

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

27 February 2025 – Memorial Hall

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Keith Urch	Deputy Chairman, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Rick Axon	Bar, Entertainment Member
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Graham Barton	Parade Marshal
Adrian Dover	
Jim Gardiner	
Jim Payne	
Sue Urch	
Sue Colborne	

1. Act of Remembrance.

The Deputy Chairman opened the meeting at 19:00 hours and asked everyone to think of the people who couldn't be with us due to ill health. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Richard Balding, Elaine Balding, John Price, Pat Price, Colin Britt, Susanne Britt, John Miles, Viv Miles, Rev Simon Mason, Tom Heseltine and Gordon Thorogood.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report was read by the Deputy Chairman and contained the following items:

3.1. Visit to Jet Age Museum – 15 March 2025

I have sent several emails out regarding the visit to the Jet Age Museum, after taking into account everyone's comments the date of 15 March 2025 at 11am was the most popular. I have booked this with the Museum and they have arranged for us to have a free tour around the Vulcan & Trident cockpits, which was a nice addition. If anyone else would like to attend please let me know and I will add your names to the list of current attendees.

3.2. Updating the Chairman's Jewel

I have now checked with Head Office and the Royal British Legion and the new King's Cypher ceremonial stuff have now been produced and is ready to purchase from the Poppy Shop. The RBL are saying that Branches do not need to change straight away but if they do then everything must change to denote the King's Cypher and Crown. So in short, change everything or nothing. The current price for changing the Chairman's Jewel is £100 and instead of the word Chairman across the bottom it now says Chair.

3.3. Newent Spring Fayre – 22 March 2025

Newent Town Council (NTC) have invited businesses and organisations to have a stall for this year's Spring Fayre which will take place on 22 March 2025 between 11am to 3pm. As I will be away for the next 2 weeks I would not have time to arrange Branch participation in the event, so if the Branch would like to be represented someone would have to arrange our participation by contacting the Admin Clerk (Alison Davis) at NewentSpringFayre@gmail.com. There is no cost for having a stall just a donation to participating charities.

3.4. Crown Portraits – HM King Charles III

The Royal British Legion have released the Official Portrait for HM King Charles III, so I enquired with the Official Crown Portraits producers, Hugo Burnand and the prices are eye watering in that just mounted prints start at £99 for 10"x8" up to £181 for 24"x20" and add an extra £100 minimum for a frame. I'm fairly sure as a small Branch this is out of our reach, unless you think differently?

3.5. Veterans Coffee Morning –25 March 2025

Don't forget that the next Veterans Coffee Morning will be on 25 March 2025 starting at 10am in Manna Coffee House, everyone is welcome to attend.

3.6. Branch Secretary Vacancy

The Branch are still without a Secretary so if anyone would like to take on this essential role please let me know, I will only be too pleased to describe the responsibilities etc.

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

Correction: item 5.2 Replace heading with "Treasurer's Report".

Apart from the above amendment the previous minutes were proposed by HA, seconded by SC. as a true and accurate record. **Decision:** Passed Unanimously.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for February 2025

5.1.1. Welcome

This month has seen the relaunch of several HMG initiatives including the Warm & Well Programme for veterans and others in need of support within our community. However, please be ever mindful of those spurious / spam telephone calls offering similar services.

The proposed changes to National RBL processes continue and especially in delivering its services to veterans over the age of 80 years of age, providing free membership and improved support to enhance Branch BCS services.

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

5.1.2. Branch Remembrance

We 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 Rex Debenham, long time Branch Treasurer, who passed away recently - a copy of Rex's Obituary is attached: we send our sincere condolences to his family.

Members are reminded that the Branch is here to assist and support veterans and their families in times of need: you only need to contact one of your Committee.

5.1.3. TRBL National Activities.

Changes within the structure and operation of RBL HQ continue: more information will be available in the near future.

5.1.4. Branch Welfare, Membership, Statistics, Community Support and Youth Liaison.

5.1.4.1. Branch Welfare

The Branch continues to provide support and advice to its Members, veterans and supporters.

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.

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.

5.1.4.3. Branch Membership

Despite last month's changes in membership, the current Branch Membership totals 49 Members.

5.1.4.4. Branch Statistics

This period has been very quiet when compared to previous Christmas and New Year months, 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 ongoing cold 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	8
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	4
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.

Your Chairman and I recently met with Andrew Barraclough, OC Newent Army Cadets to address mutual opportunities for support: copy of minutes of our meeting is attached for Members' information.

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

The majority of funding requests have been received. The Newent War Memorial Committee now await the Stonemason's planned completion date that includes the production of the Memorial Stone, Time Capsule and Memorial Plaque.

Details of the Rededication of the War Memorial will be available in the coming months: it is currently envisaged that it will incorporate other community milestones such as VE and VJ Day services. Grateful thanks are extended to everyone that has donated to date as part of the unique community project.

5.1.5.4. Veteran's Forum

Further to the recent FoDDC Veteran's Forum, a survey has been produced with the aim of increasing veteran's awareness of services available both within the District, County and Nationwide: your valued input is appreciated and as such, copy is attached. All comments / observations direct to me please at your earliest convenience.

Further to last month's report, please see a reminder of a number of email links that may be of interest:

[Samaritans](#) freephone **116 123** ROI 1850 609090 (24/7) or [email](#) – to access confidential emotional support for feelings of distress, despair or suicide thoughts

[Togetherall](#) – a safe **online** service providing access to millions with anxiety, depression and other common mental health issues. Free for serving personnel, veterans, family members and carers

[Shout](#) – a crisis **text** support service for people in the military community who are struggling and need immediate support to get through a crisis.

Text CONTACT to 85258. [#TextCONTACT85258](#)

[Forcesline](#) **telephone** helpline: 0800 7314880 (Monday – Friday 10.30 – 19.30) or [email](#).

For serving personnel, former members of the Armed Forces and their families

[NHS 111](#) – to access medical help fast but when it's not a 999 emergency, **telephone 111** (available 24 hours). To access information from the NHS on conditions, treatments, local services and healthy living following the link to [NHS Choices](#)

[Veterans UK](#) - to seek information on claiming AFCS, Armed Forces Independence Payment, Medical Discharges and Pension Forecast Requests:

www.veterans-uk.info/pensionscompensation.html

5.1.5.5. Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

1. Visit to Jet Age Museum, Saturday, 15th March 2025
2. Newent Spring Fayre on Saturday, 22nd March 2025.
3. Branch Coffee Morning on Tuesday morning, 25th March 2025 at Manna Coffee House, Newent

For further information please see the reports issued by our Branch Chairman (copy attached) and Rick, our Branch Entertainments Officer.

5.2. Treasurer's report

The current account stands at £1100.86.

Income £14 from Members subscriptions.

Expenditure £32.45 Intelligence Corps plaque.

5.3. Branch Padre

As Simon was unable to attend, Graham gave his report as follows:

Simon and Graham are looking at dates for the rededication of the War Memorial, incorporating celebrating VE and VJ day. Likely dates are 21st of June or 5th July. Keith will contact Mary Townsend re. availability of the Memorial Hall. **Action KU**

VE Day. A Beacon will be lit at Ross on Wye. Some discussion as to whether Clifford's Mesne would have a service with a beacon on May Hill, and would Newent be included. **Action KU to chase up.**

Will St Mary's church ring bells that day? As it will be a normal practice day (Thursday) anyway, this is likely. **Action GB to check.**

There were no other Officers or Committee Members Reports

6.0 Any Other Business

6.1. Pancake Night. AD reminded everyone present that the "Cobblers" have a fund-raising Pancake night in aid of the Poppy Appeal (PA) on Tuesday starting at 5pm, all Profits go to the PA.

6.2. Badges/Wreaths. There was some discussion about badges or a wreath for VE day. The Deputy Chairman felt that badges are a personal matter, but all agreed that a wreath would be appropriate. KU will speak with the Poppy Appeal Organiser about this. **Action: KU**

6.3. Concert. The Entertainments Member has received a message from the Innsworth Military Wives Choir to ask if the Branch would like to reschedule the cancelled concert from last year. After some discussion it was felt that we have too many events this Summer and that Winter weather is unpredictable. Next Spring would be a consideration.

6.4. Time Capsule. GB raised the subject of the time capsule proposed to be buried at the War Memorial site. The dimensions need to be known in order to decide what should go into the capsule. Local schools could be asked for suggestions about this.

6.5. AFBC. JG recently attended a Gloucester Armed Forces Breakfast Club. This is held on one Saturday each month at the Toby Carvery at Brockworth. This was an enjoyable and relaxing event.

6.6. Onion Fayre. The Treasurer received an email from the Onion Fayre organisers and asked if any decision had been made as to whether this event will actually take place in September this year. No one had heard anything.

7. Next Meeting date

There being no further business the meeting closed at 19:40 with the next meeting set for 27 March 2025, starting at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

Meeting Agenda

Newent and District Branch The Royal British Legion

27 March 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.