

SIX-NINETY NEWS

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

Issue 118 – October 2023



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

APOLOGIES AGAIN!

....This time for my printer having run out of ink gradually as I printed the last edition, so that copies were becoming more pale and wan as it progressed; as I wasn't standing over it, and I was in a hurry to deliver (via lunch) and post them, I decided to run with it. I now have a new printer!

LUNCH INFORMATION UPDATE

6th October – **1100 hrs** AGM & lunch at the Le Strange Arms Hotel, Golf Course Road, Old Hunstanton

3rd November – The Blakeney Manor Hotel: continue past the Blakeney Hotel where we met in previous years, The Quay becomes Back Lane, park in the public car park on your left, or pass it and continue round the corner to the hotel, which also has a large car park. ***NB 1230 arrival, 1300 to eat***

1st December – The West Norfolk, 91 Station Road, Heacham

5th January - The Lifeboat, Thornham

2nd February The Golden Lion, Hunstanton

FUTURE LUNCH VENUES may become more limited in range in the near future. Originally the idea was to visit different locations, both for variety, and so that the same members didn't always have the long journey, which is why we move around a lot. However, in recent months, booking has become more complicated, as many venues are now requesting deposits of £10 per head when a booking is made. This would be expensive, if I were to pay, and very complicated if I were to request members to send or deliver money to me, or indeed to the venue. I asked one of our lunch providers the reason, as I found it difficult to believe that large parties like ours fail to turn up – but they apparently do, along with smaller numbers, couples and individuals! Obviously the venue has to have sufficient food, staff, and space available, so when people don't arrive, opportunities have been lost to accommodate customers calling on spec, and of course the costs of all this and other overheads is meaning that the entire hospitality industry is struggling significantly. All this has happened and accelerated since Covid, and requesting deposits has proved to be the only way to ensure that people who have made bookings actually turn up. Cancellations made 48 hours in advance will be repaid, at least in the case of the West Norfolk, the proprietor of which provided this information - and who also reduced the deposit to £5 per head, as we had been there before.



BRANCH OUTINGS

The outing to Wild Ken Hill was a great success, with 24 members and guests – one tour at 10 am, and the other at 2 pm - spending a riveting two hours being driven around the site, complete with very interesting commentaries from our driver. He was friendly and informative, answering any questions, and giving us masses of information from weeds through environmentally friendly and profitable farming methods, to re-wilding, the impact of beavers on site (now a protected species in Britain), the many bird species, and much more, including a very interested group of Tamworth pigs, two of which are pictured here nosing around our trailer...



We were lucky with the weather, which was dry, with some mist, a light breeze, and some sunshine later.

Left: Members in the Beaver Meadow

Right: a view from the trailer

Photos: Editor

After the morning trip, it was suggested that we may do a repeat trip at a different time of year, maybe next May, when there will be many more birds about – apart from anything else!

If you would be interested, and would like to register your interest now, please let me know...

ANOTHER IDEA was mentioned for a possible outing next year, by a member who had recently visited the National Memorial Arboretum, in Staffordshire. (Maybe we'll meet some more Tamworth pigs!!) Terry and I have visited the Arboretum, although of course it is constantly being added to with new memorials – it is well worth a trip. The best plan may be to travel up by coach, enjoy lunch there, and have the 'train trip', which includes a guided commentary on memorials: otherwise there would be enough walking to keep us going for a week or more!

Again, your feedback on the suggestion would be gratefully received.



BIRCHAM NEWTON HERITAGE CENTRE VISIT

In my position as chairman of King's Lynn & District RAF Association, I was recently contacted by a fellow member, who is also chairman of the Heritage Centre, saying that he had offered an open morning to RAFA members from 10am to 12 noon on 10th October. In view of the low attendance at other RAFA events, I asked if it might be opened to Legion members as well, which was agreed, so if you would be interested, ***please see the directions at the end of this newsletter.*** (before the supplement.) No charge, donations welcomed, toilets open, and there's a Costa Coffee across the road!



THIS DOESN'T SOUND QUITE RIGHT!

In the 1950s and early 60s, under threat of nuclear war, members of the forces were trained on how to survive such an attack.

The early warning system would give a four minute warning to prepare. On hearing the siren, members of the RAF were to proceed to the airfield, and dig a trench deep enough to stand inside. It was then to be covered with a door (*there aren't usually many of those lying around airfields! Ed*) and the door was then to be covered with the earth which had been excavated, ensuring that a slit was left so that a rifle could be pointed through it.

However.... There were one or two unanswered questions. Could a suitable trench be dug in four minutes? Where on the station would anyone find sufficient shovels, and doors – also within the four minutes? Would the personnel remove the doors themselves? If so, were there enough screwdrivers? (*Would personnel be put on a charge for removing doors? – Ed?*)

As personnel were not issued with firearms, how long would the queue be at the armoury, to obtain arms and ammunition? (*Never mind returning to the trench with them! – Ed*). Thankfully, these theories were never put to the test!

RAFA Magazine 'Air Mail' letters page



GALLANTRY AND BRAVERY AWARDS

The Victoria Cross was introduced in Britain in 1856, beginning 167 years of state recognition of gallantry and bravery; there are now ten awards recognising both military and civilian acts of bravery. When the VC was instigated following the Crimean War of 1853-56 to recognise gallantry of British serving personnel, but not connected to the length or merit of military service, other countries – Sweden, Hungary, France and the Netherlands – already gave gallantry medal for 'other ranks' (ie not officers).

Nominations for military medals are assessed by senior officers, ending with a rigorous assessment of every recommendation by the Armed Forces Operational Awards Committee, along with being overseen by the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (the HD Committee), and all within a set timescale. Non-operational and civilian gallantry awards are endorsed by the George Cross Committee.

Despite the development of modern warfare into space and cyber, the gallantry awards criteria are not scheduled to change.

Armed Forces Gallantry

Level 1: The Victoria Cross, for gallantry in active operations.

1,358 have been awarded to 1,355 individuals, "for most conspicuous bravery, or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy". It is always the first award to be presented at an investiture, before knighthoods.

Level 2: The Conspicuous Gallantry Cross, established in 1993, replacing two previous medals, one Army and the other Royal Navy and RAF.

Level 3: Distinguished Flying Cross (RAF), established 1918 for exemplary gallantry during active operations in the air. Equivalent to the Navy's Distinguished Service Cross and the Army's Military Cross.

Level 4: Mentioned in Dispatches (no post nominal letters), for an act of bravery during active operations.

For command / leadership in active operations

Level 2: Distinguished Service Order. Awarded for leadership during active operations; since 1943 has extended to include the Merchant Navy.

Armed Forces non-operational gallantry awards

Level 3: Air Force Cross. Established in 1918, and equivalent to the Distinguished Service Cross (Navy) and Military Cross (Army) – for exemplary gallantry while flying but not on active operations against the enemy. This includes parachuting, search and rescue, and other circumstances.

Non-operational or 'civilian' gallantry awards (may be awarded 'in theatre')

A recommended award for an act of gallantry 'not in active operations against the enemy'. This may include acts such as rescues in hazardous circumstances, fire-fighting, explosive device disposal, etc.

Level 1: George Cross. Established in 1940, 409 in total have been awarded to individuals, and one each to the Island of Malta, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the National Health Service. For acts of the greatest heroism or of the most conspicuous courage or bravery in circumstances of extreme danger.

Level 2: George Medal. Also established in 1940; 2,122 medals and 27 bars have been awarded, approximately half to serving personnel and uniformed services, and half to civilians, for conspicuous gallantry and bravery not in the presence of an enemy.

Level 3: The Queen's Gallantry Medal. Since it was established in 1974, 1,066 medals and 19 bars have been awarded, for one or more acts of exemplary bravery not in the presence of an enemy.

Level 4: Queen's Commendation for Bravery and Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air. This was established in 1994, and has no post nominal letters. For an act (or acts) of bravery, including while flying, and not in the presence of an enemy. This replaced the Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct, and the Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air.

RAF Association magazine "Air Mail" Sept 2022



THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES

A unique Army unit with a reputation for being among the finest and most feared soldiers in the world, the Royal Gurkha Rifles members are infantry, at the core of the Army's Ground Close Combat capability – and manned by Nepali soldiers and both Nepali and British officers: a unique blend of cultures. British officers are required to speak Nepali, and are trained to do so in Nepal. The Gurkhas are known for their professionalism, fighting prowess, humour and humility. The soldiers are trained to out-think, outwit, outmanoeuvre, outfight and outlast any adversary, anywhere.



The rôle of the infantry is at the core of the Army; from peacekeeping to combat operations, anywhere in the world from desert to jungle, and ready for any challenge, whether protection, conflict prevention, fighting enemies or dealing with disasters at home or overseas.

Gurkhas were first recruited into the British East Indian Company following the Anglo-Nepali war and the treaty of Segauli in 1816, and over 200 years of distinguished service to the Crown has followed. During the Indian Mutiny of 1857, they remained steadfastly loyal, and helped to put down the insurrection, and during the time of the two World Wars, over 200,000 Gurkhas volunteered and served in the British-Indian Army.

After the partition of India in 1947, four of the ten Gurkha regiments opted to transfer to the British Army, and formed the main part of what was the Brigade of Gurkhas; in 1952 the Brigade moved to Malaya and its involvement in the Brunei Revolt, the Malayan Emergency and the Borneo Confrontation was close to constant. Following the Government's "Options for Change" reorganisation in 1994, the four regiments of the Gurkha Rifles were amalgamated to form one regiment – the Royal Gurkha Rifles. Today the Regiment consists of three Battalions; two alternate between the UK and Brunei every three years, the one in Brunei specialising in jungle warfare, and the UK based one is part of 16 Air Assault Brigade. Two Companies form part of the Special Operations Brigade.

Army.mod.uk / gurkhabde.com



THE SAILORS' HORNPIPE



The tune was first printed as the "College Hornpipe" in either 1797 or 1798, but even earlier versions have apparently also been found, one dated 1770.

The dance imitates the life and duties of sailors on board ship, and due to the small space needed to perform the dance, and the lack of need of a partner, the dance was apparently popular aboard. The dance movements originated from copying the hauling of ropes, rowing, climbing the rigging, and saluting! (*I'm not sure which of those might be represented in this photograph! – Ed*)

The tune is traditionally played as part of the Fantasia on British Sea Songs at the Last night of the Proms, when spectators bring foghorns and others to play along with the music; the tune was also played as the first part of the opening credits theme to the animated Popeye cartoons, beginning in the 1930s.

en.wikipedia.org



THE NAMES OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

I have often wondered where people 'find' the names allocated to military ops, and had assumed that they are now probably computer generated. However.... Good old Google came into play, and revealed what follows. The origin of naming operations is thought to have originated with the German General Staff during the last two years of the First World War, primarily, as I had assumed, to preserve operational security, but also as a convenient way of referring to operations.

Today in America, every command is given a series of two-letter prefixes – say from AA to AD, from which they can select two-word names. However, it appears that I was correct as far as UK names are concerned – an MoD spokesperson is on record as saying that 'Op Ellamy' was randomly generated by a computer program – in order that the name does not relate in any way to the action, so that no-one could work out which operation is being referred to. *www.usamm.com*

In 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved an index of words to be randomly assigned to an operation, the first word referring to the location and the second often indicating some kind of resolve, for example, "Desert Storm". You may also be familiar with the book title "Operation Mincemeat" – named after the 1943 Allied invasion of Sicily in which false military intelligence was placed on the body of a homeless Welshman found dead in England – *although I've read and enjoyed the book, I have to say that I don't understand the significance of that! -Ed*

I asked my computer where 'Op Telic' came from – the second Iraq war in 2003, for which Terry and I were both called up – and apparently it is from the Greek for 'purposeful or defined action': however, someone in the Squadron came up with the alternative 'Tell Everyone Leave Is Cancelled'!!

The Americans, of course, called their equivalent military deployment 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'; the previous Afghanistan operation 'Op Enduring Freedom', later 'Op New Dawn', and the removal of Osama Bin Laden 'Op Neptune Spear', but they are now following a different method, and as mentioned above, the UK names are now computer generated so that they carry no overtly political connotations.

Thanks again to Google!

SYLVIA HARRISON

One of the oldest members of the Legion in the county has recently died, and this article about her was circulated in the county news round-up. She was being cared for in Halsey House, the Legion's dementia care home in Cromer, and died at the age of 106.

She was born in Rome in 1917, because her family had business interests in Turkey. Her father was Captain Arthur Warden Baker OBE MC, of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. Sylvia returned to a boarding school in England, and then from the age of 16 worked and lived an independent life in London.

At the insistence of her mother that she should marry, Sylvia visited India, where she met her future husband, Philip, who rejoined his regiment in India as the outbreak of war was imminent; during the 1914-18 war, he had served in the Royal Horse Artillery in France. Sylvia also served in India as a Staff Sergeant and a nurse, in addition to raising her family there.

The family returned to England in 1946, by which time Philip had attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. A last-minute decision took them on a train journey to Norwich, and thence to a small farm in Ringland, where the family finally settled. Sylvia, a true farmer's wife, was involved with chickens, a vegetable garden, shooting parties, dogs, and also, for a time, German and Italian prisoners of war.

When Philip died in 1967 at the age of 63, Sylvia took to oil painting, and exhibited her work regularly after moving to Blakeney in the mid 1960s. She had a life in which she fully embraced, lived and enjoyed her family, friends and neighbours; she had an artist's eye for the beautiful, but above all the time, the understanding and the lack of judgement which made her universally loved.

Permission for this to be shared publicly was given by her son Tom Harrison.



EVERY ONE OF US HAS A HEART....

One of our members recently asked if I could put this into 690 News, for general information, on behalf of the British Heart Foundation: There are worrying signs that the ground-breaking progress the UK has made in tackling heart and circulatory diseases is not only slowing, but at risk of going into reverse.

Before the pandemic, many heart patients were already experiencing problems in accessing care, and now the situation is much worse. At the end of June 2023, nearly 400,000 people were awaiting time-critical heart care in England alone, a 70% increase from before the pandemic, and the highest figure on record.

We are calling on politicians to take bold action on three fronts:

Protection: address obesity and smoking to improve protection. ***Focus:*** prioritise NHS heart care to minimise the time it takes to obtain help. ***Breakthroughs:*** supercharge research to unlock future treatments and cures.

Please take five minutes to email your MP – you can use an online BHF template – and ask him or her to meet BHF representatives during their party conference this autumn, to discuss why hearts need more, and what can be done to help. THE NEED FOR CHANGE HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER.

BIRCHAM NEWTON HERITAGE CENTRE VISIT

10TH OCTOBER 10am – 12 noon

DIRECTIONS

Firstly, the Heritage Centre is not in the village of Bircham Newton!

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If approaching from Great Bircham, turn right on the road to Stanhoe, and leaving the village, follow the road up the hill where you will enter the National Construction College site – the old RAF station Bircham Newton.

On your right you will pass several old buildings, and then the old parade ground, latterly a car park but now out of use – a square tarmac area surrounded by mature trees, which is opposite two very large, new residential blocks. Continue past that, and on the right you will come to Bagthorpe Road – a lane with a post box on the corner. Continue, and very soon after that, take the next turning on the right, with a sign to ‘The RAF Memorial’.

It will look as though you are approaching an old house – you are, as it was the Station Commander’s residence! There is parking in front of it, the door will be open, and someone should be there to welcome you in.

*

If you are approaching from the direction of Docking / Stanhoe / Syderstone, turn up the B1155 towards Great Bircham.

You will pass Monks Close, and then three newly built houses, before arriving at the site of the National Construction College. You will see a large building on the left, with two access driveways, the second with a notice 'The Birches Conference Centre'.

The next left turning after that, with a notice as above to the RAF Memorial, will take you to the building described above.

*

SUPPLEMENT –

ULEZ scams: drivers targeted by dodgy websites

London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) has expanded, with drivers across the capital – and those visiting – facing a daily charge of £12.50 if their car doesn't meet the required emissions standards.

A member of the public approached us after inadvertently paying a dodgy company that appeared as 'Ulezpayservice' on their bank statement, rather than the official TfL website. Their bank later informed them that this retailer had set up a continuous payment authority (allowing them to take recurring payments) that has since been cancelled.

*

Monzo (a new UK on-line banking system) customers can now check if they're on the phone to a scammer

Bank scams can be devastating for victims, both financially and emotionally. One common type is when scammers pretend to be your bank and claim your account has a security issue.

Monzo has launched a new in-app tool enabling customers to tell if they're speaking to a fraudster. The digital bank's 'call status' tool will allow users to check if a call from the bank is genuine – while they're on the line.

*

Landline digital switchover scam

The digital switchover, which is expected to be completed in 2025, will involve UK telephone providers moving customers from old analogue landlines to services which use digital technology. The move is free

of charge, but there have been reports of fraudsters calling vulnerable people claiming they need their bank details as part of the switchover or their service will be disconnected.

Unfortunately, these scam attempts will be likely to increase as the switchover date nears. Be alert for unexpected calls, and share this with friends and family.

*

Victim loses more than £6,000 after buying an £8 camera on eBay

The victim followed the instructions to download an app from the Google Play store. He didn't know it at the time, but he was installing malware on his phone, which allowed scammers to hack his bank account and steal thousands of pounds. Malware is commonly used by scammers, but it isn't always detected by antivirus software

*

The Online Safety Bill is now ready to become law, and it includes protection against scam adverts on social media and search engines, so tech companies will be ordered to block and to remove scams from their platforms or face huge fines from Ofcom – a major step towards a safer internet.