



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025

CONTENTS

Committee Details
Chairman's Report
Secretary's Report
Membership Secretary's Report
2025 Reunion Portsmouth
Allan Lorriman's 100th Birthday
Chile Earthquake El Mercurio Article – 1939
Dedication of RN Writer Association Memorial – Peter Danks
HMS Exeter – VJ Day
Frigate Sporting Prowess
Graf Spee YouTube Clip
HMS Ajax World Cruise – Alan Styth
Ajax Fire Trucks
Tax Dodge Day – Dave Lear
Inge Nedden/Langsdorff – Dave Lear
Archivist Update

Separate Page

Annual General Meeting 27/09/2025 Agenda



1935 - 48



1963 - 85

Nec Quisquam Nisi Ajax

www.hmsajax.org

CHAIRMAN

Nigel Masters
07743381153
nige.masters@gmail.com

SECRETARY

Mike Cranswick
07396318037
mikecranswick@live.co.uk

TREASURER

Stuart Speck
07496 539103
yorkiespeck56@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP**SECRETARY/****NEWSLETTER EDITOR/
ARCHIVIST/WEBMASTER**

Malcolm Collis,
The Bewicks,
Station Road,
Ten Mile Bank,
Norfolk, PE38 0EY
01366377945
malcolm.collis@gmail.com

**STANDARD BEARER/
MERCHANDISE OFFICER**

Mike Fox
01305823436
michael.fox01@talktalk.net

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Peter Danks
01243371947
pandedanks@btinternet.com

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Dave Lear
07496 385808
dave.lear@blueyonder.co.uk

For general enquiries: email
h.m.s.ajax.rpv@gmail.com or
through the website "Contact
Us" page at www.hmsajax.org



www.hmsajax.org

h.m.s.ajax.rpv@gmail.com

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hi Everyone. I truly hope you have had a great summer; we certainly have had amazing weather - how many times have you heard people say "It's too hot!" ... never, I say.

In a few weeks time we will be in "Pompey" for the Reunion. I hope you have all booked your accommodation and meal selections. Apart from the usual "Up Sprits" and raffle (please bring prizes), this year we have live entertainment; Shep Woolley will be appearing. Shep joined the Navy in 1961 at HMS Ganges; he was a Seaman Gunner finishing as Gunnery Instructor. He also became an amateur entertainer, performing for Shipmates globally and organising shows, etc. He left the Navy and became a full time Folk-Comedy performer in England. Most of us have heard his songs, "Grey Funnel Line"; "Down by the Dockyard Wall" and "Roll my Time Boys". Well imagine my shock when I made my monthly visit to my local pub ... sorry I meant daily ... speaking to three ex-matelots (younger than me) I told them we have Shep Woolley performing at our reunion; they all replied, "Who?" - stark realisation; I am truly old.

Great news for one of our regular reunion attendees, Tommy Murray. As a lot of you will know, he works for his beloved Everton FC. When this season's fixtures were announced he was devastated as the reunion fell on the same date as Everton's fixture versus West Ham, but the Lord, in the form of Sky TV, has answered his prayers, they have moved the match to the following Monday. God Bless em!

Malcolm and Mike Cranswick are taking the lead on this and doing an excellent job.

I joined the Navy at HMS Ganges and like a lot of us I was sports mad; we really got more than our share of it. One cold January afternoon in 1972, I was playing football: whilst attempting a tackle I felt excruciating pain in my left knee and could not continue the match.

The next day I reported sick and I was put in front of the Captain surgeon, a giant of a man, he was smoking a cigarette and stank of whisky. I told him what had happened.

This man was a Medical Genius; he diagnosed my left knee without even looking at it! He informed me that I had an extreme case of "Home Sickness" I was 15, far from home, missing my family and I had imagined the injury! Well I couldn't disagree with him, so I left and the very next day I was running out to the football pitch and guess what?; I was homesick again! During my time I was blighted with "Home Sickness" in 1973, twice in '74, '76 and finally 1978.

The final time, my kneecap dislocated (not home sickness) when the HMS Ajax team were

playing Truro City FC in Drake Barracks. This was a return fixture as we had previously played them in Truro as part of the City adopting our ship events.

I was taken to Royal Navy Hospital Stonehouse; a doctor opened the ambulance door and asked me if I was a real patient or pretend one as there was an exercise on that day and they were receiving pretend injuries! The Naval Surgeon did a fantastic job.

After I left the RN I joined the Prison Service and served over 40 years as a Physical Education Officer ... with no more Home Sickness.

The Mayoress of Truro was at the match and sent me a letter following the game - you will see that it is addressed to Cook J Masters; the J stands for Jan as that was my nickname, short for Janner as I originate from Cornwall. My Wife "Janet" didn't find out my real name for two months - anybody who knew Janet can imagine her reaction!

Forthcoming events include the Association's second official appearance at the Cenotaph for Remembrance Sunday on November 9th. For those of us who took part last year it was an unforgettable experience; my foremost memory was when we were stood on Horseguards Parade and the band struck up for the first time and we began marching towards the Cenotaph - goosebumps everywhere! Mike Cranswick is taking the lead on this and doing a fine job.

The Committee are busily organising next year's visit to Ajax Ontario to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Frigate's visit to the Town. The Town are planning a week of events. This will take place on the first full week of June. It is hard to believe it was all those years ago; I have a feeling that the Town will pull out all the stops for this event.

I must thank again our Committee; they do an exceptional job. Having spoken to members of other Associations, we are unique in many ways; far more structure than most and we are so blessed to have our connection with the Town of Ajax.

It just remains for me to wish you a healthy and safe autumn and God willing we will be back for the December Newsletter with many tales from the Reunion and Cenotaph.

Nigel Masters Chairman



SECRETARY'S REPORT

As summer comes to a close, we very much look forward to this year's reunion in Portsmouth. It will be interesting returning to Portsmouth and Southsea as it has been many years since I was based there on the amphibious assault ship HMS Fearless, later having married quarters in Rowner, Gosport and commuting daily on the Gosport Ferry to HMS Nelson.

Now that the reunion arrangements are in place, it will be full speed ahead with firming things up for both the Cenotaph March in London on the 9th November and slightly further away, the visit to Ajax, Canada at the end of May 2026, where we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Frigate's historic visit to the town in 1976.



Contingent A48 on the march in 2024

We have 18 veterans signed up for the Cenotaph March, a decent number, but I do have more places if any veteran members wish to join us. The closing date for me to submit further names is the 29th of September. Contact me at mikecranswick@live.co.uk if you are interested. Those that took part last year will attest to the fact that it is an incredible and humbling experience.

There has been a very healthy interest in the trip to Canada with numbers of those wanting more information matching our reunion figures. There will be a lot of activity mapping out the week of activities and logistics of travel/accommodation. Rather than bogging down the general membership with updates, this will be restricted to those who have expressed an interest, so if you are thinking of coming across the pond with us and you haven't told me, please contact me at mikecranswick@live.co.uk asap.



Unveiling the Memorial Wall in 2016

Separately, I have been working with the Town of Ajax to make amendments to the 1976 wall panel at Veterans Point Gardens. The Wall was unveiled in 2016 and later updated in 2018.

The difficulties in obtaining an accurate crew list for August 1976 have been well documented. Unfortunately, it was not quite as simple as obtaining a list from the RN (MOD). That work is now complete or at least as complete as it

can be and the Wall will be replaced in due course

I hope we are all in good health and I look forward to seeing many of you in Portsmouth for Up Spirits, I might even have 'seconds'.

Mike Cranswick

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S

Our Total membership currently stands at 257, of whom 6 are Life members and 42 Honorary plus 4 Organisations. Our Financial Year runs 1st September to 31st August and for 2024/2025 a total of about £2200 has been raised in subscriptions, with a few more to come in; from that I have been able to claim Gift Aid on £1813 qualifying payments (UK Taxpayers who have agreed to us reclaiming on their behalf) and at 25p in the £ this resulted in £453.25 “extra free money” for our coffers. If you are a UK taxpayer and want to be included in the scheme, please let me know if you haven't already done so: likewise, any change in circumstances whereby you no longer contribute to Rachel Reeves, let me know.

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.

CROSSED THE BAR:

I am delighted to say that I have nothing to report in this Newsletter period, June, July & August

NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome three new members –

Firstly, **Jeffrey ‘Billy’ Peter Connolly** who lives on the Isle of Wight. He joined up at HMS Ganges on the 5th December 1975, leaving around the end of January, early February 1976 to join HMS Sultan for formal training as a Marine Engineer. He joined HMS Ajax just after she returned from her World Deployment. around the end of May 1976. After exercises out of Portland, Ajax left to head across to Canada - he was still only 17 at this time. He left HMS Ajax early in 1978 after having a fall in the mortar well, whilst at sea, sustaining an injury that led to his medical discharge in June of 1978. He was by then an MEM1 and had passed exams for promotion as a Leading Hand.

Secondly, **Gary ‘Bungy’ Williams** who lives in Bolton. He served in the navy from 1971 until 1996 and was in Ajax between 1975 and 1978 as an LRO(T)

Gary Miles is the grandson of Richard Frederick Miles [1901-1970] who was in HMS AJAX Dec 1937-1944. Miles Drive in Ajax is named in his honour and his name appears on the Memorial Wall. Gary is the cousin of Ken Miles who also joined as an Associate in 2023. Welcome aboard to all three, the first two of whom were on the '76 Ontario visit.

BIRTHDAYS:

Happy birthday to the following crew members in the Newsletter period from June to September, inclusive:

**June to
August inc.**

CRUISER

Allan Lorriman	21/06/1925	100*	See separate article
----------------	------------	-------------	----------------------

FRIGATE

Martin Rolland	05/06/1949	76
John Galway	06/06/1959	66
Kevin Pearson	11/06/1958	67
Bob McMorran	18/06/1940	85
Peter Danks	20/06/1939	86
Kevin Syder	30/06/1959	66
John (Vic) Wilson	14/07/1945	80
David Shearer	14/07/1957	68
Bill McCarthy	18/07/1954	71
Dan Sherren	28/07/1946	79
Alf Larkin	04/08/1946	79
Alan Styth	10/08/1957	68
Wilbert Curran	31/08/1941	84

Crew Members, if I have missed your birthday, please let me know. Thanks go to Peter Danks our 'Significant' Birthday Card writer & sender.

MARRIAGE

Many congratulations to Dave Lear & Lynne Maynard who finally got round to becoming a married couple on 25th July 2025. We wish them all the very best. [See separate article]

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.

Albert Robb.

With his 107th birthday looming fast on the 13th September, his granddaughter Viona reports that he's about the same, still between her mum's and his place. Her brother went around the other week and said he was zooming around with his walking frame. As far as Viona knows, there's nothing planned for his 107th - he doesn't like the fuss, his hearing is worse, so that makes things difficult for him. Overall, he seems generally well with no health concerns – as Viona says, think he's made of strong stuff!

Well done Albert.

Allan Lorrimer – in June Allan celebrated his 100th birthday and was presented with an Association Shield – see separate article by Stuart Phillips. He certainly looks fit and well from the photographs and very much on the ball, according to Stuart. Well done and congratulations Allan.

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: 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 01366 377945

+44 7717559594

2025 REUNION PORTSMOUTH

Plans for our 2025 Reunion are progressing well with currently 58 members and guests indicating their attendance at the Royal Maritime Hotel Gala Dinner on Saturday 27th September 2025 at Portsmouth; the vast majority are also booked in to stay at the hotel on the Friday & Saturday, with quite a few adding on extra days.

For those stopping over, Friday evening will be free to allow members to explore Portsmouth and find their own eateries, should they wish. The following morning, we will hold the Annual General Meeting at 09.00hrs at the Hotel [Hood Room]; the Agenda is published with this Newsletter but should you have any further items to be discussed, let our Secretary know and it can be raised under 'Any other Business'.

Following the AGM, we shall make our way to the Normandy D-Day Memorial Wall in Southsea and member Bob Chalmers has arranged for a vintage bus to be at our disposal to get us to and from the site (Thanks very much Bob). The service starts at 11.00hrs with music provided by the HMS Nelson Royal Naval Volunteer Band and a precision march on by Frigate Members. Afterwards, for those that wish, the nearby D-Day Museum have offered us discounted entrance; there is also a café on site. Do feel free to turn up for this even if you are not attending the Gala function.

The Gala evening will start with the usual 'Up-Spirits' at 18.30hrs followed by the Gala meal with entertainment by the renowned Comedian Shep Wooley + raffle.

Meal selections have been circulated to attendees with a request (Nay, a command!) to make their returns + Bank Transfers of £49.99 per person by the 6th September 2025 at the very latest. Coffee and wine are included in the price.

If you are not down for the Gala dinner but would now wish to attend; let us know urgently before 6th September so we can send details. Although the discounted rooms have all gone, full price ones are available.

Malcolm.collis@gmail.com

Malcolm Collis

ALLAN LORRIMAN – 100TH BIRTHDAY

On the 21st June 2025 Member Allan Lorriman celebrated his 100th birthday, something we had to make memorable on behalf of the HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association. Member Stuart Phillips lives not too far from Allan in West Yorkshire and volunteered to make a presentation. Allan served in HMS Ajax between 26th November 1943 and 19th March 1946 and was a Leading Writer. Allan was in Ajax on D-Day and we have a Brick for him at the D-Day Memorial Wall in Portsmouth where we shall gather for the Reunion Service at the end of September.



Stuart sent in this report on proceedings:

It was an honour to be asked by Malcolm to present a plaque on behalf of HMS Veterans Association to Allan Lorriman on his 100th Birthday.



After consultation with the family it was decided to do this the weekend after his birthday with his wife and two sons and their wives present. This was on June 28 during the heatwave. We sat in the garden reminiscing about his time on Ajax (1943 to 1946); he remembered all the names of all his colleagues and places he'd visited. He had a remarkable photographic album and vivid memories of the D-Day's knocking out the shore batteries at Longues-sur-Mer Gold Beach.

We then finished with a lovely afternoon tea plus a lovely birthday cake with 100 on top.

During conversation Allan remarked he had always wanted an Ajax tie after admiring mine. It so

happened that Carol, my brother's wife, had given me Alan's blazer and tie, so the following week I returned back to Allan's and presented him with Alan's tie - so my brother's memory will live on.

Also, a lapel badge of Ajax town in Canada named after the ship. Allan was over the moon. It was a pleasure to meet him and the family and listen to his stories of his days in the navy. Thank you for a memorable afternoon.



Allan & Stuart with the presented Shield



Clockwise: Allan; Bessie (Allan's wife); son Nigel; son Howard; Stuart

CHILE EARTHQUAKE EL MERCURIO ARTICLE – 1939

A translation from Chilean Paper 'El Mercurio' - circa October 1939 *Sent in by Peter Danks*

GRATITUDE FOR HELP OF BRITISH CRUISERS "EXETER" AND "AJAX"

The Following article appeared on the editorial page containing an eloquent tribute to the assistance given by British Seamen in the Earthquake zone.

"Here are acts which move the soul and penetrate deeply in the heart of the peoples by their realism and fraternalism. This may be said of the British Seamen in recognition of their co-operation with the national effort in the national catastrophe in the South. Few, probably, have expressed their thanks personally, but all, all without exception, have felt grateful.

To the people of Valparaiso the "EXETER" and the "AJAX", and many other warships flying the British flag are well known. The ships of the Queen of the Sea have the same silhouette, a special style, their delicate lines hiding their immense power, which we cannot mistake. Chile has a tradition of British friendship that goes beyond any protocol, and knows well this friendship, which dates from the very dawn of her independent life, was the foundation of her maritime progress and the glories of her Squadron in Pacific waters. It is not a study of History that has taught this to the people of Chile; it is a feeling that has been handed down from generation to generation, which nobody disputes and which belongs to the class of accepted truths.

Do we not feel that this sentiment is alive and vibrating like the taut string of a surplus emotion, in face of this gesture of the Officers and Men of these two ships which have hastened like brothers to the scene of the catastrophe to share the sorrow of the unprecedented spectacle.

Always correct, without theatrical attitudes, with the calm of the race inspiring their chivalrous serenity, without sign of excitement, ever the same whether in a social circle or on the deck of a vessel under fire, the English have in the present case once again shown their positive value, that individual superiority which counts in every part of the world as a guarantee of responsibility. Some people may differ in appreciating British world politics, if it is opposed to their own doctrine; but nobody casts doubt of the immense human value of English culture.

We have watched the disembarking from the beautiful British Warships, converted for the occasion into hospitals, of women and men by hundreds, saved from death by the energy of their sailors, and taken care of with that goodwill to serve others which can only be displayed by those who rate human life at a high value.

We have seen how the Officers and Men have given up their cabins and beds to the wounded, themselves passing the nights on deck. All these things have earned the gratitude of the Country, they strengthen still more the ancient tradition to which we have referred and 'raise a lump in the throat'. We seem to see passing before our eyes at this moment the whole galaxy of Englishmen, Scots, Irish and all the sons of the great little Island who figured in the front rank in the days of our War of Independence and in the early years of the History of our Country.

Their descendants have continued the tradition of friendship and have given to Chile yet

another imperishable memory of comradeship in an hour of trial. If the whole nation thanks them, Valparaiso does so more deeply because it was under her sky and on her waters that the friendly ships of Britain were first mirrored, and because it is Valparaiso which so often hears the cordial salutes from the glorious and most powerful of the World's Navies.

The following is a copy of a letter which Captain C H L Woodhouse, Royal Navy, issued as a Memorandum on 15th October 1939.

H.M.S. AJAX

15th October 1939

Memorandum No.145/200

The following letter has been received by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty from the Foreign Office:-

Sir,

I am directed by Viscount Halifax to invite a reference to correspondence ending with Admiralty letter No. M 1377/39 of the 5th May regarding the recent visit of his Majesty's Ships EXETER and AJAX to South and Central American ports.

From a number of despatches from His Majesty's Ambassador at Santiago, copies of which have been sent to your department, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty will be aware that the generous and timely assistance afforded by the Officers and Men of His Majesty's Ships EXETER and AJAX to the victims of the Chilean earthquake has been the occasion for widespread admiration and gratitude in Chile. I am now to request that you will convey to Their Lordships an expression of Lord Halifax's appreciation of the noteworthy contribution which has thus been made towards the promotion of good relations between the two countries.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sgd) J.V. PEROWNE

Signed by C H L WOODHOUSE

CAPTAIN Royal Navy

DEDICATION OF ROYAL NAVAL WRITER ASSOCIATION MEMORIAL

By Peter Danks

On 28th May 2025, the President of the RNWA, Mr Colin Hughes, and three Association members joined staff at the Defence School of Logistics Administration (DSL A) to dedicate a Memorial to the Branch. Also in attendance were Group Captain Rachel Mawdsley, OBE MA BSc RAF, Commander Charlie Evans and Staff members and members of the current Logisticians (Writers) class and Georgina Yates, daughter of Writer Douglas H. Yates who served in HMS ALBRIGHTON in World War II.

The proceedings were introduced by WO1 Nicola Sweet as follows:

‘Good morning Ma’ams, Sir, Distinguished guests and Shipmates.

It is both an honour and a privilege to welcome you all to this special occasion here at DSL A for the unveiling of the RNWA lectern, for which we can share a moment of remembrance and recognition dedicated to the proud legacy of the Royal Navy’s Writer Branch and to those who have lost their lives in Service.

A special thank you to the Royal Naval Writers Association for their enduring commitment and support to members past and present, and which has, and continues to preserve the values and history of the branch with extraordinary dedication.

So once again, welcome and it is my pleasure to introduce you to Mr Colin Hughes, president of the RNWA. I look forward to seeing you all again in the future’.

Mr Colin Hughes then gave an address prior to the unveiling of the Lectern.

‘Since its inception in 1867 the Writer Branch has, as part of the former Accountant Branch which became the Supply and Secretariat Branch and latterly the Royal Naval Logistics Branch, claimed many places as its home from London to Yorkshire to Kent to Cornwall and now here with the other Services in the heart of the Hampshire countryside at the Defence School of Logistics and Administration. A place that, by its very nature, feels more permanent than the previous locations.

It is fitting, therefore, that this is the place where the Association should erect a memorial to all those Writers and former Writers who lost their lives in the service of the country. Where staff and trainees can read about the history of the branch and that of the Royal Naval Writers’ Association, the oldest military association in the world, or simply sit and admire the magnificent panorama across the playing fields.

On behalf of The Royal Naval Writers’ Association, I would like to thank the Commandant for allowing the Association to erect the Lectern in this lovely spot and especially for donating the bench, tree and plaque. Our thanks also go to members of the Staff, including Warrant Officer Ian McHugh, et alia, for their unstinting help in ensuring the project reached fruition today.

It is noteworthy that we have here today a link to the past, in the person of Georgina Yates whose father

Writer Douglas H Yates who was onboard HMS ALBRIGHTON off Gold beach on D Day and whose picture is on the Lectern.



Writer Bailey Brook-Ward and Mr Colin Hughes unveiling in progress

So, without further ado I call on Writer Bailey Brooke-Ward who volunteered to assist me in unveiling the Lectern to step forward.'



Writer Bailey Brook-Ward and Mr Colin Hughes prior to unveiling



Writer Bailey Brook-Ward and Mr Colin Hughes either side of the lectern

After the unveiling, Commander Charlie Evans gave a Blessing.

Blessing for RNWA Ceremony of Dedication

'Before we come together to reflect and offer our shared blessings and good wishes, a few thoughts on the Writer past and present.

At first, the modern 21st century writer appears far removed from the undertakings of the 1800s. The art of copying has been long eclipsed by advances in technology and the digitisation of the modern world is ever apparent – today's writer is evermore capable with a keyboard than a quill. However, on closer inspection I believe that there is a shared philosophy and with that, three virtues, of which Writers can be justifiably proud.

The Virtue of Accuracy: Just as the original Writer was a copier relied upon to faithfully replicate every word, the modern Writer embodies uncompromising accuracy. Their mastery of JPA [Joint Personnel Administration] ensures every detail is correct, reflecting a deep-seated commitment to truth and meticulousness that underpins our Service.

The Virtue of Dependability: Once a rare literate hand, the Writer's historical role was built on steadfast dependability. Today, that virtue manifests in their management of our pay and allowances. Their unwavering reliability directly impacts our personal and family lives, demonstrating a profound sense of responsibility for the efficient running of the ship, its crew and, by extension, those all-important runs ashore.

The Virtue of Trust: The Writer of the 19th century held strategic secrets, protected by their unquestionable discretion. Today, the Writer manages our most personal information. Their handling of this data exemplifies a sacred trust, showcasing prudence and respect for privacy, making them a guardian of our dignity. Before the blessing let us first take a few quiet moments of quiet to reflect on what has brought us to this point in our careers or personal lives.

Blessing *In standing here at this place today, at this special time in the journey of the Royal Navy Writer's Association, we come together as one community. As we celebrate the unveiling of the lectern and enjoy the promise of standing under the future shade of the cherry tree, we thank those Writers of old whose history shaped the branch of today. And may their wisdom and virtues inspire the Writers of tomorrow.*

Commander Charlie Jones Royal Navy, Humanist Chaplain and Celebrant



Distinguished Guests



WO1 Writer Ian McHugh and Mr Colin Hughes

By Peter Danks [Enlisted RN as a Writer September 1957. Joined RN Writers' Association in March 1958 to current date; now a Life Member]

Footnote from Peter - *As an aside, I am sure there are very many members who have experienced the services of Writers in ships they served. I Would be interested to hear of any good turns, or otherwise, they received from 'scribes' as we were affectionately known.*

HMS EXETER & VJ DAY

August 15th 2025 saw the 80th Anniversary of VJ Day – Victory over Japan, and the end of the Second World War.

Sixty-six crew members of HMS Exeter were killed or subsequently died of their wounds at The River Plate and Exeter was badly damaged. Initially not considered worth salvaging, at Winston Churchill's insistence she was repaired in the Falklands using steel brought in from Argentina and escorted back to Plymouth by two cruisers since her main armament was still out of action.

From February 1940 until March 1941 Exeter was refitted and modernised. She left Britain for the last time in May 1941 and joined the East Indies Squadron, largely escorting convoys in the Indian Ocean between India and Singapore. After the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941 and the fall of Singapore in February 1942, Exeter became part of a joint American-British-Dutch-Australian command and was attacked by Japanese torpedo bombers during the Gaspar Strait Sortie.

At the first battle of the Java Sea (27th February 1942), Exeter was hit by a torpedo fired by a Japanese destroyer but luckily this did not detonate. However, a few minutes later her boiler room was hit by a shell fired by the Japanese heavy cruiser Haguro, which crippled her, reducing her speed to just 5 knots. 13 crew were killed. However, she managed to return to Surabaya in the Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia). There Exeter refuelled and the following day was ordered to steam to Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Early the following morning, at the second Battle of the Java Sea on 1st March 1942, Exeter and her escorts were attacked by a large force of Japanese cruisers. Although repairs had enabled her to reach a speed of 26 knots, another hit in her boiler room knocking out all power. Japanese destroyers then fired a total of 18 torpedoes at her, two of which struck her on the starboard side, as a result of which HMS Exeter quickly capsized and sank. 40 crew were killed and the Japanese rescued 652 men of the crew of the Exeter, including her captain, who became prisoners of war. Of these men, 152 died in Japanese captivity.

In the run up to the 80th Anniversary, various News channels carried various reports and stories. One in particular (BBC Local) was spotted by one member and related to a signed Union Flag.

“The son of a Royal Navy officer who was imprisoned in a Japanese prisoner of war camp has described a flag signed by his father as a “piece of history”. Richard Wood from Fordingbridge, Hampshire, spotted his father's name, also Richard, on the union flag when it was featured in a recent BBC TV news report.

He had served on HMS Exeter, which was sunk in the Java Sea, before being imprisoned by the Japanese in Indonesia.

The National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth allowed Mr Wood access to see the flag and is looking to trace family members of other men who signed it.



Water-stained signature top left - R V Wood HMS EXETER

The flag was in an airdrop of food supplies to those in Makassar Prisoner of War Camp in Indonesia by the Australian air force in September 1945 after the Japanese had surrendered.

Makassar contained British, American and Dutch servicemen. A large contingent were from the Plymouth-based HMS Exeter, as well as HMS Encounter and the

USS Pope, which had all been sunk during the Battle of the Java Sea in March 1942.

Mr Wood said his father had never mentioned the flag. “He very rarely spoke about anything of his time, which was a shame - but I understand they were told not to,” he said.

He spotted his father's writing on the flag when it was featured on a BBC South Today report about objects held at the museum, and was invited to see it.

“It’s a real piece of history and it’s a real privilege to see it - knowing he signed it as he knew the war was almost over.

Mr Wood Snr stayed in the Royal Navy until he retired in 1968, having reached the rank of lieutenant commander. He died in 2007, aged 93.



The flag has at least 50 names written on it.

Will Heppa, the museum's curator of artefacts, said the flag had been dropped as way of telling the prisoners, they "hadn't been forgotten". The museum is hoping to put the flag on public display and is appealing for information about other men who signed it. "If we can collect as much supporting information about the individuals named on the flag, that would be wonderful," he added.

I can only get four other Exeter names; ? Hill, ? Greenwood, WR Ball & IR Fortune – perhaps our Exeter members maybe better placed to help the museum?

Malcolm Collis

FRIGATE SPORTING PROWESS

What appears to be an article from a Town of Ajax Newspaper reports upon a couple of matches between the Town and HMS Ajax during the '76 visit. I'm sure one or two of our members were involved?

[Apologies – can't remember where I obtained the cutting (MC)]



GRAF SPEE YOUTUBE CLIP

Thanks as always to Honorary Member Wes Cross who unearthed another YouTube clip which is now on our website - www.hmsajax.org/admiral-graf-spee

“Hi Malcolm

While on a deep dive into another naval topic I came across to a reference to a 1962 CBS network documentary on the River Plate battle done by noted broadcaster Walter Cronkite. I could not find the original video but it seems to have been re-issued in 1983 by the same network and is available on YouTube. <https://youtu.be/h0WfESghreo?si=NW8SJha2Xr-DOTIX>

I found it interesting to watch since it features interviews with a number of officers who were there. I am not sure if you are already aware of this film, but I send it along just in case. The newspaper article describing the original broadcast is below.

Wes”

Montreal Gazette, March 24, 1962 p25:



HMS AJAX WORLD CRUISE

Member Alan Styth posted the below on Facebook on 22nd July 2025

[HMS Ajax:09/12/1974 to 05/01/1977; D139899B; JRO 1 (W), RO 2 (W), RO 1 (W)]

‘50 years ago today, HMS Ajax left Devonport for our epic nine-month round-the-world adventure — with The Three Degrees’ “When Will I See You Again” playing us out on the radio!

Alongside the 8th Frigate Squadron and HMS Glamorgan, we ticked off Gibraltar, Malta, Suez, Djibouti, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Hawaii, Long Beach, Panama, Puerto Rico... and even survived the memorable fire between Fiji and Hawaii that had us laid up in Pearl Harbour for a while.

What a ship, what a crew, and what a journey! I’d love to hear your own memories from the trip — and let’s not forget those who are no longer with us, including fellow Comms messmates Iain Hamilton and Noel (Nobby) O’Brien, who passed away this year.

I know there are other shipmates from that time who have also crossed the bar — please do share their names so we can remember them together.

Let’s keep the spirit of those days alive — share your memories, stories, and photos so we can all look back on one of the best chapters of our lives.



TOWN OF AJAX FIRE TRUCKS

New Fire Appliances in The Town of Ajax will now have an image of one of the three River Plate HM Ships clearly displayed on their sides, together with the wording, “IN HONOUR OF THOSE WHO SERVED ABOARD HMS AJAX/ACHILLES/EXETER” as appropriate.

All Fire Trucks allocated to the Fire HQ will have the HMS Ajax ones; All Station 2 Fire Trucks will have HMS Achilles; All Station 3 will have HMS Exeter.

The first of the ‘HMS Ajax’ and ‘HMS Achilles Fire Trucks have entered service whilst the HMS Exeter’ is still in build.

A wonderful gesture to maintain the historical links between the Town, the Ships and the HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association - No doubt they will feature in the Association’s visit to the Town next May/June.



Fire HQ HMS Ajax Fire Truck



Station 2 HMS Achilles Fire Truck

TAX DODGE DAY

(Words & Title supplied by Dave Lear)

At long last, and following constant reminders from my Financial Planner, under the heading 'Nagging Alert' with regards our marital status, Lynne and I decided to form a Civil Partnership. After giving formal Notice, the date was set for Friday 25th July at 11.00am at the Bristol Register Office.

We both wanted a low key, no fuss service which became affectionally known as our 'Tax Dodge Day'. Just as we desired, no rings or vows were exchanged, no name changes, just sign on the dotted line. Perfect, with the legal element of the service taking just 51 seconds. The most difficult aspect being our ability, or should I say inability, to effectively use a fountain pen. Our son and daughter-in-law kindly agreed to be our witnesses, accompanied by our grandson Arthur, who loved sitting in the ceremonial chair for photos. Our granddaughter Madison was unfortunately ill and unable to attend which was sad but, as you read here, she didn't miss much!

Following the ceremony, we went for a celebratory meal before catching the bus home (we like to travel in style). Deciding we wanted to mark the occasion, we visited various quaint villages in the Cotswolds before arriving at the White Hart Royal Hotel, Moreton-in-Marsh, for a two-night break, or mini moon as Lynne liked to call it. We had a wonderful time and with the Lionesses winning the Euro final on the Sunday night, it was a weekend to remember.



INGE NEDDEN, nee LANGSDORFF – Dave Lear

It was deeply saddening to read about the death of Inge Nedden, nee Langsdorff, in the June 2025 Newsletter. It reminded me what a lovely lady she was when I met her at various locations on the 80th Anniversary River Plate Veterans Association Trip to South America 2019.

I first met Inge at the *Museo Naval* in Montevideo, Uruguay. Whilst in the 'Battle of the River Plate' room I was looking at a canvas board of stamps that Uruguay had released to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate. Inge approached me and asked if I had an interest in stamps. I replied that I did with regards to collecting only those with a Battle of the River Plate Anniversary theme. Inge enquired if I had those particular stamps shown on the board to which I replied I did, although not a first day cover, which I was hoping to obtain at the museum today, if possible. We were then asked to assemble outside at the 75th anniversary memorial for the unveiling of an 80th anniversary plaque to mark the Association's visit. After the unveiling Inge and I had our photo taken together before I rushed back to the museum to see if I could obtain my first day stamp cover.



Later in the evening at the British School Carrasco, I met with Inge and she was intrigued to know if I had managed to get my first day stamp cover. I said I did, thanks to a lady in the museum who had kindly given me one. Inge introduced me to her husband Rüdiger whom she said also had an interest in stamps. Unfortunately, I didn't have the cover with me to show them, however, we went on to have an interesting conversation in general about our stamp collections.

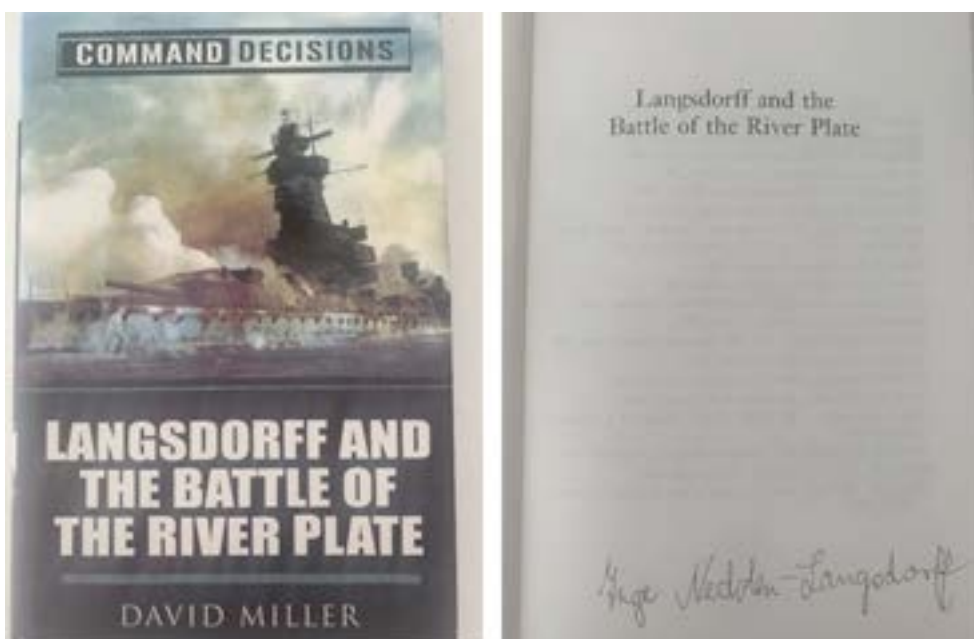
On Friday 13th December 2019, 80th Anniversary Day, I only had a brief chat with Inge due to the hectic day of events and the day being filmed by a German TV crew who were making a documentary on Captain Hans Langsdorff. She said she was looking forward to tomorrow which hopefully would be a quieter day before another day of planned events on Sunday in Argentina. The Association only would visit the secret location of the Graf Spee Bronze Eagle before sailing over the River Plate to Buenos Aires.



On Sunday 15th December 2019 I had the great pleasure of parading the Association Standard at the *Cementerio de la Chacarita Buenos Aires*; I felt very proud representing HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association and it was an honour to pay our respects to Captain Hans Langsdorff in the company of his daughter and members of the Graf Spee Association. It was humbling to stand before the grave of an honourable

naval officer and a memorable opportunity for me to have my photo taken with Inge & Rüdiger Nedden at his graveside. After the services we departed for a luncheon and reception with members of the Graf Spee Association at the premises of the Sociedad Alemana de Gimnasia, which by the way was a wonderful feast. I managed to have another chat with Inge about the day's events and luckily for me I had my first day cover, which she signed for me. We agreed to meet again tomorrow as she would be attending the hotel in the afternoon to listen to Jonathan Harwood present his talk on the Battle of the River Plate.

The following day I met and sat next to Inge during Jonathan's talk. We had some lovely exchanges before and after the talks regarding her father. I had a book with me called 'Langsdorff and the Battle of the River Plate' by David Miller. She asked if I was the author? I said I wish, but unfortunately the wrong David; we both laughed. Inge again kindly offered to sign the book for me. After the talks had finished and some welcome refreshments, we said our farewells and hoped to meet again at future events. Both Inge & Rüdiger Nedden were made Honorary members of the Association and had hoped to attend future Association events in the UK. These plans unfortunately never materialised due to covid and ill health.



It is sad that I will never meet with Inge again, however, those few moments in time have provided me with some cherished memories. To a wonderful lady, Rest in Peace.

Dave Lear

ARCHIVIST REPORT

Enquiries trickle in at a manageable pace.

CECIL H BEACHAM

I was contacted from New Zealand by a Tony White, seeking confirmation that Cecil H Beacham was on board HMS Ajax at the time of the River Plate because he holds a small but significant archive relating to Paymaster Lieutenant Cecil H Beacham.

The material includes:

- a near complete first UK edition of The Second World War, by Winston S Churchill, personally owned and signed by Cecil Beacham
- A set of caricatures of the newly promoted officer, drawn at Genoa, Italy, in the late 1920's early thirties, plus one drawn by NZ war artist Peter McIntyre in the 1950's.

Provenance connecting him to the Wellesley club in Wellington, NZ

He plans to keep these together, potentially for donation to a relevant institution.

He wanted us to be aware of their existence in case it contributes to our ongoing efforts to preserve the legacy of the Ajax and her crew.

Unfortunately, I had to reply that no Beacham's are listed on the Town of Ajax's list, nor any derivatives, which was slightly surprising. Nor could I find references to any Beacham's on the Royal Navy (RN) Officer's list for 1939-45. I did say that if he could provide the "evidence" that links Cecil Beacham to HMS Ajax or the River Plate then I can do some more research: if he does turn out to be one of the crew, I am sure the Town of Ajax may be interested in your collection.

I still await his reply!

FRANK PARKIN

Bob MacKay was hoping I would have information regarding the service record of his Great Uncle, Frank Parkin. He was the brother of his late Grandmother, Ada Parkin, who was born in Cleethorpes and resided in Leeds prior to WW2 until her death in the early '80s. Frank also resided in Leeds with his wife Jessie. Little was spoken about Frank but Bob was led to believe he was at the Battle of the River Plate and was wounded on HMS Ajax. Unfortunately, he also understood that he suffered greatly with his mental health after the war and passed away before Bob was born. He is now 63 and recently found in his late Father's possessions a mother of pearl brooch with 'HMS Ajax' in shaped wire. It got him thinking about Frank and the need to find out more about him and his service to keep in their family's memory.

I was able to respond that F Parkin does appear on the list held by Ajax and is shown as having served in HMS Ajax in 1939 until 1943 and was thus at the Battle of the River Plate in December 1939. His name appears on the Memorial wall in Canada. There is a Parkins (with an S) Drive but it is not altogether clear if Frank is assigned this street, along with another River Plate HMS Ajax veteran, S. F. Parkins. Member Debbie Steer did check it out for me but couldn't find any street plaque to verify.

As for the mother of pearl brooch – I was intrigued to find out if his is similar to the one, albeit broken, I have in the archives, which unfortunately has not survived too well over the years in a ring binder! With it is the background behind my brooch.

He did send me an image of his brooch, to which I responded, 'It is the same brooch and probably made by someone on board in their downtime (my father was a Chippie in the War and managed to make all manner of things). I wonder if whoever made them could have imagined we would be talking about them 85 years later - pity they didn't survive intact but sounds like they weren't too well looked after: between us we have a whole one. Bob was going to do some more digging in the family albums and get back to me.

Susan from Ajax also responded to Bob to say, 'It seems as though we have never been contacted by a member of the Parkin or Parkins family here at the Town of Ajax. In a case like this, Parkins Drive would be dedicated to both S. F. Parkins and F. Parkin, due to the

similarity of the names. Please forward any information regarding your great uncle Frank and I will begin his one page biography. Photos are also appreciated.



ROY JOHN WILLIAMS

Edward Dawson was after information on behalf of his daughter's mother-in-law. Roy Williams was her step-father. Born 20th June 1925, she believes he was a Stoker and briefly served in HMS Hood before joining HMS Ajax. On his 'BR77'* is his partial Service No C/KX 6(?)277 which confirms he was a stoker and from Chatham. The book is stamped 'Technical Training HMS Cabot'

**B.R. 77 Machinery Handbook naval engineers. It was standard issue for engine room artificers, apprentices, and stokers.*

I went back to him to say, 'I have ten 'Williams' appearing on the list for HMS Ajax but only one with the initial 'R', only. He is shown as being in Ajax in 1943, so if it is him, he would have been around the 18 mark. R. Williams appears on the Memorial Wall in Ajax but I do not have any further details but have copied this reply to Ajax to see if they have more details for you although they have no biography for him – they will probably request further information from you if he is confirmed as being one and the same.

A quick search on the shore training establishment HMS Cabot suggests it was in existence 1940 to 1942 so he could have attended as a Boy. I also found a crew list for the HMS Hood but although very extensive, does not record R. Williams, but I did him say to bear in mind that she was sunk on 24th May 1941 when all but 3 of the 1418 on board perished and he would have only been 15 years old at the time, so very unlikely to have been on her prior to that date.

Bob was going to follow up on the MoD Service Record route and promised to get back to me.

Malcolm Collis Archivist

