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

24 September 2026 – Memorial Hall

Attendees	Post
Richard Balding	Chairman
Keith Urch	Deputy Chair, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership
Simon Mason	Branch Padre
Graham Barton	Parade Marshal/Standard Bearer
Helen Axon	Treasurer
David Pollock	Raffle Co-ordinator
Jan Sologub	
John Price	
Tom Heseltine	
Pat Phillips	
Elaine Balding	

1. Act of Remembrance.

The Chairman 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 October. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Jon Miles, Viv Miles, Adrian Dover, Sue Urch, Jim Payne, Jim Gardiner, Pat Price, Terry Weaver and Colin Britt.

3. Chairman's Report

Introduction

Good evening, everyone. It's been another quiet month, but the highlights are:

Newent & District Branch TRBL AGM

We are at that time of year again - it's time to look forward to the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which will take place on 22 October 2026. This is the easiest time to get involved in the running of the Branch. We are looking to not only appoint Officers & Committee Members to organise and run the Branch but to encourage anyone who has any ideas or suggestions on how the Branch is run, so if you would like to get involved and make a difference in how and what the Branch does please let me know.

Poppy Appeal 2026

This year's Poppy Appeal has a slight change in that we have 3 dates to collect donations to the charity, they are: 17th, 24th & 31st of October. They will all be under the Market House and between 9am – 12pm. If anyone can spare some hours to make this year's Newent Poppy Appeal a great success please let me know even if it's only a couple of hours on one of the days.

St Mary's Newent Christmas Tree Festival 2026

At the March meeting the Branch agreed to take part in this year St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival. Well the time has come to decide on a theme and organise volunteer decorators for Wednesday 18 or Thursday 19 November. St Mary's will be open for visitors to the Festival from 1300 – 1900 on 21 November (which is the Newent light switch-on); 25 November 1830 – 2000; 29 November 1300 - 1900 and 2 December 1830 – 2000. We will then have to dismantle the tree and remove from St Mary's by Thursday 3 or Friday 4 December. After a short discussion it was agreed that the theme for the Branch tree should focus on 100 years of Newent RBL as part of the local community. RB asked for volunteers to help decorate the tree. GB offered the loan of a tree.

Branch Christmas Meal

I've been in to talk to the Red Lion in Newent about Christmas and they have just sent me the Menu that will be running throughout December. It looks a reasonable menu and they have said we can have the small room off the main area for the evening. They can accommodate the Branch 1 – 3 December. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that Thursday 3 December would be the best date – RB to confirm to the Red Lion and find out when they would need meal choices.

Veteran's Coffee Morning

The next Veteran's Coffee Morning will take place in the Ark on Tuesday 27 October 2026 starting at 10am. 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.

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 August meeting had been circulated. There were no amendments. KU proposed and JM seconded that they be accepted as a true record of the meeting. Passed unanimously.

Matters arising:

There were four matters arising:

Page 2. RB has received agreement from NTC that they will arrange the rolling road block and publicise the Remembrance Parade.

4. (Re. 7.3 from previous Minutes). RB has purchased the frame for the Certificate and showed the mounted item to Members who were all very impressed with it.

6. The box frame for the Minutes Book has been purchased and the book has been mounted in it. Again, Members were very impressed. Shops have agreed to sell tickets for the Centenary Concert and the poster has been updated.

7.2. KU has spoken to Julia Gooch and she will look into costings for the provision of shirts. He has forwarded a copy of the logo to her.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for September 2026

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

We present this month's BCS Report as follows:

5.1.1 General Information

Welcome to our Meeting and TRBL Update.

As autumn is slowly arriving with cooler days and shorter daylight hours, it is an ideal time to prepare for October when the clocks go back.

Think of preparing for the longer winter nights, ensuring that your home comforts are in place. It is a time when it is even more important that we support our elderly Veterans and neighbours, looking out to those in need of help and support.

5.1.2 Branch Remembrance

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

5.1.3 Branch Welfare, Membership and Statistics.

Again, this reporting period has been exceptionally quiet, very few requests for BCS support so time has been spent attending discussions and receiving updates from our colleagues representing TRBL HQ.

Branch Welfare

Aside from the much valued 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

This highlights another issue raised by TRBL HQ regarding BCS activities which, in the spirit of openness, it is important members are to be aware of.

Having revised BCS Terms and Conditions, TRBL have now issued formal legally binding contracts of engagement to all BCS volunteers. Members are to be aware that as your BCS representative and a volunteer, I have registered my extreme disappointment with this approach and await TRBL HQ's response.

While it is noted that no longer can a BCS Representative visit or provide advice or support to a colleague, Veteran or Veteran's family unless that said person is registered with the RBL Helpline, there are further restrictions and obligations to the way in which BCS representatives are to conduct their role. Unfortunately BCS representatives have been explicitly told not to share this information with colleagues.

However, please be assured that BCSs remain committed to TRBL and certainly, more importantly, to Branch and colleagues.

As for the issues previously raised during the recent training session that will impact upon the delivery of BCS services, still no replies have been received.

Branch Membership

Subject to the renewal process, the current Branch Membership has further reduced to a total 39 persons: new members are always welcome.

Branch Statistics

We continue to be supportive of our local Veterans, their families and others within our surrounding area but the way in which these services are being delivered remains under review by TRBL HQ.
Various levels of active Branch Community Support (BCS) will continue including signposting, offering local advice and guidance, personal visits or via the Telephone Buddy Network.

Please note that all communications are confidential.

Branch Statistics for this period are therefore as follows:

Total Number of Welfare visits	2
How many beneficiaries visited	3
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	2
Total Welfare Expenditure	NIL
Telephone Buddies:	
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	3
Telephone – How many telephone buddies:	2
Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive in support of Branch Members and local Veterans this period:	12

5.1.4 Branch Community Support, Youth Liaison and Community Activities.

Community Support and Youth Liaison

The date for the Service of Dedication of the Newent AC Standard continues to be progressed: this remains dependent upon receipt of their new standard.

In advance of the forthcoming events we continue to liaise with the many varied groups, schools and youth organisations within our community.

The Cadet Force are able to support the Poppy Appeal again this year and are anticipated to be available on either:

24th October 2026 9am - 12pm or 31st October 2026 9am - 12pm

The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy - Nominations

Further clarification has been sought and obtained from the Newent Branch of the Gloucestershire Newent Army Cadet Force and the parent of the nominee regarding their nomination: no further nominations have been received to date despite a meeting with Head of Year 7 at Newent Community School and telephone discussions with John Kyle and John Macefield schools. After a short discussion, it was agreed to delay a final decision re. the awarding of the Trophy until next month's meeting.

Newent & District Branch Centenary Celebrations 2027

Arrangements continue in support of next year's planned Branch Centenary Event as we move ever closer with an air of anticipation.

Poster Competition
The Newent Federation of Primary Schools have confirmed their intentions to participate in the competition and are seeking guidance on the scope of the poster. We await a reply from Newent Community School & Sixth Form Centre. If NCS decide not to take part, it was agreed that extra prizes should be awarded to Primary School entrants. After a brief discussion it was agreed that the theme for the poster should be: "***100 years of Newent Branch in the Community***".

The following Newent businesses will be supporting this event by selling tickets for the Military Wives Concert:

Seymour's
Gooch Sports
Parker's
The Flower Shop
The ChillOut (Newent Initiative Trust)

The Lord Lieutenant will attend, together with hopefully, other local dignitaries, making this a very special occasion for Newent.

5.1.5 Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

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

The Veteran's Breakfast and Coffee Morning being held in the Ark on the fourth Tuesday of the month commencing 10 am: everyone welcome.

Remembrance Sunday, 8 November at St Mary's; more information being available from our Branch Padre.

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

Take care, keep safe, and we will look forward to hearing from those in need of support.

5.2 Treasurer's Report

This month we have received 48pence from HMCTs for a stolen poppy box. This brings our current balance to £1,791.36.

5.3 Branch Padre Report

SM reported that as he is taking up a role as a Trustee at NCS it should be possible to improve the speed of communication between NCS and the Branch. He has also recently become qualified as a mental health first aider so might be able to help the Branch if any needs are identified. He is also making progress on the project helping young people to connect with the idea of Remembrance.

5.4 Parade Marshal/Standard Bearer Report

The Parade Marshal/Standard Bearer had nothing to report this month.

There were no other reports.

6. Branch Centenary, 18 February 2027

RB produced copies of the concert poster. These would be distributed in the near future.

KU is discussing the possibility of the History Society putting something together with Dood Pearce.

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.
- 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. TH reminded Members that there would be a Macmillan coffee morning at Our Lady of Lourdes on Saturday 26 September

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be the AGM on Thursday 22 October 2026 in the Memorial Hall starting at 1900.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 2010.

Agenda for the Newent & District Branch Royal British Legion

Annual General Meeting 22 October 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. Presentation and Adoption of Accounts.
7. Election of Officers and Committee Members.
8. Nominations to National Office.
9. Motions and Charter Motions for the Annual Meeting of the County Conference.
10. Appointment of Delegates to the Annual Meeting of the County Conference and Annual Conference.
11. Branch Centenary, 18 February 2027.
12. Any Other Business.
    a. JEW Trophy Decision.
13. Date of Next Meeting.