

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

26 February 2026 – Memorial Hall

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Richard Balding	Chair
Keith Urch	Deputy Chair, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership
Elaine Balding	
Simon Mason	Padre
Pat Phillips (PPP)	Deputy Padre
Tom Heseltine	
Jan Sologub	
John Price	
Pat Price (PP)	
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Jim Payne	

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 month of March. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Terry Weaver, Jon and Viv Miles, Colin Britt, Sue Urch, David Pollock, Adrian Dover and Graham Barton.

3. Chairman's Report

Introduction

Good evening everybody: it has been a quiet period from New Year with only a couple things happening in March which may be of interest:

3.1. Health & Wellbeing Event – 19 March 2026

The Health & Wellbeing Event will take place on 19th March 2026 in the Memorial Hall starting at 10am and will continue until 2pm. The Branch will be having a stall at the event and we will be setting up from 9:30am. If anyone would like to help they will be most welcome.

3.2. Dedication of Newent Platoon Standard - 19 March 2026

Don't forget that on 19th March 2026 Newent Platoon Gloucestershire ACF (The Rifles), have invited the Branch to attend the Dedication of their Standard at St Mary's Church starting at 1915 Hrs, the full order of service will be:

- 1915 Cadets form honour guard by Church porch (inside porch if wet)
- 1930 Procession to include Rector, Colour Party and Senior Officer(s)
(Standard furled and at the slope)
Process during opening hymn to Chancel Aisle
Welcome and introduction
Rector reads opening statement from dedication service
(adapted from RBL to suit Cadet Force)

Bible Reading
Prayers:
 Lord's Prayer,
 For the King,
 For the Cadet Force,
 Remembering the fallen
Dedication
National Anthem
Address
Blessing
Recessional hymn during procession out 2015 (approx.)
Refreshments in the Church Room

3.3. Veteran's Coffee Morning – 24 March 2026

The next Veterans Coffee Morning will be on the 24 March 2026 starting at 10am in Manna Coffee House, everyone is welcome to attend.

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 January's meeting had been previously circulated to all members.

Minutes proposed by TH, seconded by PP and unanimously agreed that they should be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

There were two matters arising:

3.7. Health & Wellbeing Event

Enough volunteers came forward so the Branch will have a stall at the event on the 19 March.

8.0. No one has yet volunteered to take on the Bar responsibilities so the bar will be run on an honesty basis.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1. Branch Community Support (BCS) Report for February 2026

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

We have pleasure in presenting this month's BCS Report as follows:

5.1.1. General Information

Welcome to our February Meeting and General RBL Update.

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

However, Members are to be aware that many Branches are opposed to TRBL changes regarding youth membership and the Gloucester Branch in particular, are anticipating presenting a Motion at National Conference against the proposed changes.

In addition to the above, there are further concerns relating to the ongoing stability of smaller branches and an underlying drive from TRBL to concentrate fund raising on corporate bodies rather than individual Branches, especially as there is an increase in the number of the smaller branches closing!

Sadly, one wonders about the future of all RBL branches given the number of TV programmes being sponsored by Help for Heroes without reference to TRBL, one of their key sponsors: the last community event in the Forest did not have an RBL representative as such, only support organisations.

5.1.2. Branch Remembrance

At this time, we also remember those unable to be present at our monthly meeting 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 a minimal number of formal requests for advice or support.

Branch Welfare

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>

Branch Membership

The current Branch Membership this reporting period totals 42 members.

New members are always encouraged and welcomed.

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	6
How many beneficiaries visited	6
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	2
Total Welfare Expenditure	NIL
Telephone Buddies:	
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	6
Telephone – How many telephone buddies:	2
Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive in support of veterans	12

5.1.4. Branch Community Support, Youth Liaison and Community Activities.

1. Community Support 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 finalised: 19th March at St Mary's Church.

Those attending are requested to be present by 1915 hrs.

2. The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy - Nominations

Unfortunately, nothing further to report this period.

5.1.5. Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

An invitation has been received from the FoDDC to attend the formal inauguration of The Imjin Memorial at The Cyril Hart Arboretum, Speech House on Friday, 24th April 2026.

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

5.2. Padre's Report

The Branch Padre re-iterated that the dedication for the Newent Army Cadet Force Standard would be the 19th March commencing at 19:15 hours. He also mentioned that there was now an excellent camaraderie between the Army Cadets, Air Cadets and the Branch.

The Padre went on to report that the new head of the Community School is looking to hold a 'Community Open Day' soon and was looking at worthy community projects for the year groups to get involved in: several idea's were discussed and the Padre would report back.

5.3. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer stated that this month the Branch has had income of:

£18 for Subs and £0.45 from HM Courts.

Outgoings for this period were £100 for room hire to the Memorial Hall.

Therefore, the balance of the current account is £977.11.

Note:

At the recent Newent Wine Circle Meeting, during which a presentation was given by Kevin Shayle of Three Choirs Vineyard: Kevin very kindly donated his fee of £50 to The Newent Branch.

5.4. Parade Marshal/Standard Bearer Report

Discussions have continued with the Army Cadets re. the Service to dedicate their new Standard on Thursday 19 March at 1930 in Saint Mary's Church. The Branch Padre has put together a running order for the Service. It is hoped that Branch Members will be able to support the Cadets at this event.

6. Branch Centenary, 18 February 2026

The Chair updated the members present on the various ideas that members of the Committee were pursuing; however, nothing firm as yet has been agreed.

Other ideas and suggestions came from the members present, including but not limited to:

- Looking to see if the band that Rotary used for the VE Day event were available.
- Conducting an anniversary service to include Rededication of the Standard.
- Ascertaining if the Royal British Legion Welsh Band were available.
- Getting the local School Children involved by running a competition to design a poster to showcase this achievement.
- Ascertain whether Newent Orchestra were available to perform a concert. However, it was noted that because of the size of the band the most likely venue would have to be the Community School.

The Chair stated all ideas would be considered and asked Members to keep coming up with proposals for this unique event.

8. Any Other Business

8.1. The Chair spoke briefly about the upcoming Imjin Veterans Memorial unveiling on the 24th April: see the attached poster.

Unfortunately, neither he nor the Deputy Chair were unable to attend but stated that the Branch Standard & Standard Bearer were available and asked that members vote for the Standard to attend. **Decision – Passed Unanimously.**

8.2. The Standard Bearer asked that he be allowed to take the Standard to Tuffley Community Association Centre on 22nd March for the Standard Bearers learning and development course. **Decision – Passed Unanimously.**

8.3. The Chair mentioned that he had sent an email around to both the Branch Membership and Veteran's Coffee Morning Group about the Manna House suggestion of a Veteran's themed meal some time in March. After much discussion it was **decided that it was an excellent idea and the Chair volunteered to make further arrangements with Manna Coffee House** along the theme of an Italian night.

8.4. The Chair also mentioned the published Gloucester City Branch Battlefield Tour to Normandy over the 10th – 13th September 2026 Costing £495 per person.

Note: See the attached poster.

Those interested are to respond promptly as time is limited

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 26th March 2026 in the Memorial Hall starting at 1900 hrs

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

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