

SIX-NINETY NEWS

*The newsletter of Sedgford & District Branch – formed in 1926
Royal British Legion: Branch 0690*

Issue 107 – October 2022



Branch number 690 includes the villages of Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe, Choseley, Docking, Fring, Great Bircham, North and South Creake, Sedgford, Stanhoe, Thornham and Titchwell. *We also have many members from beyond these boundaries – keep coming!*

**WE ALL SEND OUR SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO THE ROYAL FAMILY, AND
WE LOYALLY CELEBRATE THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF
KING CHARLES III**

'FIRST FRIDAY' LUNCHES BOOKED FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2022

I am, of course, aware that many pubs have deteriorated (or possibly improved!), or have changed hands, since the pandemic started in 2020, so if anyone has a particular recommendation – or if anyone knows of bad reports of any of the venues which I have chosen for the future, please do let me know - whatever you may think, I haven't visited all the places that I suggest for our lunches!

7th October – our AGM at Brancaster Staithe Sailing Club
4th November – The Crown Hotel, Wells-next-the-Sea
2nd December – The Three Horseshoes, Roydon

If you haven't been to a lunch or AGM before and would like to attend, email me as overleaf, or phone on the number listed overleaf under our Chairman's name.

Editor (Pamela)



HOW TIMES CHANGE...

Recently, for some unknown reason, I started to read the very first 690 News, published in December 2006, in which, in the interests of encouraging people to join, I said: "**Remember that a year's membership is less than the cost of three gallons of petrol.....!**" The annual membership subscription on that basis is now about the same as three gallons – so you are still getting a bargain! (*Always look on the bright side....!!*)

HOWEVER:

It is apparent from recent paperwork that Head Office was thinking of taking £21 for this year's subs, despite our having said "NO" to the question of whether we wished to continue at £21! This was followed up, so please don't worry – it either won't be collected, or it WILL be returned to you, as the subs for this year should be £18. You may by now have received an apology. Apparently 3,000 members paying by direct debit were affected! (*See also the supplement attached*)



RIDE TO THE WALL

Ride to the Wall is an annual motorcycling fundraising ride, with all funds raised donated to the National Memorial Arboretum. This year, a donation of £135,000 was presented to RBL Trustee and Chairman of the NMA Trustees Anny Reid by Martin Dickinson, founder of Ride to the Wall, which has raised in excess of £1.35 million since its inception in 2008. *Legion membership e-newsletter*



HISTORIC KING'S LYNN

On 5th August, members enjoyed a guided tour of historic King's Lynn, presented by branch secretary Gary Walker, who had offered us the opportunity before he qualified recently as an official guide. We enjoyed a fascinating morning, learning a lot of interesting facts about the town, with some spectacular revelations. The origins of the town go back to large salt works developed round a vast marsh lake: this gave rise to the Celtic name 'Lenne' (lake), which became 'Lynn'. Over centuries, the sandy residue from the salt extraction expanded the habitable area, pushing back the river line a considerable distance.



The 12th century development and Hanseatic trading links made the town the third wealthiest in England, after London and Southampton. It has two market places, Tuesday and Saturday – the latter is the largest in England – two Guildhalls, one of which is the largest in England, and three churches, one of which (St Nicholas) is the largest chapel in England. It also has many listed buildings, with 13 Grade 1, 52 Grade 2*, and 241 Grade 2. In 1101, the then Bishop of Norwich started the first major redevelopment of the town with the building of a Benedictine Priory and the church known since 2011 as the Minster, but originally the Church of St Margaret of Antioch, St Mary Magdalene and all the Virgin Saints. In 1146, his successor built St Nicholas Chapel of Ease – still the largest chapel in England. In 1204 the town was granted a Charter by King John, and the town called Lynn Episcopi – Bishop's Lynn – but following the Reformation in 1537, it was granted a new Charter by King Henry V111 and re-named King's Lynn.

The Trinity Guildhall dates from 1421 after the previous building was destroyed by fire; the adjoining Town Hall was built in 1895, along with a courthouse and cell block, and the adjoining Gaol House dates from 1784.

Moving on, we walked past the cottages in Priory Lane adjacent to the Minster, and into some of the original medieval streets which were the 'main roads' through the town. In one we passed a house which was formerly a tavern called "The Valiant Sailor"- once a popular name for taverns. The sailor in question was Jack Crawford, who in 1797 served on the Admiral's ship "Venerable". In a battle, part of the main mast was shot down, along with the Admiral's colours: usually considered to be an indication of surrender. Crawford reputedly climbed up what was left, and became the 'valiant sailor' by nailing the colours to the mast – a phrase with which I'm sure we are all familiar!

We continued to Hansa House, built after the 1474 Treaty of Utrecht: the town already had an association with the Hanseatic League, a German/Baltic trading organisation; continuing along the quay and admiring the river Great Ouse, which is the fifth longest river in England, and hearing of major alterations to the route of the river to shorten distances, and improve the navigation and also the flow of the water. We also discovered that the 'Pullover roundabout' is so called because there used to be

a pull-over ferry there! We also saw the Millennium Project 'statue', the 18ft tall 'Half Fathom' marker, representing the 3 fathoms height distance between high and low tide in the Great Ouse.

Next we visited Thoresby College, built from 1508, and designed as a chantry college home for 13 priests. Purchased in 1963 in very bad repair by Lady Ruth Fermoy, Princess Diana's grandmother, it was donated to the King's Lynn Preservation Trust, and is a rare example of a medieval college, most of the others being in Oxford or Cambridge. The carriage entrance to the courtyard still has the original ornately carved doors with a Latin inscription which translates as 'Pray for the soul of Thomas Thoresby founder of this place', but from which the words 'pray for the soul' were long ago seen as blasphemous and removed, leaving a plain blank section across part of the left hand door!



We walked on to the Bank House, and then the well known Clifton House with its tower overlooking the river, absorbing more information and history on each, and on to the Purfleet, to hear about Capt Vancouver who explored and charted the Pacific coast of the Americas from San Francisco to Alaska in 1792, including the Inside Passage from what is now Seattle to Skagway: then, of course, we arrived at the Customs House. Finally, as time was pressing, we stopped at the end of King Street, and rather than walking along it, enjoyed an informative talk about the medieval, and many listed, original buildings (30 in just 250 yards) and then Tuesday Market Place, which measures three acres, and is thought originally to have been much larger. We ended – as it were – with the old common practices of burning at the stake, hanging, drawing and quartering, and punishment by boiling, as well as the use of the stocks, all of which reputedly took place in the market place, before sauntering back to the quay for a most enjoyable and relaxing lunch in Marriott's.

Gary was heartily and enthusiastically thanked for his time, and for imparting his extensive knowledge. The tour is highly recommended! By the way, if you think that I remembered all that, think again! Gary kindly supplied a summary produced as part of his original training, to remind me of the details.

All present agreed that they wished to reward Gary, so our financial donations were forwarded to him, giving the option to either spend and enjoy, or donate to a charity (not necessarily the Legion!). Gary replied: "That was really kind of you all and totally unexpected as I was only too happy to do it for the Branch and I was so pleased that everyone enjoyed it. I will donate the generous donations to the Town Guides fund (as tours are usually chargeable) which is distributed each year to historical groups within the area. It is really is a virtuous circle."

AND.... THIS IS YET ANOTHER REMINDER OF THE REASON THAT WE HOPE FOR A VOLUNTEER TO TAKE OVER FROM GARY AS BRANCH SECRETARY!



WARTIME REMINISCENCES: "A DISTINCT PISSIBILITY – TALES FROM A NORFOLK PUB"

I was sorting through some Stanhoe Archive material, which I have since taken to the Norfolk Records Office, among which was a small paperback entitled as above, and with a photograph on the cover of Page Clowser, (a branch member, until his death), and former landlord of The Crown pub in Stanhoe, now, of course, the gastro-pub The Duck Inn. He had run the village general store in Docking before taking over the tenancy of the Crown in 1984, from which he retired in 2009, after 25 years. - Editor

"Every Saturday a bunch of us used to go across to Penang, and we'd go and have lunch, a whole chicken – Malaysian chickens aren't very big – loads and loads of bits and pieces of curry, a big bowl of rice, and what you did was you dunked it. Super food. And we'd have two or three bottles of Tiger Beer, which I had the other day, and it tastes absolute rubbish, but it didn't then. Then we'd probably have a haircut and they used to put lovely hot towels round your face. And then we'd go to the cinema, which you could drink and smoke in. And that was our Saturday day out. Then we'd race back from the cinema in a trishaw and we would say to the bloke 'Can we nick your trishaw?', and we would be pedalling it while he sat in the back."

"Flight Lieutenant Nick Bateman was also in Stalag Luft 3 and he was a 'penguin' during the preparations for the Great Escape. A penguin was a bloke who got rid of all the soil that they dug out of the tunnel, they shifted it down the sides of their trousers – walked around and dropped it outside to get rid of it. Anyhow I've got him! He wanted to be buried in the beer garden and that's where he is. Well, not him, but his ashes are, and I give him whisky and the occasional beer – pour it over where he's buried."

"Then there was Alan – and he told me his story from the Kohima during the Japanese invasion. He said 'We couldn't reach our rifles, but my father had given me a boy scout knife before I left. They came into our camp at night and we were overrun but I had my little sheath knife and I fought hand to hand with this Japanese soldier who hadn't got any bullets in his rifle. I killed him.' Up there on my beams is the Japanese star he took off that soldier's cap."

"Peter Wood (also a former branch member before his death) was in Greece with the Gurkhas, and there were these Germans in a house and they were in a very stable position and couldn't be got out. The Germans had all the ammunition and Peter and his lot didn't have any. Anyway, the Gurkhas thought they'd take this thing in hand. They went round the back of this farmhouse and went in through the back door. As they went in the three Germans jumped out the front windows. The Gurkhas had got their kukris out. Frit them to death!"

"These old boys who did all of this for you and me – we don't even know the half of it. I've met some good ones, I'll tell you. They've been there, they've done it." *Copyright Page Clowser 2005*

VISCOUNT

The longest serving military horse in history has died in retirement aged 30. Viscount, fondly known as "Biscuit", retired to the Horse Trust in 2017 after serving his country for 21 years and 11 months. During this time he took part in a variety of duties including working as an officer's charger in major state parades, escorting royalty and playing an integral rôle in training new recruits.



Viscount's last four ceremonial seasons saw him carrying the musicians from the band of The Household Cavalry, an honour with which only the steadiest and most consistent horses would be trusted. "These horses must be ridden with limited instruction as the musicians predominately give direction using their legs whilst carrying their instruments," said a Horse Trust spokesman. "He mastered this magnificently, as was expected from such a hardworking and composed horse."

The Horse Trust was "honoured" to welcome the gelding and he enjoyed five "well-deserved" years of retirement. "Viscount was a joy to look after and could often be found in his field with fellow military friends, Auriol and Aquaba," he said.

"We were devastated when recently Viscount developed sudden neurological signs. This was a complication of a pituitary dysfunction. Our team had been carefully managing his condition until that point with medication but sadly it reached a stage where it was no longer treatable and the kindest thing for us to do for our hero horse was to say

goodnight to him one last time.”

www.horseandhound.co.uk



MORE FALKLANDS REMINDERS FROM 40 YEARS AGO

The Argentine occupation of the Falklands Islands on 2nd April 1982 was a seismic shock for the British government. It was not even thought likely at the time by the Foreign Office nor forecast by intelligence. The Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington resigned. Contingency plans to deter an Argentine attack existed, but none to recapture the islands. The Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was determined to react as strongly as possible to this unprovoked and outrageous attack on loyal British citizens and a national dependent territory. But apart from strenuous diplomatic efforts to require the Argentinians to leave what they called Las Malvinas and claimed to be theirs, and economic sanctions, was any other response possible? Would it be militarily feasible to threaten or repossess the Falklands?

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Henry Leach, went to see the Prime Minister in the absence overseas of the Chief of the Defence Staff. He said it would be possible to respond quickly by forming and sailing a naval task force, so immediately indicating the UK government's determination to respond, whilst strenuously denouncing the Argentine aggression. But the Falklands were 8,000 miles, more than three weeks' sailing, from the UK, and with the southern hemisphere's winter approaching, appalling weather was to be expected. The nearest available airfield, Wideawake on Ascension Island in the South Atlantic, not normally used by the RAF, had only a small stock of aviation fuel, and itself was about 4,000 miles equidistant from both the UK and Falklands. No real harbour or port handling facilities existed there.

In all a force of over 25,000 personnel was put together, with about 50 ships taken up from trade, including the Canberra and Queen Elizabeth II cruise liners and a very large container ship, the Atlantic Conveyor. Because of the distances involved, some ships had to depart without embarking personnel who, once formed up with their equipment, would be taken by air to Ascension before being transferred to the ships.

A HERCULES CO-PILOT: "We were told that we weren't to discuss it with anyone" recalled a Hercules co-pilot. "There was a very limited initial briefing; we were told to go home and get ready for an indeterminate period of time, and all leave and courses were cancelled. The Falklands weren't mentioned, although it soon became clear." "I don't recall being told exactly what we were dropping as the loads had to be specially prepared. What we saw on the aircraft were a variety of waterproofed 'cardboard' boxes with parachutes on them. Some were classed as 'Dangerous Air Cargo'. The boxes were designed to float, but some were quite heavy."

One particular airdrop stuck in his mind: "Our briefing was to drop 13 boxes to the fleet down in the South Atlantic: fuel was tight with so many runs to do and we filled every tank to the brim". "Dropping to ships wasn't something we'd ever practised but there was a procedure in the book: we'd run in using the ship as a marker and drop short in the 'lee'. When the box and parachute landed, a Lynx would rush in with a diver who jumped in to secure the load to a Wessex following close behind, and this would then fly it back to the ship. The Lynx would recover the diver, and then we'd go round again!" Upon arrival, the Hercules began to drop the cargo, the Lynx was launched, the Wessex was airborne, and the process was going well, when an orca whale appeared, apparently enjoying the rotor downwash caused when the Lynx came in to drop the diver! Everything stopped for a radio discussion, as the fact that a diver looked very much like a killer whale's staple food – a seal – was of great concern. In the end, as fuel was running low in the helicopters, it was decided that the risk was acceptable: the diver was not advised of the situation!

A JUNIOR TECHNICIAN: "After the first night on the island, I woke to find a sign outside the tent, which read: 'Whoever has nicked the 21 x 1,000 lb bombs can they please return to the Explosives

Storage Area by midday and nothing will be said.' "Only later did we find out that this was the Vulcan Black Buck missions."
See more on Black Buck below – Ed.

THE HERCULES CO-PILOT AGAIN: "That was when we found out that the first Black Buck bombing raid had gone down south: the sky way above us had been full of aircraft – and nobody had told us!"

BOMB ALLEY; AN RAF NURSE: "Aboard HMS Fearless we experienced air raids while anchored in San Carlos Water: there wasn't enough anti-flash clothing to go round, so during air raids we had to lie or sit on the deck floor in our bunk areas. 'What if a fireball hit our area? How could I get out?' I thought." There was an escape hatch above his position, but if a fireball swept through, would he have time to use it? "I put a heavy white blanket over my head and sat on the floor during the first air raid: my thinking was that if a fireball hit, the blanket may just take that little bit of time to catch fire, giving me a couple of precious seconds to get out of the escape hatch." On hearing the all-clear, he emerged from the blanket to the laughter of his comrades. Having explained his reasoning, they all once again dived to the ground as another attack came in. "When it was over I took my blanket off and roared with laughter" he said. "Everyone else had blankets over them, too!"

THE JUNIOR TECHNICIAN AGAIN: "Although now ashore at Ajax Bay, events in Bomb Alley continued to involve us: while eating in the field hospital acting as their temporary billet, the warning din of clattering pots and pans started up. We thought it was probably another high-level attack from a Canberra, as had happened a few nights earlier; next thing small-arms fire opened up, and there was an almighty bang, a loss of air, and a rush of wind whistled past us. All the lights went out, the air was full of dust, and various people were shouting and screaming. Scrambling around for my 'tin lid' and rifle I tried to crawl towards the door in pitch darkness, struggling to breathe because of the dust. I can remember the smell of explosives. Eventually we were all outside in a huddle. Looking back at the building there was a large fire where the Marines' galley was. It was not a good scene: 26 men were injured and five lost their lives. At that point there was another almighty bang and we all dived for cover. A Sea King had been lifting a double stack of ammunition to go to the front line at the time of the air raid, so he just cut the rope. Somehow this stack of ammo had now ignited, and suddenly we had mortars, rounds and 66mm rockets whizzing all over the place." Two Argentine Skyhawks had attacked Ajax Bay, one dropping its four bombs on the building that the JT had been inside.

END-GAME: Having provided blood for transfusion to injured Paratroopers, witnessed a Rapier surface to air missile bring down an Argentine Mirage fighter, and helped to construct a POW camp for the 1,500 expected Argentine prisoners, the Junior Technician went with the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team south to Goose Green in June. "As the prisoners were moved back to Ajax, we moved up onto the airfield to sort out the mess." The grass was littered with helmets, rifles and fighting kit." Each Argentine aircraft still on the airfield at Goose Green had to be inspected for potential booby-traps, after an explosion killed an Argentinian POW tasked with moving boxes of ammunition. When complete, the EOD team moved on to tackling the numerous containers of napalm.

On Ascension Island, nearly 4,000 miles away, the aeromedical evacuation of casualties from Montevideo to the UK was undertaken, including an aircraft full of stretchers, many occupied by Welsh Guardsmen who had been badly burned when the Sir Galahad was bombed.

OPERATION BLACK BUCK

In 1982, the RAF proposed flying 7,595 miles in a Vulcan with a full bomb load from Ascension Island to the Falklands and back, to attack the airfield at Stanley and prevent the Argentinians from using it: this just six months before the official disbandment of all the Vulcan squadrons.

Vulcans were designed for medium range missions. Their pilots had not practised conventional bombing or air-to air-refuelling for a significant time, and airframe parts needed for refuelling had to be recovered from scrapyards and refitted. Half of the RAF's Victor refuelling fleet was to be utilised in a single operation, all taking off from the same runway in Ascension Island, and navigation systems had to be updated. The plan called for 18 Victor sorties and 18 aerial refuellings, and the Vulcan's 16 hour raid was the longest-range bombing raid in history at the time. The air to air refuelling plan was a challenge;

computers were very rare, and the plan was worked out with an electronic pocket calculator bought in the market in Swaffham for £4.95!

Seven Black Buck missions were planned, and five completed. It was only in 2001 when the US Air Force operation Enduring Freedom took place in Afghanistan that the record for the longest bombing raid was broken.

All of the Falklands reminiscences were from the RAF Association magazine "Air Mail" Apr-Jun 2022



AND, TALKING OF THE FALKLANDS...

I have at home a copy of the book "Chronicle of the 20th Century", which Terry bought for me some years ago – it covers the period 1900 to 1987, and recently, for want of anything else to do, I fetched it from the bookcase, and had another look at it. It is one of those books which it is probably impossible to read from cover to cover, and even more impossible to remember what's in it, but it is fascinating.

I sat for a while, randomly turning pages about 6 or 8 at a time, and reading whatever turned up, and to my surprise I suddenly came upon a reference to the Falklands – not, however, in connection with the 1982 war, but saying that on 11th December, 1914, the Royal Navy celebrated a magnificent victory off the Falklands. This was the sinking of four German cruisers – Dresden, Nurnberg, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau – with, apparently, no British loss. The Royal Navy continued to chase the remaining German light cruisers, but the King had already sent his congratulations.

The battle was fought at night, with only 12,000 yards between the two fleets, and virtually eliminated German sea power, except for the Baltic and North Sea areas. The American navy (officially neutral) and Argentina were said to be jubilant, and rejoicing at the British success, and newspapers in Argentina were quoted as saying that it will make the Atlantic free again.

Although I'd heard of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau - probably in connection with the Second World War - I'm not sure that I'd ever heard of the Falklands before 1982!
Ed

BEATING THE RETREAT

Eight members attended the Thursford Collection site in early September, at the suggestion of member Angela Jewell, who was, however, unfortunately unable to come. A group of four travelled together from Sedgeford, our webmaster and his wife came direct from their holiday location, and returned there afterwards, and the chairman and myself took the cross-country route from home due to a diversion being in place. A wander around the site reminded us of the shops – including the Christmas Shop already in operation! – and as Terry and I stopped for a cuppa, we met another friend, and had a chat.

The performance began with Beating the Retreat, in the car park and fortunately in dry conditions, despite the rather unpromising weather forecast. The ceremony of Beating the Retreat began in the early years of organised warfare, and the parade heralded the closing of camp gates, and the lowering of flags at the end of the day, and an order some years later, from William III in 1694, read:

"The Drum Major and drummers of the Regiment... are to beat the Retreat through the large street, or as may be ordered. They are to be answered by all the drummers and guards, and by four Drummers of each Regiment in their respective Quarters." It has now evolved into a colourful pageant of military music and precision drill, carried out by military bands. The salute was to be taken by General The Lord Dannatt GCB CBE MC DL – but he was marooned at King's Cross station, and arrived much later!

After the Beating of the Retreat, there was a break for refreshments: with the weather still dry and warm, four of us sat on the grass with our picnic food, enjoying the sunset and the conversation. This was followed by a band concert in the Thursford auditorium, which was heartily and enthusiastically

enjoyed by all those present, and of course featured the same excellent musicians, and the procedure was finally closed by General Dannatt, before we left, and welcomed.... Rain, at last!

It was organised by the Norfolk committee of, and was in support of, the Army Benevolent Fund – the Soldiers’ National Charity – in celebration of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, and the musicians were the British Army Band, Colchester.



AS WE APPROACH REMEMBRANCE DAY, A POEM TO LOST AIRCREW

On 28th October 1944 in Oxfordshire, an RAF crew began a cross-country training flight in a Wellington, but the inexperienced pilot, with too few hours’ experience to handle a fabric-covered aircraft in a severe thunderstorm, was unable to handle the icing-up and the plane broke up; the navigator parachuted to safety but the other six crew members and their instructor were killed. The poem was written by Carol Jane Shelton, daughter of the bomb aimer.

From "The RAF in Oklahoma", lent by Deryk Maddox earlier in the year

Go to your sweet rest

It is a farmer’s field like any other
Where the wind blows free
And the songbirds gather.

There are spirits here, among the flowers,
Who walk the hedgerows and mark the hours
Seven brave souls whose wings were broken
But of their sacrifice no word is spoken.
It was up to those who were left behind
To bear the wounds with no reason or rhyme.
To make sense of a thing that made no sense at all,

Forfeiting lives full of promise
With those who answered the call.

It is just a farmer's field, like any other,
But here the wind can fall silent
And the songbirds will linger.
For spirits walk here, among the hallowed flowers,
Along the sacred hedgerows, spending timeless hours.
Seven young souls who went boldly forward,
Bearing old men's burdens, bravely shouldered.
It was up to those who begged the angels nightly,
To rebuild lives now shattered and empty.
Was it for glory of war or the will of God Almighty,
This dreadful price to pay for love of country?

It will remain a farmer's field, like any other,
Where the wind carries voices
And the songbirds answer.
For the spirits here, we lay wreaths and flowers,
By the hedgerow chapel, for a few brief hours.
To the seven precious souls who left the world too quickly,
We honour your sacrifice, your courage, your bravery.
You died not in vain but for some higher purpose so true
Now your memory lives on in hearts you never knew.
Go now, you young cavaliers of the sky,
Go to your sweet rest.



A PROPOSED VISIT TO THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

Heacham branch is planning a visit, so if you would be interested, please let me know as soon as possible. I have no details yet, but I will keep anyone interested updated. It's well worth a visit! - *Ed*

THE CHAIRMAN AND EDITOR - ROYAL MEMORIES OF HER MAJESTY, QUEEN ELIZABETH II



Terry had met Her Majesty even before he had met me... The first time was at a formal dinner in 1975 at RAF High Wycombe, during his earlier days in the Royal Observer Corps. He was selected to carry the ROC Banner, and, unusually, to stay with it throughout the dinner. Her Majesty spoke to him after the meal ended, and asked politely whether he had eaten. He had already been given 10 minutes to devour a three course meal (that must account for his speed these days!) as the admin officer knew that Her Majesty would ask! Only later was Terry informed that he was required to stay where he was, behind Her Majesty, because he was between her and a plate glass window.... this was in the time of the IRA, so effectively, if someone had attempted to shoot her from outside, Terry would have stopped the bullet!

The second photograph above was taken at RAF Bentley Priory, the administrative HQ of the Corps, at a parade and Royal Garden Party in 1985, when he was Group Commandant of Oxford Group.

I had attended a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace with Terry as my guest in 1989, soon after I became Group Commandant of Bedford Group, Royal Observer Corps, which meant that I unfortunately had to wear uniform rather than finery! We didn't set eyes on the Queen; I did think that I saw Princess Diana in the far distance, but that was it!

The photograph on the right was taken in 1991, when we attended another Royal Garden Party, also at Bentley Priory – this time shortly before the stand-down of the Corps, so it was not a particularly happy occasion. As the Queen approached my Observers, I gave the official curtsey immediately followed by the salute (which always seemed to me a slightly ridiculous combination) and greeted Her Majesty, asking if I could introduce her to some of my Observers. She ignored me completely, walked past, started to chat to them, and never looked back! I know my place.....

