

**Minutes for the Annual General Meeting of The Royal British Legion
Newent and District Branch Memorial Hall 28th October 2021**

Present

Richard Balding:	Chairman
Keith Urch:	Vice Chairman/Branch Community Support Officer/Youth Liaison Officer
David Sass:	Treasurer
Pat Phillips:	Deputy Padre
Graham Barton:	Deputy Parade Marshal
Rick Axon:	Entertainments Officer/Bar Member
Christine Howley:	Newent Mayor/Veteran's rep.
Helen Axon	
John Celino	
Adrian Dover	
Tom Heseltine	
Helen Powell	
John Price	
Pat Price	
Sue Urch	

1. Act of Remembrance.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1900 hours and asked us to think about those who could not be with us due to ill health, especially for the family of Joan Buckland who was a long-time member and who passed away recently. We wish Mike Brown and Elaine Balding a speedy recovery from recent ill-health. He then read the names to the memory of the fallen during WW1 & 2 for the month of November this was followed by the exhortation.

2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from: Elaine Balding, Colin Calcutt, Sue Colborne, Jim Cunliffe, Simon Mason, Jonathan Miles, Viv Miles, Jim Powell and Tom Axon.

3. Chairman's Opening Remarks.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting thanking all for turning out despite the weather. It is an important occasion in appointing Officers and saying goodbye to others.

4. Adoption of minutes of AGM 2020.

The minutes from the Branch AGM on 22 October 2020 were examined and adopted as a true and accurate record.

5. Matters arising from the previous minutes.

The Chairman explained that he had not scrutinised individual officer's reports when looking for matters arising, however the following items were noted:

Item 10. Remembrance Commemorative. Branch members had been invited to the annual Remembrance service at Newent Community School.

Due to Covid restrictions the School restricted attendance to just School personnel and therefore was conducted "in house".

Item 10. Peace Tree. The quotes for this were £90 - £155. We accepted £90. The plaque was mounted on an ornamental rock provided by Newent Town Council, and not a stake purchased separately as previously anticipated.

6. Presidents Address

Nil

7. Chairman's Report

Welfare

With Covid-19 continuing throughout 2021 the first 6 month's continued in the same vein as 2020, where our welfare team of Keith and Colin continued to be busy. Then over the remainder of the year the welfare cases started to become resolved or reached their natural conclusion and Keith & Colin earned themselves a slight rest-bite, however we did say farewell and good luck to one half of the dynamic duo, Colin who moved on to pasture's new with his good lady wife and long-time Secretary Susanne, I wish them both good fortune over the coming years. Keith of course has continued in the same manner for which I applaud him for his continued fortitude.

Membership

I stated at last year's AGM that the Branch membership remained fairly steady throughout 2020, finishing the year with 39 members. This last year was very up and down with the latter half of the year gaining several new members, this has bumped our membership officially up to 45 but with an actual total of 46 (JP has a membership card but is not listed?). Even though we had a boost to our membership of over 15%, membership recruitment still remains an ongoing goal of the branch and as last year I would still like to see a minimum growth of 10% to help safeguard the branch for future years.

Affiliations

The Newent area continues to attract both uniformed and non-uniformed youth groups, a lot of them have already become affiliated members of our branch. I believe we should continue to talk with both youth groups and local organisations with a view to more of them gaining affiliation, therefore raising the branch profile even more in the community and possibly attracting a younger element. Don't forget under 18s do not pay a membership fee, which should be seen as a good incentive, however this cannot be achieved without the help of every branch member.

Finances

The branch bank balance remains healthy and our Treasurer is working very hard to sort out the bank mandate to enable us to have the requisite number of signatories, my thanks go to Susan and David for all their hard work over the past year under difficult circumstances.

Poppy Appeal

The Poppy Appeal in 2020 was primarily conducted via the RBL commercial partnerships, some local limited and socially distanced collections did take place for which the branch was extremely grateful. However, this year's Poppy Appeal will be conducted in something approaching the same manner as before. The PAO has organised the usual collections under the Market House and I notice that the Poppy tins are back in the local shops, however, the administration of local poppy totals has changed and therefore local totals for this year will not be known for some time. I have received this statement from our Local Poppy Appeal Organiser (Colin) "***The total amount collected 2020/2021 was £6545.31 which I think was very good as there was no house to house and a lot of places closed, we did not get some boxes back until April.***" Colin has delivered a remarkable year under very trying circumstances and deserves a heart-felt thanks from the Branch.

Other Activities

As you know the first 6 months of the year was conducted by "Zoom" which considering the alternative was reasonably successful. My thanks go to our Parade Marshal for allowing us to 'piggy back' on to his Zoom account. Once lockdown was relaxed it was quickly followed by the 2020 delayed Christmas Meal, Cream Tea and Skittles evening, many thanks to our Entertainments member for stepping up to the mark and arranging things straight from the 'get go'.

As was mentioned earlier; Recruitment was heavily on our minds this year and praise goes to our Ex-President, who arranged for a joint recruitment and Poppy Appeal event in July. The branch then had a stall at the 'Love Newent' event, which I believe kept us in the thoughts of the local community. My thanks go to all those who helped out at those events.

The Long-awaited Peace Tree dedication finally took place in September down at the lake area, under the excellent guidance of our Padre, Simon and Deputy Padre Pat, my thanks to both of them for an excellent service. Thanks also go to the Newent Mayor for her support of not only this event, but the branch as a whole.

Thank You's

This year as was last year, has been a particularly hard one, for not only our members but to all the residents of Newent; from a personal point of view, I'd like to say thank you to all of the Newent and District Branch committee for all their input, hard work and fantastic support over the past year and to all our members for their unflinching support to the branch. Coupled with that are a couple of thanks to our new Secretary, Helen and her able assistant Sue who have joined the team this year.

Keith is an incredible asset to our small branch; he not only wears several hats for the branch but continues to support the local Newent Community with several other endeavours. Keith keeps me going and I am once more indebted to him for his continued support and advice throughout this very complicated year, without Keith I would struggle, my heartfelt thanks to him.

I have thanked most people throughout this report but one or two more to finish with,

Colin and Susanne have been stalwart supporters of the branch over many years and will both be missed, but I wish them every happiness in their new life 'down south'. Mike although quite poorly at the moment has always supported and offered advice, I wish him a speedy recovery, and of course to Graham who has stepped up and committed a little bit more of his precious time to the branch, he has also Paraded the Standard as and when required. To both of them go my thanks.

The final individual thank you goes to Elaine my long-suffering wife, who has always supported me and continues to support me from her hospital bed, without her support, help and guidance I could not continue in this privileged appointment.

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

8. Individual Officers reports.

- a. **Treasurer's Report.** The Treasurer reported that we now have received the Mandate Change forms from the bank. This has been delayed for various reasons. The new signatories were to visit Barclays Bank with I.D. but this was postponed due to illness. The balance is estimated to be £1075. **The Chairman** stated that this will continue as an ongoing agenda item until resolved and ratified by the committee, with the official report sent to County.
- b. **Secretary's Report**
None, due to departure of outgoing Secretary.
- c. **Vice Chairman/Branch Support/Youth Liaison.**

I express my sincere thanks to my Deputy, Colin Britt, and all Branch Members' for their continued support during what has been an extremely unusual and difficult year. As you will be aware Colin and Susanne have moved on to pastures new and we wish them well in their new home.

Members have been extremely tolerant and supportive of their comrades, the community and the Branch especially given the significant challenges that we have all faced as a direct result of COVID-19. As we move forward, we enter a new normal, albeit some restrictions remain in place for our own benefit.

My report this period 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 membership numbers have fluctuated over the past years from 56 members to 41 members, rising to 43 and then falling to a low of 39 members during last year but this year, despite the sad passing of our last Branch WWII veteran, with everyone's support, membership has increased to 45 members, with a further number of renewals pending.

The Branch is justifiably proud of its membership, especially recognising that many of the UK's smaller branches have now closed or amalgamated with other regional branches.

BRANCH WELFARE

Members are to note that during 2019/2020, a total of 71 welfare visits were made to members and their families, with a further 138 contacts of support being made through the Telephone Buddy network. This represented a significant increase from previous years, reflecting the need to support our colleagues and their families. This year however presents a totally different picture with an increase in need for supporting services, focused around health and mobility with a far lesser request for advice on financial matters.

In summary, the Branch data for the Annual Totals (inc October 2021) period 2020/2021 in accordance with the RBL National Reporting System is as follows:
Total Number of Welfare Visits (including those at distance) 26 Visits – How many beneficiaries visited 22 Visits – How many visitors (Branch Community Supporters) 28 - Total Welfare Expenditure NIL Telephone Buddies – Total Number of Calls 43 Telephone (excluding contacts to RBL Helpline) - How many beneficiaries called 22 Telephone – How many telephone buddies, 4 on average per month, resulting in a real total of 43 “buddy contact calls” this year

Note:

In addition to the above, a further number of email and telephone communications were made to the Veterans Gateway and Regional Office on behalf of Members. Members are continually reminded of the various links associated with the RBL and the numerous aspects of support provided, all being available through the RBL’s Veteran’s Gateway.

YOUTH LIAISON AND BRANCH AFFILIATIONS

Regular communications have continued to be maintained with local youth organisations, schools and community organisations. Last year’s Commemorative Service at Newent Community School proved to be a great success and a similar event is scheduled for this year, again on 11th November: all members are welcome.

The Branch continues to support the family wishes of the late John Edward Whitehorn having established a youth award in his honour: last year’s nomination was Josh Robertson and we currently await receipt of nominations for this year. Interest in Affiliation continues but unfortunately with the changes in County structures, and the impact of the restrictions arising from COVID-19 your representatives have not been as proactive as they would have wished. It is hoped that by this time next year we will be able to present a more uplifting report. 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. Proceeds are to be divided between the Newent Branch of the RBL and future works on Newent’s War Memorial, which unfortunately has been delayed again due to certain ongoing restrictions.

RECOGNITION

Special thanks are recorded to the following: Newent Memorial Hall Committee, Members of the Newent Local History Society, Local Businesses, Schools and other Community Groups for their continuing support and raising funds for both The Branch and The Poppy Appeal, the focus of which will be totally different this year to previous years.

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

9. Presentation and Adoption of Accounts.

Please refer to item 8.a.

10. Election of Officers and Committee Members.

The Chairman stated that an email had been sent out asking officers if they were willing to continue in post. Due to ill health, the Parade Marshal and Deputy Parade Marshal will change roles. All other Committee Members were happy to recommit to their perspective branch roles for another year. Two proposals were received for:

- a. **Secretary Role:** It was proposed by RA and seconded by KU that HA take over the role of Secretary.
- b. **Deputy Secretary Role:** It was proposed by AD and seconded by EB that SC will become Deputy Secretary.

Both roles were unanimously voted for by all members present, therefore, the Branch Committee for the next 12 months is as follows:

Chairman:	Mr Richard Balding (Final Year)
Deputy Chairman:	Mr Keith Urch
Secretary:	Mrs Helen Axon
Treasurer:	Mr David Sass
Deputy Secretary:	Ms Sue Colville
Branch Community Support (BCSO)	Mr Keith Urch
Standard Bearer:	Vacant
Parade Marshal:	Mr Graham Barton
Deputy Parade Marshal:	SSgt Mike Brown
Entertainments:	Mr Rick Axon
Bar Member:	Mr Rick Axon
Raffle Coordinator:	Mrs Elaine Balding
Poppy Appeal Organiser:	Mr Colin Thomson

11. Nominations to National Office.

No Nominations to National Office were received.

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

No Motions or Charter Motions were suggested.

13. Appointment of Delegates to the Annual Meeting of the County & Annual Conference.

No Appointments of Delegates to the Annual Meeting of County or Annual Conference were received.

14. Special Items

- a. **11 November 2021 – School Remembrance Service.**

11th November at Newent Community School. Meet between 10:30 and 10:40. If *not* attending will need to send in apologies. RSVP using the invitation email sent. (do not expect a response)

b. 14 November 2021 - Remembrance Parade & Service.

14th November. Assemble at Lake Car Park at 10:00 in order to arrive at St. Mary's Church no later than 10:40. This will be an outdoor service. Jimmer Cunliffe has volunteered to parade the Standard and has been trained up by one of his friends who is a drill instructor.

JC asked for clarification re: laying of the wreaths. Those listed will be called forward from a raised area.

CH stated that there will be a "rolling closure" of the road. The Town Clerk has this in hand.

15. Any Other Business.

The Entertainments Member stated that there will be an informal social evening on 18 November 2021 in Cobblers at 8pm and that he hoped to book the back room. Christmas dinner has been booked at the King's Arms 16th December 7pm. A deposit of £10 is required per person. Please email the Entertainment Member rick@axon.org.uk to book place.

Newent Mayor reported that the Town Council was planning a new newsletter. She suggested that something could be composed to aid recruitment for the Branch, in particular, to "reach out" to the many Ex-Service personnel in Newent. After asking the members present for a volunteer to write up a recruitment ad, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman stated they would send something in to the Town Clerk.

JC suggested mailing the many houses recently built in Newent.

HP volunteered to sell poppies. This takes place Saturday 30th October and 6th November under the Market House starting at 9am. The Poppy Appeal Organiser's email was given out to those who wanted to sell Poppies this year.

Tom Heseltine reported that there is a new secretary at Our Lady of Lourdes Church. She only works on Wednesday mornings for future reference and the delivery of Poppy Collection Boxes.

John Price informed the meeting that Joan Buckland's funeral will be Friday 12th November at 12 noon at Aston Ingham, opposite the church.

SU proposed sending our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Elaine Balding

16. Date for Next Branch Meeting.

The AGM was closed at 20:15 with the next branch meeting to take place on 25th November at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

Agenda for the
Newent & District Branch of The Royal British Legion
Committee Meeting - 25 November 2021

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.