

SIX-NINETY NEWS

*The newsletter of Sedgford & District Branch – formed on 2nd March 1926
Royal British Legion: Branch 0690*

Issue 142 – February 2026



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 members from beyond these boundaries – please keep coming!*

LUNCH VENUE BOOKINGS UPDATE – *venues as yet unconfirmed in italics*

6th March – Three Horseshoes, Roydon Staithe

10th April – Jolly Sailors Brancaster

1st May - *Lord Nelson- Burnham Thorpe*

5th June - *The White Horse, Blakeney*

3rd July – *The Ostrich, South Creake*

7th Aug - *Rose & Crown – Snettisham*

4th September - *Bushel & Strike, Heacham*

Please remember that I book for arrival from 12.30, aiming to eat at 1pm

If you would like to join us for a lunch and have not done so before, please just email or phone me at least a couple of weeks before the date, as I have to submit orders in advance – my contact details are on page 2 – Editor



FAREWELL

I have recently been notified of the death of branch member Mary Heather, who lived in Burnham Thorpe. She apparently died in April 2025, but I received the information only in January this year, from her nephew, the executor of her estate.

We have also heard that Ann, the wife of member Ian Robertson who now lives in Englefield Green, Surrey, has recently died, and we send our condolences to him.



BRANCH WEBSITE

Some members may be unaware, but we have an informative branch website, managed by branch Secretary Stephen Kent, which includes photographs and information about our committee members, and of past branch activities. It is also planned to update it in the near future.

For those not using computers, and for some who do(!), I will continue to publish introductions to committee members, and below, on page 3, you can meet our newly appointed Treasurer. To access our site, visit the Royal British Legion website, scroll nearly to the bottom of the page that opens, and there is an option: "Couldn't find what you were looking for?" where you can enter and search for 'Sedgeford branch.'



MEET YOUR COMMITTEE

This month, branch Treasurer Angela Blenkinsop-Jewell, who writes:



I met Captain Anthony Jewell in 2007, in London, on a blind date!

It was memorable for several reasons: firstly, I had met very few Soldiers – and this one was passionate about the Army! Secondly it had been awhile since I had enjoyed myself so much, and we very quickly became great friends, travelling together to many places, all of which, naturally, for me, meant an exponential learning curve in the structure and

history of the Military!

Anthony had a cottage in Thornham which had become our bolthole from London so it was easy to decide that we should move up to Norfolk, and to Hunstanton, which we did in 2010.

I suppose all our lives can be split into 'phases'; from childhood, which, for me, was in Oxfordshire, blessed with wonderful parents (my Dad piloted Mosquitos in the war) and they shared their later years in Hunstanton with us, to youth and growing up – and, then - becoming old!

My youth was split between Newcastle University and, later, Imperial, London: I learnt a lot apart from Languages and Maths: I definitely believed I was Joan Baez, that I could 'Ban The Bomb' single handedly and that London was the centre of the Universe – but that, of course, was pre Hunny!

My working life was privileged: I taught in prisons and hospitals as well as schools – and became a Magistrate in 1984. Fortunately I was able to transfer to Kings Lynn Court where my work changed from Girl Gangs in Croydon to Fishing Licences and Hare Coursing in Norfolk! And I still love teaching!

I have two fabulous children – and 5 grandchildren and my second marriage, to Anthony, added 3 special daughters and another 5 grandchildren: how lucky can a girl get! I fluff up my maternal feathers whenever any of them comes to visit!

Aside from that we are loyal members of The British Legion and enjoy the monthly bonhomie that we share with Sedgeford, under the umbrella of our country's commitment to the wellbeing and appreciation of those whose families have played their part in our great National Services.

In aeternum maneat



JOHN 'PADDY' HEMINGWAY DFC AE

An RAF Group Captain, John Allman Hemingway was an Irish pilot who served in the RAF during the Second World War, including in the Battle of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, the Allied invasion of Italy and the Invasion of Normandy. He was born in Dublin in July 1919, and was commissioned into the RAF in March 1938.

Early in 1940 he was flying Hurricanes in France, and in May of that year destroyed a Heinkel aircraft, however the next day he had to make a forced landing in his damaged aircraft, but within a week he was back in England, and flew missions over the Channel in the Battle of Dunkirk.

In 1940, flying a night fighter, his instruments failed and he baled out at low altitude, following which he was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. After recovering he served as an air traffic controller during the invasion of Normandy; he then returned to flying, commanding a Spitfire squadron, when he was shot down for the fourth time.

After the war, he was posted to the Middle East, later returning to Britain, and then serving in France and finally in the Air Ministry. He was promoted to Group Captain in January 1969, and retired in September of that year.

The last surviving airman of the Battle of Britain, he died aged 105 in March 2025.
en.wikipedia.org



SOLDIERS & SINGERS...

A musical trio, the Soldiers, formed in the early 2000s, released three singles and four albums between 2009 and 2013, which reached high positions in the British charts, and between them were awarded three platinum, and one gold disc. All the performers were serving in the British Army, and continued their full-time service careers while also recording and releasing their records.



Proceeds from their first single were donated to the Army Benevolent fund. They featured in the 'Big Sing 2009' performed at the Royal Albert Hall and hosted by Aled Jones.

One member joined the Army in 1984, served in the Gulf War, and became Band Sergeant Major of the Army Air Corps; another joined the Army aged 16, is also a Gulf War veteran Staff Sergeant, and in 2010 was Drum Major of the Minden Band of the Queen's Division; the third member serves in the 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards, and has served in Afghanistan and Iraq. en.wikipedia.org / armyandyou.co.uk

PERSECUTION IN NAZI GERMANY

The widely reported death of Eva Schloss, the holocaust survivor who died in January aged 97, prompted me to do some further research: obviously we have all heard of the holocaust, and know something of the fate of the Jewish population in Germany. Eva only spoke publicly about her experiences after the death of her brother, Otto, in 1980, when she began to share the details of her experiences, in schools and universities.

In 1942, both Eva's family and that of the Frank family (now recognised since the publication of the diary of Anne Frank) lived in the same apartment block in Amsterdam, where they had moved to escape the annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938. In 1942, both families went into hiding to escape the escalating persecution of Jews in the Netherlands, but two years later Eva's family was betrayed by a double agent in the Dutch underground, arrested, and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Eva and her mother survived the concentration camp and were liberated in 1945 by Soviet forces.

After the war, they returned to Amsterdam, and renewed acquaintance with the father of Anne Frank, Otto, who Eva's mother subsequently married in 1953. Eva resumed her education after the war, studying art history at the University of Amsterdam, and subsequently photography in England, and during that time she met Zvi Schloss, a German refugee from Germany whose father had been

imprisoned in Dachau. They married, settled in England, became British citizens, and had three daughters. In June 2021, Eva Schloss became a dual citizen of the UK and Austria, reclaiming Austrian citizenship as an act of reconciliation with the country of her birth. She died in London on 3rd January 2026, and the King and Queen said that they were “privileged and proud to have known her, and admired her deeply”.

en.wikipedia.org



EXITING AN AIRCRAFT IN FLIGHT, OR A SHIP AT SEA...

I always understood that the term used sounded the same, but was spelt differently. “Bail out” is the term used for leaving a vessel – usually with the likelihood of it sinking – presumably because that is also the term for scooping water from a boat.

The term for leaving an aircraft sounds the same, but is spelt “bale out”, apparently because the sight from the ground of the departing crew looks like bales of straw! I have recently noticed a lot of apparent confusion over the spelling, and the internet now tells me that they are in fact interchangeable!

google.com



MERCHANT SEAMEN AND VETERANS’ BADGES

Recently seen by Terry Austin was a photograph of a Merchant Seaman wearing what appeared to be a veteran’s badge, so as ever, I looked on line and discovered that it is the UK Merchant Seafarers Veterans’ Badge, which was awarded to those sailing on vessels facilitating military actions in conflicts since the 1939/45 war, including the Atlantic, Korea, Suez and Gulf wars. Worn on civilian clothing, it honours bravery and is obtained via the government website or the Merchant Navy Association.

It is available to anyone who served in the Merchant Navy or fishing fleets in a vessel supporting UK Armed Forces, for instance, carrying troops or military cargo such as tanks or fuel. The design is the Armed Forces Veterans Badge with a Red Ensign added on the left.

www.gov.uk



FLT LT COLIN BELL



Having joined the RAF aged 19 during the Second World War, Colin Bell completed 50 bombing raids over Germany, 13 over Berlin, flying a de Havilland Mosquito aircraft of No. 608 Squadron, based at Downham Market. He remembers an incident when a shell exploded under his aircraft, cutting the power to both engines, but he and his navigator managed to bring the aircraft home. The next day, an

engineer handed Colin two slivers of shrapnel, each 4 or 5 inches long. Asked where they were found, he replied "They were in the parachute you were sitting on!".

On VE Day, Colin was at an airfield in Canada when the news broke, with people shouting and firing pistols: he asked what was going on, and was told "I think they're celebrating the end of the war!"

Colin says that the situation is different now, but the dangers are the same, and that now, people talk too much about their rights, and not enough about their duties: how true that is. He still feels sadness that so many lost their lives in a conflict that should never have been, concentrating on a battle for survival.



In October 2019, aged 98, he was once more on board a "Mozzie": he will be 105 in March 2026.

Above: reunited with a Mosquito; below: relaxing at the RAF Club where, now aged 104, he is still a regular visitor

When asked what he puts his longevity down to, he replied: "It's a combination of exercise, alcohol, and the love of good women – with the odd bad one thrown in!!" He clearly still has a sense of humour!

news.sky.com; and thanks to branch member Richard English for drawing my attention to Colin's story



A FAMILY OF AVIATORS AT WAR

One family has a lineage of no less than nine RAF pilots, covering the period from the First World War until the present day. Beginning with the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service, the family has produced high-ranking officers and notable figures in aviation history.

One family member conceived the idea of sending the "little ships" to Dunkirk; he later became Chief of the Air Staff of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Other family

members included a Second World War night fighter pilot, and another who served in the Battle of Britain; a deputy to Fighter Command's Hugh Dowding; a head of RAF Intelligence; a 'pathfinder' with numerous operations to his credit; and an engineer who invented a particular type of torpedo, and who broadcast live over the D-Day beaches from a Liberator bomber.

Currently another family member is captain of a Chinook helicopter in the RAF. The family is believed to be the one which has contributed the most airmen to the RAF in its 109 year history, and the book "A family of aviators at war" by Anthony Inglis tells the full family RAF story.

"Air Mail" – magazine of the RAF Association / www.dailymail.co.uk



JOAN MURRAY MBE

Another Bletchley Park cryptanalyst and numismatist during the Second World War, she was born in 1917 and died in 1996, aged 79. Educated in Cambridge, she caught the attention of Gordon Welchman, a mathematician who, with three other top mathematicians, was recruited to the Government Code and Cypher School with the aim of breaking the Enigma code – the Germans used the Enigma machine to encrypt their messages, which they believed then to be unbreakable.

Murray was recruited to Bletchley Park in 1940 to do routine clerical work, but ended up working with Alan Turing, who she knew slightly through her brother, and she quickly became the only female working on a cryptanalytic process developed by Turing to reduce the need for electromechanical devices used to decipher German encrypted messages.

In 1941, 282,000 tons of shipping per month between March and June was sunk; the work done by Murray and her team reduced this to 62,000 tons.

In 1946 she was awarded an MBE for her codebreaking work, and following the war she worked at the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), where she met her future husband, a retired Army officer. After his death in 1986 she moved to Oxford and helped historians studying wartime codebreaking at Bletchley Park. She died in 1996.

en.wikipedia.org



RUTH BOURNE

A Jewish second world war codebreaker who worked at Bletchley Park has died aged 99. Born in Manchester and raised in Birmingham, during the war she was evacuated to Caernarvon, before enlisting in the Women's Royal Naval Service at

the age of 18. She was chosen to work at the secret site in Buckinghamshire decoding intercepted messages, using The Bombe, an electromechanical device built by Alan Turing to break Germany's Enigma code, and which quickly identified daily



settings to decode enemy messages, changing the course of the war and saving millions of lives. She later said that she had "gained a little bit of personal satisfaction" from her role in anti-Nazi operations, but she remained unaware of Bletchley Park's wider mission, and, sworn to secrecy, said "I only knew my bit". She subsequently was delighted to give her time to educating others about her codebreaking contributions, and for decades she also volunteered to give tours of Bletchley Park.

In her spare time she enjoyed reading, art and pottery, and latterly lived in High Barnet in North London. In 2018 she was awarded the highest military honour of France, the Legion d'Honneur, in recognition of her service.

The Roundel, magazine of the Association of Royal Air Force Women Officers



ANOTHER CHARITY BENEFITS EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL

Two Army veterans in their late 50s attended a veterans' Christmas lunch in 2023. One entered the room, shivering with nerves and suffering huge anxiety, as she had done when meeting new people since leaving her military life, so she showed reluctance to proceed: an organiser pointed out another lady sitting alone, and suggested that she might join her. After some hesitation she went over, and in a few minutes, they realised that they had both served in Northern Ireland in 1987, when in their early twenties, and had shared a dormitory in Lisburn.

Once the penny had dropped, they hugged each other, and cried, with a depth of feeling that they hardly realised they were holding: they had each wanted to re-connect with their military 'family'. They had first met in their Lisburn dormitory, two of a couple of hundred women among thousands of male soldiers, which had helped to cement their bond, along with the atmosphere of high alert. The base was under threat of mortar attacks, but the wider sense of always being on guard was just as disturbing.

The environment was worrying for an 18 year old, and still today, they both check for exits, and sit with their backs to the wall whenever they go out: what they experienced stayed with them, and probably contributes to continuing anxiety. If a security incident confined them to barracks, or just at bedtime, they would lie in bed, talking for hours, but after a year they did not see each other again.

One married the following year, and left the Army, and the other did the same shortly afterwards, both finding it a struggle to 'find a place' after rejoining civilian

life, and always wondering “Will they like me?” “Will they accept me?”, always feeling on the periphery. This was explained by, in the military, always being ‘in the same boat’ and instantly relying on one another: in civilian life ‘you’re just not on the same wavelength’. Not admitting to weakness just made it all worse.

After their chance meeting at lunch, the two women met again two weeks later with their husbands, all getting on very well, and since then have seen each other at least monthly, holidayed together, and their friendship and new sense of identity has given them the strength to meet others.

The Christmas lunch which recommenced their friendship was organised by another charity, The Not Forgotten, which helps veterans and serving military personnel living with injury, illness, isolation and loneliness.

telegraph.co.uk

This article was forwarded to me by Terry’s brother, who served in the RAF for a number of years as a Nimrod pilot.



MILITARY POETS SOUGHT

The Chairman of Honiton branch, an armchair author with a passion for history and verse, is crafting a Book of War Poetry, with the net profit to be donated to the Poppy Appeal. The first half is now complete, spanning battles and bravery from The Crimea to World War Two. Soon, this collection will march out across the world as a Kindle release, available both nationally and globally. But here’s where YOU come in...

Budding military poets from Devon and beyond are sought to contribute to the second half of the book. Whether your words echo the trenches, the skies, or the silent courage of those who served — we want to hear them.

What’s in it for you? Bragging rights: Your poem published in print! Recognition: Your name immortalised in the book. Impact: Your words helping raise funds for the Poppy Appeal. (No royalties, just the glory of seeing your work in print, and knowing it’s for a good cause!) So, sharpen your quills, steady your hearts, and let your verses march into history!

Send your poems for consideration to: honitonchair@rblcommunity

If your work is selected for the printed edition, you’ll be asked to sign a declaration of ownership to keep everything shipshape with copyright law.



A RIGHT ROYAL RESPONSE

It was March 20th, 1974. Princess Anne, just 23 and accompanied by Captain Mark Phillips, who she had married only four months previously, was riding home from a charity event in her royal limousine. The car was gliding down The Mall when a white Ford suddenly blocked the path. A man jumped out with two handguns. His name was Ian Ball. He had come to kidnap a princess for ransom.

What happened next was eight minutes of chaos. Ball shot Anne's bodyguard, Inspector Beaton, three times—shoulder, hand and stomach. He shot the chauffeur through the chest. When a passing journalist tried to help, Ball shot him, too. A police officer who thought it was a car accident was shot in the abdomen. Four men are bleeding on the pavement, and Ball yanked open the car door, pointed his gun at Princess Anne, and demanded she get out. He had handcuffs and tranquillisers ready: he planned to hold her for £2 million ransom. Princess Anne looked at the man who'd just shot four people, and she said three words that would define her forever: "Not bloody likely." No screaming. No panic. Just a flat refusal.



When Ball kept demanding that she comply, Anne later described it as "a fairly low-key discussion about where or not we were going to go." She added: "I was scrupulously polite because I thought it was silly to be too rude at that sort of stage." Scrupulously polite. At gunpoint, and after watching four men being shot. But here's where the story gets even more remarkable. A man named Ron Russell was driving home from work. He was 6'4" tall, and a former heavyweight boxer. When he saw what was happening, he walked straight up to Ball and punched him twice in the back of the head. Ball spun and fired. The bullet missed Russell and shattered a taxi windscreen behind him. Russell

didn't run. He positioned himself between the princess and the gun, using his body as a human shield. "I honestly thought I was going to die," Russell later said. "But I didn't care. I still believe that the life of a member of the Royal Family is much more important than mine." More police arrived. Ball fled on foot and was tackled within minutes.

The next day - less than 24 hours later - Princess Anne returned to her normal schedule. She tended her horses. Her husband instructed cadets. The British press couldn't believe the composure.

That September, the Queen held a ceremony to honour the seven people who had protected her daughter. Inspector Beaton received the George Cross - Britain's highest civilian honour for courage. Ron Russell and PC Hills received George Medals. When the Queen handed Russell his medal, she leaned close and said something he'd never forget: "The medal is from the Queen, but I want to thank you as Anne's mother."

The attack changed Royal security forever. Training became rigorous. Protection was dramatically increased. The idea that the Royal family could be vulnerable just yards from Buckingham Palace became unacceptable. But what people remember

isn't the policy changes. They remember three words: "Not bloody likely." It was so perfectly British - understated, firm, irritated at the inconvenience of being kidnapped. Courage without dramatics. Defiance without hysteria.

Princess Anne has spent fifty years since the incident becoming one of the hardest working members of the Royal family, completing more engagements than almost anyone else. She does her own makeup. She drives herself to events, and once told annoying photographers to "naff off." But that night in 1974 revealed who she truly was: a woman who refused to be anyone's victim, who stared down a gunman and simply said "No". Ron Russell kept his George Medal for 46 years before selling it in 2020 due to poor health. "It was the hardest decision of my life," he said. "I am so proud and honoured to have done such a thing."

Inspector Beaton protected Anne for another five years before retiring after 30 years of distinguished service. All four men who were shot that night survived and recovered. And Princess Anne? She never stopped being exactly who she was that night on The Mall - calm, fearless, and absolutely unwilling to cooperate with anyone else's plans for her. Sometimes courage doesn't look like action movies. Sometimes it sounds like irritation. Sometimes, the most powerful thing you can do is to simply refuse. Not bloody likely, indeed.

Thanks to branch member Richard

English



OUR MAY CENTENARY OUTING IN KING'S LYNN

I have received no responses to my question regarding the preferred date for a guided tour of Kings Lynn, so can only assume that nobody has, at present, any other commitments in May which might interfere with it. Please note in your diaries the two potential dates – 15th or 22nd May - and if you find that you can't make one of those, or would prefer a particular one, please let me know, so that I can inform Gary, and keep a note of likely numbers for each date. In due course I will also need to book our lunch at Marriotts, as well, so please remember to let me know any preferences!

SCAMS:

Fraudulent requests to complete a simple task, such as liking posts on social media – for a fee – and job scams where prospective employees were asked to pay for working equipment, and never reimbursed. Also, 'easy to work from home' roles, where people might work for months, and never be paid, or be asked to invest money which you will never see again.

Fake videos, sometimes blending real videos of known people, to become influencers giving financial or legal advice, laying the foundation to devise and promote scams which their followers will trust, invest in, and pay for.

Fraudsters using any piece of information that they may have – your date of birth, or email address for example – to make scams targeting you more effective. These could enable them to access more information about customers via popular retailers and brands.

Fraudsters also use personal data to access O2 accounts before contacting customers and conning them into revealing one time passcodes.

Scammers, including foreign ones, may manipulate the phone number from which they're ringing, to make it look as though it's a more local number, and/or use cloned voices to make calls sound more official, convincing or trustworthy – using professionals' voices like bank staff, HMRC employees and tech support staff, to appear legitimate.

You can protect yourself by:

Verifying all unsolicited calls with the company they claim to represent before proceeding

If you access a website from an email, don't enter personal information before verifying that it's legitimate.

If an offer sounds too good to be true, always be suspicious: if you're tempted to buy from an on-line retailer, always research them and check review platforms before parting with money.

Check the Financial Conduct Authority's register before making an investment with a firm, to check their legitimacy.

If you lose any money in a scam, ring your bank immediately, using the number on the back of your bank card, and report it to Report Fraud (formerly known as Action Fraud).

There are also job scams, but as most of our members are retired, they may not be so relevant to us.... However, they are not to be trusted! An example of one sent by text said only that "tasks to support Tik Tok users who need media exposure and search opportunities can be completed remotely online or by mobile phone, and no experience is required, it's easy to get started."