

Minutes for the Annual General Meeting of
The Royal British Legion Newent & District Branch:
Memorial Hall - 26 October 2023

Attendees	Post
Richard Balding	Chairman
Keith Urch	Vice Chairman/Branch Community Support Officer/Youth Liaison Officer
Helen Axon	Treasurer
Simon Mason	Padre
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Graham Barton	Parade Marshal
Rick Axon	Entertainments & Bar Member
Mary Curtis	Secretary
Colin Thomson	Local Poppy Appeal Organiser
Sue Colborne	
Elaine Balding	
Susan Urch	
Tom Heseltine	
Gordon Thorogood	
Jan Sologub	
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
Colin Calcutt	
Item	Action
<u>1. Act of Remembrance.</u> The Chairman opened the meeting at 1900 hours and asked that we spare a thought for those who could not be with us due to ill health. He then read the names to the memory of the fallen from the Parish of Newent during WWI & II for the months of November & December followed by the exhortation.	
<u>2. Apologies for Absence.</u> Apologies had been received from Adrian Dover, Jim Gardiner, Pat & John Price and Susanne & Colin Britt.	
<u>3. Chairman's Opening Remarks.</u> The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed his thanks for the excellent turn out.	
<u>4. Adoption of Minutes from the previous AGM.</u> The minutes from the AGM held on 27 October 2022 were examined for completeness and accuracy, after some discussion the Post of Padre Marshal should have read Parade Marshal and that there were some inconsistencies wrt Capital and Lowercase use of the letter B in Branch. Last year's Minutes were then proposed by SM and seconded by GB that they be accepted as a true record, the motion was passed unanimously.	
<u>5. Matters arising from previous minutes.</u> There were no matters arising.	

6. Chairman's Report. The Chairman's Report can be found at Annex A.

7. Individual Officers Reports.

7.a. Vice Chairman/Branch Community Support/ Youth Liaison. The Vice Chairman/BCSO /Youth Liaison Report can be seen at Annex B.

7.b. Branch Padre Report.

The Padre outlined some of the initiatives achieved and to be achieved this year, including the following:

- The materials produced for the St Mary's new housing estate mail drop are on hold until a fuller picture of numbers have been assessed.
- Timings for this year's Acts of Remembrance:
 - 10 Nov 23 – Newent School meet up 10:30.
 - 11 Nov 23 – Newent War Memorial for 10:50
 - 12 Nov 23 – Main Newent Car Park – Parade Assemble & ready to step off by 09:30
- Focus for this year's service is 'the range & diversity of different Services and Units.'
- Newent History Society book 'We Will Remember Them' will be available in the Church with proceeds going to the War memorial fund.
- Recently a service of dedication was held for the new guiding standard and it will be participating in this year's service.

The Padre ended by thanking the Chairman for his work for the Branch over the past year.

7.c. Parade Marshal Report.

- Over the last year the Branch has been involved in several events:
- Remembrance 2022: service at Newent Community School on 11 November; parade service on 13 November
- Service to mark Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and Queen Camilla in May
- Flag raising to mark Armed Forces Day
- Dedication of updated War Memorial in Dymock
- Service at Oxenhall to support CWGC headstone dedication
- Meetings with Newent Town Council to plan events for Remembrance 2023

7.d. Entertainments & Bar Member Report.

Remainder 2023

- November 24th, 19:00 - Branch Meeting and Social in Cobblers.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 21st, 19:00 - Branch Christmas Meal. Menu and prices to follow. <p>2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events schedule for 2024 will be announced at the January Branch meeting. Any emailed suggestions gratefully received (rick@axon.org.uk). <p>7.e. Raffle Coordinator Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six raffles were held during the period from Christmas 2022 through to September 2023. Some raffles were not held during this period due to ill-health, holidays or meeting cancelled. <p>7.f. Secretary Report</p> <p>The Secretary stated that she attended the County Briefing Day on 7 October 2023, she then went on to highlight some of the items discussed.</p> <p>She also stated that Garry Mills (new County Chairman) would like an invite to the Branch to introduce himself. If he can't attend, he will send his Vice Chairman. During the briefing there was an emphasis on Branch nominations for county committee. Also mentioned was that 72pence in every £1 from the Poppy Appeal goes on welfare. The Secretary mentioned that there was an example of the new Poppy Wreath which was really good, and they are trying to have less plastic in them to make them more environmentally friendly.</p> <p>The Chairman then informed the members present that he had written to the County Chairman and had received a response which will be read out at Item 12.b.</p> <p>Remaining Officers. There were no more officer reports.</p>	
<p><u>8. Presentation and Adoption of Accounts.</u></p> <p>8.a. Adoption of Accounts.</p> <p>The Treasurer presented the Branch accounts for the year end 30 June 2023. It was proposed by SU and seconded by PP that the accounts be adopted for this year, the motion was carried unanimously.</p> <p>8.b. Treasurer's Report AGM 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The accounts have been received and on time this year. The balance at end of June 2023 was £1286.41; June 2022 £1191.34 We have raised £322.50 from the Military Wives Concert for the Poppy Appeal. (Some of the expenditure for this will appear on next year's statement) 	<p>Secretary</p> <p>All</p>

- Our only guaranteed income each year is £2 from each Branch Member. The income for the year end June 2023 was £68 as we had 34 members. This is worth bearing in mind as we consider expenditure in the current year.

9. Election and Committee Members. There were no changes to the Branch committee, therefore, the Branch Committee for the next 12 months is as follows:

Position	Name
Chairman	Mr Richard Balding
Deputy Chairman	Mr Keith Urch
Secretary	Mrs Mary Curtis
Treasurer	Mrs Helen Axon
Branch Community Support	Mr Keith Urch
Parade Marshal	Mr Graham Barton
Membership & Youth Liaison	Mr Keith Urch
Raffle Co-ordinator	Mr David Pollock
Entertainments	Mr Rick Axon
Meetings Bar Member	Mr Rick Axon
Padre	Rev Simon Mason
Deputy Padre	Rev Pat Phillips

The Chairman thanked all the Committee Members for their continued support and looked forward to working with them over the coming year.

10. Nominations to National Office.

There were no Nominations to National Office.

11. Motions and Charter Motions for the Annual Meeting of the County Conference.

There were no Charter Motions.

12.a. Appointment of Delegates to the Annual Meeting of the County Conference and Annual Conference.

There were no volunteers at this stage.

12.b. Message from County Chairman. The County Chairman sent the following message:

“Roy and I have now been elected to the positions we now hold. Dave Green from RBL Tewkesbury has agreed to take on the appointment as County Treasurer. I have reappointed Carol Hoban as the County Parade Marshal, and Bob Perkins has been reappointed as the County Standard Bearer. Our President, Grp Capt Anny Reid, ARRC, OBE (RAF Rtd), remains in post.

Roy and I have been visiting Branches since July 2023 and been well received. It is imperative that the Branch Members are made aware of this and at the same time requested to volunteer for nomination (or in the short-term co-option) on to the County Committee. This will mean that we can get the County out of Membership Council

Administration and back on to an even keel as fast as we can. This will not be achieved by Roy and I unless, and until we get the much-needed input from the active members within the Branches to come forward to assist.

The importance of getting a County Committee, and sub committees, particularly Conference, Training and Events, up and running in time for the 27 January 2024 deadline for the County AGM is a priority. To that end I would request that you ask your Branch members to volunteer their services to assist us in reforming a County Committee and that this be looked upon by all members in the Branch as a priority. Members should be participating in their Branches and those who wish to move forward must be given the opportunity to advance within the Membership structure.

I look forward to your continued support and to you encouraging those members within RBL Newent Branch who wish to participate at County level to do so.”

The Chairman reiterated the County Chairman’s message and asked for all Branch members to consider this request and let the Branch Chairman know if they are willing to join the County Committee, he would then put them forward for consideration.

13. Special Items.

13.a. Poppy Appeal Organiser. The local Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO) informed the meeting that the Poppy Appeal (PA) this year has raised around £10,000 but unfortunately, he didn’t know the exact figure as yet. The PAO then went on to say that donations for poppy pins etc. had started off well, and a new innovation this year alongside contactless payments was the addition of a QR code on the poppy boxes where people could scan with their smart phones and donate that way.

14. Any Other Business

14.a. Lea Branch Reformation. TH mentioned that there had been no progress on reforming the Lea Branch of TRBL.

14.b. CWGC Talk Oxenhall. SU mentioned that the talk by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on 19 October 2023 at Oxenhall went down very well and was very informative.

14.c. Poppy Appeal Volunteer. CC stated that he would be available to help out at the 2 Poppy Appeal stands this year.

14.d. November Branch Meeting. EB mentioned that the Chairman was unavailable for the November Branch meeting and that the Vice Chairman and Treasurer would be conducting business.

<p>14.e. The Buchanan Trust. GB asked when the talk by the Buchanan trust would be taking place? The Vice Chairman said it would now be next year.</p> <p>14.f. BCSO Thank you. SC wanted to offer her thanks to the BCSO for all the help he gave her to fill out the forms for her father.</p>	
<p>11 Date of Next Meeting. The Meeting closed at 2020 hours. The next meeting will be the November monthly meeting which will take place on 23 November 2023 Starting at 1900 hours in Cobblers Ale House.</p>	All

Agenda for The Newent & District Branch Royal British Legion

Meeting 23 November 2023

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

Newent and District Branch TRBL

Annual General Meeting in the Memorial Hall - 26 October 2023

Chairman's Report

Introduction

This year has again been a struggle to recruit new members and retain them, although as I speak the Branch membership remains consistent, but more about that later. The Branch has achieved much this year and continues to foster good relationships within the local community, which I hope will continue growing.

Welfare

Welfare as usual is one of our Branch's strong points and this is due in no small way to the stellar performance of our Branch Community Support (BCS) team i.e. Keith who as most of you know works tirelessly to make sure any non-beneficiaries or beneficiaries receive as much help and support the Branch and the wider Royal British Legion can give them, which includes some noticeable results this year.

Membership

As is the case most years the membership numbers have fluctuated, we've had several new members and we've unfortunately lost some members. At the moment the membership is lower than last year but appears to be stable. In order to maintain the 'status quo' for next year recruitment will need to be at least 10%, however, with the ever-increasing age demographic of our members a more realistic target of 20% would be a better target, with an emphasis on bringing in a younger group to become more actively involved in the Branch and therefore future proofing the continuing development of the Branch. You probably get a bit fed up of me going on about membership, but without it we don't exist.

Affiliations

The Branch has an excellent working relationship with Newent Town Council, the Air Cadets, Newent Community School, the local Girl Guiding movement and Cobblers Ale House who adopted the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal as their charity of choice, a little bit more about that later. It is my intention to continue the excellent work achieved by your Committee over the past year and to expand the Branch's affiliations and liaisons to the wider Newent voluntary and young people's activity groups, but this can only be achieved by every member taking an active role in promoting and pushing the Royal British Legion and the Branch forward into the community.

Finances

The Branch bank balance continues to remain healthy with very little movement throughout the year and Helen who has updated our Branch banking practices will give an update on the latest figures and issues faced during her report.

Poppy Appeal

As mentioned earlier the Branch has been adopted by Cobblers Ale House as their charity partner of choice, and during this year through this one activity has raised over £500 for the Poppy Appeal for which we are truly appreciative.

Other Activities

Some of the other activities the Branch has been involved in this year include but are not limited to: Participation and attendance at Newent Community School's Remembrance Service and Newent's Remembrance Parade and Service in November, attendance at the County Conference in January, the Memorial Service for Cpl Fred Sandbach in March, Chairmans' briefing day in April, Branch Community Support representatives completed their DBSs in May as well as attending the RBL Annual Conference. The excellent Innsworth Military Wives Concert was in June and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone dedication was in August. We launched the Veteran's Coffee Mornings in September and throughout the year we have supported several endeavours not least Dymock's War Memorial Restoration project and the Poppy Appeal and who can forget that we had our first joint winners of the John Edward Whitehorn trophy.

Thank You's

My report would be a little bit remiss without a few thank you's, the Branch could not exist without the hard work and dedication shown by your Branch Officials Mary stepped in last year when we were in dire need of a secretary and has steadfastly supported me during the year. My thanks for that support and I wish her well for the forthcoming year. Rick has risen to the difficult and thankless task of running the bar each month and of course organising any social events partaken by the Branch throughout the year, ably supported by his wife Helen who of course has had the incredibly difficult task of getting to grips with the peculiar RBL accounting system LOMAS and bringing the Branch bank account in to the 21st century. Thank you both for everything you've done this year. I tease Graham about being the Branch 'Standard Bearer' which he takes with good humour, because as everyone knows he is actually the Parade Marshal but does often volunteer to carry the Standard when not performing his Parade Marshal duties,. Both things make the Branch visually stand out on Parades, Services, Funerals and flag raisings, so once again thank you Graham. David took on what to most people seems like an easy task, putting on the monthly raffles, however it does take a lot of organising especially without a recognised revenue stream to fall back on, but with very limited resources he does an excellent job, so once again thank you. Simon and Pat are the moral arm of our little branch and often work hard in the background, the support they give me helps to keep me on an even track. It seems like I'm always having to say thank you to Keith and I am because he has so many hats to wear in the Branch that he is always up to something, simply put I could not Head up the Branch without the continued support from the whole Committee but especially Keith.

Nearly finished; thanks also go to Newent Town Council, Manna Coffee and Crafts, Cobblers Ale House and Newent Community School for helping in their own small way to keep Remembrance and the Poppy Appeal in the forefront of the local community.

Last but not least to all our members, whether they are able to make events and meetings or not, it always lovely to see so many of you turn out, this is such valuable support mechanism for such a small Branch, so thank you.

Richard Balding
Chairman
Newent & District Branch
The Royal British Legion

Branch Community Support Annual Report for the Period 2022/2023

INTRODUCTION

Last year we recorded the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, our Patron of many years, and witnessed the coronation of King Charles III.

At this time, TRBL has yet to be notified of our new Patron.

As your representative having the roles of Vice Chairman, Branch Community Support and Youth Liaison Officer, I wish to express sincere thanks to my Branch colleagues, those manning the Veteran's Gateway, various Newent community organisations, schools, and our Town, District and County Councils for their continued support.

As in previous years, my report covers three main areas, all of which are encompassed within the role of Branch Community Support and Welfare Officer.

BRANCH MEMBERSHIP

Members may recall that Branch Membership numbers have fluctuated significantly over past years from its height of 56 members to its current, more stable level of 36 members. Despite several colleagues moving away to pastures new, many have remained Branch members and we have had the pleasure in welcoming a small number of new members to the fold over the past twelve months and look forward to their regular attendance at our monthly meetings.

The Branch is justifiably proud of its membership and the friendships forged, especially recognising that many of the UK's smaller branches have now closed or amalgamated with other much larger regional or national branches, thereby losing their uniqueness and links with their local community.

BRANCH WELFARE

TRBL having issued Branch processes and procedures for BCS training, your Chairman and BCS Representative are now suitably qualified, and the Branch formally registered to provide BCS support. Unfortunately, as we move forward, it is extremely likely that further changes will occur especially as next year will see changes in the Veteran's Gateway service.

Notwithstanding the proposed changes, it is considered beneficial that we measure this year's summary data against that of previous periods.

During the year 2021/2022, a total of 60 welfare visits were made to members and their families, with a further 67 contacts of support being made through the Telephone Buddy network.

While this represented a decrease from previous COVID related years, it still reflected the need to support our colleagues and their families.

The 2022/2023 Reporting Period

The current reporting period presents yet another changing picture of the Branch due to the change in membership numbers and demographics. Despite the reduction in Branch Membership, several members moving on to pastures new, many have continued to support their colleagues through the BCS process. Attracting younger members remains a significant

challenge and as such, our focus this period has shifted towards the needs of our senior members, primarily focusing on health and mobility issues, with a far lesser request for advice on financial matters.

In accordance with TRBL reporting process, The Branch data for this period is as follows:

Total Number of Welfare Visits (including those at distance)	51
Total Number of Beneficiary Visits:	32
Branch Community Supporters:	44
(Note that this represents a nominal average of 4 BCS/month)	
Total Welfare Expenditure was:	NIL
Total Telephone Buddy calls made:	114
Beneficiaries called during this period:	Between 2 and 6 persons/month

YOUTH, COMMUNITY AND BRANCH AFFILIATIONS

Youth Liaison

Regular communications have continued to be maintained with local youth organisations, schools and community organisations.

Annual Remembrance Services

Further to the continued success of previous Remembrance Services, this year's Remembrance Service at Newent Community School, by kind permission of the School's Principal, Mrs Dawn Burke, is scheduled to occur on Friday, 10th November: all members are welcome.

In addition to the above, a short service will be held at Newent's War Memorial on Saturday, 11th November, with the Annual Parade and Service of Remembrance taking place on Sunday, 12th November at St Mary's Church.

J E Whitehorn Trophy

The Branch continues to support the family wishes of the late John Edward Whitehorn having established a youth award in his honour. This year saw the first joint award presented by JEW's grandson to Nathan Stringer and Harvey Hopkins.

Newent War Memorial

Sales of the Newent Local History Society's book highlighting the great loss that Newent and District families had suffered in both World Wars, "We Will Remember Them", continues. This year, in support of works to Newent's War Memorial, books will be available at The Remembrance Day Service for a donation towards The War Memorial Fund.

The proposed planned works on Newent's War Memorial to clean, repair and incorporate those names missing from The Memorial has commenced: tenders have been issued and selection of the preferred contractor is pending.

Branch Support to Dymock and Oxenhall

Having previously provided Community Support to Dymock's War Memorial Committee and into the research of one of Oxenhall's fallen WW1 soldiers, Pte Percy Griffin Williams and the erection of his CWG headstone, we are able to report that both projects have been successfully completed.

Veteran Friendly Framework

The Veteran Friendly Framework (VFF) seeks to support more than 25,000 veterans currently living in care homes within their communities by providing resources to help with their practical, emotional, and social needs. The Framework aims to tackle loneliness and isolation, as well as providing better health and wellbeing outcomes, for UK military veterans.

Veteran Coffee Mornings

With the valued support of Linda and her team at Manna Gifts in Newent, a Veteran's Coffee Morning has been launched. This will take place on the 4th Tuesday of every month: all veterans are welcome.

Newent Town Council

We welcome the newly elected councillors to Newent Town Council, its Mayor (Cllr Sara Hulbert) and the new Veteran's Representative, Cllr Julia Gooch.

Branch Affiliation

Interest in Branch Affiliation continues but unfortunately with further National RBL ongoing changes, your representatives have not been as proactive as they would have wished. However, the Branch continues to strengthen its links with other veteran organisations.

It is hoped that by this time next year, we will have been able to present many of those overdue Affiliation Certificates to organisations within our community.

Branch Recognition

Special thanks are recorded to Newent Memorial Hall Committee, Newent Town Council, Newent Local History Society, Local Businesses, Schools, and other Community Groups for their continuing support and fund raising for both The Branch and The Poppy Appeal.

However, the ongoing success of the Branch is due to its members and the many other unsung heroes within our community, without whose support the Newent Branch of the Royal British Legion would not be the success that it is today.

K C Urch

BCS Officer

Newent & District Branch BR3063

The Royal British Legion

22nd October 2023