



HMS GANGES ASSOCIATION

Minutes of HMSGA Committee Meeting
RNA Uxbridge, London. UB10 9PG
11:30, 23rd June 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, Steve Francis, Dave Parry and Glen Jack (NSB).

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 – All actions of the previous meeting were completed before the AGM. No action required.
4. **Chairman's Opening Remarks** – ES – Welcome to the meeting and I'd like to give personal thanks to our observers for your attendance.

Yet again, another successful Reunion but I'll be talking more about that later at item 9.

It has been a busy first six months of 2026: Recently 180 of us plus families gathered at Shotley Marina for a remembrance service to mark 50 years since Ganges closed. We had to downgrade it from our intended Mast Dedication service for reasons stated at the AGM. However, our President did speak with the site developers who have stated a future service is not out of the question, but no date can be identified at this time. Some of us managed to peep through the main gates and, it has to be said, there is no way we could hold our service under the mast given the condition of the parade ground. But a BZ goes to Colin Chapman and the Museum team who tried earnestly to make that happen.

A BZ also goes to Glen Jack for his efforts at Shotley alongside the Shotley Div. Standard Bearer, John Youngman. It was a bad start that morning, what with the Bish losing his notes over the seawall and thanks go to Keith Bottle of Solent Div. for saving the day and the Bish's sermon from the deep!

As I was racing to the end of my opening address, I got overexcited and attributed the poem 'If' to Rhubarb Kipling!

We almost lost our young female bugler from Holbrook School as she began to wilt at one point. However, she recovered to do a fantastic job for us. I have written to Steve Dixon, the Headmaster, praising the young girl's efforts.

So, a good day and weekend for which our thanks go to Colin Chapman, Phil Bridge, Bill Wills and the volunteers from the Museum, of which I think I counted fifteen. They set out the chairs, organised the food etc., and did a fantastic job.

Sadly, a lot of our number have Crossed the Bar – I, along with the rest of the committee, get regular e-mails from the MemSec. In his absence, PB has sent out two already this week, so we are losing a lot who've Crossed the Bar and I'd like to mention two specifically who have been outstanding members and from whom the Ganges spirit shone brightly.

Basil Downing-Waite – I know we made a presentation to him last year along with visiting the Southwest Div. and making a tribute to Basil, but he was, to me, Mr. Ganges. On the rainy day of his funeral, there were 300-plus inside a massive church, along with at least fifteen Standards. He got the

send-off he thoroughly deserved, and his daughter presented an outstanding eulogy. I was invited to read 'If' but I did not mention the author's name!

And Spud Tait who resided in the Isle of Man. Another BZ for Jacko for managing to get yourself out there alongside a couple or three other Ganges members. These are not easy journeys, but our members deserve our recognition.

Moving on quickly, I was chatting with Nina (NYTD) yesterday, but I will save what I have to say about both this year's and last year's reunions until item 9 on the agenda.

Finally, special thanks to George and Carol Barnham for another successful raffle and to Annette Bushnell and Carol for your readings of the King's letters, we got a lot of good feedback for those.

5. **Secretary's Report** – BW – I have sent off for the Standard Bearers bars and PB will deal with the invoice when it arrives, and I will distribute them once they arrive at my home.

Going through all the paperwork which I took away from the AGM, my recourse was to check all the voting slips, and I found them to be errant in that there was only one vote against those seeking to fill the positions. I have no idea where the scrutineers found seven votes against one of the candidates, they simply weren't there within the forms when I checked them post-AGM.

I also received, on returning home, two late voting slips which arrived from overseas. I have submitted a report on this within my 'Secretary's Notepad' piece to the Magazine and apologised to those from abroad. There was no way overseas members could respond in a timely manner given the state of surface mail abroad. I will endeavour to include further such voting slips at least two magazine issues prior to future AGMs.

6. **Treasurer's Report** – PB submitted the following report:

Community Account (Working)	£3,205.59
Tracker Account (Savings)	£60,000.00
Fixed Assets (IT Equipment)	£655.04
Petty Cash Box	£00.00

Giving the Associations total assets of £63,860.63

All figures correct as of 22 June 2026

Our finances continue to be buoyant, but you will notice that figures are reducing due a reduction in subscriptions/donations and activity costs in running our fine Association.

The Petty Cash held £25 which we never use so it has been transferred to the Community account.

You will notice that since my report at AGM our profit over loss is currently showing a loss of £6,849.65, this is only to be expected what with current Association activities, for example the 50th anniversary celebrations at the Museum, our share of costs came to £2,879.48, that being 50% of the total.

Our Grand Draw 2026 incurred a loss of £174.60, no big deal and I have recommended to the committee that the prize money for our 2027 Grand Draw to remain at £4,000.00.

Steve Francis asked about prospective costs for any future Mast Dedication event to which PB stated the presence of a RM band and their transport would be around £10k, catering would be far in excess of what was paid for the recent Shotley event. A conservative estimate would be around £25k in costs to the Association. There is the potential for the event not to take place given the current suspension of the development of the site.

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

Active Members	- 1083
Life Members	- 242
Associate Members	- 57
Lapsed	- 492 (345 Life Members)

TOTAL - 1874

Statistics - 18 February 2026 – 1 June 2026

Crossed the Bar – 23

New Members – 6

I sincerely hope you have been enjoying this very warm weather, here in the Pompey area it's been extremely hot and we've still got the summer to look forward to. Please take care and observe all good advice.

I received some fantastic comments about our successful Reunion 2026 and plans are being pursued towards Reunion 2027.

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.

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

Please stay safe and take care.

PB said in response to KB's report if you look at the number of CTB compared to new members, we will show a decrease in our finances. BW said this is an inevitability of the Association, it will always be on a downward spiral.

ES said we're not the only one; I've just received an e-mail from the Conference of Naval Associations who are meeting in September, and SS will attend in my stead, and I think this will be one of the big items on their agenda. Hopefully, SS will bring us a report back regarding the status of other associations. Even the Field Gun Association are feeling the pinch and are attending a tri-command event in July rather than having individual functions as they're not getting the numbers. We've been asked in the GIs Association do we wish to combine with others for our meetings. As PB says, I think we have to recognise we are a dying breed.

8. Reunion Organiser, Update – ES – It was sad news when I got the call from Tony Willders, to say he was standing down and around twenty minutes later, we all received the e-mail confirming his resignation. I did thank Tony for the great job he's done for the last ten or so years in post having taken over from Shep Woolley.

I spoke with Nina (NYTD) last night who pointed me to an e-mail which I don't think anybody else has seen:

It was lovely to see everyone again for the HMS Ganges Reunion and so pleased everything went so well, I have already received some lovely emails from members saying how much they enjoyed the weekend and to put their name down for 2027!

The hotel are happy to extend the 25% bar promotion for 2027 so that's great news, Shipston Brass Band have also confirmed for 2027 and they will make sure they have learnt "Nellie the Elephant" for 2027, we are just waiting now for the last piece of the puzzle to confirm which is the entertainment for Saturday and Sunday and I can then get the booking information to you.

Something for you to have a think about, I know that HMS Ganges have always had a set 3 night price to attend the reunion, but it is possible for members for 2027 to have the option just to attend the 2 nights if they would like to do so, with some members now having to return to work on the

Monday or having to get home to help with childcare with grandkids etc. I thought it might be an option to consider; I have detailed the prices below:

4* Crowne Plaza - Stratford Upon Avon

Friday 16th - Monday 19th April 2027

Price Person:

3 Nights - £359 (2 adults sharing a twin or double room)

3 Nights £434 (1 adult double room for single occupancy)

4* Crowne Plaza - Stratford Upon Avon

Friday 16th - Sunday 18th April 2027

Price Person:

2 Nights - £279 (2 adults sharing a twin or double room)

2 Nights £329 (1 adult double room for single occupancy)

As always please let me know if you require any further information

Kind regards

Nina

Essentially prices have increased by £10 which, given the current financial climate, is only to be expected.

My thoughts are Friday night is the get-together, a meet & greet for the members and the committee will meet for 45 minutes to discuss any final AGM arrangements. Saturday morning is for the AGM which we are constitutionally bound to hold and the evening is for the Gala Dinner.

These aspects of the weekend are virtually self-generated so, I ask you all, do we need a Reunion Coordinator?

After some discussion, it was decided the Chairman would be the conduit regarding Reunion queries and no members are to call Nina in isolation, their queries would be fielded by ES on their behalf.

The Chairman then asked about the provision of two- and three-night options?

The committee fully supported the provision of this choice.

Timings of Saturday evening were discussed, and it was agreed to bring the Certificates Presentation forward by 30 minutes as it had an impact on last year's Gala Dinner including speeches, the Grand Draw and band performance timings.

I've already had eighty-five e-mails of intention to attend the 2027 Reunion.

That's all I've got to say on Reunion except to, once again, thank Tony Willders for the sterling work he's done over the years and, in particular, how he resurrected the Reunion after the Covid period.

- 9. Awards & Rewards Coordinator – SS** - Over recent weeks Florrie has kindly assisted me in arranging further certificates, but I have now had a conversation with CVN Print and I will now be liaising directly with them for all future certificates and any other documents that we require. I'd like to thank Florrie for the assistance he's given me over this period.

I now have 85th Anniversary certificates for our Centenarian Ganges Boys as there are a couple of those and, the way things are going, there may well be a few more.

Since the AGM I have produced 7 certificates, soon to be 8 as Bungy handed me one from Canada. 2 of these have been for the HMS Ganges Victoria Division in Australia.

All certificates that I send will have proof of postage and I am asking the recipient to confirm receipt via email or text/WhatsApp. I'm also letting members know I have received their request form and when I have posted it, which is working well.

Hopefully you will all have seen the Awards & Rewards information I put on the forum in May, I've only had 41 views and no nominations to date. I appreciate this will be a slow burner, but hopefully once it is seen by more members in the forthcoming summer magazine, we will start to see members being nominated.

Advance notice - Deadline for 2027 Reunion certificates for presentation will be Monday 1st March 27.

The pull up banner which failed at Reunion cannot be repaired, but I have sourced a company to purchase a new one.

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

Steve has reported the RBL have given him 40 places for the Cenotaph Parade. Currently he has 24 names attending and is hoping to swell those numbers. *[Post meeting note – in his July update, Steve reported the loss of one name but there are still places to be filled. If you wish to attend, please contact Steve as soon as possible]*

Steve has been working really hard to drive up the number of Ganges attendees and he deserves all our thanks for his efforts.

My last e-mail conversation with Steve went as follows:

On 11/06/2026 12:13 BST STEPHEN SCHOLES:

Good morning, all

I have now received our ticket allocation for Cenotaph 26. The RBL have allocated us 40 places. Not the 50 I originally requested but 40 is good (if we can fill that number!).

For those who will be attending for the first time, the process now is that I submit all our names and e mail addresses via the portal to the RBL Cenotaph team. Once they have collated our names they (RBL) will e mail you all individually with a link to the portal where you can fill out your details and submit. Please note that all fields must be completed.

It is pretty straight forward but don't hesitate to get in touch if there are any issues.

Could I ask you all to confirm receipt of this e mail as these are the addresses I will be submitting to the RBL. The closing date for registrations is September 30th.

Our numbers still stand at 26 so we have 14 vacancies which I hope we will fill. If you are aware of any Ganges boys who would be interested in taking part, let me know.

*Regards
Steve*

*From: michaelc.williams@ntlworld.com
Sent: Thursday, June 11th 2026, 13:03*

Subject: Re: Cenotaph 26 ticket allocation

*Great work, Steve, **BZ**, shipmate! At least you've managed to secure 40 places - many more than we've been allocated in past years! I hope you get the numbers!*

*Best wishes,
Bungy*

On 11/06/2026 13:11 BST STEPHEN SCHOLLES:

Thanks Bungy

To be honest, I fully expected to be knocked back as in the past, we've fielded less numbers than applied for.

I was a little disappointed that we didn't have much of an uptake after the Reunion and AGM, also that the Forum hasn't produced much interest. I've had a couple of enquiries via the FB Ganges page. I'll be pushing out notices via the usual avenues, so fingers crossed.

If you could include a short item at the Committee meeting, also my apologies for not attending.

*Best wishes
Steve*

PB also called for any attendees who could to support RNA Uxbridge over the weekend. The Branch and Club have done much to support the Association going back many years, but the reciprocation has dwindled in these post Covid years. Let's see some GA members come back here this year.

The Chairman asked, for those members who can, to attend RNA Uxbridge over the Remembrance weekend. This would bring a fitting close to this special year for the GA, especially after the Reunion/Gala Dinner and the Shotley Remembrance service. He stated that the post-Cenotaph event in the Club would be promulgated to the membership in his July update on the Forum.

- 11. Grand Draw Update** – GB – I have the new licence for next year's raffle, and I have noted that 2025 and 2026 are the only years we've made a loss. I've cut down the number of books having previously had 1700 books which, if all were sold, would garner £17,000. Unfortunately, we're not selling them all.

I receive them from the printer and 2026 cost £315 inclusive of postage. I then contact MemSec who informs me of the magazine numbers and send the requisite number of books accordingly and keep the outstanding books to cover extra book requests. We also take the residue to the Reunion for further promotion and sales. At the last Reunion, we sold all those tickets we'd brought making £1200 in the process which is 120 books.

Essentially, we have to sell 450 books to break even, and we only sold 300+ books. I place in the magazine the various methods of payment – Bank transfer, Postal Orders, cheques or cash. Those using bank transfer will not receive their tickets until the Treasurer has confirmed payment and had to ditch two books after Reunion as payment wasn't forthcoming. Badly written cheques are another concern and despite me advising of the correct format and sending the miscreant an SAE, the correctly completed cheque wasn't received.

We made a loss of £174.60p which I feel awful about but all I can do is tell them, if you don't buy the books, you can't win it! And that's where we are.

Steve Francis asked if more than one book could be sent out with the magazine. He was informed by Carol that two books used to go out with every magazine but seldom were two sets of counterfoils returned. Phil also stated that errant cheques are no longer returned to him and he gets no notification of such.

George stated that he records all cheques received – name, number, amount etc – and if, after forwarding to Phil, there has been a problem, Phil can consult George and attempt to get the situation rectified with the person submitting the cheque.

It's all evidence of the change of attitude in today's banking practices which are causing us, and other organisations, problems getting resolution.

12. AOB –

- a) **Multiple Subject Enquiries** - Steve Francis (Solent Div.) - (*Secretary's note – The content of this part of the meeting has been heavily précised as its full content would more than double the usual size of the minutes given there were many responses, conversations and discussions over the duration of this item. If they wish, Members may request the full transcript from the Secretary (michaelc.williams@ntlworld.com)*).

Magazine – Format & Costs –

Q - Could the Magazine be delivered electronically thereby cutting the cost of postage? I know of two other Associations who deliver their periodicals by portable document format (PDF).

A – Many of our members don't have the ability to receive the magazine via e-mail and many, as far as we're aware, much prefer the hard copy we currently deliver. Also, it allows us to deliver other items such as Grand Draw tickets and election paperwork thereby reducing postal charges overall.

(*Action – The Secretary will canvas the Membership via the magazine on their preferred format.*)

Reunion Venue –

Q - Nottingham was the favoured venue for Reunion '27 as per the committee meeting minutes (Feb '26), but the venue yet again is Stratford. Car parking costs were, apparently, part of the reason Nottingham was discounted. No one was asked in the Solent Division.

[*Sec Note – At no point was the word 'favoured' used in the Reunion Rep. report for Nottingham during the February Committee meeting or the AGM. The report stated 'our sights were set on Nottingham' but, post-meeting, that venue was discounted.*]

Was there any canvassing anywhere, or was it a committee only decision?

A - It was a committee-only decision in accordance with the constitution. Exclusivity is a major factor as well as sufficient accommodation to meet the various needs of the members – accessibility etc. Dining facilities are also a consideration given the number of attendees, not all venues can take our numbers in one sitting and that is a must when it comes to the Gala Dinner.

Q – Are we getting value for money from Stratford when it comes to the bar? It seems the 25% discount cost us more than the set price we'd arranged the previous year – and the 'splashes' were £2.50. Food was also a problem on the Sunday evening meal with some courses running out and 'drinks chits' were issued by way of an apology.

A – The Chairman has been questioned regarding Stratford being the venue again, but that has really been the only subject. Nobody has mentioned the cost of drinks, shortage of courses or the

issuing of 'drinks chits'. We have also secured different packages for the 2027 Reunion which consists of a choice of 2-night or 3-night stays. The price for the latter has increased by only £10pp and that is the first such increase.

We have asked NYTD to explore hotels outside of Stratford and Nina will do her very best to meet our needs. Tony Willders researched some venues for 2027 but there were none available which could meet our requirements – 250 people, exclusivity, AGM/Church arrangements, entertainment, Gala Dinner and other meal provision – unfortunately, they were just not around.

Q – Constitution -

Reunion Venue - the Committee shall decide upon the venue for each Reunion after **taking into account the views of the membership generally, particularly those regularly attending Reunion**. Notice will be promulgated in the edition of the Gazette and the Association website immediately following a decision being made as to date and venue.

A – None of the problems and complaints you've identified over the reunion weekend were represented as complaints to any committee member to our knowledge. It's no good people getting together and dripping unless they inform us. It's what we say about Facebook, it is not monitored, it is not an official channel of the Association – the Forum is! An approach to any of the committee members either by e-mail or written letter are the only methods by which we can be made aware of problems.

The Chairman thanked Steve for his detailed comments and his contribution to the meeting.

- a) Elections – BW – We only have one committee position up for election next year and that is mine, the Secretary. I am happy to stand again but it must be put to the membership. I'm sure we'll be inundated with other volunteers.
- b) Reunion Attendance – BW – I had a member phone me up from Scotland, Andy McMahon, who is 90 years old – SS just did his 75th certificate for him – and he said, "I really want to come to Reunion, but I can't travel on my own." So, I want to find a way of connecting people within the membership who can help bring a Ganges lad down to Reunion. I will place a piece in the magazine appealing for such help with travel, not just for Andy M, but for all those who may need a lift due to their mobility restrictions.

13. DONM & Venue: Tuesday 22nd Sept 26

Meeting closed 1426.