

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

26 June 2025 – Memorial Hall

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Richard Balding	Chair
Keith Urch	Deputy Chair, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership
Graham Barton	Parade Marshal
Rick Axon	Bar, Entertainment Member
Dave Pollock	Raffle Coordinator
John Price	
Pat Price	
Jim Gardiner	
Adrian Dover	
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Helen Axon	
Jan Sologub	

1. Act of Remembrance.

The Chair 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 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 July. He concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Colin Britt, John Miles, Viv Miles, Susan Urch, Sue Colborne, Simon Mason, Elaine Balding, Tom Hestletine and Jim Payne.

3. Chair's Report

Welcome everyone I hope you are all well, another busy month with Rededications and Armed Forces Day Flag raising; so let's start with all the local stuff:

3.1. Woodlands Trust Service of Remembrance

On Wednesday 11 June 2025 3 members of the Branch attended the annual Woodlands Trust Service of Remembrance in Thornbury. This was my first time attending and I was pleasantly surprised by the number of people who attended. It was a fantastic event with very good facilities. Our Standard was Paraded so I will leave the majority of the report to our Parade Marshal.

3.2. Newent War Memorial Rededication 21 June 2025

For those of you who attended the Newent War Memorial Rededication on the 21 June, I think you will all agree that it went off very well. Thanks to the War Memorial restoration team for arranging such a wonderful event and especially to Keith Urch, Graham Barton, Dood Pearce and of course the team at St Mary's. You will hear more about the event during our Deputy Chair and Parade Marshal's briefings. A further thank you to Gordon for agreeing to lay the Branches VJ Day Wreath and a final thank you to the ladies at the Memorial Hall for their support in arranging the refreshments.

3.3. Armed Forces Week Flag Raising – 23 June 2025

My thanks go straight away to Newent Town Council (NTC), our Armed Forces representative (Julia Gooch), Newent Community School and the Branch Padre for another fantastic event, which culminated in excellent refreshments up at Newent Community School.

3.4. Veteran's Coffee Morning – 22 July 2025

Don't forget that the next Veteran's Coffee Morning will be next month on the 22 July 2025 starting at 10am in Manna Coffee House, everyone is welcome to attend.

3.5. Branch Secretary Vacancy

The Branch is still seeking a permanent 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. Could everyone please ask their friends and family if they would like to take on this pivotal role.

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 5.1.4.1. from Previous Meeting. The proposed affiliation ceremony with Newent Army Cadets will now take place at one of their meetings, therefore the £50 voted for refreshments will now no longer be needed.

Item 5.3.a. from Previous Meeting. Unfortunately the RAFA & WRNA Standard Bearers were unable to attend the Rededication of Newent War Memorial

Item 5.3.b. from Previous Meeting. The Armed Forces Day Flag was raised by NTC and the event was a success.

Item 6.1. from Previous Meeting. This item is ongoing and the Deputy Chair will update all at the next meeting.

With no further matters arising RA proposed and JS seconded that the minutes be passed as a true and accurate record. **Decision:** Passed unanimously.

5. Reports by Officers

5.1 Branch Community Support (BCS) Report

5.1.1. Welcome. TRBL having issued BCS individual identification cards as part of their safeguarding programme are discovering that there has been a failure in due process relating to personal training and issue of the ID cards in that their life expectancy is extremely limited i.e. one month rather than one year.

This issue has been reported to our MEO and County Chair who has expressed great concern as it is not an isolated case but certainly County if not, Nationwide.

We continue to progress reconnecting with our many local veterans, serving members of our Armed Forces community and Cadet Units in Newent. We have finalised TRBL arrangements for the first of our formal Branch Affiliations with the newly formed Gloucestershire Army Cadet Force (The Rifles) Newent Detachment and await receipt of date as to when Certificate and Cadet Badges may be presented.

5.1.2. Branch Remembrance. We remember those unable to be present this evening due to various reasons and as usual, offer our support to those in need.

5.1.3. Branch Welfare. Aside from the support available via your BCS Representatives, Veterans and Branch Members may continue to contact the RBL Helpline services as normal via the national network on 0808 802 8080 or Veteran's Gateway: <https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk>

5.1.4. Branch Membership. The current Branch Membership stands at 44 Members: new Members are always encouraged and welcomed.

5.1.5. Branch Statistics. We continue to be supportive of our local veterans and others 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 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	4
How many beneficiaries visited	2
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	2
Total Welfare Expenditure	NIL
Telephone Buddies:	
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	6
Telephone – How many telephone buddies:	3
Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive in support of veterans	10

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

in addition to that stated above, Branch Representatives are progressing a similar affiliation via Damon Ballinger, Flt Lt RAFAC | OC 186 (Newent) Sqn Air Cadets.

We have also contacted our MEO regarding affiliation with local businesses and organisations who contribute so much to TRBL. However at this time, TRBL has no national systems in place for performing such affiliations: it will possibly form part of a future review.

5.1.6. The John Edward Whitehorn Trophy. The response to date regarding nominations to this excellent youth award has been extremely disappointing. Reminders are continually being sent to all secondary schools and youth organisations serving Newent and its wider community, but as yet, no nominations have been received.

5.1.7. Newent War Memorial. The Rededication Service of Newent's War Memorial took place on Saturday, 21 June at St Mary's Church. This service was the culmination of several years' work by a number of local residents; the event being extremely well attended by residents, representatives from Regimental Associations, Community Groups and Local Companies.

My special thanks to all those that very generously funded The Project, Rev Canon Simon and The Team at St Marys, Graham Barton, Richard Balding, Dood Pearce, The Team at The Memorial Hall for the refreshments, those that travelled long distances to represent the various Regiments, and above all, the stonemasons, Steve Allard and Son without whom, the works on our beloved War Memorial would not have happened, making the occasion so memorable.

Photographs recording this unique event will be available in the coming days.

The Time Capsule. A varied array of items has been collected for placement in the Time Capsule: sealing will take place shortly when a number of other promised items are delivered.

5.1.8. Armed Forces Week - Flag Raising Event. Newent Town Council, having previously had a very successful VE Day Commemorative Event, held an Armed Forces Week Flag Raising Event on Monday (23 June) which was followed by light refreshments kindly provided in the Sixth Form Centre, Newent Community School.

Thanks are extended to Cllr Julia Gooch, NTC Armed Forces Representative, Newent Community School and everyone involved in organising this community event.

5.1.9. Forthcoming Dates for TRBL Branch Diary

5.1.9.a. Veteran's Branch Coffee Morning will be held on Tuesday, 22 July 2025 at Manna Coffee House, Newent

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

5.2. Treasurer's report

There were no transactions this month so the balance stands at: £1,077.36.

5.3. Parade Marshal

5.3.1 Woodlands Trust. On 11 June the Branch Standard was paraded at the Woodlands Trust Remembrance Service, along with eighteen other Standards. Following a Service in the Chapel, the Standards Bearers marched to the Memorial Stone where wreaths were laid. After the march back to the Chapel refreshments were provided for all those who attended.

5.3.2. Newent War Memorial. At the Rededication of the Newent War Memorial on 21 June the Branch Standard was joined by Standards representing the Rifles, the Air Cadets and the Guide movement. At the end of the Service the Standard Bearers marched to the Memorial Hall where they formed a Guard of Honour for Colonel Ayres, County Colonel of the Rifles.

5.3.3. Armed Forces Week. On 23 June the Branch Standard was carried at the Flag Raising ceremony to mark the beginning of Armed Forces Week.

5.3.4. Remembrancetide weekend. The Parade Marshal also mentioned that at the Armed Forces Week ceremony he got the chance to ask NTC Mayor about arranging a meeting to discuss this year's Remembrance Day Parade. NTC have now given 4 dates so that a meeting can take place, Members will be kept informed as soon as the relevant information is known.

5.4. Branch Padre

The Branch Padre was unavailable for tonight's meeting, however the Parade Marshal did state that the Branch Padre would be away for the VJ Day 80 commemoration, but was planning to ask the Branch Deputy Padre and St Mary's Curate (Mark) to conduct the ceremony. The VJ Day service is likely to take place around 10:45, further details will be published at a later date.

5.5. Raffle Coordinator.

The raffle coordinator volunteered to take photographs at the War Memorial Rededication ceremony, which he did and passed the memory stick to the Chair for distribution and presentation at a later date.

6.0 Any Other Business

6.1. VJ Day 80. The Chair informed all present that he was asked to a meeting at short notice to discuss a possible VJ Day 80 event, being arranged by a small group of local residents. The meeting took place in the Black Dog Public House on 27 May 2025. The meeting involved a lot of discussion but the outline of the possible event was decided as follows:

- Date: 15 August 2025
- Venue: Lake Area
- 3pm – Tea Party primarily aimed at Children to involve food, non-alcoholic refreshments, music and children's entertainment.
- 5pm – 9pm a mobile Bar would open with further food, music and refreshment.

The Chair would keep everyone informed as further details became known.

6.2. Violette Szabo Parade 2025. The Chair informed all present that county has asked for Standard Bearers for this year's Violette Szabo parade which will take place on 13 July 2025 in Wormelow starting at 1330 hours. Unfortunately no one was available to carry the Standard on that day.

6.3. Branch 100 Years Old. The Chair informed all present that the Branch would be turning 100 years old in 2027 and asked that Members start thinking about possible activities to mark this momentous occasion.

6.4. Forces Covenant NHS. JG let everyone know that when he was recently in hospital he was approached by staff and asked whether he would like a visit from the hospital veterans representative. He just wanted to let members know that if required additional help is available if

you have informed the NHS that you are a veteran.

6.5. Telephone Buddies. PPr asked what the criteria for becoming a telephone buddy are. After some discussion the Chair volunteered to get PPr the job description for telephone buddies.

7.0. Next Meeting date

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:00 hrs with the next meeting set for 24 July 2025, starting at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

Meeting Agenda

Newent and District Branch The Royal British Legion

24 July 2025 in Newent Memorial Hall

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