NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2023

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Nec Quisquam Nisi Ajax

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hello to you all and welcome to the September 2023 Newsletter. I hope you have survived what has been, to say the least, a very wet Summer!!!!

Our reunion at Thornton Hall is fast approaching and as always it will include the AGM: can I ask that if you have any items for the agenda, please forward them to the Secretary. The agenda will be circulated approximately two weeks prior to the AGM.

The preparation for the reunion continues; the Mayor of Ajax and his wife Rose have confirmed their attendance and at the moment the number of attendees stands at 67, which is very heartening and shows that our Association is "alive and kicking". The visit to the Camell Laird Shipyard should prove to be a very interesting experience; the company are busy preparing for our visit.

As far as the catering for the Reunion, we could, if needed, provide a whole "Watch" with five of the attendees being part of the Galley crew who were serving in Ajax for the 1976 Canada visit. They are: Leading Cook Mike (Hinney, George, Freddy) Fox; Caterer Ian (Father Famines Assistant) Darbyshire (trained Cook); Cook Desmond (Hector, Paddy) Neill; Cook Terry (Field Gun) Webster; and myself, Nige (Jan) Masters. Unfortunately, our Chief Caterer Alf (Father Famine) Larkin, cannot attend - we could do with Alf to keep us in order!

Fantastic news has been reported from Suffolk. For all those ex-Ganges boys amongst our membership, the mast has been restored and is back in its original position. The 142ft mast has new rigging, but the restoration company have used as many of the original parts as possible; so somewhere on the mast there will be traces of my sweat, tears and other bodily fluids I discharged when we had to climb it one cold December morning back in 1971.

Here is a photo of the mast back to its former glory. The construction company who bought the land that was formerly



HMS Ganges had to have the mast restored as a condition of purchase. It appears that this has been done to an excellent standard. I intend to visit the site in the near future.

In October of last year, I retired and I was given a bottle of Deptford Dockyard Reserve Pussers Rum by one of my colleagues. At nearly 55% proof it is proving quite a challenge!

It set me thinking, why Deptford? Little did l know!

Deptford, in Tudor times, was home to one of the most important Royal Navy Dockyards in the country. This was the place where Sir Walter Raleigh laid his cloak down for Elizabeth 1st and where Francis Drake was knighted.

Founded by Henry V111 in 1513 the dockyard was the most significant Royal Dockyard of the Tudor period and remained one of the principal naval yards for three hundred years.



Important new technological and organisational developments were trialled here and Deptford came to be associated with the great mariners of the time, including Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh. The yard expanded rapidly throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, encompassing a large area and serving for a time as the headquarters of Naval Administration and the associated Victualling Yard became the Victualling Board's main depot. Tsar Peter the Great visited the yard, officially incognito, in 1698 to learn shipbuilding techniques. Reaching its zenith in the eighteenth century, it built and refitted exploration ships used by Cook, Vancouver, Bligh and also warships which fought under Nelson.

The dockyard declined in importance after the Napoleonic Wars. Its location upriver on the Thames made access difficult and the shallow, narrow river hampered navigation of the large new warships. The dockyard was largely inactive after 1830 and though shipbuilding briefly returned in the 1840's, the navy closed the yard in 1869. The Victualling Yard that had been established in the 1740s continued in use until the 1960s, while the land used by the dockyard was sold. The area now being known as Convoy Wharf.

The **VERY** interesting part of this is that the Navy blended prodigious amounts of rum within the compound. The yard's warehouse grew to accommodate between 30 to 32 storage vats in specially constructed buildings with a total capacity estimated to be 250 thousand gallons of rum! This rum became known as "The Pussers Rum"(a corruption of the word Purser).The good news is that I shall be bringing the bottle of "Deptford Dockyard Reserve" with me to the reunion : all those who would like "Harry Sippers" please let me know so we can form an orderly queue outside my room; whether it will be so orderly when you leave remains to seen!!

It just remains for me to say enjoy the rest of the summer; enjoy the time with your loved ones and I look forward to seeing all attendees at the Reunion.

Nigel Masters Chairman

[Not mentioned but please see news on Jan Masters in Membership Secretary's report]

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY UPDATE

I am pleased once again to report, with one or two exceptions, that there are no outstanding Subscriptions, so thanks everybody - this does make life so much easier.

Can you also please remember to update me with any changes in your circumstances such as address, phone numbers and in particular, email addresses **AND** make sure your next of kin have us listed as someone to contact … when the time comes!

Should you be struggling to pay the subscriptions in these difficult economic times then please do contact me rather than just not pay – we can work something out.

CROSSED THE BAR:
Associate member **June Elizabeth Turner**. The family advise that June passed away on 4th May 2023. June was the wife of Roy 'Topsey' Turner [Ajax 1946-47] who crossed the bar March 2017. She lived in Rhyl.

I have lost contact with **Elizabeth Gray** and I must therefore conclude that she has, sadly, crossed the bar. She was the wife of Raymond 'Dolly' Gray [Ajax 1938-44] who crossed the bar May 2011. She lived in Evesham.

NEW MEMBERS:
After a lean period, we welcome three new members aboard.

Chris 'Nobby' Hall. Chris joined the navy in 1976 in HMS Ajax and visited Ontario that year. He served as a Marine Engineering Mechanic. He lives in Bridgnorth Shropshire. He has attended previous reunions and had hoped to make this year's one.

Desmond 'Des' Hector' Paddy' Neill. Des served in Ajax 1975 – 1977 and so too visited Ontario in 1976. He served as a Cook. He lives in Hull and will be attending the reunion in the Wirral.

Kenneth Miles. Has joined as an Associate with his grandfather having served in the Cruiser Ajax – the full story can be found in the Archivist Report. He lives in Deal.

BIRTHDAYS:
Happy birthday to the following crew members in the Newsletter period from June to August inclusive.

CRUISER	
Alan Lorriman	**98**
FRIGATE	
Wilbert Curran	82
Peter Danks	84
John Galway	64
Alf Larkin	77
Bill McCarthy	69
Bob McMorran	83
Martin Rolland	74
Dan Sherren	77
Alan Styth	66
Kevin Syder	64
John (Vic) Wilson	78

Members, if I have missed your birthday, please let me know.

Welfare & Health Updates

Ray London. As reported in previous Newsletters, member Ray London, Treasurer of Exeter Association, had a stroke last summer. Recovery has been long and slow but Ray is finally home, which has been modified & refurbished to receive him and make life a little easier for both him & Jaine. He is making steady progress and has even been let loose out on his mobility scooter … down to the pub; where else? We all send him our best wishes for continued recovery.

Lynne Maynard. Also reported previously, Lynne was diagnosed with breast cancer which led to a single mastectomy operation on 25th March. Since then, she has undergone eight chemo sessions and has the inevitable ups and downs with the side effects. Providing all goes well, Lynne is hoping to start Radio Therapy for three weeks on 11th September and if that goes according to plan, she is really hoping to make the Reunion in October and is even thinking about what to wear. Good on her for staying so positive even after all she has been through and we all hope to see her in the Wirral. Everyone sends their best wishes.

Jan Masters. More sad news regarding Jan, our Chairman's wife. In July she was diagnosed with cancer in her right lung. She has started her round of chemotherapy which involves sessions at three week intervals for the next year, so a long hard struggle but Jan remains upbeat and confident that she will win through. The Association sent her flowers and we send all our love and best wishes to her and Nigel.

Allan Lorriman. One of our three Cruiser veterans. I gave him a welfare call to find he was in good spirits despite having to visit his cardiologists for heart problems. He celebrated his 98th birthday in June and the doctor reckons with a bit of work, he'll get him to a 100. We send him our best wishes.

Dennis Talbot. Another of our Cruiser veterans and had been a familiar sight at all our events until recently. He is not in the best of health and is confined to his house, apart from constant trips to the hospital; he receives carer home visits four times a day. They are not sure what is wrong with him but he keeps losing his balance and falling over – which is not what you want to be doing at 92. As he says, he's taking enough pills to sink a battleship, so hopefully some of them will do the trick. We hope to see him soon although he is not up for the Reunion.

Albert Robb. Our third and final Cruiser veteran will be 105 on 14th September. The Chairman & I intended to visit him, seeing as we said we would when we went there for his 104th, but he is going to be away for a few days. So, a bit early, but we wish him many happy returns for the 14th. If anyone wishes to send him a card let me know and I'll share his address.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The easiest way to pay your membership dues is either through PayPal which is on the Association's website or by Standing Order through our bank. Both these methods automatically renew and saves you having to remember to do a transfer or send a cheque each year … and will save me having to chase you should you forget.

Annual subscriptions remain the same: £12 for individuals and £18 for families.

BANK DETAILS: HMS Ajax & RPVA (or River Plate Veterans Association)
ACCOUNT NUMBER: 24865868
SORT CODE 30-99-56CHEQUES payable to **HMS Ajax & RPVA** and sent to me at:
Malcolm Collis, The Bewicks, Station Road, Ten Mile Bank, Norfolk, PE38 0EY.

I can then pay them in electronically on-line.

Please let me know if there are any changes to your address, phone number or email, so that I can keep the membership records up to date. Also contact me in cases of hardship.

Membership Secretary

Malcolm Collis h.m.s.ajax.rpv@gmail.com 01366 377945 +44 7717559594

2023 ASSOCIATION REUNION 10th & 11th OCTOBER

Plans are progressing well with the Reunion to be held in The Wirral at the Thornton Hall Hotel & Spa, Neston Rd, Thornton Hough, Wirral CH63 1JF. Following initial problems with finding accommodation within striking distance of Cammell Laird Shipbuilders on The Wirral, Alan Phillips came up trumps with the Thornton Hall, although we had to opt for a mid-week booking as weekend rates were prohibitive. We worried that this may have put people off … but with over 60 members booked, this will be the best attended reunion for many a year!

The majority of attendees will be arriving on the Tuesday 10th October in readiness for visiting Cammell Laird next morning, Wednesday 11th October, where we will hold our Annual General Meeting, a commemorative event*, and a tour of the Shipyard.



Thornton Hall Hotel & Spa

We'll then make our way back to the Hotel for the evening's Gala dinner. Unfortunately, the New Zealand Naval Representative has had to withdraw due to a more pressing engagement but we are delighted that two Cammell Laird representatives will be in attendance as well as the Mayor of Ajax, Shaun Collier and Rose.

Many will head for home on the Thursday although some are staying an extra night.

*2023 sees two anniversaries for Cammell Laird with connections to the HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association:

The 60th anniversary of the first commissioning of the Frigate Ajax, following her launch & build at the Shipyard;

And the 90th anniversary of the commissioning of HMS Achilles following her launch & build there. Achilles was a sister ship of Ajax and they fought together at the River Plate, along with HMS Exeter.



F114 HMS Ajax Frigate



HMS Achilles

SURGEON LIEUTENANT A. J. BURDEN - UNIFORM

I received the following email from Italy from Andrea Valle
"Hello, I am an Italian collector and an Italian and English navy enthusiast. I have a small naval museum that I have been curating for over 35 years. One year ago, my wife gifted me a Royal Navy uniform which I am now restoring. This is a complete uniform in every detail which belonged to Surgeon Lieutenant A. J. BURDEN who after some research I discovered was on H.M.S. Ajax in the Battle of the River Plate. I am writing to ask you for further news and information on this lieutenant and perhaps, with a little luck, find a photograph of him. Every detail would be a precious piece of the puzzle I'm putting together.

I sent the first of many exchanges: "As you know, we have him listed as serving in HMS Ajax at the time of the Battle of the River Plate in December 1939. However, apart from knowing he was an officer I have little extra information on him. The Town of Ajax in Ontario, Canada, named after HMS Ajax, with whom we work closely, has an extensive crew list from that time on which he appears as A J Burden and although there is a Burden Crescent in the Town named in his honour (most of their streets are named after veterans) there is no biography for him.
My usual next step for officers would be to search this site Royal Navy (RN) Officers 1939-1945 -- B (unithistories.com) which is normally quite comprehensive, but unfortunately he is not listed.
I did manage to find him on the Navy List here The navy list (nls.uk) which records him on Page 12 on the general list as: Ajax Burden A. J. MB Bch Sg LCr 17 Aug 1934 & on Page 176 of the Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander 1934 list as Alexander James Burd**o**n (with an 'o') M.B., B.Ch. 17 Aug. Almost certainly the same person – the list runs to over 500 pages so errors were to be expected.
It therefore looks as if he was in Ajax from 1934 when she was in build; on her maiden commission 15 April 1935 and also on her second commission 11 January 1938 through to 24 February 1940 which would have included the Battle of the River Plate on 13 December 1939: he may well have stayed with her longer?

Ajax ...	Burden A. J. MB,Bch	Sg LCr	17 Aug 34

SURGEON LIEUTENANT-COMMANDERS.

1934

Alexander James Burdon, M.B., B.Ch. ... ... 17 Aug

[I also mentioned the forthcoming auction of the McCarthy uniform in case his wife was looking for another gift!]







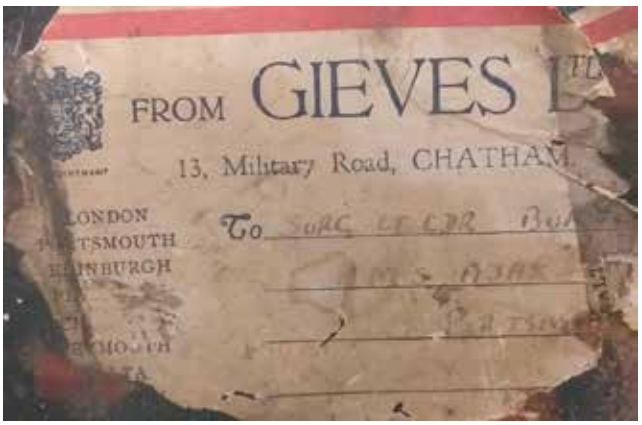


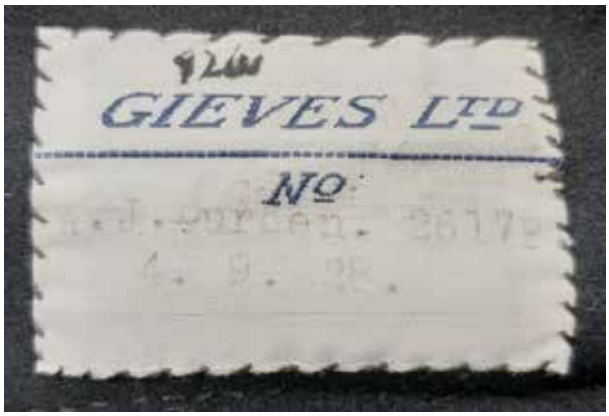


He responded: “Ciao Malcolm, I don't know how to thank you for your precious help! I've been restoring this uniform for a few months and as always, as well as restoring, I'm researching the history of the piece I'm working on. Initially I thought it was just an extra item for my museum but this uniform exudes a special charm that deserves the utmost respect … I would also like to ask you about the meaning of the 8-pointed star above the anchor on the shoulder pads of the jacket. After some research Alan Phillips found that the insignia is for a Lieutenant with over 8 years service, so presumably before he was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and ultimately Commander.

Surprised that the Unit History website didn’t list him I emailed them and they came back with: Alexander James Burden. Birth 03 DEC 1903 • Kilkenny, Ireland. Death 23 APR 1982 • Barnston, Cheshire, England. First ship, HMS Bruce in 1929 and shown as Ajax 01.1938 to 04.1940 although this doesn’t tie in with the dates I found listed for him! He retired 03.12.1958 as Surgeon Commander.

After much research Andrea has purchased a period ceremonial sword and is working on the medals and he will keep me posted with his progress







Labels from various items of uniform. Gieves were the Tailors who supplied the Navy. In 1974 became Gieves & Hawkes

TOWN OF AJAX – GET TOGETHER

Past and present members of the Town recently had a reunion lunch at Magwyers; where else! - a familiar watering hole to anyone who has been over to Canada!
All of them are Honorary or Life Association Members
Pat Brown sent in the photo.
Left to Right:
Ex Mayor Steve Parish
Colleen Jordan
Pat Brown
Cherry Sevigny
Jackie Lumsden
Debbie Steer



STYTHINSON STREET - UPDATE

Alan and Diane Styth visited Ajax with the Association in 2016 where he received his Stythinson Street Sign, although the name was yet to be allocated. They were due to travel out with us again in 2022 but events overtook them.
An enquiry with Jennifer Larmand at the Town revealed that the Stafford Development, where Stythinson Street is located, is still under construction. It is located close to the Legion building and stands on the site of the Bayly Engineering; Pat Bayly was the first mayor of the Town.
Debbie grabbed some shots for Alan as of mid-June.





CAPTAIN McCARTHY'S UNIFORM

Reported in the June Newsletter was a piece about a forthcoming sale of a Dress Uniform of Captain McCarthy of HMS Ajax with an estimate of £400 to £600.
The Second World War Royal Navy dress uniform consists of gilt bullion epaulettes,



regulation bicorn cocked hat, two dress belts and a single cloth lace rank shoulder board worn by Captain Edward Desmond Bewley McCarthy during his command of H.M.S Ajax from 22nd April 1940 – 27th November 1941. Retailed by Gieves, in an original fitted tin case named to McCarthy. Sold with related research paperwork and original newspaper clippings about McCarthy's service.

The auction by Halls Fine Arts was held on-line from 21st July until 8th August 2023 but the item failed to sell and is being returned to the original vendor.

PEGASUS BRIDGE – LAST SURVIVOR



At rest Reg Charles, the last survivor of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry unit which captured Pegasus Bridge on D-Day in June 1944, has died aged 100.

Those of us who made the recent Association trip to France may be interested to learn that Reg Charles, the last survivor of the assault and capture of Pegasus Bridge, our first stop, has recently died at the age of 100.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

IKARA FIRING

This image of an Ikara missile was posted on the HMS Ajax Facebook page by Ian Armstrong and taken by him from the Frigate's Flight Deck during either the Mediterranean or World Deployment 1975/76.



The Ikara missile was an Australian ship-launched anti-submarine missile, named after an Australian Aboriginal word for "throwing stick". Designed in the late '60's it had a range of 19km.
During her refit 1970 until 1973, HMS Ajax's 4.5-inch gun turret was replaced by the Ikara system.

GRAF SPEE BRONZE EAGLE SAVED FROM SMELTER

Those of us fortunate enough to make the 2019 visit to South America will never forget our trip to the secret naval base location outside Montevideo where we were the first group of civilians to set eyes upon the Graf Spee bronze eagle since it was salvaged, such is the continuing controversy over its very existence.

Ongoing legal wranglings have left its future with much uncertainty and recent reports do little to finalise its fate – personally, I think it would be a great shame if it were never to be exhibited, as a piece of sculptural art and more importantly as a reminder of what it represented – Nazi Germany.



The following article, which was but one, was widely reported on 16th June: By Vanessa Buschschlüter BBC News. The future of a bronze eagle which once adorned the Nazi-era battleship Admiral Graf Spee remains uncertain after plans to melt it down were scrapped. Treasure hunters raised the eagle in 2006 off the coast of Uruguay, where the Graf Spee had been scuttled in 1939 to stop it falling into enemy hands.

A court ruled last year that it belonged to the Uruguayan state, in whose waters it was found. The country's president had proposed turning it into a sculpture of a dove. President Luis Lacalle Pou had announced the plan to melt down the bronze eagle, which weighs 350kg (770 lb), on Friday.

The eagle, which has a wingspan of 2.8m (9.2ft) and is 2m high, clutches a large swastika. It had been lying on the bottom of the River Plate since 1939, when the captain of the Admiral Graf Spee had scuttled it soon after the first major naval battle of World War Two. He feared the ship could reveal valuable German secrets if seized by the British. It was part of the Deutschland class of heavy cruisers. Called Panzerschiffe, the vessels were nicknamed "pocket battleships" by the UK press at the time due to their heavy guns and low weight. The Graf Spee had been a great threat to the Allied forces in WWII, having sunk eight merchant ships between the outbreak of war in September 1939 and its scuttling in December of that year.



Plan to melt Nazi eagle into dove statue is for the birds

By James Badcock *in Madrid*

THE president of Uruguay has ditched plans to melt down a bronze Nazi eagle recovered from a warship and remould it into a dove.

Luis Lacalle Pou was forced to back down after opposition groups said the relic should be preserved rather than destroyed. The sculpture of the bird clutching a swastika was recovered from the wreck of the Admiral Graf Spee by treasure hunters in 2006 after a 10-year hunt in the River Plate off Montevideo. It measures about 10ft by 6ft (3m by 2m) and weighs 55st (350kg).

Many had called for the eagle to be put on display, but Mr Lacalle Pou said on Friday that the sculpture would instead be melted down and turned into a dove, a move that he said would transform a symbol of violence into one of "peace and unity."

But the announcement provoked strong opposition and within two days more than 18,000 people signed an online petition calling for the eagle to be preserved.

"Cultural heritage must be cared for and cannot be left at the mercy of a leader's whim," said Guido Manini, a former army general and senator. The president backed down yesterday as he admitted his aim of using the relic to bring people together had failed.

"If you want peace, the first thing one has to do is to create unity, and this clearly has not done so," he said.

Mr Manini, a member of the ruling Multicolor coalition, said a committee of experts should now decide what should be done with the sculpture.

"It occurred to us that this symbol of war could undergo a transformation into a symbol of peace or union, like a dove," the president had said on Friday. A Uruguayan sculptor, Pablo Atchugarry, had been commissioned to recast the eagle. Mr Atchugarry accepted what he called the "challenge of transforming hate, war and destruction into a symbol of peace". But just two days later, President Lacalle Pou announced that the idea had been shelved.

“In the few hours that have passed [since the announcement], an overwhelming majority of people has come forward who don’t share the decision. When you aim for peace, the first thing you need to do is create unity and this [idea] clearly didn’t,” Mr Lacalle Pou said. He did not say what would happen to the bronze now.

The fate of the eagle - whose ownership was the subject of a long legal battle - has been a matter of controversy since it was first raised from the river bed.

When it was briefly exhibited years ago, Germany complained, asking the Uruguayan state not to showcase “Nazi paraphernalia”.

When a court in Uruguay ruled that the eagle should be auctioned off to pay off the private investors who had financed its recovery from the River Plate, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights organisation dedicated to Holocaust research and remembrance, warned that it could fall into the hands of Nazi sympathisers.

While Uruguay’s Supreme Court ruled last year that the eagle belonged to the Uruguayan state, its government appears no closer to deciding what its fate should be.

AJAX MODEL – UPDATE

The presentation of his model of HMS Ajax to Mayor Shaun Collier by Norm Harris was reported in the March Newsletter.



Maria-Lise Dobri from the Town of Ajax’s Library has sent in the latest update on the display:
“Just wanted to let you know that we’ve put Norman’s ship on display in the Main Branch of Ajax Public Library. It will be there for the foreseeable future.
We’ve also included a plaque donated to the Town of Ajax by Captain Squires when the Ajax visited and some information about the tradition of naming streets after veterans.

GRAF SPEE JIGSAW PUZZLE

Member Claire More, Granddaughter of Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, emailed me with this find which is now in her possession:
"A friend of mine is currently in the process of clearing out her parents (Navy family) house and came across this hand-cut jigsaw. We think it probably dates from about 1939/1940 with a price of 1/3d*.
I found it fascinating and thought other members might be interested. I feel lucky to now have it in the family for future generations."
**1/3d was one shilling and thruppence (3 pence (d)) or 15 old pence, about 6 new pence and is the equivalent of about £5 today. For those not old enough to remember, there were 240 pence in a pound and 12 in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound. A penny was abbreviated to 'd' from the Latin word for this coin 'denarius'.*







ROYAL CANADIAN SEA CADET CORP HARWOOD - 49th REVIEW

Commanding Officer Lt(N) Ross Mounsteven of RCSCC Harwood in Ajax has sent in a report of the 49th Annual Ceremonial Review held on Saturday 10th June 2023.

"I am pleased to report that we finally had a largely "normal" training year where we were able to meet in-person throughout the year without interruption. Although the entire program did not fully return to normal, some of our team were re-constituted and the year certainly felt more like those before Covid! We have maintained a healthy strength in the 50-cadet range. One of those ways in which we returned to normal was in holding a cadet vote for the Captain Tubby Squires Award and the winner was Petty Officer First Class Abigail Chiu and Mayor Shaun Collier was the Reviewing Officer Debbie Steer was also present.


The Officers and Cadets of
Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps
HARWOOD
and The Navy League of Canada
Ajax/Pickering Branch
Cordially invite you to attend our
49th Annual Ceremonial Review
The Reviewing Officer will be
Mayor Shaun Collier
of the
Town of Ajax
CADETS CANADA







"With next year bringing our 50th anniversary we will be planning a larger celebration than usual. We will target early June 2024, either the first second weekend, for the events we're planning, including our 50th ACR. We would absolutely love to see any members of the Harwood family and the Association as may be able to attend.

Ross Mounsteven



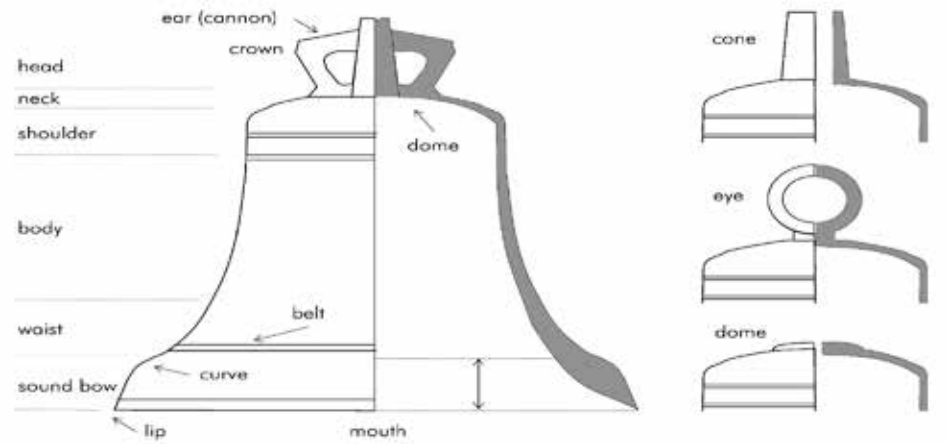
BELLS OF BRITISH NAVY VESSELS – Dave Lear

This is a follow up to the March Newsletter after Association members attended the Kingswood Preparatory School, concerning the size of the Ajax bell compared to the one presented to Uruguay. After some research I have found what possibly could be the explanation for the various sizes and dimensions of both these bells.

Bells mounted on warships of the Royal Navy tended to follow traditional late eighteenth and early nineteenth century church patterns, with the bell head comprising a crown staple that was usually cast iron. The staple had six cannons into which an argent was inserted that allowed suspension from a headstock (in churches) or a fixed bell mount (on ships). Two Admiralty patterns (8a and 10a) are referenced in the literature that refer to the overall bell weight, shape and size of the crown staple.

For example, a bell with pattern 8a exhibits the typical crown suspension head with six cannons and has approximate measurements of 410mm height, 450mm diameter, and a weight of 75kg. Whereas a bell with pattern 10a has a crown suspension head with four cannons with approximante measurements of 310mm height, 330mm diameter, and a weight of 25kg.

See below illustrations.



Post World War II, most Navy ships carried 2 or 3 bells, normally one of each Admiralty pattern. 8a as the main bell and 10a as the quarterdeck bell.

See below example of the HMS Valiant bells.



Admiralty pattern 8a *Admiralty pattern 10a*

At least among larger ships, the ship's bell carries the name of the vessel, either in relief or more commonly engraved in large letters, with the engraving blackened to make the name stand out. If a ship's bell is inscribed also with a year, that date reflects the year the ship was formally commissioned rather than the year it was launched. Occasionally (especially on more modern ships) the bell will also carry the name of the shipyard that built the ship.

A ship's bell, an object legally required to be provided on all vessels of 12m or more in length, is a prized possession when a ship is broken up and often provides the only positive means of identification in the case of a shipwreck.

Traditionally, ship's bells fulfilled two functions, one operational and one navigational. On an operational level, the bell audibly signalled the passing of time on a ship. Crew duties, in particular of naval vessels, were divided into watches of four hours' duration, with the bell signalling the passage of each half hour (with eight bells signalling the end of watch).

In addition, for vessels at anchor in areas of restricted visibility such as fog, the bell would act as a navigational warning aid, being rung rapidly for about five seconds at intervals of no less than one minute to alert other ships of one's presence.

Dimensions of bells and their fastening

It may sound odd at first, but ship bells are most commonly measured in a square dimension. This way it is easy to determine the actual measurement criterion - the bell's diameters - which is often according to the bell's height. A bell with a diameter of 15cm (measured at the bottom of the bell's body) is usually also 15cm in height. This harmonious proportion causes a well-balanced chime.

Brackets for ship bells are usually rather narrow to provide the necessary stability to hold the full weight of the bell. A locking bolt, shackle, or screw connects the bell to its bracket. The bell is always mounted in a way that it has room to slightly swing when chimed.

See below table covering Weights, Tones and Dimensions of bells.

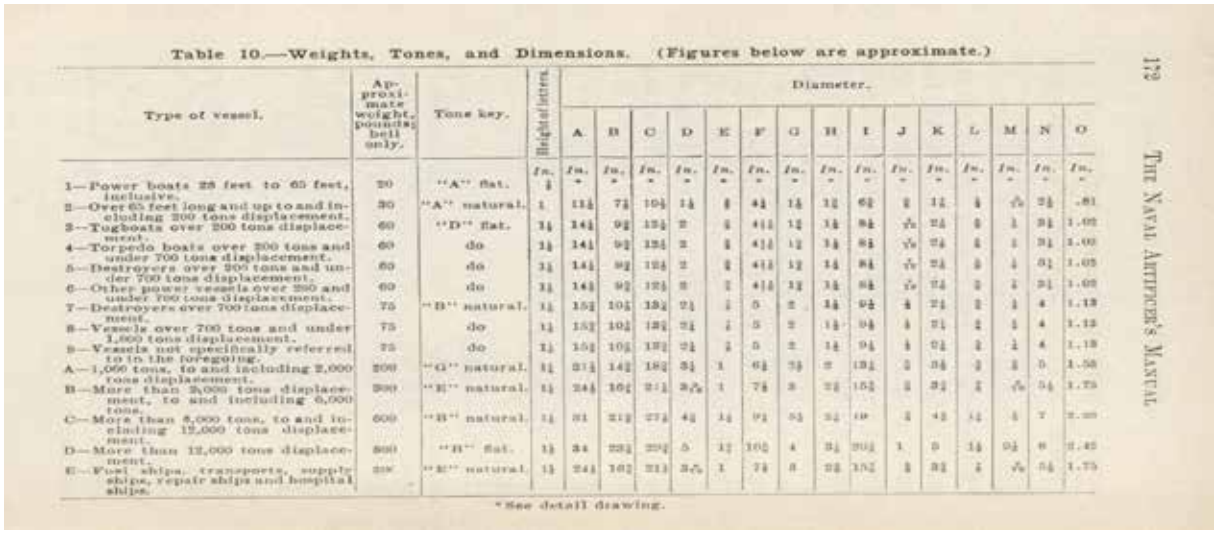


Table 10.—Weights, Tones, and Dimensions. (Figures below are approximate.)

Type of vessel.	Approximate weight, pounds, bell only.	Tone key.	Height of letters.	Diameter.														
				A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
			In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.
1—Power boats 25 feet to 65 feet, inclusive.	20	"A" flat.	½															
2—Over 65 feet long and up to and including 200 tons displacement.	30	"A" natural.	1	11¼	7½	10½	1½	⅝	4½	1½	12	6¾	⅝	1½	¼	7/16	2¼	.81
3—Tugboats over 200 tons displacement.	60	"D" flat.	1¼	14¼	9½	13¼	2	⅝	4½	1½	1½	8¼	7/16	2¼	⅝	½	3¼	1.02
4—Torpedo boats over 200 tons and under 700 tons displacement.	60	do	1¼	14¼	9½	13¼	2	⅝	4½	1½	1½	8¼	7/16	2¼	⅝	½	3¼	1.02
5—Destroyers over 200 tons and under 700 tons displacement.	60	do	1¼	14¼	9½	13¼	2	⅝	4½	1½	1½	8¼	7/16	2¼	⅝	½	3¼	1.02
6—Other power vessels over 200 and under 700 tons displacement.	60	do	1¼	14¼	9½	13¼	2	⅝	4½	1½	1½	8¼	7/16	2¼	⅝	½	3¼	1.02
7—Destroyers over 700 tons displacement.	75	"B" natural.	1½	15½	10½	13½	2¼	¾	5	2	1½	9½	¼	2¼	⅝	½	4	1.13
8—Vessels over 700 tons and under 3,000 tons displacement.	75	do	1½	15½	10½	13½	2¼	¾	5	2	1½	9½	¼	2¼	⅝	½	4	1.13
9—Vessels not specifically referred to in the foregoing.	75	do	1½	15½	10½	13½	2¼	¾	5	2	1½	9½	¼	2¼	⅝	½	4	1.13
A—1,000 tons, to and including 2,000 tons displacement.	200	"G" natural.	1½	21½	14½	18½	3¼	1	6½	2½	2	12½	½	3¼	½	½	5	1.58
B—More than 3,000 tons displacement, to and including 6,000 tons.	300	"E" natural.	1½	24½	16½	21½	3 7/16	1	7½	3	2½	15½	½	3½	½	7/16	5¼	1.75
C—More than 6,000 tons, to and including 12,000 tons displacement.	600	"B" natural.	1½	31	21½	27½	4½	1½	9½	3½	3½	19	½	4½	½	½	7	2.30
D—More than 12,000 tons displacement.	800	"B" flat.	1½	34	23½	29½	5	1½	10½	4	3½	20½	1	5	1½	9/16	8	2.45
E—Fuel ships, transports, supply ships, repair ships and hospital ships.	225	"E" natural.	1½	24½	16½	21½	3 7/16	1	7½	3	2½	15½	½	3½	½	7/16	5¼	1.75

*See detail drawing.

179 THE NAVAL ARTIFICER'S MANUAL

Royal Navy bell disposal practices

When a ship is decommissioned, the bell is removed for storage, reuse, or, in most cases, onwards sale. Even if the ship is not scrapped, but rather transferred to another navy, the bell is removed and upon transfer the ship issued with a new bell. There seems to have been no regular practice of "turning" the bell and providing it with a fresh inscription on the reverse side. A case in point is the Leander-class light cruiser HMS *Apollo* (1934), which was transferred to the Royal Australian Navy in 1938 and renamed HMAS Hobart. Her two bells were placed almost immediately for public sale in December 1938. On the other hand, the

bell of the modified Leander-class cruiser HMS Amphion (1935) was turned and re-inscribed "HMAS Perth 1939" when the vessel was transferred to the Royal Australian Navy.

In comparison with ship's bells of the U.S. Navy, there is little information available pertaining to bells of Royal Navy vessels. This is in part due to divergent disposal practices of each service, and also in part likely due to differing public perception of military relics. Unlike the U.S. Navy, which retains the ownership of the bells of all major combatant vessels, the Royal Navy has been amenable to the disposal of ship's bells to private parties. The bells were sold at nominal prices between GBP1 and GBP10 to officers associated with the decommissioned vessel, other ships, or naval establishments.



Consequently, most bells of decommissioned Royal Navy vessels are now in the public hand, complicating the tracing of their whereabouts. The sheer number of naval bells for sale is illustrated below, showing the sale of British Navy bells in 1959 where the Royal Navy disinvested itself of ownership and abandoned any claim to the bells.

Most of the bells do not retire from service when the Admiralty dispense with them; they just changed their jobs e.g. becoming a dinner gong in the houses of retired officers who served on the ships from which the bells were taken. No formal regulation seems to have existed that specifically governed the disposal of a vessel's main and quarterdeck bell.

Some individuals and even countries go to great lengths to retain and display naval bells which greatly demonstrates the iconic nature, being a trophy of a key battle or a symbol of past histories or iconic moments. The large number of Royal Navy bells that are unaccounted for does not suggest disinterest or indifference towards these items. On the contrary, the ownership of many such bells by ex-service personnel suggests a deep connection to past histories and practices.

A few British ships bells are held in public collections, such as the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich and the Imperial War Museum in London.



We know that one of the bells of the Frigate AJAX F114 now hangs in the Council Chambers at the Town of Ajax City Hall (see images below) but what happened to her second bell? This was sold as Lot number 186 at Bonhams London Knightsbridge on the 20 February 2008 for £1560.00. The bell had no clapper. It doesn't mention who acquired it but would certainly make an interesting story. Ajax F114 was decommissioned in 1985 and scrapped three years later.

As a point of note, if you happen to see an Ajax bell for sale on any social media site these will be made from the brass components of the ship when it was broken up and will not be the original bell melted down, as may be stated.

Dave Lear

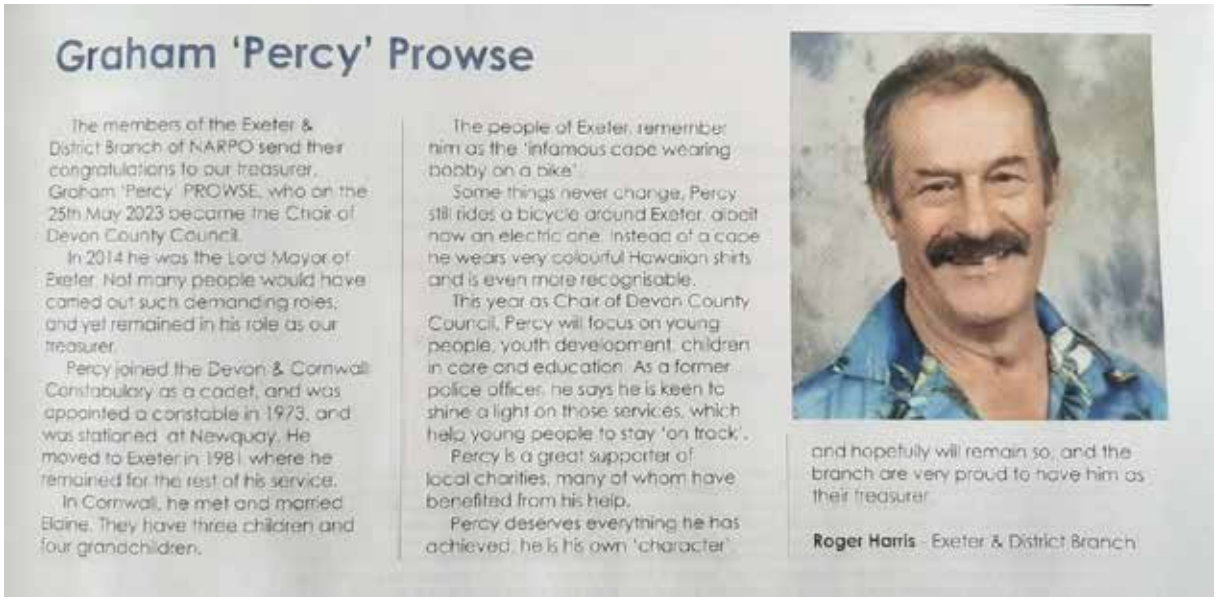
GOOD ON FACES BUT …

My trouble is, that whilst I'm good on a recognising a face, it all falls apart when I try and recall the place and name!

This happened recently at the Gaborone Airport Botswana when I went to collect the hire camper 4x4. One of the lads from Avis had a familiar face but gave me a very sceptical look when I said I knew him. After some probing, it turns out he used to be a police officer in Botswana working in the north of the country, which is where I would have briefly met him when I visited the police station in Kasane … in 2009!

On opening my August 2023 edition of NARPO [National Association of Retired Police Officers] magazine, on page 19, a face struck me as being familiar and this time the name was too. Reading the article, the occasion also fell into place. He had been the Lord Mayor of Exeter in 2014 and had attended, with his wife Elaine, the Lady Mayoress, our 2014 Association luncheon, held on the actual anniversary day, the 13th December, at the Royal Beach Hotel in Southsea, commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate

Malcolm Collis



Graham 'Percy' Prowse

The members of the Exeter & District Branch of NARPO send their congratulations to our treasurer, Graham 'Percy' PROWSE, who on the 25th May 2023 became the Chair of Devon County Council.

In 2014 he was the Lord Mayor of Exeter. Not many people would have carried out such demanding roles, and yet remained in his role as our treasurer.

Percy joined the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary as a cadet, and was appointed a constable in 1973, and was stationed at Newquay. He moved to Exeter in 1981, where he remained for the rest of his service.

In Cornwall, he met and married Elaine. They have three children and four grandchildren.

The people of Exeter, remember him as the 'infamous cape wearing bobby on a bike'.

Some things never change, Percy still rides a bicycle around Exeter, albeit now an electric one. Instead of a cape he wears very colourful Hawaiian shirts and is even more recognisable.

This year as Chair of Devon County Council, Percy will focus on young people, youth development, children in care and education. As a former police officer, he says he is keen to shine a light on those services, which help young people to stay 'on track'.

Percy is a great supporter of local charities, many of whom have benefited from his help.

Percy deserves everything he has achieved, he is his own 'character'.

and hopefully will remain so, and the branch are very proud to have him as their treasurer.

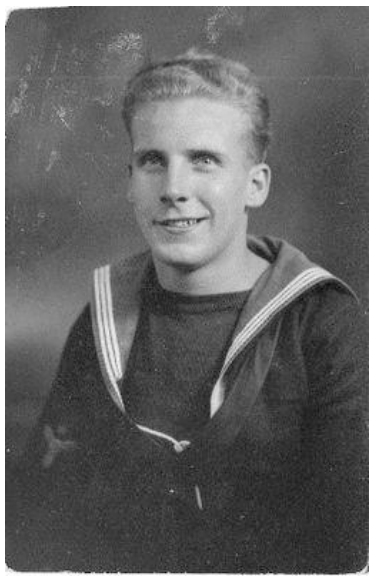
Roger Harris - Exeter & District Branch



Ben Harwood between the Lord Mayor & Mayoress Table 11

HEATHERWOOD ROAD - STREET DEDICATION

Associate member John Major's uncle Joseph 'Joe' Heather had been in HMS Ajax at the River Plate and John and another nephew, Terry travelled to Ajax where Heatherwood Road was formally dedicated in the presence of Regional Councillor Joanne Dies and Councillor Nancy Henry on 25 July 2023



Joe was born 3 August 1919 to parents Ernest Heather and Martha Newton in Fulham, Greater London

On 24 August 1937, shortly after his eighteenth birthday, he joined the Royal Navy and began his career onboard the training ship HMS Pembroke, later joining HMS Ajax Feb 1938 through to May 1940 as Stoker 1st Class and was thus at the River Plate.

By May 1940 he left HMS Ajax to begin his training with the Royal Navy Submarine Service.

In September 1941, he returned home briefly to marry Winifred May Farley at St. Paul's Church, Hammersmith. He then served in several ships and eventually found himself in the Mediterranean. On 24 April 1943 his submarine, HMS Sahib, was depth charged and damaged off the coast of Sicily by the Luftwaffe, then attacked by three Italian Naval ships. The crew scuttled the Sahib and all 48 members were taken as prisoners of war.

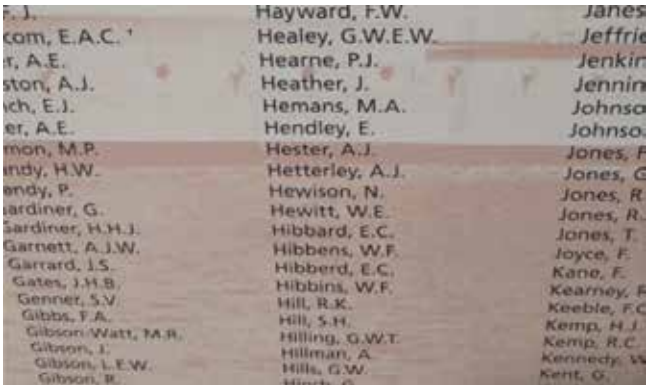
Joseph Heather died on 22 January 1998 at the age of seventy eight in Fulham Greater London, England.



LtoR: Joanne Dies; Terry; John; Nancy Henry



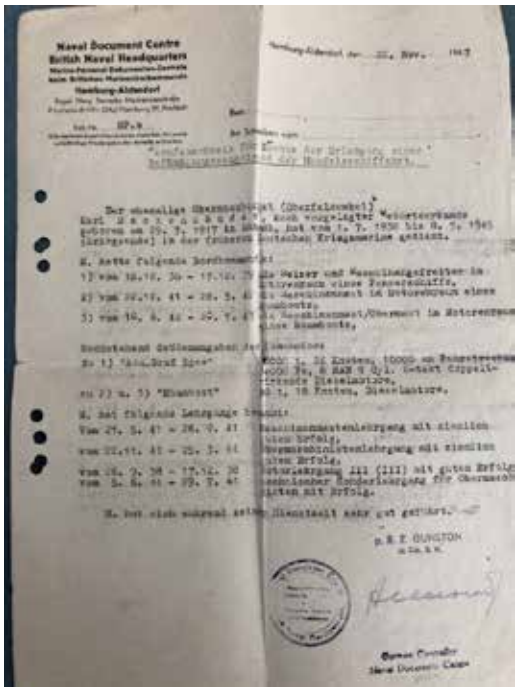
Street Dedication Plaque



Memorial Wall inscription

THE STORY OF A GRAF SPEE SAILOR

I was contacted by Robert Nilsson who is researching his grandfather Maschinen-Ob.-Gefr Karl Meckenhäuser who served in the Graf Spee until the Battle of the River Plate. He died in 1985 when Robert was just eight and his grandfather never spoke of his time in the war; it wasn't until later that his grandmother talked more about him. He knew he had been interned in Argentina and that the story was that he and some fellow crewmates escaped by hiding on a merchant ship until it made port in Ceuta [a Spanish enclave on North Morocco coast]. From there they made their way across to mainland Spain, possibly by postal plane and up through Vichy France back to Germany by 1941. He received the Iron Cross and returned to the navy to serve the rest of the war on smaller ships. In 1945 he and other shipmates surrendered and was for a short period, a prisoner of war until he returned home. The family moved to Sweden in the early '50s where they spent the rest of their lives.


Naval Document Centre
British Naval Headquarters

Robert can verify he was in the Graf Spee in 1939 and was interned; he had his first child in Germany in 1942 and he had his records from the Royal Navy* but was struggling to find any evidence to confirm the escape story.
*who seem to have taken on that role after the war – see "Naval Document Centre British Naval Headquarters" record for him dated 22 Nov 1947.

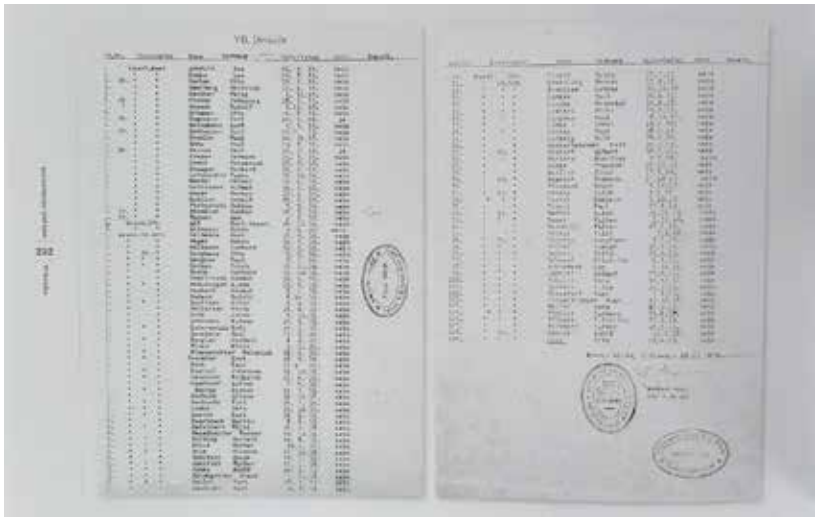
I responded: "… the vast majority, 1055, of the Graf Spee crew were interned in Argentina where they were taken once the Graf Spee was scuttled. Those who went to Argentina were processed by the authorities in order to issue Identity Cards. They were allowed a great degree of freedom and dispersed through the country, with many marrying local girls, taking up employment, etc. Quite a number took the opportunity to escape and return to Germany to re-join the war effort. Towards the end of the War, they were declared Prisoners of War and at War's end many were forcibly repatriated back to worn-torn Germany; some remained with their new families; some left wives behind; some took the wives with them; many later returned to Argentina to rejoin their loved ones and hence there are a number of descendants there now (including Enrique Dick).



The HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association visited South America to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Battle in December 2019 where we met up with Enrique Rodolfo Dick, the President of the Graf Spee Comradeship Association and joined with them at Captain Langsdorff's grave in Buenos Aires. We have a very close relationship with them and I have copied this reply to Enrique. Enrique presented me with a book in which all 1055 crew particulars are recorded, taken from official records and your grandfather is recorded as Number 663 and part of the



V11 Division. His date of birth is given as 29.7.17 and so would have been 22 at the time of the Battle of the River Plate.

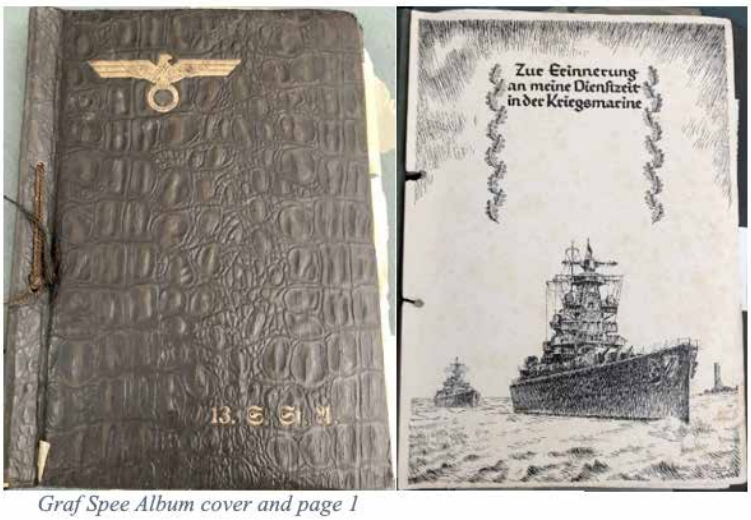


Whilst I cannot comment about the details you give about his escape to Morocco/ Spain it is entirely likely and similar to other stories I have read: some involve vast treks across the Andes and journeys across Asia back to Germany, taking many months. Clearly, many were keen to return to the war effort; others accepted their lot.

Robert came back with lots more information and questions and confirmed his date of birth, born in Lübeck and enlisted in 1936.

Enrique was copied in on the exchange of emails and is also now on the case.

Robert also shared some further images:



Graf Spee Album cover and page 1



Karl Meckenhäuser Lisbon 1938



Karl Meckenhäuser [left] on completion of training before boarding Graf Spee

Robert continues with his researches and will update me on progress.

ARCHIVIST UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2023

A very quiet period in terms of enquires. The ones relating to the Burden uniform and Graf Spee sailor are reported elsewhere and one of the enquiries resulted from a new member.

JACK HOLMES

Benn Eades was after any information regarding his great grandfather Jack Holmes born 1st June 1920 in Colne, Lancashire. The only information he knows about him is he was on HMS Ajax, was an ASDIC operator and likely was at the Battle of the River Plate and D Day and he loved painting, mainly battleships etc. He also sent a photo of him



I responded that on my list which is maintained by the Town of Ajax I have four Holmes listed as being in Ajax, all of whom are shown as being at the River Plate in 1939.

However, none appear to be your great grandfather Jack, although the navy were great ones for almost everyone to be known by nicknames and alternative names. If you can somehow double check to see if he in fact had an official Christian name that may tie him in with one of the below that may clarify things.

I have copied this to Ajax Town as there is a Holmes Crescent there named in honour of those crewmen named Holmes – B.H.; Edward J.; E.R.; H.B.C. Holmes

After a chase up he came back to say his birth certificate has no middle name, just shown as Jack Holmes and the same is on his death certificate and also on the marriage certificate where he is shown as an able-seaman in 1941. He is unaware if he may have used any nicknames. He was advised to get hold of his service record from the MoD and come back to me if this confirms he was in Ajax at any time during the war

RICHARD FREDERICK MILES

Ken Miles recently joined the Association as his grandfather had served in the Ajax before the war through to 1944. He was unaware there was a Miles Drive in Ajax and as such was asked to supply a biography, which is reproduced below. Debbie Steer also grabbed some shots of his street for him and interestingly the school located on the street is where Greg went. I think we may have fired up Ken to make a trip to Canada!



Richard Frederick Miles was born to Richard and Caroline Miles in 1901 in the village of Staple, in Kent, and grew up in the agricultural village of nearby Wickhambreaux. Not wanting to do farm work, he joined the navy with his father's blessing and his mother's apprehension as a boy 2nd class on the 10th Sept 1917 on the training ship HMS Impregnable.

He advanced to boy 1st class during the 1st World War, seeing action in the 2nd Battle of Durazzo on HMS Lowestoft. Continuing his training and service after the

war, he became ordinary seaman in 1919, then able seaman in 1920.

As his naval career continued, he married Emma May Gambrill in 1930 in his home village where they had 3 children, Richard, Winifred and Robert between 1931-35.

After training and tours on other ships, including the Repulse, Royal Oak and Cairo, he joined the Ajax on 30th Dec 1937 where he became a lead torpedo operator, as well as assisting in communications.

A comment on his record says, “He restored the telephone line during a lull in action with Graf Spee with quiet efficiency”. He also became the chief film operator on board.

He stayed assigned to Ajax, seeing action in the Mediterranean including the evacuation of Crete. He finally left the Ajax in March 1944 after the ship returned to full service, after being disabled and back in the Mediterranean.

He remained in the navy, mainly on training ships, until the end of the war. He left service in Oct 1945, returning to his home village where after a brief time as a painter and decorator, he finally joined the farming community and became an agricultural labourer at a local mushroom farm.

He passed away in Jan 1970.





Richard’s street is in good company alongside Ted Wicks Drive who many of us remember!

GEORGE STANLEY KING

Shaun King was after information on his grandfather George Stanley King who he believes was in Ajax 1944 to 1948. Although a number of Kings were listed none appear to be his grandfather and so he was advised to obtain his service record from the MoD

Malcolm Collis Archivist