

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

22 January 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
Simon Mason	Padre
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Adrian Dover	Secretary
Tom Heseltine	
Terry Weaver	

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 during the months of December, January and February. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Elaine Balding, John and Pat Price, Jon and Viv Miles, Colin Britt, Sue Urch and Helen Axon.

3. Chairman's Report

Introduction

Welcome everybody to a brand-new year:

3.1 Remembrancetide 2025

As usual the Branch was involved in several events to mark Remembrancetide week. Apart from the Newent Town Council (NTC) sponsored Parade & Service on 9 November, there was the now annual Newent Community School service on 7 November and of course the smaller ceremony at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th Month. All of which went off without hitch and I'm sure you will hear more from your Deputy Chair, Parade Marshal & Branch Padre. We were also honoured to be invited to Ross Willis Court after the ceremony on the 11th to join in with the residents in commemorating Remembrancetide.

Obviously some thanks are due to: NTC, the Veterans Representative and Mayor for their continued support around Remembrance; the local 4x4 rescue team for marshalling; Newent Community School Head Teacher, students and bugler; Ross Willis Court for the invite, not to mention the fantastic support from the local uniformed and youth services and so many local residents for yet another fantastic turnout; but remember that none of this would happen without the considerable endeavours of the Branch Committee.

Other things of note that happened between September and January were:

3.2 Poppy Appeal Collection Weekends & Money Count

The Poppy Appeal Collections under the Market House were on 25 October and 1 November 2025. Along with the Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO) and Branch Members, this year saw the return of both the Army Cadet Force and Air Training Cadets which boosted the Poppy Appeal presence in the town. The money count for this year's appeal took place on 24 November 2025 where several Branch Members attended; final figures for this have yet to be announced.

3.3 Newent Civic Carol Service 2025

The Branch was again invited to attend the annual Civic Carol Service which took place in St Mary's Church on 3 December 2025. Several Members of the Branch attended and enjoyed an evening of carols, mulled wine and mince pies.

3.4 Veterans Coffee Morning – 27 January 2026

Don't forget that the next Veterans Coffee Morning will be on 27 January 2026 starting at 10am in Manna Coffee House, everyone is welcome to attend.

3.5 Branch Annual General Meeting

This year's Branch Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Thursday 23 October 2025 in the Memorial Hall with 12 Members present. I'd like to thank all those who attended and those who sent in apologies – as a result Newent Branch of the Royal British Legion will continue for another year. However, we are running short of active Members and would love to see other Members become more actively involved in the everyday running of the Branch. My thanks go to both Helen and Rick for the excellent additions of cheese & wine.

3.6 Branch Christmas Meal

Once again the Branch Christmas meal was held at the Alma Inn in Linton and, as usual, was a complete success, my thanks go to everyone who contributed to helping this event go ahead.

3.7 Health & Wellbeing Event – 19 March 2026

I've been contacted by Rachel James from the TWNS Primary Care Network Health & Wellbeing Team who are holding another event at the Memorial Hall on Thursday 19 March 2026 between 10am and 2pm. This will be something similar to the last event that was held in the Community Centre on the Ross Road about two years ago. They have asked if the Branch would like to put up an information stand alongside the others from around Newent & Staunton.

I am happy to sort out the information boards and bring along the leaflets/handouts but would need help on the day to stand behind the information table and interact with the attendees. Obviously if we have enough volunteers we can create a rota and take turns. I need to give our reply no later than next week so a straw poll of volunteers would enable me to go back to the team and say yes or no.

3.8 Dedication of Newent Army Cadet's Banner/Standard

The Branch has also been invited to attend the dedication of Newent Army Cadets Banner at St Mary's Church in March. The date has been confirmed as 19 March 2026 taking place in the evening. If anyone would like to attend returns are required for safeguarding purposes. Timings and final arrangements to be confirmed.

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 September meeting had been circulated and, proposed by KU, seconded by TH, it was unanimously agreed that they should be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

There were three matters arising:

- 5.1.3.2 Roger and Thelma Acland have not yet joined the Branch;
- 5.5 The November meeting scheduled for the Cobblers was cancelled;
- 6.1 The Army Cadets were not able to carry out a poppy appeal collection at Newent rugby matches as there was not enough adult supervision available.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for January 2026

Dear Branch Members, Veterans, Families and Supporters of the Newent & District Branch of the Royal British Legion. Belated New Year's greetings.

Following on from the BCS Report issued at our Branch AGM, a copy of which has been circulated, we have pleasure in presenting this month's BCS Report as follows:

5.1.1 General Information

Having attended a number of Christmas time festivities on your behalf we now return to normal business with the promise of lighter, brighter and longer days to come and the herald of Spring.

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

Our Branch Affiliation with the Newent Branch of the RAFAC via Damon Ballinger, Flt Lt RAFAC | OC 186 (Newent) Sqn Air Cadets and the Newent ACF (The Rifles) via Lt Andrew Barraclough continues albeit TRBL Procedures for youth membership have changed.

5.1.2 Branch Remembrance

It's with great sadness that following the commemoration events of November 2025, that we suffered the loss of our Branch friend, colleague and Entertainment's Officer, Rick Axon.

Rick will be missed by many - thank you to everyone for their ongoing support.

At this time we also remember those unable to be present this evening 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 quiet, with few formal requests for advice or support.

5.1.3.1 Branch Welfare

Members may be aware that our PAO's wife was injured in a recent RTA - Branch support has been provided. TW and KU gave an update saying that Sue is making good progress but is still in a great deal of pain.

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

Due to non-renewals, the current Branch Membership has decreased this reporting period to 43 members. New members are always 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	10
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:	4

Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive in support of veterans 18

5.1.4 Branch Community Support, Youth Liaison and Community 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.

Members are to note that the Service for the dedication of the Newent AC Standard is being finalised: the date being considered is 19 March at St Mary's Church.

5.1.4.2 The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy - Nominations

One has to again report the disappointing response to our requests for candidates.

As we enter the New Year, reminders are again being sent to all secondary schools and youth organisations serving Newent and its wider community for action during the current school term.

5.1.4.3 Newent War Memorial and Time Capsule

The Time Capsule has now been sealed.

5.1.5 Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

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

5.2 Padre's Report

SM said that everything had gone really well at Rick's service and that it had been a privilege to be part of it. He felt that it was really good the way everything came together.

Date for the dedication of the Army Cadets Standard confirmed as 19 March at Saint Mary's. Timings to be confirmed as soon as they are available.

5.3 Treasurer's Report

The most recent bank statement covers the period from 1 October 2025. Income during that time was £56 for Members subs.

There were 4 deposits of 45pence from His Majesty's Court, probably repayments for a stolen poppy box.

Outgoings have been £7.50 for badge bar engraving, £49.50 for Standard Bearer's gauntlets and tie and £27.50 for a poppy wreath.

The balance of the current account is £1,058.66.

5.4 Parade Marshal/Standard Bearer Report

On 7 November 2025 the Branch Standard was paraded at the Newent Community School Remembrance service. As always happens at this event, the behaviour of the Students could not be faulted.

On 9 November, at the request of Newent Town Council, the Branch organised the annual Remembrance Parade. This was very well attended and, following the service inside Saint Mary's, the Act of Remembrance took place by the War Memorial. The Branch Standard was carried by a member of the Air Training Corps.

The Branch Standard was present at the service held at the War Memorial on 11 November and afterwards at Ross Willis Court.

5.5 Raffle Coordinator

DP thanked everyone for their support at the Branch Christmas Dinner at the Alma.

There were no other reports.

6. Branch Centenary, 18 February 2026

RB said that we needed to start thinking about ways to celebrate this auspicious event and asked Members if they had any suggestions. Responses included:

- Rededication of the Branch Standard
- Applying for 100 year pennant to go on the Standard
- Celebration tea in the Memorial Hall
- Concert – possibly the Military Wives or a military band
- Slide show of Branch activities over the last 100 years
- Providing a case in which to permanently exhibit the original Minutes book
- Inviting a VIP/VIPs

RB agreed to check with Memorial Hall re. availability and KU agreed to contact the Lord Lieutenant re. VIP attendance. GB offered to find out about current charges for booking the Military Wives Choir.

RB asked Members to keep coming up with ideas.

7. Memorial Hall Charge Fee

Following a brief discussion, GB proposed and KU seconded that we pay £100 to the Memorial Hall to cover our hire costs. Agreed unanimously.

8. Any Other Business

RB said that we would need someone to step in as the Bar Member following the loss of Rick. No one immediately came forward so RB agreed to circulate the Membership to see if anyone was interested.

GB said that he would not be able to attend the February meeting and asked if someone would take the Minutes. AD and RB said they would cover it between them.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 26 February 2026 in the Memorial Hall starting at 1900.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 2000.

**Agenda for the Newent & District Branch Royal British Legion
Meeting 26 February 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.