

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

27 March 2025 – Memorial Hall

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Richard Balding	Chairman
Keith Urch	Deputy Chairman, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership
Simon Mason	Padre
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Rick Axon	Bar, Entertainment Member
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Adrian Dover	
Jim Gardiner	
Tom Heseltine	
Sue Colborne	

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. He then read out the names of the members of the Parish of Newent who lost their lives in WW1 and WW2 during the month of March and April. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Colin Britt, John Miles, Viv Miles, Graham Barton, Elaine Balding, Susan Urch, Gordon Thorogood, Pat Price and John Price.

3. Chairman's Report

Welcome everyone I hope you are all well, it's been a fairly busy month with arrangements for VE/VJ Days and the Rededication of the War Memorial taking center stage; so what's been happening since the last meeting:

3.1. Visit to Jet Age Museum – 15 March 2025

6 members of the Branch went to the Jetage Museum on the 15 March and were treated to personal tours of not only the exhibits but an exclusive look behind the scenes. From my point of view, we were extremely well looked after, and I would wholly recommend this excellent small facility.

3.2. VE Day – 8 May 2025

The Newent Town Council Veteran's Representative has been working hard to organise a ceremony to commemorate VE Day on the 8th May 2025, the running order so far is:

- Muster at Flag Pole (outside the Library) at 09:15
- Reading of the Proclamation
- Flag Raising
- Short Walk to the War Memorial (St Mary's) for brief Service and laying of the Wreath
- Sheppard House for Refreshments

The refreshments have been arranged as a thank you to all veterans, and as our veterans have various different mobility status, they would not be expected to attend all the activities, and as such it would not be a problem to attend just the Sheppard House refreshments. For Catering purposes, I would need a rough idea of numbers for those attending Sheppard House.

Newent Memorial Hall will also be holding a VE Day event which will start at 2pm until approximately 4:30pm, this will include some music, refreshments and a toast to King Charles III: once again numbers will be required because of the limited availability of seating.

3.3. Newent War Memorial Rededication – 21 June 2025

The Branch Padre has had to overcome several issues to arrange a suitable date to hold the Rededication of the War Memorial after its recent name additions and spring clean. The Branch will also be taking the chance to lay wreaths for the 80th anniversaries of both VE & VJ day. The Branch Padre is currently working on a schedule for the service of dedication with timings to be published soon. However, there will be chance for a get together and refreshments after the service in the Memorial Hall: details will be announced at April's meeting.

3.4. Affiliation Event – Newent Platoon ACF and Newent Branch TRBL – 3 April 2025

I have also received the following invitation from Newent platoon of Gloucestershire Army Cadet Force:

“Newent Platoon, Gloucestershire Army Cadet Force (The Rifles), are holding an event at Newent Community Hall, Watery Lane on Thursday 03 April 2025 from 2000hrs until 2030hrs. Invitations will be sent.

On the same evening, we plan to host and welcome Newent Town Councillor along with The Chairman and Committee Members from Newent RBL and the Mayor of Newent as our special guests. It is hopeful that any planned speeches and proposed affiliations will take place between 2030hrs to 2115hrs.

I would therefore need to know of your availability please, so our planned event does not conflict with any other event.”

Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend as I will be away, however the Branch Deputy Chairman has generously agreed to represent us at the event, but if anyone else would like to go, please let us know so that we can send in the numbers.

3.5. Veteran's Coffee Morning – 22 April 2025

Don't forget that the next Veterans Coffee Morning will be on 22 April 2025 starting at 10am in Manna Coffee House: everyone is welcome to attend.

3.6. Branch Secretary Vacancy

The Chairman talked in some detail as to why the Branch need a Secretary, so if anyone would like to take on this essential role please let me know as I will only be too pleased to describe the responsibilities etc. The Chairman also stated that he has now started to advertise the post externally.

3.7. 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

Matters arising:

item 5.3. Bell Ringers, GB sent in a note to state that he had spoken to the Branch Padre and he will be contacting the Bell Ringers to ascertain whether they were able to ring on both the 8th May and 21st June.

Item 5.3. Beacon lighting, KU stated that as yet he had not received a reply.

Item 6.2. Wreaths, KU has spoken with the PAO and Wreath's had been ordered.

With no further actions and no amendments the minutes were proposed by KU, seconded by RA. as a true and accurate record. **Decision:** Passed Unanimously.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for 27 March 2025

5.1.1. Welcome

The changes to National RBL processes continue with the aim of improving and enhancing members' services.

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

Members are reminded of the continuation of many of the HMG's energy saving initiatives, some of which will undoubtedly benefit several of our elderly veterans. More information is available upon request.

Please be ever mindful of those "doorstep callers" offering services and spurious / spam telephone calls, those purporting to sell gold, silver, medals etc. in exchange for cash. Unfortunately, such financial scams are on the increase.

5.1.2. Branch Remembrance

We again remember those friends, veterans, and Branch colleagues who are unable to be present this evening due to illness, impending hospital procedures and in particular our former colleague Arthur James Cook, resident of Newent and veteran of The Glorious Gloucester's who died recently.

His funeral is taking place at Aston Ingham Church on Thursday, 10th April at 2pm (1400hrs).

5.1.4. Branch Welfare, Membership, Statistics.

5.1.4.1. Branch Welfare

The FoDDC Veteran's Forum's survey produced with the aim of increasing awareness of services available both within the District, County and Nationwide remains available: your valued input is appreciated

Veterans and Branch Members may 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>

Aside from these excellent services, your BCS Representatives will continue to utilise their local and regional experience to assist further, wherever possible in providing support and advice to its members, veterans, their families and supporters in times of need: you only need to contact one of your committee.

5.1.4.2. Armed Forces Support Network - The Veterans Covenant

The Forest of Dean (FoD) Armed Forces Support Network continues to be supported by the FoDDC: more information is available upon request.

As a Veteran, you are reminded to register your status with your local health service provider.

5.1.4.3. Branch Membership

The current Branch Membership totals 45 Members, several of which did not re-new their membership.

5.1.4.4. Branch Statistics

This period has been very quiet when compared to previous, albeit we continue to be supportive of our local veterans and another two within our surrounding area. The Branch continues to provide support to its current Members, new veterans moving into our community and a small number via the Telephone Buddy Network.

We would remind members that given the current changeable weather, you can support others in need by signposting them to TRBL helpline or by reference to the Branch BCS representatives at the earliest convenience: all communications are confidential.

Branch Statistics for this period are therefore as follows:

Total Number of Welfare visits	6
How many beneficiaries visited	3
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	2
Total Welfare Expenditure	NIL
Telephone Buddies:	
Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive	10
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	5
Telephone – How many telephone buddies:	2

5.1.5. Branch Community Support and Youth Liaison Activities

5.1.5.1. Community and Youth Liaison

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

In addition, your Chairman and I are liaising with Andrew Barraclough, OC Newent Army Cadets and will be attending their initial open evening on

3rd April at 2000hrs, taking place at the Community Hall (The Pavillion), Watery Lane: all members are invited to attend.

5.1.5.2. The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy

Application forms have again been resent to all secondary schools and youth organisations serving Newent and its wider community, seeking nominations for this unique award to a young person providing outstanding community services: no nominations received to date.

5.1.5.3. Newent War Memorial

All requests for funding have been received and as such The Newent War Memorial Committee await The Stonemason's planned completion date that includes the production of the Memorial Stone, Time Capsule and Memorial Plaque. Grateful thanks are extended to everyone that have donated to date as part of this unique community project.

It is currently proposed to perform the Rededication of the War Memorial on Saturday, 21st June 2025: confirmation will be available in the coming weeks. it is also envisaged to hold commemorations for other community milestones such as VE and VJ Day services albeit such local activities have yet to be finalised.

5.1.5.4. Veteran's Forum

Armed Forces Support Network - The Veterans Covenant

The FoD Armed Forces Support Network continues to be supported by the FoDDC: more information is available upon request.

As a Veteran, you are reminded to register your status with your local health service provider.

5.1.5.5. Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

1. VE Day Commemorate Event, Thursday 8th May 2025
2. Veteran's Branch Coffee Morning, Tuesday, 22nd April 2025 at Manna Coffee House, Newent.

For further information please see the reports issued by our Branch Chairman and our Branch Entertainment's Officer.

5.2. Treasurer's report

The current account stands at £1100.86.

5.3. Branch Padre

The Branch Padre gave an in-depth explanation about the issue around arranging a suitable date for the Rededication of the War Memorial and holding a service for VE & VJ Days. However, a date had now been set as 21 June 2025 which was briefly described in the Chairman's report. He did say that because the guest list for the rededication would include local dignitaries and members from the families of the new names added to the memorial that it would be fitting to hold a small gathering in the Memorial Hall after the Ceremony.

The Chairman stated that he had provisionally booked the Memorial Hall for the 21 June and would speak to the Hall Chairperson about sourcing some refreshments. **Action: Chairman**

5.4. Bar and Entertainments member

The Bar and Entertainments member stated that he only had plans this year for the following:

October 2025 – AGM with refreshments

November 2025 – Branch Social

Christmas 2025 – Christmas Meal

There were no other Officers or Committee Members Reports

6.0 Any Other Business

6.1. Pancake Night. The Deputy Padre stated that profits from the Pancake Night Poppy Appeal fundraiser in Cobblers at number 7 made £180 with the owner Graham, topping the funds up to £200 and then a regular customer also donated £10 so that the final total came to £210 which is a brilliant achievement. Thanks go to Simon who always volunteers to cook, Graham for choosing the Poppy Appeal as his supporting charity and of course to all those who attending on the night.

6.2. Band of HM Royal Marines. SC informed the members present that she had a poster from the Royal Naval Association Monmouth that is showcasing the Band of HM Royal Marines who will be performing a concert at the Blake Theatre, Monmouth on Saturday 26 April 2025 starting at 7pm, tickets are priced at £30. A copy of the poster will be added to these minutes with the rest of the details.

7. Next Meeting date

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2000 hrs with the next meeting set for 24 April 2025, starting at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

Meeting Agenda
Newent and District Branch The Royal British Legion
24 April 2025 in Newent Memorial Hall

1. Welcome and Act of Remembrance.
2. Apologies for Absence.
3. Chairman's Report.
4. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising.
5. Reports by Officers.
6. Any Other Business.
7. Date of Next Meeting.