**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**YEOVIL AND DISTICT BRANCH RBL (BR2555)**

**HELD AT YEOVIL RUGBY CLUB ON 24 OCT 23 AT 1900**

1. ACT OF REMEMBRANCE BY THE CHAIRMAN

2. MEMBERS PRESENT

Christopher Le Hardy (Hon President), Robert McDonald (Somerset County Chairman), Simon Woodrow (Chairman), Tim Tatler (Joint Vice-Chairman), Alun Smith (Joint Vice-Chairman), Andy Kendal (Treasurer), John Emery (Secretary) and 7 other Branch Members.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Roger Law (Committee Member) and 8 other Branch Members.

4. CHAIRMANS OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed all those present. He thanked the Secretary for arranging the use of Yeovil the Rugby Club for tonight’s meeting and stated that he would write to the Chairman of the Rugby Club thanking them for the use of their facilities.

He also welcomed the Treasurer to the meeting and wished him well after his recent illness.

5. MINUTES OF MEETING 24

Copies of this meeting had been distributed and copies were made available to all present. It was agreed that they were a true and accurate record of that meeting.

**Proposed - Chairman Seconded – Guy Williams Carried Unanimously**

The minutes were then signed off by the Chairman.

6. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the previous AGM.

7. PRESIDENTS ADDRESS

The President stated that the Branch was in good hands with the current team in place and was in a steady state. However more volunteers are always encouraged, and welcome to join the committee team.

At the RBL Annual National Conference the motion to change the balance of the Board of Trustees away from the membership had not been approved. Any proposed future changes to the RBL Constitution were still being looked at by the Somerset RBL.

Membership of the Branch has shrunk over the past years down to the current membership of 87. This decline in membership needed to be addressed to see how this could be improved. He stated that he was currently in discussion with RBL contacts in Wiltshire and Dorset, who were both also seeing a decline, to actively address this matter.

He briefed the meeting about the events that took part in Tenby, South Wales, on the 22-24 Sep 23 to commemorate the remnants of the Belgium Forces who reformed, after the collapse of Europe in 1940. He was pleased that note that the Chairman had acted as the Parade Marshal for this event.

8. CHAIRMANS REPORT

The Chairman apologised for his long periods of absence during the year due to his Role of a Medic Volunteer in Eastern Europe. However, he would be in attendance during this year’s remembrance period.

Poppy Appeal 2022. Last year Yeovil had raised a total of £30,400 for the appeal, a record for the town. He gave a vote of thanks to everyone involved in the collection including Branch Members, Branch Associates and Cadet Groups. He gave a particular vote if thanks to Paul Bunce the Poppy Appeal Manager for Somerset for his efforts on behalf of the town. Any volunteers for this year’s collection were always welcome.

He then gave the meeting brief accounts of:

1. His visit to the RBL Oklahoma USA Branch, which had been a great success.
2. His attendance on 25 Apr 23 at the ANZAC Day Service at Hyde Park Corner followed by a Parade in Whitehall.
3. His attendance at the 2nd anniversary of a hunger strike carried out by Gurkha Veterans in support of their claim for equal pension rights between them and their British counterparts.

Falklands Service of Commemoration. A small service and wreath laying was held at the Memorial in St John’s Churchyard on 14 Jun 23, the 41st Anniversary of the end of the conflict. Veterans of the conflict, the Dorset and Somerset representative, Cozi Powell, of the South Atlantic Medal Association (SAMA 82), attended along with The Mayor, the President, and Branch Members.

Due to the success of this event the committee had decided, with the agreement of SAMA 82, to carry out this commemoration on an annual basis.

Project for 2024. The coming year would see the 80th Anniversary of the D Day Landings, Operation Overlord. It was hoped that the Branch would commemorate this event in some way. He had had some preliminary thoughts on this but hoped that the Committee, Branch Members, and other local organisations would be happy to be a part of this commemoration.

Finally, the Chairman took this opportunity to thank all the Committee, Branch Members and supporters for their assistance and help during the past year.

9. VICE-CHAIRMEN’S REPORT

Vice-Chairman (TT) reported after successful training the Branch now had three trained Standard Bearers. He was actively looking for more volunteers to fill more posts within the Branch.

The Chairman stated that a Standard Bearer would be required in the Borough on 11th November at 1100 and at the Yeovil Town Football Club Poppy Collection in the afternoon. This was in addition to a Standard Bearer at the Remembrance Parade on Sunday 12th November.

Vice-Chairman (AS) informed the meeting that the landlord of the Great Lyde Public House was offering a free Sunday Carvery to any Veterans parading on Remembrance Sunday. All they had to do was pre-book by phone.

10. TREASURERS REPORT

The Treasurer reported that the Branch account balance currently stood at £5,411.15. A copy of the Annual Accounts will be submitted to the County Office within the required timescale to keep the Branch fully compliant with current RBL regulations.

Secretary’s Note: Annual RBL Subscription remains at £20. Consisting of: RBL Subscription of £18 and Branch Subscription of £2.

11. SECRETARY’S REPORT

The Secretary stated that he had now settled in after 6 months in the post. However, he was still learning the duties on a daily basis. He passed copies of RBL Forms MS1 (Branch Details) and MS1b (Standard Bearers) to the Chairman for completion.

He thanked Tony Powell for the excellent article he had written in the SAMA 82 newsletter about the Falklands Service of Remembrance held by the Branch in June.

12. THREE YEAR PLAN

The Chairman stated that the Branch should be planning to over the next three years to:

1. Achieve a target of having a Branch Membership of 100 (currently 87) by the end of 2024.
2. Find out why the attendance at the AGM was so low and strive to improve this.
3. Forge an affiliation with the local Cadet Forces Units.

13. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

All the current Officers and Committee Members of the Branch were willing to stand for another year and were duly elected by those present.

**Proposed – Andrew Kendal Seconded – Guy Williams Carried Unanimously**

14. MOTION FOR THE COUNTY CONFERENCE

There was none as yet. The Chairman stated that the Conference was on 11 Feb 24 and any motion had to be submitted by the end of October.

15. DELEGATE FOR THE COUNTY AND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

No one had been nominated yet, the Branch were still awaiting a letter asking for nominations.

16. WELFARE

There was much discussion on “What was the Procedure” for getting welfare support.

The County Chairman stated that the primary function of the RBL was welfare. All members should be aware of this, and the Legion Website gives comprehensive information of what welfare support is available. There is also a phone number on the back of your Membership Card for Welfare Queries.

All welfare cases should be reported to the County Office, they have dedicated caseworkers. However, home/hospital visits are encouraged but do not make promises on behalf of the RBL.

A good idea was to establish a Branch point of contact at the local Armed Forces Breakfast Club but again be careful of what you say and if necessary, refer welfare cases to the County Office.

The County Secretary asked those present if they were aware of the Armed Forces Covenant what they understood it to meant to them. He received a varied response from those present.

Secretary’s Note: To assist members a brief guide to the Armed Forces Covenant and the Defense Employer Recognition Scheme is attached to these minutes,

The Chairman stated that the Branch did send a quarterly welfare return to the County Office.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The County Chairman reminded members that the Official launch of the 2024 poppy Appeal was 26 Oct 24.

The Vice-Chairman (TT) noted that on the Branch Website it stated that meetings were held at the YESS Club. Could this be amended to reflect the current situation.

The Chairman reminded members that the Act of Remembrance at Yeovil Cemetery would take place at 1415 on remembrance Sunday.

18. PRESENTATION

The President presented to the Chairman a Certificate of Appreciation for his 10 continuous years’ service to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

19. CLOSING ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

**John**

M J Emery MBE S Woodrow

Branch Secretary Branch Chairman