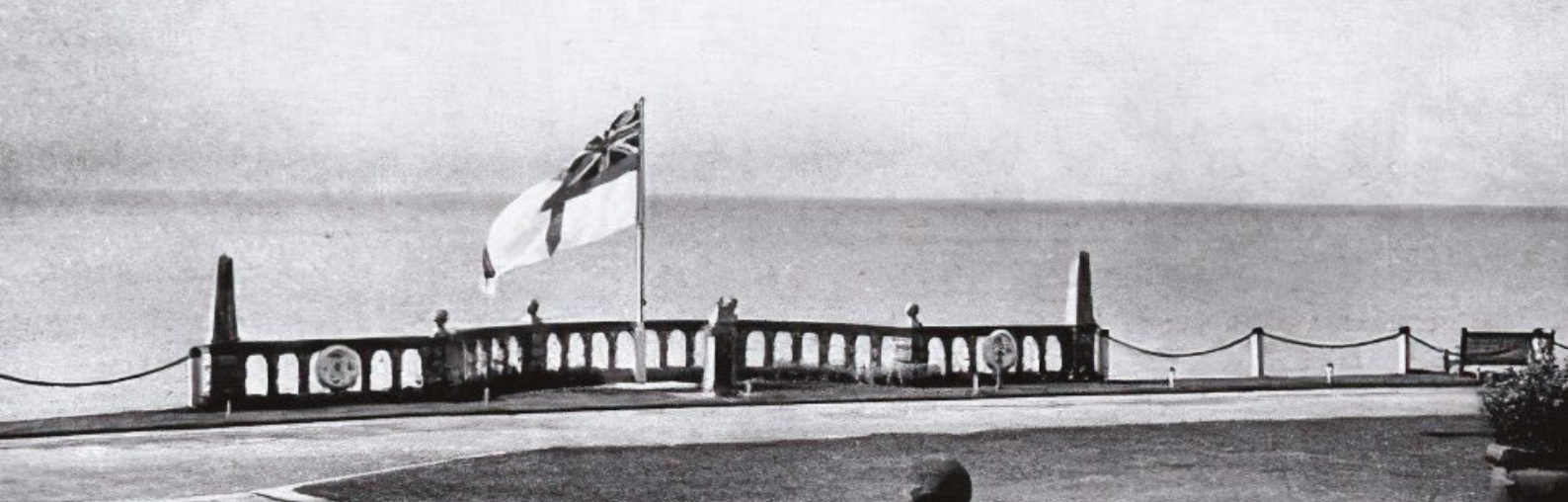


# Old Roedeanians' Association



## The Ensigns



# Jutland Ensigns

In 1914 the whole School was granted a special holiday to celebrate distinctions gained at Cambridge Colleges - Girton and Newnham - by two ORs, Margaret Cole (*Postgate, No.3, 1907-11*) and Joyce Woodward (*Pybus, No.3, 1905-09*).

With much excitement, the girls visited the fleet of eight battleships which were anchored off the West Pier at Brighton.

The trip was arranged by Captain Percy Royds. His sister was Jessica Royds (*SS 1891-92*) and her friend Florence Yarrow (*SS, 1890-92*) was his wife. The elder of his two daughters, Dorothy Nichol (*Royds, No,3 1914-18*) was at the school at the time.

Each of the four Houses presented one of ships (HMS Collingwood, Hercules, Bellona and Neptune) with a white ensign, which were later flown at the Battle of Jutland – generally acknowledged as the last great naval sea battle.

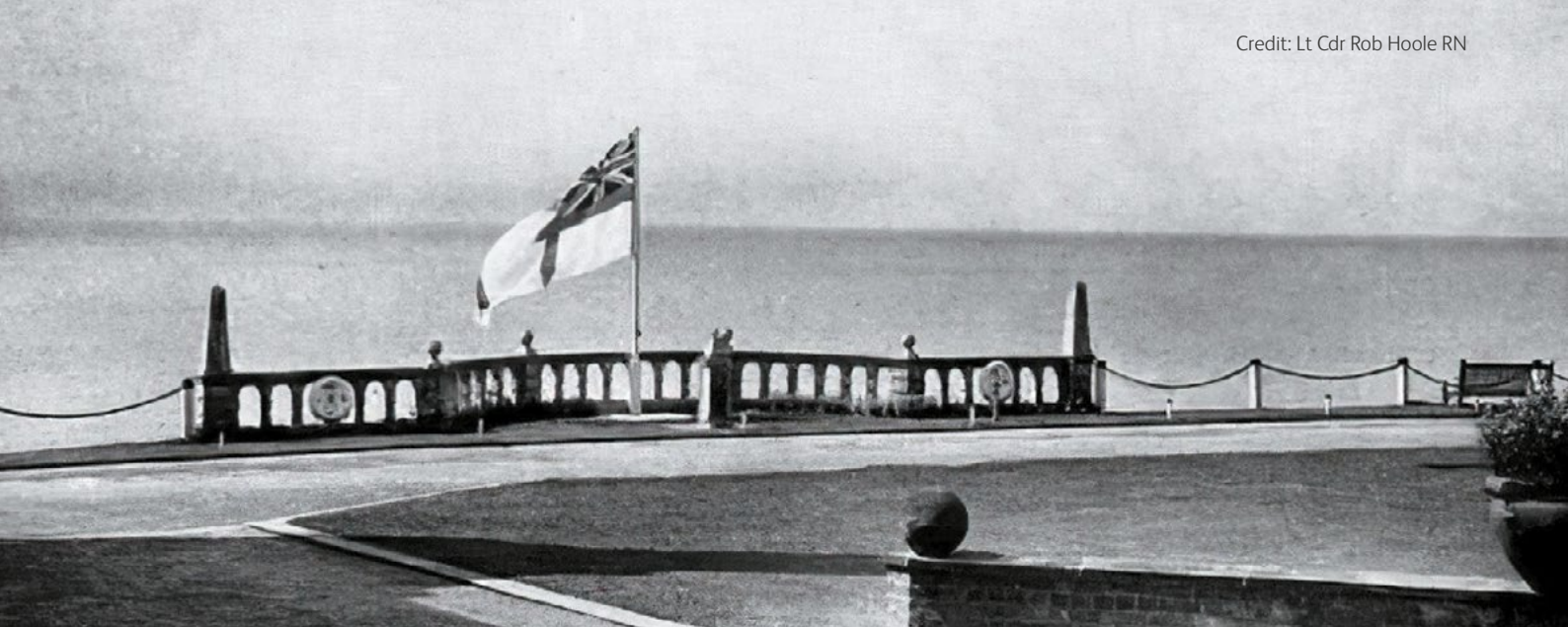
Captain Royds was in command of HMS Bellona at the time, but later assigned to HMS Canterbury and took the “Roedean” ensign with him.

- No. 1 HMS Collingwood**
- No. 2 HMS Hercules**
- No. 3 HMS Canterbury**
- No. 4 HMS Neptune**



In 1919, when the ships were decommissioned, the ensigns were returned and hung in the Chapel for nearly 70 years before being taken down in 1989 due to age and fragility. For the last 30+ years the Jutland Ensigns have been stored in a glass fronted cabinet, together with a further ensign from HMS Vernon which was flown at the school from the quadrangle on D-Day 1944 (when HMS Vernon was stationed at the school).





## HMS Vernon Ensigns

There are two Ensigns from HMS Vernon at the School.

The School has a long association with **HMS Vernon** having been used as their training establishment for the Mining and Torpedo School during the World War 2.

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, D-Day, the flagstaff flew a No.1 White Ensign in honour of the men about to land on the Normandy beaches. Those who were there on that day remember seeing wave after wave of ships going down the Channel on their way to France.

Captain Norman Grace, who took over command of HMS Vernon in September 1944, presented the Ensign flown from the flagpole on the “quarterdeck” during HMS Vernon’s time at Roedean to the Headmistress in a service on 13th July 1947 to consecrate the laying up of the ensign which was then hung in the School’s chapel in a place of honour.

The HMS Vernon ensign is shown in the photo flying from the flagstaff on the terrace in front of the quadrangle (known as the quarterdeck).

This WW2 ensign is in need of repair so that it can be re-hung along side the ensign donated by HMS Vernon’s Commanding Officer in 1985 when the school celebrated its centenary.

Captain J.D.W Husband, OBE, RN, Commanding Officer of HMS Vernon presented the second White Ensign in 1985, Roedean’s Centenary Year, “for safekeeping in the School Chapel. It is presented as a memorial to those of the Royal Navy who died in War, and in recognition of the long and treasured liaison there has been between HMS Vernon and Roedean School.”



The plaque under the Ensign reads:  
***This Ensign was presented to  
Roedean School  
on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1985  
by the Captain, Officers and Men  
of HMS Vernon  
on paying-off  
In memory of their long association  
with the school***

HMS Vernon ceased to be an independent command  
on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1986.

## Current Condition

The ensigns feature a union jack in the canton with the red St George cross dividing the four quadrants. The remaining three quadrants are white. They are constructed in red, white and blue wool weave fabric. Each is attached to wooden poles via ropes that pass through the heading or pole sleeve. Metal hooks are attached to the rope at either end.

All the ensigns are creased and distorted from storage. They are very soiled with ingrained dirt and dust. The original natural coloured wool fabric is discoloured. The wool fabric feels stiff and inflexible suggesting fibres are dry and impregnated with salt deposits from sea air and sea water. Hooks and eyelets are corroded and the wooden poles are encrusted with dirt.

In many places there are scattered small holes, which leave the fabric weak and vulnerable to tearing.

The ensign from HMS Canterbury is particularly interesting. It is noticeably more crudely made than the others in the collection, with the seams being distorted and pulled during manufacture. A seam along the ensign width at the fly end suggests either an early repair to replace the original fly end, perhaps damaged, or as an extension to the ensign's length. It is noticeable that the ensign is approximately 25 cm longer in length than the other ensigns of this size in the collection.

There is one large repair patch on the lower hoist quadrant (the quarter below the Union Jack). The repair consists of a large patch in wool fabric applied to one side and machine stitched around the edges. The structural damage is stitched by hand to the patch. The patch is labelled '**May 31<sup>st</sup> 1916**' (the first day of the Battle of Jutland) directly onto the patch in handwritten black ink.



Current condition of HMS Canterbury (No.3)

## Proposed restoration/conservation treatment

We are advised that it would be feasible to conserve and repair to a level where the ensigns could be re-hung in their original positions in the chapel. This would allow them once again to be valued by old and current Roedeanians in the context of their and the school's history.

However, these are battle worn artefacts that do not need to look like new!

- Surface clean using controlled vacuum suction
- Apply sublimating agent to protect inked writing (HMS Canterbury)
- Wet clean to remove ingrained soil and degradation products
- Custom dye materials for stitched support to damaged areas
- Support ensign on pieces of dyed conservation net where appropriate
- Repair staffs and make safe for rehung.



Current condition of HMS Collingwood (No.1)

# Admiral Sir Percy Molyneux Rawson Royds, CB, CMG, ADC (1874–1955)

Captain Percy Royds was later to become Admiral Sir Percy Royds, being knighted for political and public service. He was elected MP for Kingston upon Thames in 1937.

His obituary in the Roedean magazine of 1955 reads:

Roedean mourns the loss of a true and honoured friend whose connection with the school was long and close.

His sister was Jessica Royds (SS 1891-92) and her friend Florence Yarrow (SS, 1890-92) later became his wife. Two of their daughters, Dorothy (No.3 1914-18) and Florence (No.3, 1925-29), granddaughters, June Wetherell (Moir, No.3, 1936 41) and Joy Walker (Moir, No.3, 1939-1945) were also at the school.

It was through his instrumentality that the invitation was given to the entire school to visit the 1<sup>st</sup> Battle Squadron when it was anchored off Brighton before the outbreak of the First World War. The flags in the chapel are a lasting reminder of that day.

His jovial presence on school occasions like The Fathers' Cricket Match will be long remembered. He was a member of the School Council from 1931-45. Admiral Royds paid his last tribute to the school by his presence, in spite of ill health, at the Memorial Service for Dame Emmeline Tanner in London on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1955.



Credit:  
National Portrait Gallery

## Recollections

Reminiscences of Old Roedeanians 1911-18.  
Roedean School Magazine, June 1935:

*“Around your Chapel hang the battered ensigns of the Grand Fleet of our day. We remember the thrill with which we packed off those ensigns. We remember the pride, almost personal, with which we followed them through Jutland and the Falkland (sic) Islands. And we remember the parcels of knitted goods (duly overhauled by our house-mistresses) which we sent to the ships. Some of us even remember that magical day in June 1914, when the school visited the Grand Fleet. I wonder if other Roedean people turn back in thought to that day when they try to remember what it was like before the war. Such June sunshine and such fun - how the brass fittings on the big guns shone - how ornamental and how useless the torpedoes looked. What a jolly band there was (‘ I say, you might just show me that new thing, the two-step ’) and what amazing strawberry ices we ate . . . And back at school we were half-way through the Excelsior semi-finals.”*

Desiree Edwards-Rees (No.1, 1913-18)

# References

- *Roedean School Magazine 1914*
- *Roedean School Magazine June 1935*
- *Roedean School Magazine 1955*
- *Royal Navy Research Archive*
- *Wikipedia Percy Royds*
- *Roedean School Archive, archivist Jackie Sullivan*
- *Roedean School by L. Cope Cornford and F.R. Yerbury, (1928)*
- *The History of Roedean School by Dorothy de Zouche (1955)*
- <http://www.thepostmagazine.co.uk/brightonhistory/brighton-summer-1914>



# Do you want or need to know more?



More information on each of the projects can be obtained by:

- Downloading detailed project brochures from <https://community.roedean.co.uk/resources>
- Emailing [heritage@oldroedeanians.co.uk](mailto:heritage@oldroedeanians.co.uk)
- Calling the Roedeanian Office on **01273 667398**

## How to donate

- Online via JustGiving <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ora-heritage-projects>
- Online via Roedean Community Network <https://community.roedean.co.uk/supportus>
- By Cheque or Credit Card, completing the enclosed form.

Donations go directly to the School so can also be Gift-Aided if you are a UK tax payer.

If you are based in the USA, you are able to make a tax efficient donation through the British School and Universities Foundation (BSUF) by going to <https://www.bsuf.org/donate>.

Do let us know if you want to support a specific project.

**All donations will be ringfenced for the ORA Heritage Projects.**

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progress of the projects**



**ORA Facebook Group:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/roedeanians/>



**ORA LinkedIn Group:** <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3665480/>



**ORA Instagram:** [https://www.instagram.com/old\\_roedeanians/](https://www.instagram.com/old_roedeanians/)

**Roedean Community Network:** <https://community.roedean.co.uk/news/ora-news>

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### **By newsletters and publications**

We will also be including updates in the Roedeanian Society Newsletter, The Roedeanian, as well as in the Old Roedeanians' Magazine.

**Thank you so much for your support!**

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