

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

Meeting held on 24 June 2021

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Post</u>
Richard Balding Keith Urch	Chairman BCS Representative, Deputy Chairman, Youth Liaison and Membership Secretary.
Simon Mason	Padre
Pat Phillips	Deputy Padre
Graham Barton	Deputy Parade Marshal
Colin Britt	Deputy BCS
Rick Axon	Entertainments/Bar Member
David Sass	Treasurer
Mike Brown	Parade Marshal
John Celino	President
Adrian Dover	
Susan Urch	
Colin Calcutt	
Sean Gaunt	Guest
Helen Powell	Guest
Jim Powell	Guest
Susanne Britt	Secretary

<u>Item</u>	<u>Action</u>
<u>1. Act of Remembrance</u> <p>The Chairman Opened the Meeting at 1900 hrs and welcomed everyone to the first meeting to be held in the Memorial Hall since the beginning of the Pandemic. He stated that it was good to see so many and welcomed 3 new faces Helen, Jim and Sean. He asked if we could spare a moment of thought for those who could not be with us tonight and those that were feeling under the weather, he also wanted everyone to spare a thought for the family and friends of Victor Urch who sadly passed away earlier this month. He read the names of those from the Parish of Newent who had lost their lives during WWI and WWII during the month of July and concluded with the Act of Remembrance.</p>	
<u>2. Apologies</u> <p>Apologies had been received from Elaine Balding, Tom Heseltine and Christine Howley.</p>	
<u>3. Chairman's Report</u> <u>Introduction</u> <p>Good evening everybody and welcome back to the Memorial Hall for June's branch meeting, I hope you are all well, a much quieter month than has been of late, but before I go on I'd like to welcome some new faces, and I'm sure you will all make them feel welcome.</p>	

To start local news:

Memorial Flower Bed outside the Medical Centre

Adrian volunteered to use his green fingers and help me do some long-awaited pruning and tidying up of the Flower Bed the Branch looks after outside the Medical Centre behind the Memorial Seat dedicated to 'Uncle Bert'. Please take a look when you next walk past and if you feel the urge, by all means take some secateurs and snip away. Thanks, Adrian, for your help.

Branch Management Awareness Training

I attended the revised webinar Branch Management Awareness Training course on Tuesday 8 June. I wanted to try out the new course structure and see if it is suitable and easily accessible for any of our committee or members to attend. This is a basic overview of how the Royal British Legion works from a branch perspective and I would recommend it as an introduction to the way a branch should be run. If anyone would like to attend one of these courses from the comfort of your own home, please let me know and I will apply.

Newent in Bloom

Earlier this year I was invited by Newent in Bloom to attend one of their meetings to discuss their plan for the forthcoming season (I was persuaded by the promise of alcohol?), during a weak moment I volunteered to service and turn on/off the summer time watering system they have for hanging baskets etc. in the town, after many emails I've now done what is needed to get the system working for this year, all I have to do now is remember to turn it off at the end of the season.

One Legion Strategy update

A couple of weeks ago National sent out this update on the progress off the One Legion strategy:

"In the period since we last spoke there have been some changes that I'm sure many of you are aware of:

- ***Changes to the Executive Board***

Getting the organisational structure right is a big part of delivering our strategy. As I said in February, combining Marketing, Fundraising & Remembrance under one Director is key to that. I am pleased that Gary Ryan has taken up the new role. Thanks and best wishes go to Claire Rowcliffe, who has now left RBL.

- ***Delivering welfare services for the future***

We want to increase and improve the services we offer to our beneficiaries. This is a key piece of work and it's important that we get it right. We are continuing to work on what these changes will look like and how they might best be delivered. We will keep you updated on our progress.

- ***Future ways of working***

We've had useful feedback on the proposals for closing our secondary offices. Some of you are concerned at how this will impact our contact with "customers" - members, volunteers and beneficiaries. We are taking the time to review everybody's responses and to look at the options before making final decisions. On the subject of offices, it's clear there is some confusion in what we mean by area, secondary or county office. They are the same thing. County is an older term more often used by members.

- **Next steps**

Once the Executive Board has considered the feedback and the options, we will take our recommendations to the Board of Trustees in July. Our plan is to update you all via virtual town halls on Tuesday 13 July. "

Clarification about a recent News Article

This Clarification on a news item run by the 'I' publication came in on Tuesday of this week from Head Office and clears up incorrect reporting:

"Please see below clarification about an i-news article and other similar articles published over the weekend.

The i reported that "The Royal British Legion has been forced to abandon sales of poppies in the European Union because of the extra costs and bureaucracy it faces following Brexit."

This is not an accurate description of the situation. Only merchandise sold through our online Poppy Shop is impacted by the new regulations. The distribution of paper poppies to the EU isn't affected. We are still sending deliveries to locations in Europe.

This is why we're not selling online into Europe.

From 1 July all goods sent directly from the UK to consumers in the EU will be subject to the local rate of VAT in the destination country. If you add in customs fees, then the standard delivery charge, then the additional costs will total more than the value of the original article

Any accounting workarounds will cost twice as much as the profit we make in the EU per year. As a charity, this isn't the best use of our funds.

EU members won't go without

The number of orders coming through from the EU is relatively small (0.2% of all orders), but for those Poppy Shop customers impacted, there is the opportunity to nominate a family member or a friend living in the UK who will be able to use the current membership discount whilst shopping on the online store.

We have sent our EU-based Members an email explaining all of this.

If these regulations change, we will be delighted to resume selling online into Europe.”

Recruitment of New Branch Members

My thanks go to our President and our district Poppy Appeal Organiser who are starting a recruitment drive for new members, he had hoped to be under the Market House this Saturday, but unfortunately it was too short notice for Newent Town Council, if you would like to join them just let our President know, or if anyone else fancies putting up a stall in town with marketing/ recruitment ephemera on it in the near future just let me know and I'll support you anyway I can. I have just requested some more upto date marketing and recruitment materials, which hopefully should come soon.

Secretary Position

The Lack of a Branch Secretary is a critical issue, I've had some good suggestions from our President which I am grateful for and I have started re-advertising the role on social media again so if you see the ad please share, repost or comment as a way of getting a better circulation, I have also asked Longhope branch if they have anyone who might fancy belonging to 2 branches and becoming our Secretary, but nothing back yet.

So as usual I'm going to ask if anyone would like to take on this worthwhile role or have any idea's in recruiting a new Secretary please let me know, the thing to remember is if we do not have a full compliment of Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman by October's AGM the branch will have no option but to inform County of our predicament.

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 the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record. Proposed by SM and Seconded by SB and agreed unanimously. There were no Matters Arising.

5. Reports by Officers

Deputy Chairman/Membership/Youth Liaison/Branch Community Support

This month's report sees us meeting together once more in our local adopted Branch Headquarters, Newent Memorial Hall rather than outside or via Zoom.

Your Representatives continue to attend virtual meetings and provide The Branch with all appropriate updates. The RBL BCS Steering Group continue to develop services and benefits are

beginning to emerge for all Branches and will so in the coming months.

For those of you wishing to discover more, please contact either The Branch Chairman or your BCS Representatives. You are reminded that for those undertaking Branch Community activities the new BCS Handbook is readily available.

On-line face to face training, GDPR, Safeguarding, DBS Processes, and Lone Working courses have evolved, most of which are available to County and District Officers. We are informed that until BCS representatives have completed these courses no local BCS activities are to be undertaken. However, in the true spirit and ethos of the RBL we shall continue to provide support to those veterans and members in need.

Welfare and Membership

RBL HQ are continuing with its Strategic Review and information is becoming more readily available.

A number of RBL surveys have been issued to which your BCS Team have responded.

Welfare

As in the past, we shall continue to aid and support our members and veterans, in the first instant, by signposting them to the National RBL Helpline.

The National RBL Helpline is: 0808 802 8080
The Veteran's Gateway:

https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/answers/detail/a_id/127/~the-royal-british-legion

Branch Membership

The Branch Membership currently stands at 38 members. We recognise that this number remains at variance with our true membership listing but HQ Membership Team have confirmed that the expected issues to be resolved in the very near future.

We look forward to welcoming a new member to our meetings, Jan Solobub, who recently moved from Longhope into Newent - we wish him well as he settles into our vibrant community.

Branch Statistics

We are blessed at this time that The Branch has not been presented with any new cases, albeit one of our elderly members, Victor, has since passed away.

The family appreciate the many cards and kind words of condolence and support at this difficult time and look forward to being able to celebrate his life in the near future.

In the event that members identify a comrade in need, they are encouraged to contact their BCS Representatives at the earliest convenience.

Branch Statistics for this period are therefore as follows:

Total Number of Distancing Welfare Visits	NIL
How many beneficiaries "visited"	NIL
How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters)	NIL
Total Welfare Expenditure	NIL
Telephone Buddies:	
Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive	NIL
Telephone – How many beneficiaries called	NIL
Telephone – How many telephone buddies:	NIL

No other telephone/email communications were made during this period.

Youth Liaison

All initiatives continue to remain on hold in accordance with RBL Guidelines.

Community Liaison

In accordance with current RBL and HMG Guidelines and restrictions on public gatherings, your BCS Team continues to conduct its general business in the main via social media and telephone.

Other Branch Information

BCS (Branch Community Support) Training

County Officers are now rolling out these training sessions as part of the greater RBL Initiative.

Remembrance Sunday in London

TRBL have been organising the event at The Cenotaph as in previous years but due to current restrictions, numbers are limited.

Those wishing to attend are in the first instance to contact RBL HQ and will ask you to provide responses to a range of the usual security questions.

Treasurer

The Treasurer Reported that the Bank Balance stood at £1136.68 and the BFI account 47p.

Movement in the account was £4 from Head office for membership subscriptions. Plus, we anticipate the usual £0.48 pence from courts

Following a meeting with the previous Treasurer the accounts seem to be in order except an amount of 47p which was voided due to an errant double entry

The End of Year accounts were as follows:

Balance (Including anticipated payment of 47p from HMRC)
£1394.71.

Movement during the year was: - £284.44

Branch Membership Fees £72

Branch Fundraising Events £5.22 (No Onion Fayre this accounting year)

Branch Poppy Appeal events £0.00

Expenditure:

Ceremonial £55.50 (Purchases of Wreaths and Badges)

BCS £211.96 (BCS) Branch Awareness Events

Branch awareness. £38.56

Branch Recruitment Expenditure £68.20

Total £335.66

Earmarked funds, currently we have £831.82 earmarked.

The balance carried forward from last year was £903.36 now adjusted due to expenditure of £71.54 for engraved paper Weights and Shield engraving.

This report based on A draft of 11 pages. from LOMAX. The final report will be run at year end will be sent out for signatures and submission as final accounts.

Padre

The Branch Padre stated “We are now more hopeful that we can arrange a suitable date for the dedication of the Peace Tree when Lockdown restrictions are lifted on or about 19/7, with another opportunity to raise the profile of the branch and its activities”.

For the National Day of Thanksgiving 4/7, Thank you Cards will be available from Church and traders and can be sent to those we wish to thank directly for their hard work and support of our community during the Pandemic. They can also be handed in to church to be added to a display of a Wall of Thanks in the town. Social media will carry notifications.

Although it remains unclear about the scale and permitted attendance for the Remembrance Sunday derive, we are resuming our planning for this in the important 100th Anniversary year.

Entertainments Member

The entertainments member outlined some of the proposed events he would like to organise for the remainder of this year:

- **July:** Belated Christmas dinner; keep local either Bar and Kitchen or Kings Arms. Due to the short notice of this proposed event the Ents Member was asked to come up with date(s) + venue to the Secretary for membership circulation. It was Proposed by SM and Seconded by CB that a subsidy of £5 per member be levied. **Decision:** Passed Unanimous.
- **August:** Cream tea at Good News Centre.
- **September:** Skittles evening at Kings Arms or Circle Club, (start regular skittles matches next year).
- **October:** Cheese and Wine at AGM.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November: Social Evening in the Cobblers. • December: Christmas meal, venues to be suggested when Christmas menus are available. <p><u>President</u></p> <p>The president highlighted his intended plan to start a recruitment drive, as mentioned earlier unfortunately he was not able to get permission at short notice to put up a stand under the Market House this weekend but would submit the relevant documents for a date in July, he also suggested that a better 'footfall' could be gained by having a stand outside the Co-Op, he will therefore seek permission from the Co-Op to enable this. The President also welcomes any participation from our members on the day, many in the hall said they would help.</p> <p>There were no other officer reports.</p>	President
<p><u>6. Any Other Business</u></p> <p><u>GB</u> – Stated that it was Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee next June (2,3,4,5 June 2022) and felt the Branch needed to consider and start planning for some sort of event. After some discussion it was decided that the Chairman would contact the Town Council via the new veteran's representative to see if a partnership could be formed between the Town Council and Newent Branch to discuss and organise a joint event.</p> <p><u>JP</u> – JP introduced himself to those members present and gave a brief resume of his experience with marketing and offered some advice.</p> <p><u>Chairman</u> – The Chairman invited those members present to take some pre-printed Secretary Adverts and distribute them around town where possible to aid in finding a secretary.</p>	Chairman Veterans Rep
<p><u>7. Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>The next Meeting will be held on 22 July 2021 at 19:00 hrs in the Memorial Hall. The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 20:15 hrs.</p>	All

Agenda for Meeting of Newent and District Royal British Legion

Branch on 22 July 2021

1. 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.