

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

Meeting Held 26 January 2023 at the Memorial Hall

| Attendees | Post. |
|------------------|--|
| Richard Balding | Chairman |
| Keith Urch | Vice Chairman, BCS Rep, Youth Liaison and Membership Secretary |
| Mary Curtis | Secretary |
| Helen Axon | Treasurer |
| Rev Simon Mason | Padre |
| Rick Axon | Bar and Entertainments Member |
| Rev Pat Phillips | Deputy Padre |
| Graham Barton | Parade Marshal |
| Seamus Brennan | Membership Engagement Officer |
| David Pollock | Raffle Coordinator |
| Tom Heseltine | |

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 JM who has been in hospital recently but looks like he is on the mend, also MC who has had a trying Christmas and New Year with the passing of two family members and SC who is also have a trying time with family members. He read the names of those from the Parish of Newent who had lost their lives during WW1 and WW2 during the months of January and February and concluded with the Act of Remembrance.

2. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Susanne Britt, Colin Britt, Sue Urch, Adrian Dover, Sue Colborne, Jon Miles, Viv Miles, Elaine Balding, John Price and Pat Price.

3. Chairman's Report.

Introduction.

Happy New Year to everyone, great to see you all, I'd firstly like to extend my thanks to Rick for the Branch Christmas meal, the was substantial and of a high quality and we received a very warm welcome from the staff, I think all those that attended will agree it was a really good evening.

My reports start with:

County Conference 21 January 2023

Keith and I attended the Gloucestershire County Annual General Meeting and Conference on Saturday 21 January 2023, at Severn Vale School starting at 11am. The AGM followed the usual format as in recent years; however, Keith did think the running of it was slightly im[proved]. Main points of the AGM were:

- There is still a disconnect in communication throughout the RBL structure, it was pointed out that there are 4 distinct platforms that run all the services and none of them talk to each other, this one of HQ's main concerns.
- The recent Bristol Poppy Day managed to raise £25,884.87 in donations for the Poppy Appeal.

- Gloucestershire as a whole collected donations of £593,014.72 for the 2021/2022 year and for 2022/2023 have so far received £507,948.43 which includes £97,637 from contactless machines.
- There was also a large report on how the allocation of monies was distributed to beneficiaries throughout 2021/2022. I have a couple of copies of the report if anyone wishes to take a look.
- One of the other important items on the agenda was a proposed Charter Motion, which seeks to consider the long-term viability of keeping the branch structure, it has been muted at HQ level to do away with branches. Unfortunately, after much discussion it was decided that the motion needed to be re-written before sending up to National Conference, but was agreed in principle.
- The county committee also made a plea for members to volunteer for committee roles, they are very understaffed, if anyone would like to join the county committee, please let me know and I'll put your name forward.

The highlight for me was the food this year which was a hog roast, so not all was lost.

Annual Conference 19 – 21 May 2023

My Thanks go to Keith for volunteering to accompany me to this year's Royal British Legion Annual Conference which takes place 19 – 21 May 2023 at the Riviera International Centre in Torquay. To offset our costs, I have applied to the Jim Prince Fund which is a sum of money allocated each year to alleviate the expenses of Small Branches (less the 50 members), we should also receive a motor allowance, which doesn't cover it all but will go a long way.

Branch Membership 2023

Branch membership still remains a concern, Keith will give you this month's numbers during his report, but if anyone has ideas on how to recruit new members, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss it.

Finally

Don't forget that as normal if anyone needs help in anyway 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.

The minutes from the Branch meeting on 24 November 2022 were examined and adopted as true and accurate record with two matters arising which are noted.

Item 6a. Crisis Grant reimbursement of £200 is on hold at present.

Item 6b. Letter to Newent Young Farmers was given and received.

Proposed by TH, Seconded by RA agreed unanimously.

5. Reports by Officers.

5a. Vice Chair/ BCSO/ Youth Liaison

We remember in particular this month, those Officers and Members of The Branch who have lost loved ones; we extend and offer our support.

For those local veterans, friends and Branch colleagues suffering ill health, caring for the family members, remember that we are here to assist you; you only need to contact one of your Committee Members.

Membership, Branch Community Support Representative and Youth Liaison Officer.

Members are reminded that those wishing to become BCS Representatives, on-line courses remain available and assistance available from your Branch Chairman and BCS Representative. TRBL have now finalized their DBS process and your representative is now in the process of completing the application.

Welfare and Membership.

The Branch continues to aid and support its members and veterans, in the first instant, by signposting the to the National RBL Helpline and by interaction with local community and national organisations such as SSAFA and Help for Heroes.

Members are reminded that The National RBL Helpline telephone number is: 0808 802 8080

And the Veteran's Gateway:

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

Please be assured that we continue to utilise our local knowledge and contacts to support our members and veterans.

Branch Membership.

In accordance with TRBL record, Branch Membership currently stands at 38 members, reduction of two members as they both move away from the area. We send them our best wishes for the future but in doing so, remind them that they are able to retain membership of more than one Branch at no additional cost.

Branch Statistics.

The Branch has provided support to several Members and veterans this period.

The veteran that was provided with a Crisis Support Grant has extended his immense gratitude to The Branch and SSAFA for their assistance in his hour of need. While he continues to receive support from The Lord's Larder, his home is now complete with carpets, furniture and white kitchen goods, which have been delivered and installed.

This clearly identifies us as a caring Branch, providing various levels of assistance to our colleagues in need of support.

In the event the members identify a comrade in need, they are encouraged to contact any Committee Member or BCS Representative at the earliest convenience. All Communications are confidential.

Branch Statistics for this period are therefore as follows:

Total number of Welfare visits 3

How many beneficiaries visited 3

How many visitors (Branch Community Supports) 4

Total Welfare Expenditure NIL (see Note 1)

Telephone Buddies:

Total Number of Calls made by Branch Executive 12

Telephone – How many beneficiaries called 3

Telephone – How many telephone buddies: 4

Notes:

1. An emergency grant “A Crisis Grant” in accordance with TRBL procedures, in the sum of £200 was expended prior to Christmas. TRBL MSO/MEO “Membership Engagement Officer” is fully aware of this issue, as approved by TRBL Board Members.
2. A limited number of email and telephone communications were made to TRBL HQ during this period on behalf of veterans and their families.

Community, Youth and Veteran Liaison

Members are to be aware the Nominations for The John Whitehorn Trophy are now closed.

Two nominations have been received and these will be considered under AOB during this (January) meeting.

Activates continue on works to upgrade Newent’s War Memorial and incorporate those names originally omitted.

Our community Veteran, Corporal. Fred Sandbach has now been laid to rest and a thanksgiving/memorial service is being planned to celebrate his service and life within the community. Further details will be available shortly.

As we now move into the New Year and the colder weather, we are reminded of those less fortunate and be aware of their needs. For those Branch members giving of their time in support of others during the festive season, we are indebted to their support and service to our community.

TRBL HQ, County Liaison and Branch Communication (OS365)

Your Chairman and BCS Representative attended TRBL County AGM last Saturday. It was an interesting and enlightening event, once again highlighting the many changes that are being instigated in the coming year. More information will be available following the production of the AGM Minutes.

For further matters relating to other HQ/County/Branch communications and other local activities, please see your chairman’s and other Representative Reports.

5b. Treasurer.

Income for the Period 1st October to 29th December:

£46 from Head Office. Member Subs

Expenditure:

£18.50 Poppy Wreath

£200 Crisis Fund for a Dymock Veteran

Balance end: £1026.84

5c. Padre.

In regard to the thanksgiving/memorial to Corporal Fred Sandbach, the Branch Standard will be required. This was acknowledged by Branch members.

The Padre informed the members that a welcome pack is being produced by St Mary’s Church to welcome new people to the area, especially in the hundreds of new builds around Newent. He suggested that with the Welcome pack it would be a good opportunity for the Branch to add a small leaflet with

information covering what the local Royal British legion Branch are upto. The MEO volunteered to order some extra leaflets and the Chairman volunteered to prepare a small 'Branch' leaflet.

5d. Deputy Padre.

The new landlord of Cobblers Bar is thinking about doing a Pancake Day event. They are going to cook fresh pancakes to help raise money for RBL causes. There will be no charge for the pancakes but he will ask for a £2 donation which will go to RBL. The Deputy Padre volunteered to obtain a donation box from the Local Poppy Appeal Organiser and pass it on to Cobblers.

5e. Parade Marshal.

Nothing to report.

5e. Entertainments & Bar Member.

October Cheese and Wine after AGM.

November Social in Cobblers.

December Branch Christmas Meal.

5g. Raffle Coordinator.

Donations of Raffle prizes gratefully received.

5h. Secretary.

Thank you all for your support and kind words while I have been going through this trying time of two deaths in my family. Things are starting to get back to normal.

6. Any Other Business.

6a. Membership Engagement Officer (MEO).

Thank you for having me this evening at your Branch meeting. Reports from the County Conference are available if you fancy some light reading. The MEO then gave those present an informed talk about the New RBL structure and his role in general and also offered any support or help wherever possible. On behalf of the branch the Chairman thanked the MEO for his attendance this evening.

6b. Nominations and Decision for John Edward Whitehorn Trophy.

Nominations for two candidates were received and due to the outstanding nature of both candidates all Branch members unanimously agreed that the John Edward Whitehall trophy should be awarded jointly for this year, with both candidates receiving a 'keepsake' and sharing the trophy over the coming year. KU volunteered to contact the daughter of John Edward Whitehall to ask when she would be available to present the trophy and the Chairman offered to write and deliver Congratulation letters to both candidates. The presentation date will be announced when it is available.

6c. Update on Memorial Service for Cpl Fred Sandbach.

This was covered in the Padre report.

6d. Coronation.

GB asked what are Newent Town Council's (NTC) plans for make the coronation of King Charles III, the Chairman said he will approach NTC for their plans and ideas.

6e. Entertainment extra.

The Parade Marshal stated that he had contacts with Innsworth Military Wives Choir and thought after preliminary discussions with the Memorial Hall, that a concert could be arranged with the intention of gathering further funds for the Poppy Appeal. After much discussion it was decided that the Parade Marshal and Entertainments members should liaise with the Military Wives Choir and Memorial Hall committee to look at suitable dates and costs involved. The Parade Marshal and Entertainments member will get what information they can and report back at the next meeting.

6f. Fire Service Representative Talk.

The local Fire Service Representative (Rachel Smith) has offered to attend one of our future meetings and give a talk to members about Newent Fire Services and Health & Safety in the home. Branch members present thought this was a good idea and the Chairman volunteered to ask if she was available to attend either the April or May Meeting.

Date of Next Meeting.

The Meeting was closed at 20:30 with the next meeting to take place on 23rd February 2023 at 7pm in Newent Memorial Hall.

Agenda for Meeting of Newent and District Royal British Legion Branch on 23 February 2023

1. Ac 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