

TRIBUTE TO ALL
VETERANS

on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate

Come Celebrate September 26 to October 4, 2009



World War II changed Canada and the rest of the world forever, and in the midst of this change would be born,
a Town called Ajax

*honour
all
veterans*

*DIL celebration
history freedom*

HMS Ajax



Welcome Message from Mayor Parish



Steve Parish, Mayor

On behalf of Ajax Town Council, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the Veterans of HMS Ajax, HMS Exeter and HMS Achilles, as well as their families and friends, to the Town of Ajax for the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate. This occasion is a very special one to all of us in Ajax and we welcome our dear friends and Veterans who have helped make our Town, and our country, the great place it is today.

It is hard to believe that 10 years have passed since we last gathered for the 60th Anniversary Reunion. I do, however, remember it like it was yesterday and the events that gave birth to the idea. In October 1996, my wife Rosemary and I attended the dedication ceremony in England, honouring those killed during the Battle of the River Plate. I realized for the first time, how truly special and important it was to these gentlemen that our Town was named after their ship, and that our Town has streets named in honour of them.

Shortly after my visit to England, I realized that many of the Veterans had never visited "their" Town and streets. It was clear that if an effort was not soon made to have a reunion in Ajax, the opportunity might be lost forever. This gave birth to the idea of holding the 60th Anniversary Reunion in the fall of 1999. The idea was enthusiastically supported by Town staff, the Ajax Historical Board, the Legion and most importantly, the HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association.

This year, for the 70th Anniversary celebrations, we are taking the opportunity to honour all Veterans who have served, and will serve, their country to preserve our freedom.

I would like to thank the organizing committee, chaired by Pat Brown, for their hard work, dedication and countless hours spent coordinating the celebrations and memorial tributes.

We certainly have something to celebrate. Enjoy!

Steve Parish
Mayor

Message from Councillor Pat Brown

The Town of Ajax has the distinction of being the only town in the world to take its name from a ship - the HMS Ajax, who in December 1939, along with HMS Achilles and HMS Exeter, engaged and routed the powerful German pocket battleship Graf Spee at the Battle of the River Plate. As such, the Town has maintained strong relationships with these Veterans throughout its 50-plus years of existence. It is through these close ties that the Town will again pay tribute to those who fought at the Battle of the River Plate during the Town's 70th Anniversary Reunion of the battle. These events will also recognize all Veterans who have, and will, serve our country to protect our freedom. It's important to pay tribute to our Veterans - our heroes - who have proven their heroism and love for their country time and time again. This is an opportunity to acknowledge what a tremendous sacrifice our service members and their families are making to ensure our freedom and safety.

Pat Brown has a real passion for the history of the Town of Ajax. She has lived here since 1958, and has served as Ward 4 Councillor since 1991.



Pat Brown, Councillor

She is very honoured to be serving as Chair of the Planning Committee for the reunion celebrations and to honour all Veterans.

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Discover the past and celebrate the future

It's the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate and the entire Town of Ajax is celebrating with a variety of fun and commemorative events.

Whether you want to learn how the Town was named, meet some of the Veterans of this battle and their families, or simply enjoy the celebrations with friends and family, there is a new experience waiting for you.

The Town of Ajax was born from the conflict of the Second World War and is a standing memorial and testament to the freedom we enjoy! On September 26, 2009, Veterans of HMS Ajax, HMS Exeter, and HMS Achilles will visit the Town of Ajax to celebrate this special occasion. The Town is taking this opportunity to honour all Veterans who have served or are currently serving our country. Celebrate our freedom and pay tribute to the people who have helped to make our town, and our country, free! Enjoy a fun-filled evening with dignitaries and exceptional entertainment at the Tribute to All Veterans Gala on Friday, October 2 at Deer Creek; attend one of the many special street dedications and tree planting ceremonies; bring the family to the moving Musical Tribute to Veterans on Sunday, October 4 at Veterans' Point



Veterans' Point Gardens at the foot of Harwood Ave.

Gardens; or, visit a pub night at the Legion with the Veterans of the battle on Tuesday, September 29.

Remembering the past in our ever-changing world is key to understanding our heritage and how we came to have the privileges of freedom that we now take pleasure in. This is the perfect way to teach children about their very own history. Putting real faces to

the events will help them understand the realities of conflict. All you have to do is look around to find evidence of the benefits that our Veteran protectors, past and present, have achieved.

Go ahead - it's time to celebrate! For more information on the schedule of events, visit www.townofajax.com or call 905-619-2529 ext 3335.



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In memory of my Father (Stanley Jones) who served 5 years overseas.



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"We salute in deep gratitude the service men and women gathering in Ajax during celebrations marking the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate. They risked their lives to champion liberty in dire times, and blessed us with freedom and prosperity."



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

On September 26, 2009, Veterans of HMS Ajax, HMS Exeter, and HMS Achilles will visit the Town of Ajax to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate, and honour those currently serving overseas. A series of events are planned for the celebration.

Saturday, September 26 STREET DEDICATIONS

The following streets will be formally dedicated between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm.
Cullcastle St., Dring St., Iles St.,
Talbotshire St., Wicks Dr., Turnerbury Ave.

Sunday, September 27 STREET DEDICATIONS

The following streets will be formally dedicated between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm.
Jonesridge Dr., Searell Ave.,
Napiermews Dr.

Monday, September 28 SCHOOL VISITS

Local schools will be visiting the Main Branch Library and Ajax Town Hall throughout the week to meet with the Veterans and learn about the unique association the Town has with the crews of HMS Ajax, HMS Exeter and HMS Achilles. Canadian Veterans are also being invited to participate in these school

visits. Veterans attend Ajax Council Meeting Veterans will attend a reception at Town Hall, followed by the Ajax Town Council meeting at which they will be formally welcomed to Ajax.

Tuesday, September 29 TOUR OF AJAX AND LUNCH AT DORIC LODGE

Members of the Town's Heritage Advisory Committee are coordinating this event which will include a tour of Ajax and lunch hosted by members of the Doric Masonic Lodge.
(Invitation only)

Tuesday, September 29 PUB NIGHT AT THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

The Executive and members of Branch 322 are holding an Open House at 6:30 p.m. to welcome visitors to Ajax. The public is welcome to attend. For more information visit www.rclajax.com.

Friday, October 2 GALA DINNER

A Gala Dinner will be held at Deer Creek Golf & Banquet Facility. The dinner will feature a four course meal, with wine and entertainment provided by Brian Rose and the Little Big Band. All residents of Ajax are invited to attend this very unique event. Tickets are on sale now! For more information visit www.townofajax.com.

Saturday, October 3 STREET DEDICATION

The following streets will be formally dedicated between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm.
Dolby Cres., Dyerham Dr., Eyreglen Cr.
Morland Cr., Watersplace Ave.

Saturday, October 3 HARWOOD STREET DEDICATION

A street dedication will be carried out in the vicinity of Ajax Town Hall to formally honour Ad

miral Sir Henry Harwood, who led the three ships at the Battle of the River Plate. Admiral Sir Harwood's grandson will be officiating this ceremony.

Sunday, October 4 MUSICAL TRIBUTE

Musical Tribute to Veterans at Veterans' Point Gardens - 9:45 a.m.
Special guest, David Onley, Lt. Governor of Ontario. Massed bands, dedication ceremony and dedication of the Ajax Legacy Obelisk, followed by reception at the Royal Canadian Legion, visit www.townofajax.com for more details.



The management and staff at Subway would like to thank all our Veterans and extend sincere gratitude to current soliders abroad for all their sacrificed they have made.



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(at Bayly St.)



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Ajax Legacy Obelisk to be dedicated October 4 at Veterans' Point Gardens

The Ajax Legacy Obelisk will stand as testimony to honour all Veterans who have served and will serve our country to preserve freedom

We wish to thank our generous corporate sponsors that helped make the ajax legacy monument a reality

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LEFT TO RIGHT: Don Terry - Ontario Power Generation, Steve King - Ajax Rotary, Pat Brown - Councillor Ward 4, Chair of Event, Rosalind Menary - Sutton Group, Diana-Hills Milligan - Veridian, Anne Briscoe - Toronto Real Estate Board, Scott McEachnie - McEachnie Funeral Home, Pat Clark - Co-Chair of Event, Chris O'Hagan - Ontario Lottery Gaming Corp., Terry Clayton - Chair Durham Region Police Services Board, Bruce Sharpe - President, Royal Canadian Legion Branch #322, Ron Hawkshaw - Polak, McKay, Hawkshaw (absent from photo)

Ajax Legacy Obelisk

Ajax Council unanimously approved the Obelisk Project in the 2009 Budget to celebrate the Town's history and honour all Veterans.

Location: Veterans' Point Gardens, at the foot of Harwood Avenue.

Dimensions: 8ft by 8 ft at the base, 12 ft tall. Made of polished 'India Black' granite.

Etched with a poppy and featuring the inscription: This Ajax Legacy Obelisk will stand as a testimony to honour all Veterans who have served and will serve their country to preserve freedom.



The Rotary Club of Ajax Salutes the Veterans of the Battle of The River Plate on its **70th Anniversary** and all Veterans Past and Present for Services Rendered on Our Behalf!

Thank You!

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The members of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 606 Pickering congratulate the Veterans of the Battle of the River Plate on its 70th Anniversary.

Congratulations to the Town of Ajax and the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 322 Ajax on their efforts to coordinate the events celebrating this historic occasion.

Veridian salutes our Veterans.



The Battle of River Plate

Date: December 13 to 17, 1939
World War II

Location: Near the coast of Argentina and Uruguay in South America, off the estuary of the River Plate.

Event: A hunting group of three Royal Navy cruisers (Britain's HMS Exeter and HMS Ajax and New Zealand's HMS Achilles) tracked down a German heavy cruiser (Admiral Graf Spee) that had been commerce raiding since the start of the war in September. During the battle, the Exeter sustained heavy damage and had to retreat from battle. The Graf Spee went to port in Montevideo for repairs while the Ajax and Achilles waited to pounce. Rather than face the overwhelmingly superior force that the British led him to believe had been assembled, Hans Langsdorff, captain of the Graf Spee, scuttled his ship.

Summary: It was the first major naval success of the British Allied forces during WWII and the battle was heavily celebrated.

Celebrate with heroes at the Veterans Gala Event

Experience the joyful celebrations on Friday, October 2nd, during a truly festive evening filled with special guests, great music and the opportunity to mingle with World War II Veterans and their families. "The Tribute to all Veterans Gala at Deer Creek will be a once in a lifetime opportunity to celebrate with the people who contributed to creating the wonderful world we live in today," says Pat Clark, former council member, chairman of the gala and Ajax resident for over 35 years. Hosted by the Town of Ajax, the gala is part of the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate taking place in Ajax from September 26th to October 4th, 2009.

Guests will arrive at Deer Creek and be escorted to the banquet facility on golf carts by Naval Cadets and cordially greeted by the Air

Force cadets. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be served and then guests will be seated at their tables. "The West Creek Highland Band will 'pipe in' the Veterans and dignitaries and everyone will sit down to a fantastic four course meal," explains Ms. Clark. "The Mayor will introduce the Veterans and council members and dinner will be served. The food at Deer Creek is phenomenal," she continues.

Following dinner, a special guest (to be confirmed) will address the group and the Brian Rose Little Big Band will play while guests mix and mingle and dance the night away. "It is bound to be a memorable experience for all those attending," says Ms. Clark.

Proceeds from this event will go to help offset the cost of the Veterans

War Memorial being dedicated during the Musical Tribute to All Veterans on Sunday, October 4th at Veterans' Point Gardens.

Veterans Gala Event

FRIDAY OCTOBER 2, 2009
CELEBRATE THE UNIQUE HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF AJAX.

\$125 per person
or \$1250 per table

Tickets for the Tribute to all Veterans Gala can be purchased at: Ajax Town Hall, 65 Harwood Ave. South; Ajax Community Centre, 75 Centennial Road; McLean Community Centre, 95 Magill Drive; or by calling Pat Clark at 905-925-9860.



Our heartfelt thanks to all veterans, for the sacrifices you have made and will make on behalf of Canadians, and those in far off lands, less fortunate than us.



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(In the Ajax Plaza in the corner by Home Hardware)

Join us at a musical tribute to honour our heroes

On Sunday, October 4th, 2009 bring the family and be part of a special musical tribute to all Veterans at Veterans' Point Gardens. Join in the pomp and pageantry and see the dedication of the Ajax Legacy Monument. Placed at the foot of Harwood Avenue at the entrance to the Gardens, this beautiful obelisk, or memorial, will honour those who have served in past wars including our present day UN peacekeeping troops. This legacy monument will also serve as a vehicle for future tributes.

The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, will officially dedicate the stately obelisk and address gatherers. The Pickering Concert Band will perform music from the WWII era and the ceremony will include marching bands and classic pipes and drums groups including the HMCS York Band, Pipes and Drums of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 43, the Concert Band

of Cobourg and the Harwood Cadet Band.

Experience this incredibly moving musical ceremony. "With bands and speeches and seeing the Veterans march in with their medals, it will be a moving experience," says Pat Clark, former councillor and part of the team organizing the 70th reunion. "The Canadian Air Force has been requested to provide a fly over around 11 am which will thrill the crowd and there will be a lunch at the Legion following the ceremony."

The obelisk is 2.4m x 2.4m (8ft x 8ft) at the base and stands over 12 feet tall. Weighing approximately 20 tonnes, it is made of solid polished 'India Black' granite. A poppy symbol is etched into the top and the inscription reads:

This Ajax Legacy Obelisk will stand as a testimony to honour all Veterans who have served and will serve their country to preserve freedom.

Dedicated October 4, 2009 during the visit of Veterans from the HMS Ajax, HMS Exeter, and HMS Achilles on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate.

The urban plaza surrounding the obelisk has also been renovated and enlarged as part of this project. Expanded by 55%, the plaza has new benches, landscaping, a spotlight, unit paving, bollards, and sponsorship panels.

"The obelisk will stand the test of time and serve as a memorial to all Veterans," says Ms. Clark. "We owe the world we have today to those men. I don't want to think what our country would be like today if it weren't for them!"

The Bands will march south on Harwood Avenue from St. James Catholic School, corner of Cloveridge and Harwood, at approximately 9:45 am. The formal ceremony at the Gardens will begin at 10:30 am.



Did you know?

The Ajax Town Hall building interior features many similarities to the inside of a ship. There is a variety of memorabilia from the Ajax, including pieces of the enemy ship, Admiral Graf Spee, on display as well as wartime posters and historical photos. The HMS Ajax anchor is located outside the Legion on Hunt Street. The bell from the 8th HMS Ajax hangs in the Council Chambers at the Town Hall and is rung by the clerk to signal the start of each Council Meeting. Take a look!

Over 700 of the 800 streets in the Town of Ajax are named in honour of Veterans. Want to find out if your street was named for a Veteran? Call the Mayor's office at 905-619-2529.



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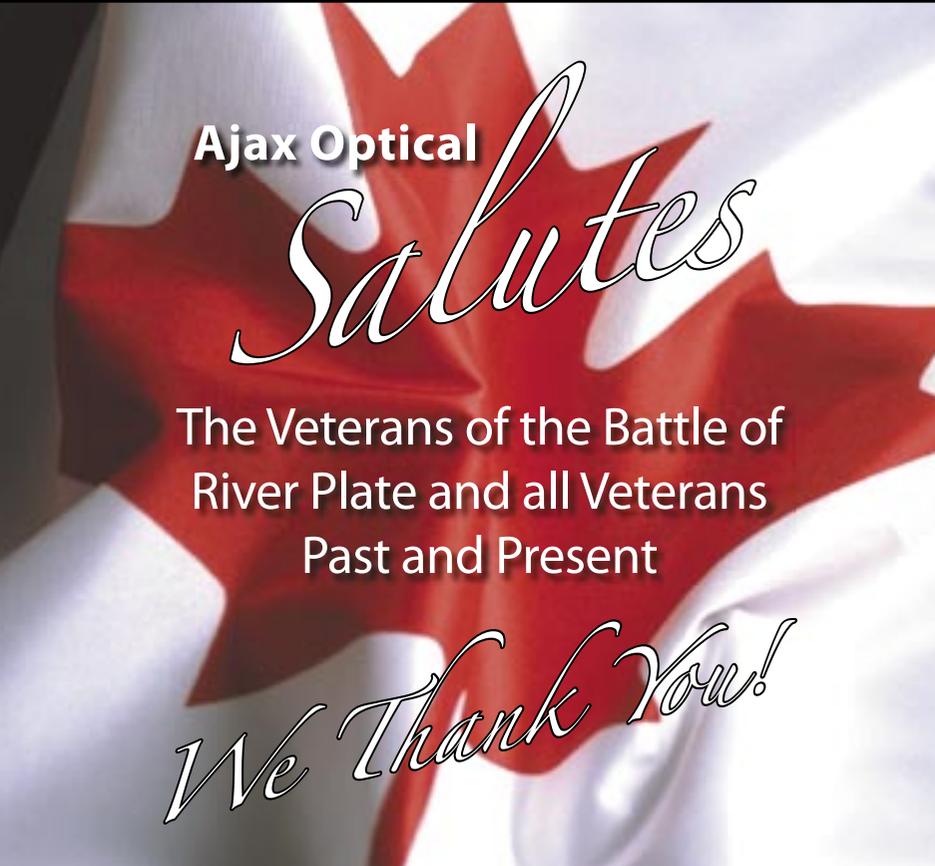
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What's in a street name?

As many residents know, the Town of Ajax was named in honour of HMS Ajax, one of three ships involved in the first Allied naval battle of WWII, the Battle of the River Plate. But did you know that the Town names its streets after those who served on these ships? Parry Road and Woodhouse Crescent, for example, were named in honour of the captains who commanded the HMS Ajax and HMS Achilles during the famous battle.

Residents may have also noticed special trees on Town streets with an engraved brass plaque. Whenever an HMS Ajax Veteran or a family member comes to visit Ajax from the U.K., the Town will host a dedication ceremony to officially unveil the street name. Over the years, the Town has conducted more than 65 street dedications. Veterans and their family members are overwhelmed when they visit - not only by the fact that Ajax is honouring them, but for the very warm welcome and friendliness they receive when they visit.

During the 70th Anniversary Reunion Celebrations, the Mayor and Town Council will preside over street dedication ceremonies for the following Veterans or the Veteran's family members:

Saturday, September 26

- Talbotshire Street
- Cullcastle Street
- Dring Street
- Iles Street
- Wicks Drive
- Turnerbury Avenue

Saturday, September 27

- Jonesridge Drive
- Searell Avenue
- Napiermews Drive

Saturday, October 3

- Harwood Avenue (at Town Hall)
- Eyreglen Court
- Watersplace Avenue
- Dolby Crescent
- Dyerham Drive
- Morland Crescent

With over 700 streets in Ajax and only 65 that have been formally dedicated by visiting Veterans and their families, it is a very distinct honour to live on a dedicated street.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Veteran for whom your street was named, contact the Mayor's Office at 905-619-2529, ext. 3335 or you can e-mail cherry.sevigny@townofajax.com.



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Admiral Sir Harwood's grandson to attend tree planting

Jonathon and Susan Harwood (Harwood's grandson and wife) will be visiting from Sept 29th to October 4 to attend the 70th Anniversary events and a special tree planting to honour Sir Henry Harwood at the Town Hall, on Harwood Avenue between King's Crescent and Achilles Road will be held on Saturday, October 3rd at 10:00 am.

Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, for whom Harwood Avenue in the Town of Ajax is named, is best known as the Commodore who led the British hunting group of naval cruisers against the German Pocket Battleship, the Graf Spee in the Battle of the River Plate, December 13th, 1939.

Born in 1888, he was first appointed to South America in 1919. It was during this time that Commodore Harwood developed a great appreciation for Uruguay and its people. Harwood's personable demeanour enabled him to establish excellent ties with the South American people. In addition to cementing friendships on the golf course, Harwood took the opportunity to train his small squadron to be ready for the war that he knew was coming. It was his visits to South American ports in the 2 1/2 years prior to WWII where he fostered goodwill and

trained his ships and crew that enabled Harwood to lead a successful battle at the River Plate on December 13th, 1939.

"The battle of the River Plate was no haphazard action. It was the culmination of a three-month ocean wide search, brought about by a careful strategic appreciation by Harwood, and it was made a victory by the tactical planning of Harwood and the captains of the cruisers. After the Graf Spee sunk the Doric Star on 4th December, Harwood correctly appreciated that her next move would be to attack allied shipping off the River Plate in which case she would arrive there on the morning of 13th December. He concentrated his force and exercised his plan for attacking a pocket battleship which would entail the more powerful Exeter attacking from one direction and the light cruisers Ajax (Harwood's ship, wearing his broad pennant) and Achilles, attacking from the other direction," writes Stephen Harwood of his father.

Just after dawn on December 13th, Exeter sighted the enemy and immediately opened fire. Return fire from the Graf Spee soon crippled Exeter and she was forced to set sail for repairs in the Falkland Islands with cover fire being provided by Ajax and Achil-

les. After Exeter's withdrawal, the two remaining ships were running low on ammunition but had made a mark on the Graf Spee. The German captain retreated for the nearest harbour, in neutral Montevideo for repairs. "An elaborate plan was used to make the Germans believe that an overwhelmingly powerful force was already in position to meet the Graf Spee should she sail," writes Stephen Harwood. "This was not so... (There was no support for the two ships.) Langsdorff (the German captain,) recognizing the amount of repair work still to be done if the ship was to make its way back to Germany, also mindful of the safety of his young crew, made the decision to scuttle her 6 km outside Montevideo on the evening of Friday 17th December."

The Battle of the River Plate was the first major naval success in the Second World War. Following the battle there were celebrations throughout the city of Montevideo and within the Allied Forces. Harwood received medals and appreciations from His Majesty King George VI and Prime Minister Winston Churchill for his outstanding strategy and leadership.

Given a 'battlefield' promotion to Rear Admiral, Harwood remained in the South

Atlantic until the late summer of 1940. Later in the war he became Commander in Chief of the British Naval Forces in the Mediterranean and was then promoted to substantive Admiral, and retired in late 1945 to spend 5 happy years at home, but in deteriorating health. Harwood died of a heart attack in June 1950.

In 2001, Harwood's sons, Henry and Stephen, both themselves retired naval officers, presented his full dress uniform, unchanged since it was worn in 1939, to a museum in Montevideo. There is a street named after Harwood in Carrasco, a neighbourhood of Montevideo, Uruguay. Harwood Avenue in the Town of Ajax serves as a reminder of this great hero.

"The Harwood family send our very best wishes to the Mayor and people of Ajax on the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate. Those who fought in the Battle, especially those who lost their lives, will live on in all our memories. We are deeply honoured by the naming of Harwood Avenue in memory of our father Admiral Sir Henry Harwood. KCB OBE."

- Henry and Stephen Harwood.



Joe Dickson, MPP
Ajax – Pickering

Thank You to all Veterans past and present for the sacrifices you made. Lest we forget.

Please call us with any provincial concerns or questions:

Community Office

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Congratulations to the Veterans of the Battle of the River Plate on its 70th Anniversary

Thank You to you and all Veterans past and present for your service to our country and community!



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DYNAMIC PUBLISHING EVENTS MANAGEMENT

Durham BusinessTimes

A model ship and Crewmen: HMS Ajax



HMS Ajax in Venice, Italy

While Ken Jones was not on board the HMS Ajax during the battle of the River Plate, he did serve on the Ajax from August 11, 1945 to August 26, 1947. During that time he visited many locations throughout the Mediterranean including Montevideo, Uruguay where he could see the still visible wreck of the German pocket battleship, the Admiral Graf Spee in February, 1946. From December, 1946 to May, 1947, Mr. Jones was part of the crew who were involved in the policing of the illegal Jewish immigration runs to Palestine. Most of the immigrants were making sea crossings in small overcrowded boats, many suffering horrible con-

ditions and losing their lives in heavy seas. Mr. Jones is currently Chairman of the HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Associations and will once again be visiting the Town of Ajax and renewing his acquaintances with his many friends in the area. Mr. Jones became extremely involved in arranging the Veteran's trip from England to the Town of Ajax to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate when the Association's president, Eric Smith suddenly passed away. Stepping up to the plate, Mr. Jones took over arrangements at the last minutes and arranged a successful trip and upon his arrival here, the members of the association

named him president. Ken has been doing a wonderful job of keeping the Association alive and well and will celebrate 10 years as the chairman while he is here in Ajax.

More recently, Ken Jones has been building ships of his own. Model replicas of the Ajax, Exeter, Achilles and Graf Spee are on display in the Chatham Dockyards in Britain and, although we haven't been told officially, they are believed to be valued in the neighbourhood of one million dollars.

Eric Smith was a crew member of the Ajax during the battle. Following the war, he attended a reunion of crew members and met his captain, who suggested a Veterans association for the Ajax and Battle of the River Plate crew members. "My father went ahead and formed one and it is still going strong today," Ken Smith said of his father Eric. "The Ajax and Battle of the River Plate Veterans Association was my father's life. There's a reunion every October in Chatham, England and those Veterans who are able to go make a trip of it."

Eric Smith passed away shortly before the 60th Anniversary reunion in the Town of Ajax in 1999 when Ken Jones took over as president of the Association. Eric's son Ken and his wife Sandy are visiting Ajax to represent Eric. Smith Lane was dedicated to Eric Smith in 1999 when Ken and his brother

came to Ajax for the reunion.

A Veteran crewmember of the Ajax who was on board at the time of the Battle of River Plate, Ken Eyre, 87 will be represented at reunion events by his grandson, Matthew Lawson, 22. Mr. Eyre served on the HMS Ajax during the Second World War and fought in conflicts around the world. Mr. Lawson is proud to be representing his grandfather and excited to be making his first trip to Canada. Joining Matt in Ajax will be his uncle Tony, Ken Eyre's son. Tony and Matt will officiate at a street dedication on Eyreglen Court in honour of Ken Eyre on Saturday, October 3rd, between 11am and 4pm.



Ken Jones, taken in Malta, age 18 years



Richard Price and his team at Dundee Private Investors Inc. salutes the Veterans of HMS Ajax, HMS Exeter, and HMS Achilles on this special anniversary and honours all Veterans serving our great Country both past and present.

"Democracy makes Canada all it is, but Canada's Veterans make Canada all it should be."

Our office is proud to be a part of this 70th Anniversary milestone.

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Battle of the River Plate and
all Former and Current Veterans
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Tom Batchellor - Store Owner



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at Monarch Ave.
(In the Baywood Plaza)

New Zealanders visit Ajax to represent the HMS Achilles

Mr. William (Bob) Batt and Mr. Eddie Telford both served on the HMS Achilles during the Battle of the River Plate. Visiting the Town of Ajax 1999 and again in 2005, they are returning once again this year to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate.

Bob joined the New Zealand Navy in 1938 as a Seaman boy. He was just 15 years old when he was posted to HMS Achilles in May, 1939.

After an initial Pacific Island Cruise, Achilles returned to Auckland to replenish stores and ammunition and returned to sea. On August 28, 1939 the ship headed for Panama and they were at sea when New Zealand declared they were at war with Germany. The ship's sailing instructions were changed and Achilles headed for Valparaiso and ultimately to the River Plate.

Bob stayed on Achilles for a while and then served on other ships in various theatres of war; escort duty across from New Zealand to Freemantle, minesweeping and patrolling up around the Phillipines alongside the British and American Navies.

His final war time service was again on the Achilles off the coast of Japan with the

American Task Force that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. He retired from the Navy in 1952 as a chief petty officer.

Bob and his wife Joan live in Whakatane, on the North Island of New Zealand in an area known as the Eastern Bay of Plenty and Bob is currently the president of the HMS Achilles River Plate Association in New Zealand.

Crewmember Walter Searell visited the Town of Ajax in 1999 and 2005 but has since passed away. His wife will be making the trip to celebrate the 70th Anniversary and to formally dedicate a street named in his honour.

The family of Wallace Wm. Martin, Veteran of HMS Ajax decided to attend the Reunion festivities to represent Mr. Martin since he has passed away. A request was initiated to use the name Martinworth to dedicate a street as a tribute and this name has now been approved and will be placed on the reserve list for a future street name.

At time of printing, Eddy Telford's visit was not confirmed.

"The Veterans and their families feel connected to this town," says Pat Clark, one of the key organizers of the week's events. "They have made friends here." Bob and



Bob Batt, HMS Achilles 1943

Joan have made very close friends with a number of residents of Ajax and in particular, Mike and Elizabeth Ryan, who hosted the Batts in their home on their previous visits to Ajax. They are once again looking forward to having Joan and Bob stay with them throughout the anniversary celebrations.

Veterans from the HMS Exeter

Basil Trott, Veteran crewmember of the HMS Exeter, has visited the Town of Ajax several times. He made the trip for the 60th Anniversary in 1999, in 2003 to plant a tree and dedicate the street named in his honour and for the Town's 50th Anniversary in 2005. He is looking forward to coming once again this year for the 70th Anniversary events.

From a naval family, Mr. Trott's grandfather, father and three brothers have also served. The tradition continued with his son Peter, who recently retired from the Navy. At the time of the Battle of the River Plate, Mr. Trott was only 19 years old, turning 20 just nine days after the fight. After the war, Mr. Trott transferred to the HMS Miss Kenya where he stayed until the end of the war. Mr. Trott and his wife Sadie live in Cambridge, England.

Basil's friend and crewmate, John Napier and his wife, also came to visit Ajax in 1999 to celebrate the 60th Anniversary. Sadly, John has passed away but Basil is here to represent John and will officiate at a street dedication on Napiermews while he is here.

During the Battle of the River Plate, Exeter was hit and severely damaged by German artillery that resulted in 61 of her crew being killed and another 23 wounded. Exeter was sunk by the Japanese in a battle on March 1, 1942.

Thank you Veterans

We extend our gratitude to all Veterans past and present as we celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate.

THE **News Advertiser**
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*We would like to thank the
 Veterans who fought so valiantly
 for the freedoms that we
 enjoy today!*

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OLG is a proud
community partner
that helps make
nearly 200 events
happen across
Ontario each year.

- Doors Open Brant 2009
- Brockville Riverfest
- Winona Peach Festival
- Fergus Scottish Festival
- Gloucester Fair 2009
- Mackinac Festival 2009
- Northern Lights Festival Boreal
- Thunder Bay Harbourfest
- Carassauga Multi-Cultural Festival
- Windsor Summer Fest - Celtic Connection Weekend
- Kempfenfest 2009
- Brantford's Canada Day Festival
- Burlington's Sound of Music

We bring local events to life with sponsorship support and by collaborating with community leaders and event organizers.

Don't miss out on the Tribute to All Veterans events,
September 26 - October 4, 2009.