

## **Obituary Jack Hedley**

Jack Snowdon Hawkins was born 28<sup>th</sup> October 1929 in London, England. His mother was Dorothy Withill who had grown up in poverty but later went on to make a fortune by founding Direct Mail an office services business. He never knew his father.

He was privately educated at The Emanuel School in Battersea, south London. After leaving he became a cadet at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, then spent eight years as a marine commando on active service in Malaya, India, the East Indies, Australia and Korea. He rose from cadet to lieutenant but was eventually invalided out after being shot twice in the leg. He then worked in his mother's business but after 18 months he was losing interest in his job. On walking past RADA's building on the way to the office one day he decided to audition for an acting course and was accepted. While there he played Dr Dolittle opposite Glenda Jackson's Eliza in Pygmalion at St Pancras town hall. After graduating in 1957 he went straight into the West End. He took his cousin Hedley Hawkins's forename as his own professional surname because of the film star Jack Hawkins.

His private school education and military background gave him a distinctive tone and delivery that suited many classic 'Brit' roles and he had a natural air of authority. He became a household name after starring in the successful BBC TV series The World of Tim Frazer which ran from 1960-61 over 18 episodes. He then went on to appear in many films and more TV series including a long spell in the Colditz TV series.

To all of us who regularly visit this website he will always be Alan Haldane (Leandros) the leading role in Michael J. Bird's TV series Who pays the Ferryman? He was perfectly cast and performed so well alongside Betty Arvaniti, Neil McCarthy, & Stefan Gryff.

On a personal note. I tried to track him down a few years ago and managed to get in touch with his sons James and Johnny. Jack was estranged from his sons and had been for many years and refused contact with them even when they tried to form a relationship with him. They were clearly very hurt by that and very bitter. They did give me his address in Battersea London where he was living with his third wife Alexandra Westendarp. I wrote him a nice letter as a fan and asked for any anecdotes or photos from Who pays the Ferryman? for this website. He never replied. I got the sense that he was intensely private and struggled with the concept of fatherhood. He requested that no funeral was to be held after his death.

He died 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021 aged 92 after a short illness believed to be a heart attack. May he rest in ever lasting peace. Goodbye Leandros.