



## NEWSLETTER

**JUNE 2026**

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*Nec Quisquam Nisi Ajax*

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## 2026 ASSOCIATION REUNION

A plea to all members that our 2026 Annual Reunion is booked for the weekend of Friday 25th September to Sunday 27th September 2026 at Hinckley [Sketchley Grange Hotel & Spa | Countryside Hotel Near Leicester](#) with evening meals on the Friday & Gala meal on the Saturday with live entertainment. On Saturday morning, following the AGM, a coach will take us to the National Memorial Arboretum for a service of remembrance at our Battle of the River Plate Memorial, with time to explore the site.

Details of how to book with SF Events have previously been circulated but contact Malcolm Collis [malcolm.collis@gmail.com](mailto:malcolm.collis@gmail.com) if you need them again.

**We are short of numbers and need your support.**

*The Committee*

*HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association*

## ASSOCIATION 2026 TRIP TO AJAX ONTARIO

**30th May to 6th June 2026: To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Frigate's 1976 historic visit.**

Finally, after eighteen months of planning, the long-awaited trip to Ajax was upon us.

Fifty-two association members and family made this trip; forty-six from the UK, including nineteen frigate veterans, fifteen of whom were on the 1976 visit. Two Cunliffe's and four Cranswick family from across Canada made up that total of fifty-two, certainly the largest group the Association has ever taken to Canada.

So, the first flyers took off on **Thursday 28th May**, some reaching Ajax that evening. Friday was the travel day for the majority. Those already on Canadian soil had a great day spent in downtown Toronto. That said, it was only a great day until the return trip back to Ajax. Looking to catch the train back from Union Station, the group spotted a Go Train

about to depart for Ajax. With no time to buy tickets, they jumped onboard, planning to pay on the train. That was until they were firmly told by the Go Transit Police onboard that this was not possible and it was an offence to board a train without a ticket. The Go Train cop was not moved by the story of the Battle of the River Plate and the small group, led by an unnamed Association Chairman, were ejected at the next stop, counting their lucky stars that there was no fine or incarceration. Cue a call to Debbie Steer's Rescue Centre for pick up.

**Friday 29th May** evening and Tommy Murray and Steve Cook arrived without luggage. This was to be Tommy's first disaster. Fortunately, some of the missing luggage did arrive overnight and was delivered to the hotel.

**Saturday 30th May** morning and Tommy pulled out his blazer from the late luggage and proceeded to steam iron the wrinkles out. He did such a good job, that he burnt a hole straight through the shoulder (disaster no 2). Determined to make the parade, he donned the holey jacket, hoping to hide somewhere in the middle of the ranks, but not before he put his foot through the trouser seam in his leg (disaster no 3).

Late Saturday morning, a Town regional bus collected the group and we headed off to



Oshawa Lakewood Park beach, adjacent to the jetty and port that the Frigate had docked at in 1976. With a Colour Guard from Legion Branch 43 (Oshawa), and Harwood Sea Cadets and Band, we proudly marched behind our Standard Bearer from the end of the jetty, left wheeling onto a boardwalk, giving a salute to Mayor Collier on the dais before halting outside a marquee erected on the beach.

Dismissed, we entered the marquee reception to meet Invited VIP's, including former Mayor Steve Parish and MP Jennifer McKelvie, together with members of Ajax Council. A formal welcome from Mayor Shaun Collier was followed by lunch and refreshments and then a presentation of Freedom of the Town Commemorative Pins to all Ajax Frigate veterans. The bus returned everyone back to the hotel for a quick change of clothing and then drinks at Magwyers. Shortly after arriving we discovered that the main room in the pub was booked out for an event. Plan B and Shaun rang the Legion to see if they could accommodate thirty plus for drinks and of course, we were welcomed with open arms. In the ten minutes it took us to walk to the Legion, they had printed welcome posters which were placed at the entrance and on each table! A relaxed and fun social night ensued with a takeaway delivery of wings and pizza.

**Sunday 31st May** and an easy start to the day with a relaxing morning before Ubers and Taxis were ordered for the short trip to Whitby Yacht Club. Organiser of this event, Ken Armes, was there on arrival and we were introduced to the club commodore, Chris Russell. The club had been scrambling to get boats in the water for the start of the season, delayed by bad weather, but they had managed to get half a dozen boats ready for us. Unfortunately, the wind speed was creeping up and with a chop on the water, it was reluctantly decided that it would be unsafe to take guests onto open water. The boats that were ready were made available for us to explore and each one contained drinks and snacks, so we spent a pleasant few hours sitting on the boats in harbour. Although the wind was up on the lake, the sun was warm and the area around the club was calm and well protected. One of the motor boats took guests for trips around the harbour which delighted the Wright family children, age 10 and 12 years, who got to play Captain and steer the vessel.

A mountain of food; burgers, Italian sausage and potato salad had been provided by Ken Armes. What we didn't know was that this was a DIY BBQ. Anyone know of any ex-Navy Cooks?

Nigel and Mike Fox to the rescue. In some intense heat, they dived back into 1976 galley mode. The rule being; you brought them beer and they kept cooking. Unlike galley days, there

was more than just one \*\*\*\*\* sausage for everyone. Ably assisted by Lori and Richard Cooke on serving duties, the food kept coming and no one went hungry. The day turned to evening with a very pleasant social on the outdoor terrace.

Nigel thanked the club for their continued hospitality and presented a framed photograph of the Ajax Frigate at Oshawa in 1976, along with some commemorative caps and pens to Ken and Chris, the club Commodore.

Mid evening the group dispersed back to the hotel.

**Monday 1st June** was essentially our only free day. Some used it to explore the Town and waterfront; a small group headed to Port Perry that inevitably included a brewery stop.

By evening, the group were collected by the Town bus and conveyed to Mill Street where a Pop-Up Exhibit event was launched. Curated by the TownLibrary and Archives team, many commemorative exhibits were on display, highlighting Ajax's history and its relationship with the Association. An address was made by both the Mayor and the Chief Librarian and Executive Officer before a blue ribbon was cut, signaling the official opening.



The group then had the chance to explore the many artefacts and material on view. The event space would be open to the public on advertised dates throughout the month of June. Exhibits included Admiral Harwood's uniform, the 7th HMS Ajax photos and illustrations, a Defence Industries Ltd display case and photos, 8th HMS Ajax material and photos and a map of the town of Ajax outlining streets dedicated in recent times.

Cocktails and refreshments followed in the lounge area to conclude the evening.

**Tuesday 2nd June** saw the first full day of street dedications and another hot sunny day. Two Durham Regional Transit buses ferried the group from street to street. The streets dedicated on this day were: Sharp Crescent (Trevor Sharp – accepted by Association), Williamson Drive (Gary Williams), Harper Hill Drive (Jim Harper), Tidmarsh Lane (Simon Tidmarsh) and Seagrave Lane (Glyn Seagrave). A Global TV news reporter (Toronto area) appeared at Tidmarsh Lane and interviewed the Mayor and myself.



Iles Street was also visited during the dedications. This street, previously dedicated in honour of Arthur Frederick Iles, HMS Ajax (River Plate), was being visited for the first time by Association member Steve Iles and his daughter Alice. A nice touch from the Town saw Steve

presented with a street sign and a memorable photo opportunity.

The day was broken up by a visit to Ajax Fire Service HQ. We certainly never expected the welcome that we received here. We were met on arrival by a pipe band, a Colour Guard of Honour and fire service personnel. A formal welcome was made by the Fire Chief and we were invited to tour the station and get close up to the fire tenders looking splendid in their new livery depicting the Battle of the River Plate cruisers,



Ajax, Achilles and Exeter. A buffet lunch was provided in the Fire Hall before Dave Lear, an Association committee member and ex fire fighter, presented Ajax Fire HQ with a framed photograph commemorating our 50th anniversary visit. Dave also donated and presented the Fire service with a framed First Day Cover of the 40th anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate, signed by Admiral Sir Desmond Dreyer who was on Ajax at the Battle as a Lieutenant Gunnery Officer. Admiral Dreyer had officially opened Ajax Fire station number 2 during the Frigate's 1976 visit.



It was a remarkable couple of hours, many thanks to Ajax Fire and Emergency Services for pulling all the stops out!



A full day was concluded with a BBQ evening held at Debbie Steer's home. The house was packed to the rafters and those two Navy cooks were in action again. Nigel's recent BIG Birthday was celebrated with an Association cake and a fun time was had by all.



On **Wednesday 3rd June** a small but mighty group of fifteen veterans, supported by Kathy and Ann attended Southwood Park Public School in Ajax to speak to a group of around one-hundred and fifty students aged 12 to 14 years. We met the Principal Sarah Mitchell, also present was Mayor Shaun Collier, an ex-student of the school, along with council members.

I spoke about the history of the Town, it's lengthy and strong bond with the Association, the history of the Association and the 1976 visit bringing it up to date with the 50th anniversary visit.

We then had several speakers, Tommy (Seaman), Gary (Radio Operator), Steve (Stoker), Dave (Flight Crew) and Mike (Cook), talking about various aspects of Navy life as it was in the mid 1970's. After a brief recess, we took a Q and A session with the students. The Town had a slide show of photographs from the 1976 visit as a backdrop to the talks.



At the conclusion, we presented the Principal with a framed commemorative photo of the Frigate HMS Ajax and a bunch of Anniversary visit pens for the library.

The afternoon was a Free afternoon to unwind for a few hours before the next stop.

Wednesday evening and Peter Danks led a cohort of Association members to the Harwood Sea Cadets Unit for their ceremonial division's practice night. Peter performed the role of Reviewing Officer and the group witnessed the Cadet's parade and drills skills which were mightily impressive. Peter also presented the Tubby Squires award, an annual award first started by the Association in 2016

to the cadet who has contributed significantly to the success of the Corp by being a positive example, helpful and maintaining high standards. It is an award voted for by the cadets themselves. This year, the prize went to CPO Hibah Ahmed. This young lady also impressed our veterans who were all in agreement that she was destined for a great future in whatever career path she eventually embarked upon.

The Association presented a framed commemorative photo and an anniversary visit pennant to the cadets, who in turn gave the group a Harwood Cadets baseball cap each. Thanks to Commanding Officer Ross Mounstevan for inviting us to take part.



**Thursday 4th June** was day two of street dedications with everyone in attendance. Streets dedicated this day were Wright Crescent (Derek Wright), Stythinson Street (Alan Styth), Cook Lane (Steve Cook), Cranswick Lane (Mike Cranswick), Cunliffe Lane



(Ian Cunliffe), Danks Ridge Drive (Peter Danks) and Littlewood Lane (The late Paul Littlewood – accepted by Association).



Our lunchtime stop today was at Veterans Point Gardens at the Waterfront of Lake Ontario. The whole area was looking splendid in the sunshine, neatly mowed grass and verges, a food tent erected and picnic benches available. The town had certainly put some thought into making it look its best. They forgot however, that the sprinkler systems would burst into life as we casually strolled the lawned areas, giving everyone an unexpected cool down. Regional Councillor Marylin Crawford caught a jet stream resulting in a nice wet pair of trousers!

We gathered at the Veterans Crosswalk spanning Lake Driveway West at the junction with Harwood Avenue South; a fairly new addition to the area, opened in October 2025, remembering those who served. The crosswalk features red and white stripes representing

Canada's national colours, a painted outline of the Cruiser HMS Ajax and a soldier's helmet to honour all military. A nice photo opportunity and Councilor Nancy Henry presented a copy of the council motion that created the crosswalk to Nigel.

Then followed a street sign presentation in the gardens to Kevin Syder whose name was added to the town reserve name list for future developments. Mayor Shaun Collier made the presentation of Syder Street and to the delight of Kevin, one side of the sign had been amended to Scrumpy Street! Nice touch.

Due to Cranswick Lane not being accessible, the dedication of this street was carried out at Veterans Point. Thank you Town of Ajax.



We then observed a minute of silence at the Cruiser Memorial Wall for Association veteran Albert Robb who

had recently passed at the age of 107 years. Albert's biography was read by the Mayor and all WWII veterans were remembered as the Exhortation was read by Dave Lear and our standard was paraded and dipped. Wreaths were laid by Mayor Collier and representing the Association Cruiser veterans, Steve Iles.

We then moved to unveil the final amended version of the 1976 crew wall, with myself and Nigel unveiling the panel into view following an introduction from the Mayor.

The garden's sprinkler system had by now ended its display and we all tucked into lunch in the sunshine.

Street dedications resumed after lunch and we then took a brief stop at Pat Bayly Square where Mayor Collier gave some background to the Square and the magnificent memorial there to Defence Industries Ltd and the woman who worked there in munitions. A last group photo at the 41ft x 8ft AJAX sign in the square heralded the end of the formal day and the beginning of a social evening as we headed off on the buses to the Ajax Legion.



The first-floor function room was the space for this event and guests were treated on arrival to a performance by the Highland Creek Pipe Band and some clog dancing by the Kick up a Fuss Ladies Clog Dancers. The bar was open and cold drinks were most welcome after a long hot day outside.

A number of speeches and presentations were made, notably by the Association with Nigel presenting the Town with a large framed commemorative photograph, a special plaque presented by myself to Mayor Collier for his support of the Association during his term of office as Mayor. Gifts to both Shaun and Rose Collier from Mike Fox. Flowers and chocolates to Jennifer Larmand from the Town for all her hard work over eighteen months of planning. A framed commemorative photo to the Legion accepted by Chairman Bruce Sharpe along with a framed First Day Cover of the 50th anniversary of the D Day landings signed by Vice Admiral Peter Berger who was a Midshipman on HMS Ajax at Normandy (donated and presented by Dave Lear). Last of all, gift bags to the youngest guests there, the grandchildren of Derek Wright, Jackson age 10 and Aria age 12 years.

A special guest was present at the even: Louise Johnson of Ajax, one of the original 'Bomb Girls' was about to celebrate her 105th birthday. Everyone sang a rousing Happy Birthday to Louise before she had her photo taken with the HMS Ajax veterans.



Just prior to food service, everyone's attention was brought to a screen on stage for a photographic slide show of the 1976 visit beginning with a surprise video message from crew member and former Treasurer committee member and standard bearer Alf Larkin.

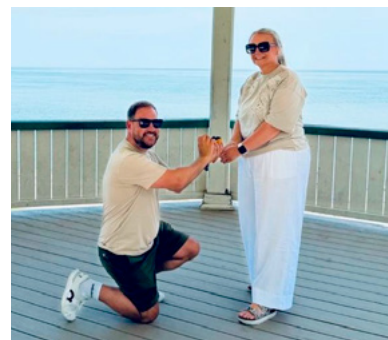
The social shenanigans continued long into the night.

**Friday 5th June** was an early start and there were some fuzzy heads boarding the coach to Niagara. This day trip was generously paid for by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and Greenwich Hospital Remembrance and Comradeship Grant. With forty-seven on board, we set off for Niagara-on-the-Lake.

We had a one and a half hour stop here, which was just enough time for a marriage proposal! Martyn Styth, son of Alan, got down on one knee in the Queens Royal Park Gazebo on the shores of Lake Ontario to ask for the hand of his partner Katie. Many congratulations to the happy couple!



Next stop was Niagara Falls. Four hours of zip lining, helicopter rides and a traditional soaking on the Maid of the Mist completed a memorable day. With the coach driver on a strict timeline and the return time known by all, it was an unnamed Chairman and a West Country Committee member who rocked up ten minutes late, giving me high blood pressure. They narrowly avoided a \$350

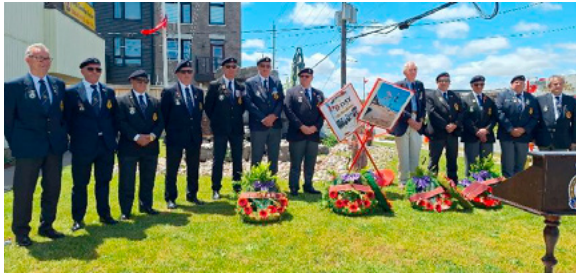


uber ride home.

A great day was had by all, back in Ajax 8.30pm; exhausted.

On **Saturday 6th June** we gathered at the Legion for their D Day service at 1pm, the only bit of rain we had all week fell that morning but the weather gods shone for us once more and it was a nice clear warm day, although a strong wind kept the colour party on their toes. A wonderful poignant service was led by the Legion's President, Bruce Sharpe with a number of speakers, including our chairman Nigel, Peter Danks and somewhat unexpectedly, myself. The Association veterans began the service with a march from the rear of the car park, following the Highland Creek Pipe Band, with our standard bearer, out to a position close to

the Ajax Frigate anchor. All our veterans were presented with a commemorative 100th year Canadian Legion Pin. It was standing room only, with the seating area full; good to see a substantial crowd remembering those at D Day.



At the conclusion of the parade, everyone adjourned to the Legion bar for some refreshment. Ours was a short stay as we had little time to prepare for the evening Gala.

Between the end of the D Day service and the gala evening, Tommy, yes, him again, lost his beret (mishap number 4). Note - during the 2022 visit, he lost his phone.

Everyone gathered in the hotel reception around 5.45pm where Nigel said a few words about the week and his hope that our new members would continue to support the Association at future events such as this year's reunion and later in the year, the Cenotaph parade.

With the group looking at their finest, we made the short walk to the new Durham Convention Centre: registration took place at the door and then we entered into the grand foyer. A surprise for all was our rum bosun, Mike Fox with his own stand and rum barrel calling 'up spirits'. Dressed in his traditional bosun outfit, the three-hundred and fifty guests were treated to a bit of Naval history with a placard alongside the stand detailing the story of the tot. Unaccustomed to being the centre of attention, Mike bravely smiled away for the many requests for photographs.



We were indeed honoured to be special guests and needless to say, the gala event was jaw dropping, with fine food, an open bar, entertainment and much, much more. The Association commandeered the dance floor and danced the night away. The scene transformed two of our members.

Steve Cook, with his dodgy hips, showed all his moves and barely left the dance floor and Jim Harper wearing a very fetching pair of tartan trousers became Clark Kent turning into Superman across the ballroom.

It was a late finish and a wonderful end to a wonderful week in Ajax

There were some tired heads on **Sunday 7th June** morning and with the official week activities over, it was time to recover. A few departed for the airport later that day, others enjoyed another day of sunshine and got out and about, some as far as 1000 Islands at Kingston. We really did luck out with the glorious weather all week.

**Monday 8th June** and the majority were homeward bound. Amazingly, Tommy got home without any further mishaps .... I think!

Thanks must go to Debbie Steer and Richard Cooke who not only collected most of the group from the airport but returned them at the end of the week

It was lovely to see extended family groups making up our number, Derek Wright bringing half of Glasgow, with good numbers of the Styths, Cooks and Cranswicks. Together with our solo travelers, showing how important the Association is in bringing people together, combating isolation, mingling with couples and families.

There are many superlatives about our week in Ajax; it far exceeded everyone's expectations. Laughter, tears, and many memories that will last forever.

To the Town of Ajax, Mayor Shaun Collier, Rose Collier and all the hard-working staff behind the scenes that made this such a very special week, we cannot thank you enough.

Until the next time ....

*Mike Cranswick*

*Secretary HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association*

## HISTORY OF 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1976 HMS AJAX VISIT

By way of background to the reason for the Association's 2026 visit to the Town of Ajax, the Town posted the following on their website which gives a very useful history overview. [50th Anniversary of the 1976 HMS Ajax Visit - Town of Ajax](#)

'In June 2026, the Town of Ajax is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the 8th HMS Ajax visit from 1976.

To mark this milestone, Ajax is hosting a series of special events and contests throughout the month. These celebrations offer residents and visitors a unique opportunity to participate in commemorative activities, connect with the Town's naval heritage and create lasting memories as part of this historic anniversary.

Before exploring the event and contest information, we encourage you to read more about the deep-rooted history that gives meaning to these festivities.

Learn more about Ajax's History

The Town of Ajax's name involves a unique bond that spans oceans and began during the Second World War. In 1941, the federal government established Defence Industries Limited (D.I.L.) on what was then farmland in Pickering Township. As thousands of workers arrived to support Canada's wartime effort, the fast-growing community needed essential services, including a post office, and a name that captured the spirit of the moment.

The name "Ajax" was inspired by a defining early naval victory in World War II: the Battle of the River Plate (December 1939). In that battle, three Royal Navy cruisers, HMS Ajax, HMS Exeter and HMS Achilles, engaged the German pocket battleship Graf Spee near Montevideo, Uruguay. The action became a widely recognized symbol of courage and determination, and those ship names carried powerful meaning across the Allied world. For a community born of wartime production and resilience, the name Ajax was chosen to reflect that same resolve.

The relationship between the Town and the Royal Navy deepened in the decades that followed. In 1963, Ajax Mayor William Parish attended the commissioning of the 8th Royal Navy vessel to carry the name "Ajax" and formally invited the ship to visit its Canadian namesake. While the invitation could not be accepted immediately, it became a proud tradition for each new Mayor to extend the invitation again.

That tradition paid off when Mayor Clarke Mason renewed the invitation, and it was accepted. On August 25, 1976, the 8th HMS Ajax docked at Oshawa Harbour, marking a long-awaited visit that became one of the Town's most celebrated moments.

On August 28, 1976, the officers and crew of HMS Ajax were awarded the Freedom of the Town, which is the highest civic honour that can be bestowed on a visiting military unit. In a memorable display, the crew paraded down Harwood Avenue to the Ajax Community Centre, "with swords raised, bayonets fixed and colours flying," marking a powerful ceremony of friendship, respect, and shared history.

Ajax continues to preserve, and honour this heritage in visible, meaningful ways such as the following:

**The ship's bell:** When the eighth HMS Ajax was decommissioned in 1985, the ship's bell was presented to the Town. It now hangs in the Council Chamber and is rung to call to begin all Council meetings, linking civic life to naval tradition every time Council assembles.

**The anchor memorial:** The ship's anchor was formally presented to the Town in 1987 and is displayed in front of the Royal Canadian Legion (Branch 322) on Hunt Street, serving as a public memorial and gathering point for remembrance.

**Street signs that tell a story:** Streets throughout the town bear the names of the officers and men who served on the Ajax. The Town amended the street naming policy to include the names of men who served on the HMS Achilles and HMS Exeter during the Battle of the River Plate. In 2016 the policy was amended again to include the men who served on the 8th HMS Ajax during the visit in 1976.

Chain of Office: Inspired by Mayor William Parish's 1963 visit to England for the commissioning of the 8th HMS Ajax, the Chain of Office is worn by each Mayor as a visible link between today's civic ceremonies and Ajax's enduring naval heritage. During his visit, Mayor Parrish spent time with several English mayors who wore Chains of Office, a longstanding British tradition that had not yet been adopted in Ajax. Surprised that the Mayor of Ajax did not have one, this experience inspired the creation of Ajax's own Chain of Office shortly thereafter, which continues to be worn by all Mayors of the Town today.

Ongoing connection with the Association: The relationship is kept strong through continued ties with the HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association, including commemorative visits and ceremonies that reinforce Ajax's place in this shared history.

Ajax is the only town in the world named after a Royal Navy warship, and the 50th anniversary of the 1976 frigate visit is a chance to honour that rare identity: a community shaped by wartime purpose, built through postwar growth, and sustained by a living tradition of remembrance and friendship.

Visit: [HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association](#) to learn more about the relationship between the Town of Ajax and HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association

To learn more about Ajax's general history visit: [Ajax 70th Anniversary - Town of Ajax](#)

## ALBERT EDWARD ROBB - OBITUARY

There cannot be many Associations in the world that can claim to have recruited a centenarian into their membership, but for Albert's 101 birthday present, in 2019, his family did just that by joining him up with the HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association.

Albert Edward Robb was born on 13th September 1918 and died 27th March 2026 at the grand age of 107. He remained mobile, independent and in his home up until the end.

There have been several articles on Albert since he joined and Nigel Masters & I had the privilege to visit him on his 104th birthday. We arranged for him to get a Street Name in the Town of Ajax and he was duly assigned to Robbie Crescent, originally named in honour of Richard Robbie, a River Plate Ajax veteran and Association member who died in 2002; his son Leonard is also a member. Albert was sent a Street Sign by the Mayor.



The below is as appeared on his application form:-

Served on the Ajax from 19/03/1940 to 22/11/1941. Official no: C/SR 16343, Ajax rating Petty Officer (ordnance artificer)\* Left Ajax in Alexandria for a UK Draft called in New York & brought over the first American troops after Pearl Harbour, arrived UK Feb 1942.

After foreign service leave, draft to hunt class destroyer HMS Meynell 6th March 1942, convoy duties in home waters for 3½ years which included arctic convoys to Russia until coming south to take part in Normandy landings on D-Day. Then constant convoys to France until France was cleared of Germans, after that convoys to Antwerp. Made Chief Petty Officer December 11th 1942, finished with the Navy 18/12/1945. I have 13 decorations, all are government issued, 7 UK, 3 Russian, 1 Malta, 1 Greek, 1 French. The Russian one being the Ushakov, one of Russia's highest naval awards. The French one being Appointment Chevalier



*Albert with his street sign*

of the order national de la legion of honour which is France's highest order of merit which makes me a knight. I was mentioned in despatches whilst in the Arctic. I have written my memoirs, a copy which in the Admiralty archives.

\*As a Petty Officer Ordnance Artificer Albert was responsible for the all the upper deck guns: 8 – 4” H. A. guns, 12 short range weapons and the aircraft catapult. His memoirs can also be found here <https://www.hmsajax.org/subsequent-commissions>

Albert's funeral was a private affair.



LtoR: Malcolm Collis; Albert Robb; Nigel Masters at Albert's 104th

# Long lives lived well

**FAIR winds and following seas to Harry Waddingham believed to be Britain's oldest WW2 veteran – who has died aged 109.**

Harry survived two sinkings in 12 months in the darkest hours of the conflict – firstly during the Dunkirk evacuation, then 12 months later during the German invasion of Crete.

They were the grimmest moments in a remarkable career spanning several decades – and two arms of the nation's armed forces.

Originally from London, Harry joined the Royal Navy at 16 in 1932, initially as a gunner before subsequently transferring to the PTI branch.

He saw extensive action throughout the 1939-45 conflict in the European/Mediterranean theatres of war.

In May 1940, Harry (pictured with Admiral John Kingesell, president of Eastbourne RNA) was serving aboard veteran destroyer HMS Wakeful pressed into action during the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk.

Having embarked more than 600 troops – in addition to her crew of more than 100 – Wakeful was attempting to return to England when she was torpedoed by a German E-boat.

Turns in two, the ship sank in minutes with horrific loss of life. Just four soldiers and 23 crew were rescued including Harry, who was catapulted into the Channel from the upper deck by the force of the blast.

He was later drafted to another destroyer, Iuno, a ship he didn't want to. She came under sustained Italian and German air attack southeast of Crete 74 hours after Axis forces invaded the island and fell victim to direct hits from Italian bombs which caused her to capsize inside two minutes. Of 220 men aboard, only 104 survived.

Harry continued to serve at sea till the war's end, chiefly on Atlantic and Russian Convoy patrols.

Post-war, he went into teaching, initially in schools, then recalled to uniform by joining the RAF's educational arm, where he reached the rank of Squadron Leader before returning to civvy street to resume teaching, before he retired to Bexhill where he became a valued and popular member of the town's Royal Naval Association branch.

RNA National President Vice Admiral Duncan Potts said Harry's passing marked "the end of an era".

He continued: "Harry Waddingham was truly one of a kind. To reach 109 years is extraordinary in itself, but to have lived a life of service and integrity makes his passing all the more poignant.

"His life stands as a testament to the courage and sacrifice of the wartime generation, whose legacy continues to inspire us all.

"We are immensely proud to have called him one of our own, and he will be greatly missed."

Just two years younger than Henry Waddingham was former senior rating Albert Robb who passed away aged 107.

Originally from Newark, after completing basic training in the RN Special Reserve he was assigned to cruiser HMS Ajax, completing repairs following damage sustained grappling with the Graf Spee in the Battle of the River Plate.

As a Petty Officer Ordnance Artificer, the 22-year-old was responsible for all the upper deck guns; eight 4in anti-aircraft guns, 12 short-range weapons and the catapult for Ajax's spitzer plane.

Albert spent 12 months on Ajax, seeing action throughout the Mediterranean from Greece and Crete to Egypt and Malta, before joining Hunt-class destroyer HMS Meynell and spent the rest of WW2 in the waters of northern Europe's Arctic Convoys (for which he earned a mention in despatches), the D-Day landings and subsequently further convoy duties, escorting merchant vessels to liberated Belgium and France.

Participation in D-Day was "a relief" after the runs to northern Russia. Albert's destroyer was charged with escorting a force through the Dover Strait and on to Normandy to support the landings around Arromanches.

"We arrived at Gold beach on the morning of June 6," he recalled. "Ships galore as far away as we could see, battleships and cruisers bombarding, and Ajax was there. We then continued with our secondary orders: patrol on the seaward side of all the shipping as interference of German E boats and one-man submarines was expected.

"This was until dawn next day when we suddenly picked up speed and returned to Portsmouth to pick up our second convoy and carried on like this most of the time. This was our routine until our forces took Antwerp and the last Germans were kicked out."

In harm's way for most of World War 2 – Albert took the risks with remarkable sangfroid. "I wasn't scared to be on the sea or of the war," he said. "I always thought if you're going to get killed, you're going to get killed. Whether you're laughing, whether you're scared, it doesn't make a difference and that's how it was."

Discharged as a chief petty officer in late 1945, he earned 13 Government-issued medals (he's pictured holding a framed collection of most of them); seven from the United Kingdom, three from Russia, and one each from Malta, Greece and France – the latter the *Légion d'honneur*, granted to Allied servicemen and women who played their part in the liberation of the country from the Nazi yoke.

Albert joined the HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association in 2019 on his 101st birthday. Although he wasn't at the River Plate, the town of Ajax, near Toronto, which took its name from the cruiser following the encounter with the Graf Spee, honoured Albert with a road (as it did with all the warship's crew) a street of substantial family homes, Robbie Crescent.

He died on March 25th after a short illness.

Navy News Obituary Article for Albert and another 109 year-old veteran

## KNITTING TO REMEMBER

An interesting article entitled, “Friends from afar join forces to knit wartime life” appeared in March 2026. It related to ‘The Longest Yarn 2 exhibition’, where 80 knitted panels tour the country and aim to portray what everyday life was like for people in Britain during the war, from when it was declared until the parties in the streets to mark its end, with volunteer knitters spending hundreds of hours creating wartime scenes as part of the exhibition.

One exhibit was of particular interest: Rosemary Fielder, from Penrith, Cumbria, was keen to get involved in the project, having previously knitted for a similar exhibition commemorating the D-Day landings. She roped in two friends, one from Newcastle and one from Sussex, with a third joining from Norway after they met on holiday.

They knitted Winston Churchill visiting HMS Exeter as it returned from a mission in 1940 [River Plate].

She said, “When you’re sewing up 80 sailors’ feet and, literally, their shoes are the size of my thumbnail, it’s a bit of a labour of love, but it’s been so rewarding.”

It took the group about seven months to knit the scene.



Profits from tickets go to supporting veterans’ charities including Forces Veterans Afloat - a project to refurbish canal boats to provide permanent homes for veterans with PTSD, so a worthy cause.

The exhibition finished at the end of April 2026.

If you are a knitter and fancy becoming involved in future projects, have a look at <https://www.thelongestyarn.com/>. My distant memories of my mother trying to teach me to knit only produced scarfs that I didn’t know how to end!

*Malcolm Collis*

## DAMAGED HMS EXETER GUNS

Another member posted these images on our Facebook Group showing damage sustained by HMS Exeter at the Battle of the River Plate and this, along with other heavy damage and many casualties, forced her to retire from the Battle and make for the Falklands.

I wasn't aware that identification marks were displayed on RN ships and whilst it obviously aids friendly aircraft to know who is who, by the same token, it would also help enemy planes pick out a target?



## THE WRECK OF THE GRAF SPEE

A member of the group posted this image of the wreck of the Graf Spee being inspected by allies, which brought back happy memories of our Association trip to Uruguay & Argentina in December 2019, a trip made to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate and the subsequent scuttling of the Graf Spee, some six miles out from Montevideo. We sailed out with the Uruguay naval to the scuttle site where we all cast flowers onto the sea; only a buoy marks the spot now, the wreck having sunk from sight into the mud.

The hole at the top of the image is where the rangefinder would have been and being of great interest to naval engineers as it contained cutting edge technology; it has already been removed. We viewed it in the dockyard at Montevideo, along with her anchor and one of her guns; the anchor has now been relocated to Punta del Este, near the Ajax waist anchor memorial, that we also visited.

We were very fortunate to have also been given special permission to visit a secret location to view the recovered bronze eagle, the first group ever to have seen it. Recovered in 2006, there has been an on-going legal and public debate about what to do with it: melt it down, sell it or display it, which is still ongoing with the eagle still in secret storage and still not been seen by anyone else except our group!

*Malcolm Collis*



*Jonathan Harwood inspecting the Graf Spee Rangefinder*



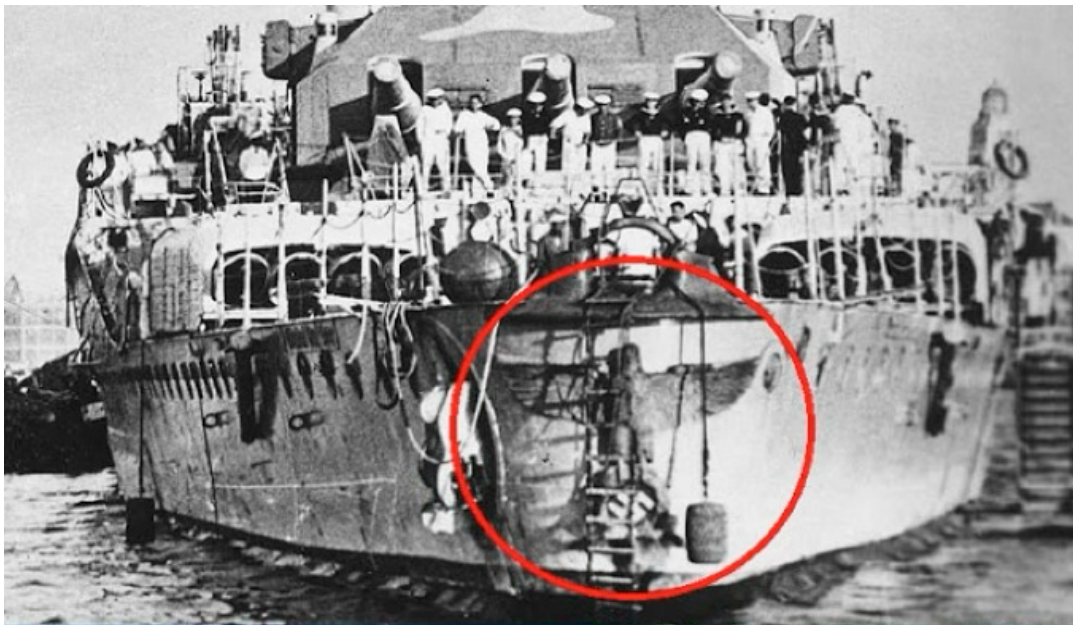
*L to R: the late Alan Phillips; Dave Lear, Ken Ward at the Graf Spee Anchor*



*The Ajax Waist Anchor Memorial at Punta del Este, Uruguay*



*The Graf Spee Bronze Eagle being recovered in 2006 & below, in situ on the stern*



## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

I am delighted to report that, with one or two exceptions, there are no outstanding subscriptions - thanks everybody – this does make life so much easier. If you don't pay by a renewing Faster Payment In (FPI) or Standing Order, just check your last payment date and make a manual transfer to save me having to chase – subscriptions remain at £12 & £18 family. We are encouraging members to select this method of payment as an alternative to PayPal as we do lose out on transaction fees – you can cancel your PayPal subscription and replace with a FPI or SO.

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.**

**Veterans and their families ought to be aware of the network of organisations out there that can offer help if required:**

<b>SSAFA</b>	<a href="#">SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity</a>
<b>Help for Heroes</b>	<a href="#">UK Armed Forces and military veterans charity   Help For Heroes</a>
<b>Royal British Legion</b>	<a href="#">Royal British Legion   Armed Forces Charity</a>
<b>The Veterans Charity</b>	<a href="https://careaftercombat.org">https://careaftercombat.org</a>

### CROSSED THE BAR:

Albert Edward Robb 27th March 2026 at the age of 107 – see separate article for further details

### NEW MEMBERS:

No new members in this Newsletter period.

### BIRTHDAYS

The following Frigate members have celebrated a significant birthday (a '0' or a '5') during this Newsletter period, March to May inclusive and we send them our best regards:

Kevin Bowen	65
Ian Darbyshire	70
Nigel Masters	70

Welcome Ian & Nigel to the seventy club!

They should have received an Association birthday card from Peter Danks.

### WELFARE & HEALTH UPDATES

As we all get older, bits wear out, stop working or just fall off, and I'm sure all of us of a certain age will have a litany of ailments of varying degrees of seriousness and varying amounts of tablets for breakfast. Should you have something in particular you would wish members to be aware of, then please let me know – I also know how to keep a secret if you just want to make me aware.

**Allan Lorriman** – our now sole Cruiser veteran who celebrated his 100th birthday last year. Son Howard reports both mum and dad are doing well with no change since the last update, still plodding along – good to hear and we send them both our best wishes.

**Marian Gifford** – an Associate member, along with son Ralph, Marian unfortunately had a fall at home in April and ended up spending some time in Medway Hospital. She is now (beginning of May) in a Rehabilitation Centre and is making reasonable progress. Marian recently celebrated her 95th birthday and as son Ralph said, they certainly made them off strong stuff back in 1931. Happy belated birthday wishes from us all. Marian is the daughter-in-law of Lewis Henry Gifford 1937-40 and was at the River Plate (CTB 01/10/1977 at the age of 77) and was married to Lewis', son Norman, who CTB 08/12/2017.

Unfortunately, we have several other members either recovering from, undergoing, or awaiting various medical procedures, or just Anno Domini catching up, and we send them all our very best wishes for a speedy recovery.

If anybody wants to make contact with any other member, let me know; I'm sure they will agree to me sharing their contact details, not forgetting WhatsApp direct messaging.

### **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The easiest way to pay your membership dues is by Standing Order or regular Faster Payment (FPI) through our bank and this is the preferred method. PayPal, which is on the Association's website, is another option, but we become liable for transaction fees. 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: LLOYDS: HMS Ajax & RPVA (or River Plate Veterans Association)

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 24865868

SORT CODE 30-99-56

CHEQUES 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](mailto:h.m.s.ajax.rpv@gmail.com) 01366 377945*

*+44 7717559594*

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## **NMA BECOMES THE RBLNRG ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE GARDENS**

At the end of March the Association received a 'Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens' Communication to Memorial Holders

The email went on to say, 'Our memorial holders are an important part of the National Memorial Arboretum community, and I am writing to you to provide you with some important information.

Over the last few months, we have been working on a plan to enhance the long-term future of the National Memorial Arboretum by uniting it with the Royal British Legion.

This has put the destination at the heart of the ambitious RBL strategy to 2035 to evolve Remembrance and widen participation to support the vision of bringing society together to recognise, remember and support the Armed Forces community.

To help achieve this, the RBL and the Arboretum joined together and ceased to operate as two separate entities as of 31st March 2026. This change has provided a simplified governance structure, with one Board of Trustees, removing administrative duplication and associated costs. There was no change to Arboretum employees other than a transfer under TUPE regulations.

From September the National Memorial Arboretum will become known as the **Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens**.

This new name is part of changes which will enhance our position as a popular visitor centre and the nation's year-round place to remember.

The RBL National Remembrance Gardens will continue to be a dedicated place to commemorate service and sacrifice by members of the Armed Forces, emergency services and civilian organisations, for generations to come. Our collection of more than 420 memorials [Ours was the 300th back in 2014] will grow, and we will announce our vision for investment to enhance the site's position as the nation's year-round place to remember later this year.

We want to reach even more people in future and will continue to evolve our work through landscape, learning, community outreach, events and partnerships.

All donations and funds raised will continue to be warmly received and will continue to support our work at this special place.

RBL National Remembrance Gardens describes a place that invites people in, not just to reflect, but to take an active part in Remembrance. We will be updating our branding from September onwards, you will see new signage, and a refreshed website and social media channels.

This important new chapter is supported by our founder Commander (Rtd) David Childs CBE.

He said: "When the Arboretum was founded, my ambition was to create a living place of Remembrance, rooted in trees, offering a dedicated space to reflect on service and sacrifice for our nation. Over time, that vision has grown organically, shaped by those who cared for it and by the many communities who found meaning here. I am excited to see[PR7] how this inspirational place will continue to grow and evolve in the next chapter of its journey."

Like David Childs, I'm excited about the future of this very special place and look forward to sharing our future plans with those like you who have supported us in our first 25 years.

I also wanted to use this opportunity to confirm the arrangements and commitments to existing memorials.

There will be no changes to the basis of arrangements for memorials and, as owners, you remain entirely responsible for the maintenance, upkeep and safety of your memorial. If memorials are not maintained and become a safety hazard the terms of the Memorial Application and Amendment Policy SOP 44 (available on our website) will apply and the memorial may be removed.

All rights and obligations under your current memorial agreement will be assumed by the Royal British Legion, who will continue to honour the terms of the agreement without interruption. This transfer will not affect the terms, validity or performance of your agreement. If you have a current, signed and valid maintenance agreement with the Arboretum the arrangements for your memorial will continue following the transfer.

Must remember to reflect this change when we print up the Service Sheets for our service at the NMA, sorry RBLNRG, on Saturday 26th September 2026

## SS USSUKUMA

I received an enquiry from Michael Brundke who said he had read our website with great interest. The enquiry was in respect of his father Heinz Brundke who was aboard the German merchant ship SS Ussukuma on December 5th 1939. He said, "It was captured by HMS Ajax. In retaliation, the crew scuttled their own ship. The crew were taken prisoner aboard the Ajax.

Unfortunately, I was never able to discuss these events with my father as he passed away in 1975. I would be very interested to know if the crew of the Ussukuma was still aboard HMS Ajax during the battle with the Admiral Graf Spee or were the crew already transferred to another ship bound for the Falkland Islands?"

The Ajax diary has an entry for the incident which reads: *5/12/39 With CUMBERLAND intercepted the German ship USSUKUMA off Bahia Blanca. USSUKUMA was scuttled. AJAX sailed to San Borombon [near Buenos Aires] to refuel from OLYNTHUS*

The brief history for HMS Cumberland reads: *5th [December] in company with HMS AJAX intercepted German ship USSUKUMA which scuttled.*

*12th [December] Under self-refit and boiler cleaning at Port Stanley.*

She was scuttled in position 39° 24' S 57° 15' W and her wreck was identified in 2008, lying in 70 metres of water approx. 60 miles off Necochea in Argentina.

Ajax did not visit The Falklands between the incident with the Ussukuma and The Battle of the River Plate on 13th December 1939, but Cumberland did, for a quick re-fit before being recalled north arriving in the days after the Battle.

Further research [www.sixtant.net] revealed that Ajax interned the 107 crew members from their lifeboats and transferred them to the Cumberland, as enemy civilians, which put them ashore on the Falklands Islands. Micheal believed that the Ajax later transferred the crew to the Internee Camp Baviaanspoortin in South Africa near Pretoria, but this not accurate as Ajax never went to South Africa. HMS Cumberland did however, in early January 1940, sail to the Cape of Good Hope and refitted at HM Dockyard Simonstown on the 11th, so could well have taken the prisoners with her?

His father stayed in South Africa until 1947.



USSUKUMA (DOAL), built 1921, 7 766 BRT, Foto: DA

On the outbreak of war the SS Ussukuma, named after a region in German East Africa, now Tanzania, was lying off Lorenço Marques [now Maputo, the capital of Mozambique] and was commandeered by the German war machine for service in the South Atlantic where she would act as a supply ship for the Kriegsmarine, carrying ammunition, explosives, torpedoes and edibles for U-boats and Raiders in the south Atlantic.

In late September she went to South America and on 11th October reached Bahía Blanca in Argentina, where she stayed until 4th December.

Her captain, Karl Schulte, fell ill there and was replaced by Hugo Wilmsen. On 4th December 1939 the Ussukuma left Bahía Blanca in the direction of Montevideo in Uruguay, possibly to help the pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee, also heading for Montevideo. On 5th December, towards evening, she was intercepted by HMS Ajax who had been informed of her departure by the British naval attaché in Montevideo and by a Dutch ship which had met the Ussukuma shortly after the latter's departure. Ajax threatened not to rescue the German crew if they left their ship, but also ordered them not to sink it. Captain Wilmsen decided to scuttle her nevertheless and the Ajax fired three rounds at her, the first across the bows, the

second whilst she was lowering her lifeboats and the third when the boats were dropped into the water, 62 miles from the coast. The Ussukuma sank during the night of 5 December or morning of 6 December.

*Malcolm Collis Archivist*

(I never heard back from the enquirer!)



*Ajax from the Ussukuma*



*Ussukuma from Ajax*



*Heinz Brundke*

## ARCHIVIST UPDATE JUNE 2026

A fairly quiet period with very few enquiries trickling in.

### **JEREMY MICHAEL PORTER CAPTAIN HMS AJAX 1981 – 1983 - UPDATE**

In the March 2026 Newsletter, there was a request from Lauren Porter, granddaughter of Jeremy Porter, seeking any anecdotes from crew members who may have served with him in Ajax.

Tony Rawlings (Ajax 1977/78 and also 1981/82) supplied the following to Lauren:

“I served onboard HMS Ajax with your grandfather as Captain – he joined the ship when we swapped over from HMS Galatea in Gibraltar. At that time I was a Leading Radio Operator. We sailed to Plymouth and onto Portland to do Basic Operation Sea Training. A very intense period where the ship and crew are tested in all manner of scenarios. I can recall visits to Copenhagen & Hamburg during that time.

I returned to Ajax after completing a leadership course and a promotion order to Petty Officer was waiting for me on arrival. We had sailed to an exercise north of Scotland in very rough seas. To be promoted you have to request this at the Captain’s Table, carried out in the officers flat, a small space which leads to all the officer’s cabins. So, there I was standing in front of your grandfather, listening to the flattering words from my divisional officer. The seas became rougher; the ship leapt into the air and bounced – everyone was holding onto something for support – standing in front of the Captain’s table I had nothing to hold onto. I hurtled through the air like a missile, into the First Lieutenant’s cabin and landed on his bed.

Your grandfather burst out laughing, ‘Pull yourself together, you’re now promoted.’

The ship was deployed to the Persian Gulf, to relieve other ships needed in the South Atlantic. My role was working in the Main Communications Office (MCO) where signals were sent and received. It was a sombre space to be in when we heard the awful news about HMS Sheffield – your grandfather spent some time in there reading all the signals as they come in.

From the Persian Gulf we sailed to Singapore. There I left the ship and flew home, but before that Captain Jeremy Porter sat down with me and we had long chat – he thanked me for my service onboard during his Captaincy. For me it was a good memory – other Commanding Officers I served with did not do that. My recollections of your grandfather are he was firm but fair. I was saddened to hear about his passing only 2 years after I had left the ship.”

Lauren I hope this helps.

Lauren responded that her dad and uncle were so touched to read this. Her uncle said, “Lovely - thanks Lauren - HMS Sheffield was sunk in the Falklands - I remember mum telling us that his ship was going there for the war and then it got turned around a few days later as the then government/Navy high command didn’t think it would be a war for the sort of guns Ajax had - I think Sheffield was sent instead. He told me he was very disappointed not to be deployed there after all those years of training”.

### **HERBERT FLETCHER**

I received an enquiry from Wayne Caley regarding his grandfather Herbert Fletcher who served 1939 – 1945, died in 1946 and is buried in Tottenham Cemetery. Whilst he did not specifically mention he had been in Ajax, this was assumed as he wanted to know if a memorial was taking place this coming October as he was looking to visit from the UK.

Of the six Fletcher I have, two were as listed as HMS Achilles, one HMS Exeter & three HMS Ajax, but none appear to be Herbert.

I did, however, find him on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission site here [www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2432969/herbert-henry-fletcher/](http://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2432969/herbert-henry-fletcher/)

Ordinary Seaman HERBERT HENRY FLETCHER Service Number: C/JX657100

Royal Navy H.M.S. Ganges.

Date of Death           Died 25 March 1946   Age 36 years old  
Buried at TOTTENHAM CEMETERY North Sec. Grave 5023. (Screen Wall. Panel 1).  
Son of Edward and Annie Fletcher; husband of Florence Louise Fletcher, of Tottenham.

I commented that HMS Ganges was a shore training establishment for new recruits; perhaps he was part of the staff there as at 36 he probably wasn't a new recruit in 1946? I suggested he applied for his MoD record to clarify.

I advised that The Association will be visiting The Town of Ajax in May/June to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Frigate HMS Ajax's visit to Lake Ontario and The Town of Ajax. At the end of September, we shall be holding our Reunion weekend for members but on the Saturday we shall visit the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire and will hold a service at our Battle of the River Plate Memorial – you could join us at the NMA should you wish.

If you can establish the link between Herbert and HMS Ajax and did wish to visit Canada I could put you in touch with the Town to arrange a civic event: there is a Fletcher Avenue in the Town named in honour of the six listed Fletcher's and if you can show Herbert was in HMS Ajax at some time during WW11, I am sure they would add him and arrange a street dedication.

I've not heard back from Wayne!

### **WILLIAM DAVID ROSS KERR**

Gordon Ross Kerr emailed me regarding his father Able Seaman William David Ross Kerr C/JX643317 who was a Navigators Yeoman in HMS Ajax joining her in Malta on 15/11/1946 until November 1947. He was born 31/12/1926 and died 04/10/1983.

Gordon stated, "my father volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1944 at the age of 17, but was sent back and told to finish his final year at school first.

After completing his basic training at the Royal Navy Training Schools in the south of England (HMS Royal Arthur & HMS Dryad) he was assigned a ship in late 1946. He left the UK on HMS Indom [Indomitable?] on 15/10/1946, arriving in Malta on 22/10/1946. He stayed for 3 weeks on HMS Euroclydon [Shore establishment on Malta] and joined HMS Ajax on 15.11.1946 as Navigators Yeoman.

Ajax did a tour of duty in the Mediterranean between December 1946 & July 1947 (including the Exodus Incident), during which my father related the progress of the ship in letters home.

He was clearly ferociously proud of his ship and considered his position as Navigators Yeoman as one that presented a number of advantages over that of his fellow crew mates. One of the most recurring was the sanctuary of the Chart Room, with its radio and small heater that on occasions provided comfortable overnight accommodation compared to the slinging of a hammock below decks!

I am interested to know if it is likely to be any surviving photographs of the Chart Room and if so, if it possible to obtain copies to add to my record of Dad's time on his beloved HMS Ajax. I would be grateful for any information you are able to provide."

I wasn't able to help him with any images as I only have photos from the pre-war first commission taken by the ship's official photographer and made available as an album to subscribing serving crew (I have my father's which is on the website). During hostilities, diaries and photographs were not allowed and any 'unofficial' ones I have tend to be 'selfies' and fellow crewmates. I appreciate his father was post-war, but even then, there seems to be very few photographs available.

### **LESLIE JOHN ROBINSON**

Gaye Robinson is researching the wartime service of her relative, Leslie John Robinson, who served in the Royal Navy during World War II. From family information, she understands he

served aboard HMS Ajax and was later involved in submarine service. She believes he may have been onboard during the Battle of the River Plate, though she is still trying to confirm details.

He was born and bred in Bedford but after the war went to live in Western Australia: he died in 2009.

The crew list I have shows 15 Robinson, 13 of whom were Ajax, one which could well be Leslie; unfortunately, the navy only seemed to use initials rather than full names. L. Robinson is recorded as being in Ajax 1939-40 which would have put him at the Battle of the River Plate that took place at the end of 1939. L. Robinson appears on the Memorial Wall in the Town of Ajax. Whilst there is not a street in Ajax there is a Robinson Crescent in the nearby town of Whitby attached to the name.

To help clarify matters Gaye was directed to the MoD site to get hold of his Service Record and was asked to keep me updated on any developments.

*Malcolm Collis*  
*Archivist*