



HMS GANGES ASSOCIATION

Minutes of HMSGA Committee Meeting
RNA Uxbridge, London. UB10 9PG
11:00 17th September 2026

Committee Members Present: Eddie Seaborne, MBE (ES), Phil Bridge (PB), Bungy Williams (BW), George Barnham (GB), Sean Sweeney, MBE (SS), Bill Wills (BiW)

Observers – Carol Barnham, Ron Carr, Nick Foot, Tina Wills.

1. **Minute Silence** – The Chairman (ES) welcomed the attendees and called for them to be upstanding for a Minute's Silence for all Members who had Crossed the Bar (CTB) since the Committee had last gathered.
2. **Apologies for absence** – Ken Bushnell (report submitted via e-mail)
3. **Approval of Previous Minutes of Meeting** – BW – Proposed Phil Bridge, Seconded Sean Sweeney – passed unanimously.
4. **Chairman's Opening Remarks** – ES – Welcome to the meeting and I would like to give personal thanks to our observers for your attendance. Again, many thanks to Slinger for availing us with the use of the RNA Uxbridge club.

It has been a busy couple of months again. I had very sad news from Brian Hill that, despite his efforts alongside Mike Phillips and Mick Ryan, there is no way the Southwest Division can continue. They had their final meeting in the RNA Club, and it was decided to fold the Division. I was unsure if this needed any input from us but they, along with all other Divisions, are independent of the national Association.

Soon after, I received the news of Sam Potts Crossing the Bar, and we were all shocked to hear that. I know Phil was a great friend of Sam, I served with him on two occasions and he proudly attended the last three reunions alongside his good mate, Mick Pitcher, sporting their red Field Gun blazers. It is such a shame to lose him, as it is any of our members. Sam had four passions – Ganges, Field Gun, rugby and golf – and Wiggy Bennett, who was also a friend of Sam, is now a celebrant and will lead Sam's service and has requested that each of Sam's passions are represented in the presentation of his eulogy. Many will have much to say about Sam so I will make my contribution short and recite the Rudyard Kipling poem 'If.' Sam commented on that poem's inclusion at Basil Downing-Waites funeral saying how he appreciated its reading and recalling it from Ganges. The NSB will be in attendance.

At this point, I would like to congratulate Jacko for his performance so far as NSB after filling the breach left by Tony. He is also well supported by Dodi.

I have some good news on the Almoner, Cenotaph and RBL.

On the Almoner, I was surprised by the presence of Mick Ryan during my recent holiday to Turkiye. On letting him know we were looking for an Almoner, Mick stated immediately that he would like to be considered for the position. I accepted his offer on the spot! Mick has been to the last four or five reunions, helped Brian Hill and Mike Phillips with the SW Division and said he needs something to keep him occupied now. He is good with words which is what we need, and, on contacting Bungy, he agreed we should take him on immediately.

I spoke with Steve Scholes regarding the Cenotaph progress, and he has done a wonderful job in trying to boost the numbers in this our 50th year since HMS Ganges closed. At the moment we have 32 attendees and the cut off is 30th September for those currently undecided.

Over the last 12 months, the RBL have proposed changing the name of the National Memorial Arboretum to the RBL Gardens of Remembrance. A former Ganges Boy who made Captain, Stevan Jackson, has raised a petition challenging this change. To our knowledge, there has been no consultation with other Associations regarding the change despite RBL insistence that there was. The matter was an agenda item at the recent CONA meeting and Sean, who represented us, will give us the results of discussions later in this meeting.

We will keep everybody informed on this matter but, as it stands, the name change will take place but there are over 230,000 names on Stevan's petition against the name change.

In Reunions news, Florrie reports Scarborough is fully booked, and a reserve list is in existence.

The US-UK reunion in November under the direction of Michael Kerr will have eight UK attendees. Judging by the number of bottles of rum Michael has garnered, it could be a messy evolution.

Reunion 2027 – I am still getting questions from some “Why Stratford again?”. We will not be holding it there in 2028 and NYTD are investigating alternatives for that event. The ‘Jersey Boys’ have been secured as the Gala Dinner entertainment.

Peter Clarke has reported 36 confirmations for the Malta Reunion in September '27 which bodes well. The Reunion element will take place during the week commencing 20th with many attendees arriving the weekend prior to and departing the weekend after that week.

So **BZ** to all the organisers of these various Ganges-driven reunions.

Finally, I have received two nominations for Letters of Recognition who, if successful, will receive signed letters from our President. Nominees are proposed by the members in recognition of their extensive individual contributions in promoting their division and/or the Association.

5. Secretary's Report – BW – Other than a letter which I will refer to in AOB and which, I believe, is beyond both the Committee and President to action, things have been pretty quiet.

I did speak to Nick Crow in the week who has informed me he has upgraded his system with new hardware and software which allows him to do things better and faster!

I did e-mail the Committee concerning my travel costs and secured accommodation at the Lancaster Hotel on the Brunel University campus. I would hasten to add submarine experience would be beneficial as the room is very small! This was only £81.50 in comparison to the £155 the Premier Inn were seeking – neither included breakfast. I raise this to remind the Committee and the reading membership that hotels are expensive, and they will not get any cheaper in the foreseeable future.

6. Treasurer's Report – PB:

Community Account (Working)	£2,066.59
Tracker Account (Savings)	£57,151.93
Fixed Assets (IT Equipment)	£655.04
Petty Cash Box	£00.00

Giving the Associations total assets of £59,873.56

All figures correct as of 16th September 2026.

Gents, as mentioned to you before on our email group, finances are buoyant but our assets are getting lower, please note the Profit/Loss this financial year so far!

Loss of members for one reason or another, increases in running costs and 50th anniversary celebrations are a few areas where the increase in losses occur. It will not be the first time I have had to report a loss at AGM, there is no panic and many members feel that we have too much money anyway, they will be happy to see it getting lower!

We have spent more on gizzits etc., this year than previously.

7. Membership Secretary's Report – KB submitted the following report:

As of 29th September 2026

Active Members	1068
Life Members	230
Associate Members	60
Lapsed	492 (346 Life Members)
TOTAL	1850

STATS - 1 June 2026 – 29 September 2026

Crossed the Bar	20
New Members	7

Leaving the summer months and what a summer we have enjoyed, we move to the Autumn and wintertime.

The Ganges Association continues to move on a pace with numerous plans with Reunion 2027 taking shape, we have a new recruitment poster just coming out, so time does not stand still.

As a courteous notice, especially to new members, should any personal details change, i.e., home address, telephone numbers, email address, please inform the MemSec.

You will see in my report above there are a number of 'lapsed members' this is where the Magazine is delivered only to find the member has moved or has CTB. I am still receiving far too many magazines 'Return to Sender' with no forwarding address and I ask if you can be more vigilant and let me know when these changes are made.

Also, when changing bank, you will need to set up a new 'Standing Order' as they do not automatically transfer over.

Please stay safe and take care.

8. **Reunion Organiser, Update** – ES – I've little to say further on this except for the cancellation of any entertainment on the Sunday evening. Feedback as shown the members just wish to chill out after the activities of the previous days.

Nina has revealed that applications are currently running at just under 100 submissions. It is not currently known what the number of applications is for each of the two packages – 2- or 3-night stays.

9. **Awards & Rewards Coordinator** – SS – I will touch on the CONA meeting then go on to certificates.

CONA – - I met the Chairman of the Port Phillip Bay RNA branch in Australia. The Branch had a plaque produced which represents 534 RN Boy Seamen aged 16 & 17 killed by enemy action in WWII serving their King and country in 80 warships. He presented it to me, and I will now pass it on to Phil to be incorporated alongside the Book of Remembrance we received a couple of years ago. I have done some research on it and there is a similar plaque in Portsmouth Cathedral.

V. Adm. Duncan Potts opened the conference and covered liaison between 1st & 2nd SLs and charities to forecast the needs of sailors from 2040 onwards. I was given a questionnaire with regard to what associations would like to see from CONA moving forward as part of the review and development of the organisation in aiding associations. He wanted it completing there and then as they wish to move on it at speed. I was not in a position to complete it so have brought it back and copied it to the Chairman and I am further advised by Slinger that it is now online.

They did a 60 second speed-dating introduction of naval charities that were present – Veterans Outreach, RNBT, RNA, RNRMC etc.

There was then a presentation from R. Adm. Andrew Rose, Dir. People and Training, who talked about what the RN is currently doing, where the RN is heading, why charities and associations matter. He stated all the armed forces are busy in the North Atlantic and stated the 1SL has been tasked to be ready for war by 2029. He underlined that recruiting was on track and the RN is in good shape with both Ratings and Officers joining at HMS Raleigh. (Phil mentioned a report of a re-joiner aged 61 – *check your kit!*)

The RNA Gen. Sec. gave an update stating they have recruited 2,300 members over the last 12 months of which 1,900 were veterans.

The RNA National Chairman, Andy Christie, spoke about the Biennial Parade, the Uckers Championship and was supposed to cover the National Arboretum - the latter was not mentioned. I asked about the NMA at the AOB section and was informed the RNA were meeting up with the RBL regarding progress toward renaming the NMA.

After I got home, I e-mailed V.Adm. Potts' PA asking for the date of the meeting and how the outcome would be communicated to CONA – radio silence thus far! If and when I get anything, I will share with all.

We also had a presentation by Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, author of *The Battle of the Arctic*.

On certificates, since April I have issued 19 and have 5 for presentation at the Reunion. As I said previously, I contact the member when I receive their request, I contact them again when I produce and forward the certificate, asking they notify me of receipt.

Regarding stock, we have ample 50th, 60th, 70th, 75th, 80th, and now, 85th anniversary certificates ready to go. We do have an abundance of blanks, so I have spoken with Mark at CVN Print regarding future requirements to reduce costs. I have also been receiving requests for certificates slightly in advance of the anniversary date which I have been filing. Some have requested them as much as a year in advance of their date which I have rebuffed and told them to apply closer to their anniversary date!

Can I ask that the constitution is updated to reflect the anniversaries we now commemorate? (BW – *actioned post-meeting*)

Post Meeting Note:

[Whilst preparing these minutes, BW received the following communication via PB:

From: Lindsey Smith <lsmith@britishlegion.org.uk>

Subject: **Communication to Memorial Holders**

Date: 30 September 2026 at 13:11:34 BST

Good afternoon

Earlier this year, we wrote to let you know that the National Memorial Arboretum would become the Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens. I am writing to confirm that this change has now taken effect.

The new name reflects the RBL's longstanding relationship with and support of the site. The RBL has been the parent charity since 2003, and the name recognises the role it has played in supporting and sustaining this special place.

While our name has changed, our purpose remains the same. The site is home to more than 430 memorials commemorating service and sacrifice in the Armed Forces, Emergency Services and civilian organisations, and they will remain central to the purpose of the National Remembrance Gardens. We will continue to commemorate service and sacrifice on behalf of the nation, host significant moments of Remembrance and provide a dedicated place for remembrance, reflection, and learning throughout the year.

You will now begin to see our new name and branding reflected across our communications, website, signage, and promotional materials. Visitors, memorial holders, supporters, and partners can continue to expect the same commitment to remembrance, the same warm welcome and the same focus on preserving and sharing the stories represented across our memorial landscape.

There will be no changes to the basis of arrangements for memorials and, as owners, you remain entirely responsible for the maintenance, upkeep, and safety of your memorial. If memorials are not maintained and become a safety hazard the terms of the Memorial Application and Amendment Policy SOP 44 (available on our website) will apply and the memorial may be removed.

All rights and obligations under any current memorial agreement were assumed by the Royal British Legion on the 1st of April and The Royal British Legion will continue to honour the terms of the agreement without interruption. The terms, validity or performance of your agreement will not be affected. If you have a current, signed, and valid maintenance agreement with the site the arrangements for your memorial will continue.

If you are not able or do not wish to carry out your maintenance obligations, we do offer a service to do this for you by prior agreement, if you would like to discuss this service, please contact Paul Johnson pjohnson@britishlegion.org.uk or myself AAnsell@britishlegion.org.uk

Thank you for your continued support. Your contribution has helped make this nationally important place what it is today, and we look forward to continuing our relationship with you as the Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens.

Yours sincerely,
Andy Ansell
Head of Estates]

10. Standards & Events Report – (Steve Scholes) – delivered by BW:

Steve Scholes 08/09/26:

Good morning, all.

September already!! November will be here before we know it.

We still have 32 of us taking part so this year should be a good turnout, let us hope the weather is kind to us again.

Nothing much to report but just a reminder to those taking part for the first time, your passes and instructions will be e mailed direct to individuals on October 30/31. Also, for those travelling by rail, keep a check on your regional rail operators to see if they are offering free travel on Remembrance weekend. I will be checking with the Poppy cabs, where they will be picking up etc., on the Sunday and will let you all know as soon as I find out.

As the event is always oversubscribed the RBL will be asking me to hand back any unfilled places, so if you know of any ex-Ganges boys who are still not sure about attending, the closing date for registration is September 30th, so do not leave it until the last minute.

In the meantime, if you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch but please note that Angie and I will be getting in some sea time October 17th to 29th we will be out in Japan on a cruise so may not have an e-mail access.

That is about it for now.
Steve
07710451648

From: WILLIAMS MICHAEL 08/09/2026

To: STEPHEN SCHOLLES

Subject: Re: Cenotaph 26

Many thanks, Steve! I will bring it up in the meeting!

On behalf of the committee, many thanks for your continued efforts for this event!

Best wishes,

Bungy

Thanks Bungy

I have asked Phil Bridge to act as point of contact while I am away in October, but I need to clear that with the RBL.

I do not envisage any problems as I should still be in e mail contact, but just in case.

Be prepared!! Once a boy scout.....

Regards

Steve

The Chairman stated that he had placed two dits on the Forum regarding the event. Shep, PB and Eddie are coming to Uxbridge on the Saturday prior and staying local. Slinger has stated he will gladly host the GA on the Sunday afternoon on returning from the parade if the numbers warrant it.

The Chairman will place another notification on the Forum in an effort to garner more support given Slinger's kind offer.

- 11. Grand Draw Update** – GB – The raffle ticket books arrived this morning. I will be forwarding them to Nick for inserting into the Magazine once Ken informs me of the numbers required dependent on membership. I keep a number back for members who require further books right up to the Reunion weekend, after which Carol and I will take the remainder to Reunion and, hopefully, sell them all there.

We ran out of books at the last Reunion, but Nick will bring any which may be left over from the Magazine distribution and Ken will bring any from the Magazine returns he receives.

As agreed at the last meeting, the raffle prize monies will remain at £4,000.

12. AOB –

- a) Feedback from Steve Francis's input at last meeting – BW – I had only one request for the full transcript of Steve's questions to the committee and their responses. It must be remembered that the condensed minutes will not yet be with the Magazine readership so those who do not visit the Forum will still be uninformed regarding this particular item.
- b) Letter from a Canadian Member – BW – A letter was received requesting help in entering the UK to attend the 2027 Reunion. Unfortunately, the circumstance in which this member finds himself are beyond the Association's powers to resolve. This is a matter which can only be dealt with by the Home Office. BW will respond to the member.
- c) Elections – BW – The committee were informed that Florrie Ford has been proposed and seconded for the position of Secretary. As two members are now vying for that position, a voting form bearing both candidates names has been created and forwarded for inclusion in the Magazine.
- d) Almoner – ES – With the recruitment of Mick Ryan, the position of Almoner is now resolved. Bungy will organise the handover of 'Almoner Stores' between Mick and John Allison.

We would like to thank John for his efforts during his tenure and wish him better health in the future.

13. DONM & Venue: Thursday, 14th January 2027 @ 1100.

Meeting closed 1342.