

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

Held 23rd May 2024 Newent Memorial Hall.

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Richie Balding	Chairman
Keith Urch	Deputy Chairman, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership Secretary
David Sass	Secretary
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Graham Barton	Parade Marshal
Rick Axon	Bar, Entertainment Member
Rev Simon Mason	Padre
Elaine Balding	
Tom Heseltine	
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Colin Thomson	Poppy Appeal Organiser
Jim Gardiner	
Adrian Dover	

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 who lost their lives in WW1 and WW2 during the month of June. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2 Apologies for Absence.

Pat Phillips, Sue Colborne, Jon Miles, Viv Miles, Susan Urch, John Price, Pat Price, Colin Britt, Susanne Britt.

3 Chairman's Report.

Introduction

Good evening All. This month was somewhat busier than last month with lots of letter writing and briefings, so to start:

3.1 Annual Conference – 10-12 May 2024

As previously stated, the Deputy Chairman and myself attended this year's Royal British Legion Annual Conference virtually. The virtual side of Conference was very convenient in that we were able to vote and observe proceedings without moving from the comfort of our homes. However, I felt it lacked a little atmosphere i.e. when the debates were on we didn't really get a good sense of the room feelings. However, we did vote according to Branch wishes which turned out to be the majority in all cases. The one thing that came out of Conference that will affect all Members is a gradual increase over each of the next 5 years in the cost of RBL membership to the tune of £2 per year. This increase is to keep up to date with the rising costs of running the charity.

Another thing that came out of Conference was a plea for any Members to get in touch with Membership Services if they would like to join a 'panel' to help make the 'Novacraft' side of membership better. **Note:** No volunteers were forthcoming.

3.2 Veteran's Coffee Morning – 28 May 2024

This month's Veterans Coffee Morning will take place at Manna Coffee House on 28 May 2024 starting at 10am, everyone is welcome to attend.

3.3 D-Day 80 Display

We have been invited to use some of Gooch's Sport shop window and the Market House to put up a display commemorating D-Day 80. I have said yes provisionally and have printed off a load of information to place on the 2 boards we have. I would propose to utilise our main display board for Gooch's Sports window and our single Veterans Coffee Morning information board for the Market House. If anyone has any literature or artifacts or indeed artistic flair please let me know, all help would be gratefully received.

3.4 Marie Curie Talk and Presentation – 25 July 2024

As mentioned in last month's minutes, Mr Peter Sara the Senior Community Fundraiser for the West Midlands and South West has agreed to give a presentation on Thursday 25 July 2024. If you have any advance questions for Peter let me know and I will pass them on.

3.5 Central News 2024 - Simplifying the enquiry process

"As part of our ongoing work to improve the membership experience, we are simplifying the enquiry process for membership email enquiries. From 1st July 2024 any membership enquiries that are not directed to your MEO should be sent to membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk only.

Why are we doing this? *By simplifying the enquiry process our dedicated Membership Services team can manage and track all enquiries received, ensuring a timely response is provided.*

What does this mean in practice? *From 1st July 2024 your MEO will remain your point of contact for all relevant enquiries and you should continue to email them directly. Any other membership enquiries should be sent to membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk only"*

3.6 Royal British Legion Aspire Leadership Programme

Earlier this month I sent out details of a new free initiative from the RBL: Aspire Leadership Programme. This is an attempt to develop the skills of prospective, current and future Branch, County and National leaders. The programme will be taking place 5-7 July and 2-4 August 2024 at Haig House in London. If anyone would like to apply for this programme please let me know. **Note:** The Chairman has applied.

3.7 Volunteer Committee Member – Memorial Hall

Mary Townsend (Head of Memorial Hall Committee) has asked if anyone from our Branch would like to become a committee member for the Memorial Hall Committee at this year's AGM. The member would have to be appointed at the AGM and the duties would include some or all of the following:

"We have a meeting every 4-6 weeks; 2 events a year (Macmillan coffee morning and the Christmas Fayre) and maybe involved with events going on in the town. Basically making sure everything is in good order and kept up to date. Nothing too onerous"

In my opinion it would be good to have someone on the Committee as it would be an ideal way of keeping up with current thinking, let me know if you are interested. **Note:** *After meeting one Member did show interest in joining the Memorial Hall Committee, however after due consideration the Member did decline the offer. The Chairman informed the Memorial Hall Committee of this and volunteered himself for Branch representation on the Committee.*

3.8 Branch Subscription Fees for 2024/2025

Each year I ask what you would like to do about Branch Subscription Fees. This is the portion of the Membership fees you pay annually to the RBL that we as a Branch receive back for the 'admin burden'. This year is slightly different as it comes on the back of the expected increase announced at Annual Conference. I would not expect the Branch element to increase as it is currently set at £2 but if our Branch Membership deemed it appropriate we could reduce or do away with the Branch element of the fee entirely, what are your thoughts? **Decision:** *After much deliberation the Members present decided to keep the Branch fee at £2, this meant no further action required from Branch.*

3.9 New Patron Announced

This month we heard that the New Patron of The Royal British Legion will be HRH King Charles III. This is fantastic news. Unfortunately I have been unable to source an appropriate portrait of the King as the RBL are not on the official 'entitled organisations' list for a free portrait and frame. I will now wait and see what RBL HQ come up with.

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.

No errors or amendments mentioned and were proposed by KU and seconded by SM that the minutes were a true and accurate record. The minutes were signed by the Chairman. Matters arising were as follows:

Item 3.4 Booking of Memorial Hall for Innsworth Military Wives Choir has been confirmed by Graham Barton.

Item 3.5 The date of the Remembrance service at Newent Community School has been confirmed and we are awaiting the itinerary.

Item 6.3 There has been contact with Mary Townsend but no response to date.

Item 6.6 Veterans Representative Julia Gooch has liaised with Newent Town Council regarding D-Day 80 Flag raising at St Mary's Church and Newent Library Flagpole. There will also be Coffee / Tea and croissants at St Mary's Church after the D-Day memorial Service.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for May 2024

5.1.1 General Information

Branch Remembrance:

We remember those veterans, friends and Branch colleagues that are unable to be present this evening: please remember that we are here to assist and support both veterans and their families; you only need to contact one of your Committee Members.

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

As previously mentioned, and this was evident from presentations at the National Conference, there continue to be many planned changes within the structure of TRBL HQ and the way in which it delivers its services.

5.1.3 Branch Welfare

The Branch continues to aid and support its Members and veterans.

Veterans and Branch Members may continue contact the RBL Helpline services via the national network on 0808 802 8080 and The Veteran's Gateway: <https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk>

5.1.4 Branch Membership

In accordance with TRBL records and subject to Member renewals, Branch Membership remains at 39 members.

The Branch welcomes new Members and encourages them to attend forthcoming events, especially our Branch Coffee Mornings at Manna Coffee House on the last Tuesday of the month.

5.1.5 Branch Statistics

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. In the event that Members identify a comrade in need, they are encouraged to contact a Committee Member or BCS Representative at the earliest convenience. All communications are confidential.

Branch Statistics for this period are therefore as follows:

Total Number of Welfare visits 4

How many beneficiaries visited 2

How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters) 4

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: 4

5.1.6 Branch Community Support and Youth Liaison Activities

5.1.6.1. Community and Youth Liaison

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

Your BCS representative attended The Newent Town Council Annual Assembly at which a small number of local groups were in attendance.

The process for TRBL Branch Affiliation continues.

5.1.7 Newent War Memorial

The Newent Initiative Trust having established a separate “ring-fenced account” specifically for this purpose now seeks to raise funds via public subscription. Details will be published very shortly via the local media in line with the planned completion, the end of October 2024.

5.1.8 The 2024 RBL Conference was held at the ICC in Newport, Wales during the weekend of 10th/12th May: your Chairman and Deputy attended virtually.

A comprehensive report on the Conference will be presented to members in the near future.

5.1.9 Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

5.1.9.1. D-Day Commemorations

Members are invited to support the presentations of our local D-Day veterans to be established as part of a shop window display.

D-Day flags will be raised in a number of locations throughout the town and a brief service of commemoration held.

Events are planned to occur on the 6th June to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day including a number of local beacons: more details to follow once events are finalised.

5.1.9.2 Remembrance Day Events

November is likely to be a very busy time for the Branch and Newent’s community: more details to follow.

5.1.9.3 Military Wives Concert

A repeat of last year’s successful event is planned to be held on 24th November in Newent’s Memorial Hall: more details to follow.

5.2. Treasurer’s Report

We have bought a wreath this month for £18.50. This brings our current balance to £1004.41

5.3. Bar & Entertainments Member.

Rik Axon confirmed that the Military Wives Choir concert would be at Newent Memorial Hall.

5.4. Poppy Appeal Organiser

CT announced that a certificate would be presented to Cobblers Micro Pub as a thank you for raising funds for the Poppy Appeal. He also stated that the D-Day 80 Flag will be flown at the Memorial Hall on June 6th.

Note:

Presentation of Certificate to Nicky & Graham

This now sits proudly on the wall.



5.5. Padre’s Report

The Padre said that he was looking forward to the D-Day Flag raising at St Mary’s Church with Members of the Branch and hopefully Newent Town Council attending.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Newent Veteran 100th Birthday Celebration

Chairman thanked Gordon Thorogood for suggesting that the Newent RBL Branch consider a way of celebrating the Newent veteran on his 100th birthday in January 2025. Members of the Branch agreed to think of appropriate celebrations.

6.2 D-Day Display Board

KU requested Members families to try and locate some photographs that could be used on the D-Day Display board.
Post meeting note: 2 boards are now on display in the window of Gooch Sports and in the Market House.

6.3 D-Day Service at Oxenhall Church

CT informed members that the D-Day Service at Oxenhall Church would be held at 11.00 on June 6th

6.4 Rex Debenham

EB reported that ex-Branch Treasurer and Member Rex Debenham is doing well in his new Accommodation.

6.5 Blaisdon Beacon Lighting

EB stated that she has a poster about the Beacon lighting taking place at Blaisdon on 6 June 2024.

6.6 Gloucestershire Grenadiers 75th Anniversary Garden Party

GB informed members about the Garden Party and invited members to book tickets before 16th June.

Richie Balding would distribute full details to all Members on Email.

6.7 RBL Mugs

RA stated that he had a few Branch mugs left over from a few years ago, which because of the emblem were now out of date. He suggested we donate some of the mugs to Cobblers and Manna House. Decision: it was agreed by all present that the mugs could now be distributed to supporters around the town.

7. Date for Next Meeting. The Meeting Closed at 20:21 with the next meeting to take place 27th June 2024 starting at 1900 in Newent Memorial Hall.

Meeting Agenda

Newent and District Branch The Royal British Legion

27th June 2024 in The 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.