. Chairman's Opening Remarks.</u> The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed his thanks to those who turned out.	
<u>4. Adoption of Minutes from the previous AGM.</u> The Minutes from the AGM held on 24 October 2024 had been circulated to all Members before the meeting and were noted by all present. The only alteration was changing Dace Pollock to David Pollock on the list of Attendees. They were proposed as a true record of the meeting by Sue Urch and seconded by Tom Heseltine. The motion was passed unanimously.	
<u>5. Matters arising from previous minutes.</u> There were no matters arising.	
<u>6. Chairman's Report.</u> The Chairman gave his report. See Annex A.	

<u>7. Individual Officers Reports.</u> 7.a. Vice Chairman/Branch Community Support/ Youth Liaison. The Vice Chairman gave his report. See Annex B. 7.b. Branch Padre Report. The Branch Padre gave his report. See Annex C 7.c. Parade Marshal Report. The Parade Marshal gave his report. See Annex D. 7.d. Treasurer's Report. The Treasurer gave her report. See Annex E. 7.e. 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: Branch meeting in Cobblers on 27 November 1900 hrs. followed by a social and the Branch Christmas meal in the Alma, Linton on 18 December starting at 19:00 hrs. 7.f. Raffle Coordinator's Report. A total of 12 raffles were held from October 2024 through to September 2025. 7.g. Secretary's Report. The Secretary was unable to attend tonight's Meeting. There were no further reports.	
<u>8. Presentation and Adoption of Accounts.</u> 8.a. Adoption of Accounts. The Treasurer reminded everyone that the Accounts for the year ending 30 June 2025 had been presented and adopted at the Branch Meeting held on 24 July 2025.	

9. Election of Officers and Committee Members.

There were no new nominations for any of the Committee posts, therefore the Branch Committee for the next 12 months is as follows:

Position	Name
Chairman	Mr Richard Balding
Vice Chairman	Mr Keith Urch
Secretary	Mr Adrian Dover
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 Canon Simon Mason
Deputy Padre	Rev Pat Phillips
Standard Bearer	Mr Graham Barton

The Chairman thanked all the Committee Members for their continued support and looked forward to working with them over the coming year.

10. Nominations to National Office.

There were no nominations to National Office.

11. Motions and Charter Motions for the Annual Meeting of the County Conference.

There were no Charter Motions.

12. Appointment of Delegates to the Annual Meeting of the County Conference and Annual Conference.

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman would be attending the National Annual Conference remotely this year.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 The Chairman reminded everyone he needed names of those who were intending to attend the Remembrance Service at Newent Community School on 7 November.

13.2 The Chairman informed Members that the Manager at Ross Willis Court had very kindly invited all Members for coffee after the Remembrance Service on 11 November. Again, names needed from those hoping to attend.

13.3 The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman will not be able to attend the November meeting and Social at the Cobblers. It was agreed by everyone that this would now just be a social occasion without a Branch Meeting. **After Meeting notice: unfortunately the Entertainments Member and Treasurer are also not available for the Social evening so the decision has been taken to cancel the Room and Social at Cobbler in November.**

13.4 GB reminded Members that the Branch Centenary is only fifteen months away so we need to decide how best to celebrate

All

All

this occasion. It was agreed that this should be an Agenda item for the January 2026 Branch Meeting. 13.5 RA proposed that Branch Members should each receive a £10 subsidy towards the cost of the Christmas Meal on 18 December. Seconded by SU and passed unanimously. 13.6 HA said she had seen that RBL is giving money towards Veterans and she asked who was getting this money. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman explained how RBL is supporting various third party initiatives to help veterans and this is probably what it is referring to. 13.7 GB informed Members that the PAO had put a Poppy Appeal box and collection tin out for us to use. 13.8 GB asked if we should be making a payment to the Memorial Hall for Hall Hire for the coming year. The Chairman suggested this should be added to the Agenda for January's Meeting. 13.9 TH informed Members that he had received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. He was warmly congratulated by all Members.	
14. Date of next Meeting: 1900, Thursday 22 January 2026 at the Memorial Hall. There being no further business, the Chairman closed the Meeting at 2000.	

Agenda for The Newent & District Branch Royal British Legion

Meeting 22 January 2026 at the Memorial Hall

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

Newent and District Branch TRBL

Annual General Meeting in the Memorial Hall - 23 October 2025

Chairman's Report

Introduction

This year the Branch has made great strides in the local community, primarily with the local youth uniformed services. We've always had a good relationship with the Guiding organisation and Air Cadets, but this has gone a stage higher with both the Air Training Corps (ATC) and Army Cadet gaining affiliation with the Branch and Royal British Legion. We hope to continue and foster this relationship in the coming year(s).

Welfare

Welfare is as always the bedrock of what the Newent & District Branch stands for. The Branch now has 2 Branch Community Supporters (BCS) each with an RBL DBS, ID Cards and separate official email addresses to keep any sensitive information as secure as it can be. This was no easy task: the 'BCS Team' have filled out endless forms and attended what seems like endless courses to get to this stage, but rest assured they will continue to support those who need it on behalf of the Branch whether they are beneficiaries or not, so please keep passing on the details of anyone who might require support.

Membership

The membership continues to be a conundrum, we have rises and falls throughout the year, gaining some new Members and losing others and essentially keeping a steady state. However, for the Branch to improve and play a more active role in the local community new Members are needed, so to the existing Members please let anyone who might listen know that we are always appreciative of new Members.

Affiliations

As mentioned in my introduction the Branch continues to have excellent working relationships with Newent Town Council, the ATC, Newent Community School, 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. The Branch will strive to continue these working relationships and friendships and if possible grow them by adding further affiliations.

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

The Poppy Appeal always gains support from the local community. This weekend is the official start of 2025 Poppy Appeal season and the Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO)/Branch will have a stall under the Market House on Saturday 25 October and Saturday 1 November, and with help from Members and the uniformed services should ensure the season sets off on the right track.

Remembrance Activities

This year was one of the busiest for some time, with both VE Day 80 and VJ Day 80 Remembrance events throughout Newent. We also had the Rededication of Newent War Memorial, participation in the Woodlands Trust Service of Remembrance, various town flag raisings and still to come are the Newent Community School Remembrance Service on Friday 7 November, the Remembrancetide Service and Parade on Sunday 9 November. The Veteran's Coffee Mornings have continued throughout the year and are supported by a mixture of Branch Members and other who come along for a social chat and coffee.

Thank You

Thank you's are always a big part of my report, without the following support from such a wide number of people neither I nor the Branch would be such a force in the community.

The Branch would not exist without the incredible efforts of the whole committee, from Keith with his personal support for my efforts to the Youth Affiliations and of course Welfare Activities, which are too varied to mention; Helen our Treasurer who does not have an easy time coping with the ever changing complexities of the Royal British Legion administration, but always makes sure the Branch are in compliance; Graham who embraces the Parade Marshal and Standard Bearer responsibilities as well as helping out on meeting nights recording the minutes; Simon, as ever, oversees every part of Remembrance whether a short simple service or complex indoor/outdoor event with consummate ease; David who continues to conduct the raffle with a minimum of fuss, and who could leave out Rick, without whom we would have a dry meeting. I know I depend on him for not only the drink but his contributions to the various Branch events throughout the year.

As always thanks go to Newent Town Council as a whole, the Town Mayor and Armed Forces Representatives who give unflinching support to the Branch, Manna Coffee House, and Cobblers Ale House for their continued support to both the Branch, the Poppy Appeal and Veterans Coffee Mornings; Newent Community School for helping to keep Remembrance alive as part of the School ethos and Newent Memorial Hall for their continued support.

Last but not least, to all our Members, whether they are able to make events and meetings or not, it 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 2024/2025

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 this BCS Annual Report.

RBL PATRON

The Newent and District Branch of TRBL are extremely pleased that despite his own particular challenges, King Charles III has remained Patron of The Legion and its activities. The charity has held Royal patronage since it was founded in 1921 and The King is the fourth monarch to serve as patron of the RBL following his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, and George VI and Edward VIII before him.

NATIONAL NEWS

In 2024, we announced that Vice Admiral (Rtd) Paul Bennett CB OBE was to be our next National President. Since then, TRBL has undertaken many organisational changes nationally, regionally and in county structures. Jason Coward became our National Chair and Mark Atkinson, our new Director General leading a totally revamped management structure with an increased focus on serving our Armed Forces, Veterans and their families.

Following feedback from County Chairs during 2024 and into early 2025 regarding the importance of clear communication and effective engagement, the recent changes within the Membership Directorate followed by further role reorganisations in regional structures is leading towards a much changed national RBL outlook for the coming years.

Further to TRBL Strategy Roadshow on 9th October, three key areas have been identified for action over the next 5 to 10 years: Connect, Remembrance, and Support.

There appear to be three main access routes to Membership: On-line (no particular affiliation), The Riders Branch and Branch Membership

Total membership of TRBL is circa 200,000 worldwide

Moving forward it is proposed that support services to individual clients are to be provided by specialised organisations - TRBL purely acting as a Signposting Organisation and providing support via the BCS route.

Future BCS will therefore be all about making Connections and Supporting those in need. These proposed changes will probably involve the sharing of BCS expertise across Branches and Regions, albeit a further review of structures and training may be necessary to achieve these aims as TRBL will need to attract more members to undertake courses and training in general.

Nationally TRBL is now apparently seeking to focus on an organisational based approach, raising funds and not providing direct support as in the past, acting solely as a Sign Posting Organisation once initial contact has been made - future success of BCS will be measured by these proposed changes.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY NEWS

Following past difficulties, the County Committee is continuing to grow both in strength and reputation. The Newent Branch extends its support to the County Executive 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 business and community organisations including, Army Cadets, Air Cadets, Guiding and Scouting Groups, 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 last year and the current renewal of The Covenant in particular, Health Practices, Councils and related organisations have highlighted their continuing commitment to the Armed Forces and all Veterans.

Members are reminded of the ongoing support available via the Branch, TRBL Helpline and via Forces Connect South West, created last year. 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

Supported by a number of Town Councils and their Veteran Representatives such as District Cllr Julia Gooch (Newent), the FoDDC Armed Forces Network within the Forest of Dean District continues to further the aims and objectives of The Covenant. It is led by District Council Representatives as part of a community initiative: its appointed Armed Forces Champion for 2025/26 is Cllr Alan Preest, representing both Gloucestershire County and Lydney.

Commemoration services this year included those for VE Day 80 and VJ Day 80, both of which involved members of our County Representatives and supported by our valued Newent community.

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

Having welcomed new Members to our Branch last year following the unfortunate closure of the Minsterworth Branch, numbers have since reduced from its high of 52, with membership now stabilising around 45 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 couple of new Members to Newent: 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(s) have re-registered and completed further refresher training in order to continue providing BCS support.

During the year, TRBL announced a number changes, including that of a new Branch Community Coordinator role, new BCS resources, and BCS ID Cards, the impact of which, we hope, will have had a positive impact upon reporting systems and streamline the delivery of BCS to our Members.

During the year 2024/2025, a total of 46 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 year's 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 2024/2025 Reporting Period

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

Total Number of Welfare Visits	46	(55) visits
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Beneficiary visits:	31	(31)
Branch Community Supporters:	24	(36)
(Note that this represents an average of 2 BCS per month)		
Total Welfare Expenditure was:	NIL	(NIL)
Total Telephone Buddy calls made:	74	(131)
Beneficiaries called:	44	(38)
(Note that monthly numbers have varied from a maximum of 6 to a lower number of 2 beneficiaries called)		

YOUTH LIAISON, BRANCH AFFILIATIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

Members are to note that as we approach one of the most significant sections of our calendar, that of Remembrance, the Annual Service of Remembrance is taking place on Sunday, 9th November at St Mary's Church and supplemented by a short service being held at Newent's War Memorial on Tuesday, 11th November.

Please note that prior to these services, Newent Community School will host their Annual Service of Remembrance on Friday, 7th November.

The Branch continues to support the family wishes of the late John Edward Whitehorn having established a youth award in his honour. Despite extensive publicity, we have yet to receive any nominations this reporting period which is naturally very disappointing: the Branch continues its call for nominees.

Interest in Branch Affiliation continues and TRBL Affiliation Certificates have been awarded to: Newent Platoon, Gloucestershire Army Cadet Force (ACF), The Rifles; 186 (Newent) Squadron, Air Training Corps.

It is worthwhile noting that TRBL (RBL National) have yet to finalise arrangements for the award of affiliations to Community Organisations and their Affiliation, considered to be vital in demonstrating the future continued support of The Legion and its activities: something for the coming year.

With the support of Newent Businesses, Community Organisations, the Branch, Armed Forces Veterans Associations and sales of the Newent Local History Society's book, "We Will Remember Them", the refurbishment of Newent's War Memorial has been completed. These works are a fitting tribute to those in the Parish of Newent who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Grateful thanks and appreciation are extended to everyone who donated to this once in a lifetime project.

Cobblers Ale House, a local hostelry, and Manna Coffee House in particular, have continued to be extremely supportive of the Branch and its activities throughout the year, with significant proceeds being donated to the Poppy Appeal.

RECOGNITION

Special thanks are also extended to the following: Newent Memorial Hall Committee, Local Businesses, Town Council, Schools and other Community Groups for their continuing support and raising funds for 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 and 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)

Padre's report

Once again it has been a momentous year. With both VE Day 80 and VJ Day 80 commemorations and in addition the Rededication of our War Memorial alongside the Time capsule.

It has been an honour to be part of these events as well as working with others across our community. It is at times like these that we recognise how much the work of RBL is appreciated and valued.

My thanks to all Officers of our Branch who not only lead us with inspiration but are tireless in making sure individuals are cared for.

We look forward to another good year and the preparations for celebrating our centenary in 2027.

Plans for our Remembrance Sunday service are now in place as we look to remembering with thanksgiving and taking the opportunity to remind the wider community of all that RBL does.

Rev. Canon Simon Mason,
Branch Padre.

Parade Marshal Report for year 2024/2025

Since the AGM in October 2024 the Branch has been involved in several events:

- Remembrance Service at Newent Community School on Friday 8 November where the Branch Standard was paraded.
- Remembrance Parade and Service on Sunday 10 November. This was very well supported by uniformed groups, civilian organisations and the public. After parading through the Town, the Standard Bearers formed a Guard of Honour by the Church porch before joining the rest of the congregation inside. After the service everyone moved outside to the War Memorial for the Act of Remembrance.
- Remembrance commemoration by the War Memorial on Monday 11 November where the Branch Standard was paraded.
- VE80 and VJ80 were both commemorated at events during the Summer.
- On Wednesday 11 June the Branch Standard was paraded at the Memorial Woodlands service at Earthcott Green.
- On Saturday 21 June there was a parade to mark the rededication of the War Memorial following its cleaning and the addition of missing names. After the service, refreshments were served at the Memorial Hall.
- On Monday 23 June the Branch Standard was paraded outside the Library where a flag was raised to mark the start of Armed Forces week.
- The Parade Marshal attended a Standard Bearers' training day on Sunday 7 September.
- During the year the Branch Standard was paraded at the presentation of affiliation certificates to the Army Cadets and Air Training Corps.

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

Graham Barton,

Parade Marshal.

Summary of Branch accounts 2024/2025

The financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June each year. Our returns were sent through to the MEO at that time.

In summary:

Opening balance 1st July 2024 £996.91

Income:

Membership fees (our share) £98

Fundraising (cancelled concert) £284

Donations (Highnam) £100

Expenditure:

Poppy appeal £37

Fundraising expenditure (cancelled concert) £146

Ceremonial (plaque for standard holder) £86.10

Other (plaque for 100 year veteran) £32.45

Contribution to hire of hall £100

Closing balance 30th June 2025 £1077.36