

Geoffrey Nigel Gudgion

4 November 1952 in Barnet – 3 August 2025 at home in Beaconsfield

Geoff Gudgion was one of a kind. A fine, upstanding, creative, caring Englishman, he was a Royal Naval officer, a businessman, a writer, an enthusiastic amateur equestrian, singer and pianist. His death from kidney, liver and lung cancer, only three months after diagnosis, was an unbearable loss to his family and many friends.

Born in Barnet in 1952, Geoff's parents held to very Victorian attitudes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he grew up with his nose in a book – books that often featured knights in armour, riding brave steeds into battle, themes that he would revisit in his writing many years later.

In 1969 Geoff embarked on his naval career at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. He served on board a number of vessels, including Norwegian patrol boats. Very much an action man, he has said that "driving torpedo boats around North Cape during the Cold War was fun"ⁱ.



Geoff, sponsored by the Royal Navy, was awarded a place in 1972 at St Catharine's College, Cambridge University, to read Geography. He won a half blue for rifle shooting – and met the love of his life, Deborah A Watterson. His time at Cambridge University was happy and fulfilled, academically and socially, and he made lifelong friends. He graduated MA, Geography, in 1975.

Geoff and Deborah were married in St Nicholas, Kenilworth on 16th Aug 1975. Baby James, and then Sophie soon followed, completing their family and bringing Geoff so much joy. He returned to the Royal Navy and served as the Supply & Secretariat Officer from 1975 to 1981ⁱⁱ and on aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal.ⁱⁱⁱ He found the downtime during long deployments rather dull; Geoff wrote "the Navy was not quite ready for me"^{iv} and Charles Style said in his eulogy "the Navy failed to make best use of Geoff's abundant talents". The downtime prompted him to make his first forays into writing fiction^v. This positive phase of his life was cut short by a near-fatal road accident when on shore leave in Trinidad. He spent three months in hospital with injuries which would for a lesser man have been life-changing – the surgeons fought to save his left arm when he refused to have it amputated, and for many weeks it was touch and go as to whether he would keep it. His left leg suffered too, and was shorter than his right by 3 inches, easily masked by the beautiful shoes he had specially made by Lobb's in St James's Street, London.

By 1990, his business career was in full swing, first with Nortel, a Canadian multinational telecommunications and data networking equipment manufacturer, as Director Global Accounts for seven years and then with Sensormatic Electronics for two years. He then became a consultant, mostly freelance and using his talent for consulting with top clients and helping them achieve their own objectives. His clients were substantial companies in the tech and comms sectors like Lucent BCS Messaging, Rhetorex, Quantiv, Mosaix, and Avaya which took him to 2005, all in the London and Thames Valley area. He went back full-time in 2006 as Managing Director, Europe, for the comms and telephony company ShoreTel in Marlow than as interim General Manager for fibre optic monitoring systems manufacturer Sensornet in Elstree to 2011.

His retirement, at age 60, was prompted by a spectacular row with the head of the business he was working for at the time – a tale he would share with great gusto, over a glass of wine. He was delighted that he now had no excuse not to write full-time, and he would ensconce himself in his writing cabin buried in his beautiful garden. "I spend much of my time crafting words in a shed, fifty

yards and five hundred years from the house”^{vi}. His garden also housed an arbour, which was his favourite place for enjoying a glass of wine or wee dram with friends and family, particularly enjoying shooting the breeze with son James on his visits home from Australia.

Geoff’s first book, [Saxon’s Bane](#), published in 2013, is a time-slip with a supernatural twist and its roots in the Dark Ages. His second novel, [Draca](#), crosses the boundaries between literary fiction, historical fiction, and ghost story, becoming an Amazon genre bestseller on its release. He called on his own experiences saying “The sea and the horse are passions which have been known to creep into my writing.”^{vii}

He worked intensely on a trilogy, set in convincingly realistic late-medieval France with, in his own words, “a kick-ass, cross-dressing medieval nun” as the heroine, Adalais. “A character had come into my mind as if she had always been there, waiting for her story to be told; a courageous young woman, raised as a pagan but incarcerated in a nunnery and forced to kneel to a foreign god”^{viii}. At the demand of his agent Shiel Land Ltd. and the publisher they had found (Second Sky, an imprint of Bookouture / Hachette, specialising in audio books), Geoff had to re-write all three from scratch with the fictional placenames and other-world characters to be sold in the up-and-coming genre “historical fantasy” and under a different moniker, G.N.Gudgion, to mask the gender of the writer. His intensive research into the history and meaning of runes provided Norse-mythology and language dimensions to the work. The trilogy acquired a name: *Rune Song*, with [Hammer of Fate](#), [Runes of Battle](#) and [Blood of Wolves](#) completing the set.

Geoff took to his new role as author like a duck to water. Charming, knowledgeable and infinitely generous, he supported other authors, new and established, and was Treasurer and a committee member of the Authors’ Club whose monthly lunches were at his National Liberal Club. He turned his hand to photography and social media to support the events they run. He was also a judge for their Best First Novel Award, reading and reporting on around 25 books during the judging period – an act that caused him to bemoan his reading speed, or lack thereof! His colleague there Laurel Lindström writes “At our James Bond dinner in 2023 to celebrate *Casino Royale*’s seventieth birthday, he channelled Bond to perfection. Immaculate in black tie, complete with white dress scarf – 007 personified – Geoff swanned about, Martini in hand, working the room and in command.”^{ix}



His love of horses was well-known. Initially taking up riding as a way to spend time with a young Sophie, he continued when she, inevitably, moved on to other interests. For Geoff, riding was an escape from physical and mental trauma as well as the general stresses and strains of life. He was an ardent cross-country jumper first on Actaeon^x then on Bally, his Irish hunter, first at Shardeloes near Amersham and then at Widmer Equestrian next to Hodgemoor Woods east of his home in Beaconsfield. He hacked round Hodgemoor, often sitting to the canter shouting yee-haws out of sheer joy. From 2010 he lodged Bally at Susie and Marcus’s stables and fields for a few years and rode often together. When Bally died in 2021 he bought a strong-charactered

thoroughbred mare called Ida who fast-became the ‘other’ woman in his life such was their mutual love. Although Ida had been brought on by Lana Craker at Waylands Equestrian as a jumper, Geoff took to dressage and competed at the Prelim level.

Geoff said “Horses possess a deep, wild empathy. They can understand us at a primal level, and unlock emotions that are buried within us. No horse has ever healed me in the way that Trooper heals Fergus, but horses have helped me keep my equilibrium. I can climb into the saddle tense, but the mental slate is wiped by the adrenalin-charged madness of a gallop, or the surge-and-soar of jumping^{xi}” and “I ride horses. I know enough about them to wonder how these usually-gentle, nervous beasts were trained to be instruments of war. What could persuade a prey animal – one that has evolved to run from danger – to hurl itself headlong into battle? When I was planning the *Rune Song* series, the warhorse was a gap in my knowledge that I had to research.^{xii}”



The Navy and the sea also influenced Geoff’s writing. He said in 2014 “Last year I went sailing with a friend, and we moored one night in a remote inlet where a Saxon church sat hunched on the shoreline and the bones of dead sailing ships poked through the mud as the tide went out. It was very atmospheric and became the setting for *Draca*”^{xiii} and “I used to sail every summer with an old friend. It only stopped being fun once, in a very strong tide off Alderney. A gale blew against the tide, forming a brutal sea state. It was a bit hairy until we found shelter. Not so much a ‘mystery’ but certainly an incident that became central to the plot of *Draca*. The waves, of course, grow higher with every telling.”^{xiv}

Geoff described himself as a “very bad pianist” but that did not seem to be the case when he confidently accompanied himself to songs from musicals such as *Les Misérables* as well as works by Cole Porter, Tom Lehrer (*The Vatican Rag*), and Flanders and Swann (*The Gasman Cometh*). He had a fine bass voice which he expressed regularly for over ten years in the choir of St Mary’s Church in old Beaconsfield. His Anglican faith took firm root in that environment and he was an active member of the church community and their house groups. He expressed his secular side and a delightful sense of humour with seven male friends in the Chiltern Chirpers singing barbershop songs and *a cappella* light music.

Geoffrey Gudgion was not a man to sit still and he took his roles in the community seriously, campaigning tirelessly against housing developments in green belt to the east of Beaconsfield and working for the Hodgemoor Riding Association raising funds to create and maintain all-weather trails for riders, cyclists and walkers. Geoffrey was a Non-Executive Director at the Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust 2008-2014. He found the meetings frustrating in the way management failed to live up to their responsibilities but he felt his work did make a positive difference. He donated a percentage of his royalties from his book *Draca* to Combat Stress, the veterans' mental health charity, whose President, General Sir Peter Wall, wrote a foreword for *Draca*. He became a guildsman with the Poulters and a Freeman of the City of London in 2021.



He leaves his wife Deborah, son James, daughter Sophie and four grandchildren.

Researched and written by Marcus Bicknell marcus@bicknell.com 3rd October 2025

With thanks to Geoff’s family and close friends for their input and correction,
and to writing friend Clare Christian clare166@gmail.com www.clarechristian.co.uk

End-notes

ⁱ <https://zealotscrip.co.uk/2023/07/28/featured-friday-geoffrey-gudgion/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/geoffgudgion>

ⁱⁱⁱ Graham Wiltshire message.

^{iv} <https://sarahpotterwrites.com/2014/05/17/interview-with-author-geoffrey-gudgion/>

^v https://play.google.com/store/info/name/Geoffrey_Gudgion?id=11v6tw477&pli=1 and <https://www.sheilland.com/geoffrey-gudgion>

^{vi} <https://jamreads.com/interviews/some-thoughts-with--gn-gudgion>

^{vii} <https://pdpabst.com/author-interviews/geoffrey-gudgion-author-of-saxons-bane/>

^{viii} <https://jamreads.com/interviews/some-thoughts-with--gn-gudgion>

^{ix} <https://www.authorsclub.co.uk/apologies-for-absence-remembering-geoff-gudgion/>

^x Message from James Wrigley Oct 2025: "Geoff insisted on 'buying' Actaeon from me. I was going to put Actaeon down because he had a nasty rearing habit and took out my knee whilst hunting with the Surrey Union. But Geoff was adamant he was going to have him. A real daredevil when it came to horses, I would say."

^{xi} <https://sarahpotterwrites.com/2014/05/17/interview-with-author-geoffrey-gudgion/>

^{xii} <https://geoffreygudgion.com/2024/06/warhorse/>

^{xiii} <https://sarahpotterwrites.com/2014/05/17/interview-with-author-geoffrey-gudgion/>

^{xiv} https://www.goodreads.com/author/6542406.Geoffrey_Gudgion/questions