

# HMS AJAX Frigate Captains

## **DAVID PETER SEELY: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX 16 SEPTEMBER 1963 to 9 JULY 1965**

The Hon. David Seely, the 4th Baron Mottistone, CBE, KStJ, was born 16 December, 1920, the eldest son of Baron Mottistone. Winston Churchill and Duke of Cornwall (Edward VIII) were his godparents. He was educated at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. From 1941 to 1944 he was employed on convoy duty in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. He qualified as Commander in 1944 and served in the Pacific in 1945. He was appointed to HMS Cossack 1958 until 1959, and to HMS Ajax as Captain 24th Escort Squadron. HMS Ajax was completed at Birkenhead, and commissioned 14 December, 1963. In June 1964, she and the squadron were based at Singapore, at the time of the Indonesian confrontation. Captain Seely was mentioned in despatches for his services.

From June, 1965 he served as Naval Advisor to the UK Commissioner in Ottawa. He retired at his own request as Captain, on his succession to the barony, as 4th Baron Mottistone in 1967. He was Lord Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight from 1986 to 1995. He died 24 November 2011 aged 90.

## **ALLAN GORDON TAIT: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX 10 JULY 1965 to 11 DECEMBER 1966**

Sir Allan Gordon Tait KCB, DSC was born in Timaru, New Zealand, on 30 October 1921 and educated at Timaru High School and the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. He went to sea as a Midshipman in 1940, serving in HM Ships Nigeria and Matabele in the Atlantic and Arctic convoys. Whilst on Nigeria as a junior officer he seized the Enigma Cipher settings from the Lauenburg, a German weather ship.

He specialised in submarines in 1942, and served in HM Submarines Taurus, Tally Ho and Tudor in the Mediterranean and Far East, being awarded the DSC and Mentioned in Despatches. He later commanded HM Submarines Teredo (1947), Solent, Ambush, Aurochs, Tally Ho and Sanguine.

As a Commander and Captain he commanded the Caprice, Ajax and the Second Destroyer Squadron Far East, HMS Maidstone and the 3rd Submarine Squadron, and the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. He has also served as Aide-de-Camp to the Governor-General of New Zealand, 1949-51; on the staff, Assistant Naval Adviser, of the UK High Commissioner in Canada, 1957-59; on the Naval Staff at the Admiralty and Ministry of Defence 1962-65; and as Chief of Staff of the Submarine Command, 1969-70. On promotion to Rear-Admiral he was appointed Naval Secretary at the Ministry of Defence. In 1972 he was appointed a Naval Aide-de-Camp to the Queen.

He was promoted to Vice-Admiral in 1974 and appointed Flag Officer Plymouth, Port Admiral Devonport and NATO Commander Central Atlantic, in February, 1975. He became Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in the 1977 New Year's Honours List, and took up his appointment as Chief of Naval Personnel and Second Sea Lord on 22 February, 1977. He was promoted to the rank of Admiral on 14 March 1978 and retired in 1979. He died 29 May 2005 aged 83.

## **GEORGE ARMAND DE GAVARDIE KITCHIN: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX 12 DECEMBER 1966 to 8 MAY 1968**

Born 14 February 1921 in Northumberland. George Armand de Gavardie Kitchin CBE, joined Dartmouth in 1934 as a Cadet at the age of 13. His Midshipman's time was spent initially in the battleship Barham until she was torpedoed in December 1939 and after that in the Rodney, which as flagship of Commander-in-Chief Home Fleet took part in the

Norwegian campaign. One of the most lasting memories of his Midshipman's time was a sense of awe latterly tinged with amusement over the evolution of 15-inch gun drill.

Having completed his Sub-Lieutenant's courses in late 1941 he joined the destroyer Gurkha which was building at Birkenhead. Gurkha survived almost exactly a year - from January 1942 until January 1943 when she was sunk by a torpedo off Tobruk, whilst escorting a convoy to Malta. During her short life the Gurkha had seen service in the Atlantic and as part of the famous Force H based at Gibraltar and centred round Ark Royal. Sub-Lieutenant Kitchin was actually on watch when Ark Royal received the fatal torpedo some sixty miles east of Gibraltar and when she, in fact, went down some hours later. The Germans had so often falsely claimed to have sunk Ark Royal that it was with sorrow and almost disbelief that the news of her sinking was received.

After the Gurkha herself had been sunk, Sub-Lieutenant Kitchin was promoted Lieutenant and went as liaison officer to the Greek destroyer Kendouriotis. His chief recollection of this ship is his awakening one night to find a rat up his pajamas leg, and he still remembers his intense relief that the verminous creature, with only two possible escape routes, up or down, chose the latter. The incident did not really end there, however, for a month or two later two ratings died in Port Said of bubonic plague. After the ship was fumigated, over 150 dead rats were found on board. After nine months Lieutenant Kitchin transferred to another Greek destroyer called Queen Olga. This ship, in company with the British destroyer Petard, sunk the Italian submarine Ubard off Malta, recovering most of her crew.

A most frightening experience which Captain Kitchin recalled at this period, was the dark night when Queen Olga, at 32 knots had a near collision with the cruiser flagship of Admiral Vian, of Altmark fame. The two ships met almost head-on, at a combined speed of over 60 mph, but exactly parallel to each other. In the Admiral's words - "There was no water between the ships".

From October 1943, until late 1948, Lieutenant Kitchin was appointed as First Lieutenant successively to the destroyers Bickerton, Cotton and Childers. During this period he saw service in the Atlantic and on Russian convoys, and also took part in the Normandy invasion.

After a year ashore in a Boys' training establishment (HMS Bruce at Crail, Fifeshire) Lieutenant Kitchin was promoted Lieutenant Commander and assumed command of the Portland Flotilla frigate Leeds Castle in April 1950 where he spent almost two years running off Portland, taking part in two of FOSM's "summer wars" off the west coast of Scotland, and visiting the Channel Islands and southern ports of England.

After taking the Naval Staff course he spent the next two years in Greece as Staff Officer Operations to the head of the British Naval Mission in Athens and as Director of Studies at the Greek Naval Staff College there.

In 1955 Lieutenant Commander Kitchin was appointed as First Lieutenant of the then very modern destroyer Daring and saw service in her mainly in the Mediterranean. Daring was one of the force of ships present during the attack on Port Said in the autumn of 1956 and entered the port after the military had secured it.

Soon after leaving the Daring at Malta in December, 1956, he was promoted Commander and almost immediately returned there as Staff Officer Operations to Flag Officer Second-in-Command, Mediterranean. He recalls a busy two years, partly ashore and partly afloat, in a variety of flagships, including the "Shiny" Sheffield and Ark Royal.

In April, 1959, Commander Kitchin assumed command of the frigate Crane, one of the old Second Frigate Squadron of the Far East Fleet. During his 18 month Foreign Service

commission in her, he visited Japan, Korea, (where he was kissed in the back of a taxi by an over-exuberant Korean Admiral), the Philippines, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Borneo and the Maldives Islands. Taking station leave at Singapore, Commander Kitchin sailed as First Mate aboard the schooner "Xarifa", of Hans and Lotte Hass fame, when she was chartered by the Army for an expedition in Indonesian waters.

Commander Kitchin's next appointment was to the Plans Division of the Naval Staff at Admiralty; an overworked two years with much burning of midnight oil. From there he went to HMS Vernon as the first-ever non-TAS Commander of the establishment. However, in under a year he was promoted Captain and re-appointed.

As a Captain he has been Naval Advisor Karachi (1964-1966), a student on the Senior Officer's War Course, Commanding Officer of HMS Ajax and Captain (D) Second Destroyer Squadron Far East Fleet. HMS Ajax was re-commissioned and worked-up at Singapore in December, 1966. Back at Chatham in March 1967 then in April to Hong Kong via the Philippines. A visit to Japan followed, to Kobe, Etajima, Moji, Otaru, and Hakodate. The Ajax was guardship at Hong Kong after the Japanese visit until she sailed for Singapore for a maintenance period, and guardship duty. Back to Hong Kong in mid-August, Singapore in October, and to join the Aden task force, covering the withdrawal of the British personnel. On passage to Aden the ship was diverted to search for the crew of a Shackleton, which had come down in the Indian Ocean west of Sumatra. They rescued three survivors of the crew of eleven.

January 1968 found the Ajax at Mombasa on the Beira Patrol and in February on her passage home via Simons Town, St Helena and Gibraltar, reaching Portsmouth 7 March, then to Chatham for a four-month refit.

In the summer of 1968 Captain Kitchin became Deputy Director of Naval Plans, and then finally took command of HMS Fife in February, 1971. He then left the sea to become Commodore Superintendent Contract-built Ships on 1 March 1973. He was made a CBE in June 1976. He died 23 June 1996 aged 75.

## **DAVID HEPWORTH: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX**

**9 MAY 1968 to 12 MARCH 1969**

Rear Admiral David Hepworth CB, joined the Navy as a sixteen-year-old boy telegraphist in October 1939. He was the third boy from HMS Ganges to attain flag rank. He was commissioned as a sub-lieutenant six years later on 1 January 1945, promoted lieutenant 16 December 1944 (back-dated), lieutenant-commander 16 December 1952, commander 31 December 1958 and captain 31 December 1964.

From 1945 he served in and commanded a number of submarines, was in command of HMS Stalker, a submarine support ship, from 1959 to 1960 and of HMS Ashanti, first of the Tribal class frigates, from 1961 to 1963.

After a period of shore appointments, including that of Deputy Director of Undersea Warfare, Captain Hepworth returned to sea in May 1968 as Commanding Officer of HMS Ajax. The Ajax was half-way through her refit at Chatham, and was recommissioned for her fourth commission on 2 August 1968. The band of HMS Ganges attended and Sir Desmond and Lady Dreyer were present.

Christmas 1968, Ajax was the only British warship on passage, sailing from Portsmouth to the Far East, and off the west coast of Africa near the Equator on Christmas Day. She visited Japan: Yokohama, Yokosuka and the island of Hokkaido. In January 1969 the Ajax relieved HMS Glamorgan as Captain (D) Second Destroyer Squadron Far East Fleet. Later, Ajax

joined the Far East Fleet and the Squadron off the coast of Malaya. Between exercises and a maintenance period at Singapore, she visited Western Australia, Bangkok and Hong Kong.

Captain Hepworth was next appointed Director of Gunnery at the Royal Naval Tactical School (October 1969 to June 1971), and in 1971 he became Director of Naval Warfare. He was promoted Rear Admiral 7 July, 1974 and nominated a CB in the Birthday Honours, 1976. He died on 11 June 2012 aged 89.

### **HARRY ROBERT KEATE: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX 2 SEPTEMBER 1969 to SEPTEMBER 1970**

Harry Robert Keate was born at Rudgwick, Sussex, in December 1925. He was educated at St Aubyn's School, Rottingdean, Sussex, and entered the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth on the outbreak of the Second World War. Captain Keate's father, the late Lieutenant Commander H.A.D. Keate, DSO, RN, died in 1925. He was married in May 1954 to Miss Susan Angela Vian, daughter of Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Philip Vian.

After leaving Dartmouth in 1943, Captain Keate served as a Midshipman in the cruiser HMS London in the Home Fleet and on the East Indies station. He later joined the destroyer HMS Quadrant in eastern waters. From 1945 to 1950 he served successively in HMS Exmoor, Consort, Theseus, Verulam and Wakeful.

In 1951 Captain Keate was appointed Flag Lieutenant to Rear-Admiral A. K. Scott-Moncrieff, Flag Officer Second-in-Command Far East station. After a short tour in command of HM MTB Gay Fencer, he became Flag Lieutenant to Vice-Admiral J. P. L. Reid, Flag Officer Second-in-Command Mediterranean Fleet.

As a Lieutenant-Commander between 1955 and 1959 he was Squadron Communications Officer of HMS Chieftain, Captain (D) 1st Destroyer Squadron, and of HMS Ganges. Captain Keate later commanded HMS Striker and HMS Dieppe in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf, and was appointed to the staff of the Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth in 1961. From 1964 to 1965 he was Executive Officer of the Guided Missile Destroyer HMS Devonshire and later became second-in-command of HMS Mercury, the RN Signals School.

He was promoted Captain 31 December, 1966, and was appointed British Naval Attaché in Paris, in February 1967. He was appointed to command HMS Ajax 2 September 1969 and in November the ship returned to Chatham from the Far East for a refit. December 1969 was taken up with exercises off Portsmouth and South Wales.

In January 1970 the frigate was guardship at Gibraltar and this duty was followed by exercises in the Mediterranean. She returned to Chatham and sailed for Liverpool in May to attend the anniversary celebrations of the end of the Battle of the Atlantic. She was present at the Queen's visit to Port Talbot, to open the deep-water oil terminal and then sailed for the Clyde for exercises in the area and off Northern Ireland (Operations Oceanex and Opeval, in company with submarines). The ship cruised in the Hebrides and visited Stornoway in June, and the Chief Scout, Sir Charles Maclean and Lady Maclean visited the ship. Later, Ajax visited Hull for 'Meet the Navy' week and on 12 June 1970 she sailed for Kiel for 'International Kieler Woche' (annual sailing event held in Germany). In August she returned to Chatham and was paid-off to be converted to an Ikara\* frigate. In May 1974 he commanded HMS Antrim until November 1975.

He died on 28 December 2013 aged 88.

\*An air launched anti-submarine torpedo.

## **R. S. BLACKMAN: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX**

**16 JANUARY 1971 to JUNE 1973**

Commander Blackman was promoted to lieutenant 16 August 1962 and lieutenant-commander 16 August 1970 and took command of HMS Ajax as she underwent her Ikara\* conversion. Captain Bates took over command in June 1973 and she was recommissioned 5 December 1973.

\*An air launched anti-submarine torpedo.

## **RICHARD J. BATES: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX**

**JUNE 1973 to DECEMBER 1974**

Richard Bates was educated at Willesden Grammar School, and joined the Navy in 1949. He flew with 812 Squadron from HMS Glory in Korea and with 703 and 849 Squadrons at home before joining HMS Welcome on fishery protection. In 1958 he transferred to HMS Bulwark and took part in the salvage operation in the Gulf of Oman where the Liberian tanker Melika, and the French tanker Fernand Gilabert had collided. The crews abandoned ships when they caught fire. The Navy stepped in and did a successful salvage job and earned the prize money.

After Bulwark, he became a flying instructor at Portland and then joined the Intensive Flying Trials Unit at Culdrose as Senior Observer on Wessex helicopters. Next he flew with 815 Squadron, the first Wessex all-weather squadron, in HMS Ark Royal. By then he was a Lieutenant Commander, and stayed on in Ark Royal as Operations Officer. In 1966 he became captain of HMS Carysfort and two years, crammed with incident, followed. He played his part as one of the guardships during the Torrey Canyon disaster [18 March 1967] and was on guardship duty later off Gibraltar during a particular spell of international 'tension' with Spain over the Rock. During the 1967 Cowes Week, Carysfort was chosen as Guardship to the Royal Yacht Britannia and the destroyer also acted as escort when the Royal Family sailed north to Scotland for their annual holiday.

Captain Bates was appointed to HMS Ajax in June 1973 towards the end of her Ikara conversion. The ship was re-commissioned at Devonport on 5 December. In August 1974 she was one of the ships involved in the evacuation of the refugees from Cyprus and at the beginning of September escorted a flotilla of lifeboats from Poole to Portsmouth for the RNLI celebrations. She was guardship for Cowes Week and then back to Cyprus. Exercises followed, in the course of which she visited Malta and Gibraltar, returning to Devonport on the 27 September. At the beginning of December she was at Amsterdam, after which Captain Bates handed over the command to Captain J. Mackenzie.

Captain Bates served as Executive Officer in HMS Blake, the helicopter cruiser and at the Ministry of Defence as Deputy Director of Naval Administrative Planning and Director of Naval Service Conditions between February 1976 and May 1978. He was Chief of Staff, Rosyth May 1978 to March 1980.

## **DAVID JOHN MACKENZIE: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX**

**5 DECEMBER 1974 to 28 JUNE 1976**

Rear Admiral John Mackenzie CB, was born in Perth in 1929, and entered the Royal Naval College in 1943 at the age of 13½. He served as Midshipman in HMS Birmingham in 1947 - 48 on the East Indies station. On completion of Sub-Lieutenant's courses, he served in the Royal Naval Rhine Squadron from 1950 to 1952. During 1952 to 1954 he was in HMS Opossum, a frigate stationed on the Far East and Korean stations. From 1954 to 1956 he served as Destroyer Gunnery Officer of HMS Barossa. In 1956 he assumed command of HMS Brinkley, an inshore minesweeper, based at HMS Lochinvar. In 1958 to 1960 he served as First Lieutenant of the destroyers Hogue and Finisterre, being promoted to Lieutenant-Commander in 1959. He then completed the Royal Naval Staff Course at Greenwich and

from 1961 to 1963 he was Staff Officer Operations on the staff of the Flag Officer Sea Training at Portland. From 1963 to 1965 he commanded HMS Hardy in the Londonderry Squadron. He was promoted to the rank of Commander in 1965 and stood by building HMS Glamorgan as her first Executive Officer. After fifteen months in commission he left the Glamorgan in 1968 for the Joint Services Staff Course and assumed duties of the Commander Sea Training at Portland from August 1968 until August 1970. After a short spell from 4 September 1970 in command of HMS Lincoln he took command of HMS Hermione, a Leander class frigate serving at Home and Mediterranean waters, from December 1970 to December 1971.

He was promoted Captain in December 1971 and commanded the Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence School at Portsmouth between 1972 and 1974, after which he attended the Senior Officers' War Course. He assumed command of the 8th Frigate Squadron in the Leander Class frigate, HMS Ajax, from December 1974 to June 1976. After taking part in exercises in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, early in 1975, HMS Ajax sailed round the world as a unit of the Group 3 Deployment, leaving Devonport on 22 July. The squadron (HMS Ajax, Berwick, Llandaff, Plymouth, Rothesay and Royal Fleet Auxiliaries Tidespring, Gold Rover and Tarbatness) was led by Rear-Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, with his flag in HMS Glamorgan. Group 3 headed towards the Mediterranean, then made the first transit of the Suez Canal by HM ships since the 1967 Middle East War. After a spell in the Indian Ocean carrying out exercises with Australian and American ships, they visited Gibraltar, Malta, Port Said, Port Sudan and Djibouti. Then the Group split up for visits to Bombay and Madras (HMS Ajax, Berwick and Llandaff, and RFA Gold Rover to Madras). Off the west coast of Malaysia the complete Group carried out weapon training in conjunction with the Malaysian and Australian Air Forces and Malaysian fast patrol boats.

On to Singapore for the last planned meeting of the whole Group until February 1976. HMS Ajax led six ships to Hong Kong, while the Glamorgan, Plymouth, and Tidespring stayed for a three-week maintenance period. On the return passage to Singapore HMS Ajax and Rothesay were both slightly damaged when they met up with a school of whales. After leaving Singapore, HMS Ajax, Berwick, Plymouth, Rothesay, Tidespring and Tarbatness exercised with the Royal Australian Navy in the South China Sea. The rest of the ships were also exercising with the RAN 'Swift Swing' and all successfully completed, they headed for the Torres Strait, steered south between Australia and the Great Barrier Reef, and 1,809 miles later, arrived at Sydney for a ten-day visit.

After Christmas 1975, the Group sailed for Pearl Harbour and three days later for the west coast of America; all but HMS Ajax, who was detained for repairs after a serious fire had damaged her main switchboard. She rejoined the Group later but missed a visit to San Francisco and the exercise 'Valiant Heritage'. However, on 16 February 1976 they celebrated the 1,000th deck landing of the Wasp helicopter.

Visits to Long Beach, Rodman, Panama City, San Juan, Puerto Rico and Waikiki followed. On the passage across the Atlantic the final exercise 'Last Chance Three' took place, in company with HMS Zulu and the nuclear submarine Sovereign. On 14 April 1976 four of the ships sailed into Portsmouth and on the same day HMS Ajax and Berwick berthed at Devonport.

After a period of weapon training, Captain Mackenzie was appointed as Director of Naval Equipment at Bath from August 1976 to August 1978 and in January 1979 he was transferred to the Royal Navy helicopter cruiser HMS Blake in command until December 1979.

In December 1979 Captain Mackenzie took command of HMS Hermes until November 1980. The ship's refit being put back, she sailed in mid-January on a training cruise from Portsmouth on a U.S. deployment. During this period the ship visited Pensacola and Fort Lauderdale before calling at Bermuda. Midshipman Prince Andrew and 19 others of his class from Britannia joined the Hermes from 22 February to 9 March and left the ship at Bermuda.

The rest of her pupils were 40 sons of members of the crew.

Captain Mackenzie was promoted to the rank of Rear-Admiral 7 January 1981, as Flag Officer Gibraltar (Commander, British Forces, Gibraltar) until January 1983.

In 1982 he was awarded a CB.

He died 26/11/2015

### **ROBERT RISLEY SQUIRES: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX**

**15 JULY 1976 to 28 FEBRUARY 1977**

Vice Admiral Robert Risley (Tubby) Squires was born in March 1927 and was educated at Geelong Grammar School, Australia, and Eton. He joined the Navy in 1944 as a 17½ year-old. After serving as a Midshipman in the Battleships King George V and Anson, he transferred to the Submarine Service and served in HMS Tabard in the Mediterranean from 1948 to 1951. As a Lieutenant he took command of HMS Aurochs in 1955 and in the following year, after promotion to Lieutenant Commander, he was given command of another submarine, HMS Aeneas, until 1957. After a period as Executive Officer of the destroyer HMS Lagos he spent nearly a year on nuclear submarine training with the United States Navy and following this, he took command of the submarine HMS Porpoise.

He was appointed Executive Officer of HMS Dreadnought, the Royal Navy's first nuclear-powered submarine in 1961 and was promoted Commander during this appointment. In November 1965 he took command of the frigate HMS Eastbourne.

In December, 1965 he was appointed Commanding Officer of the nuclear submarine HMS Warspite and in 1968, following promotion to Captain, he attended the Joint Services Staff College at Latimer. He was appointed an Assistant Director of Naval Warfare at the Ministry of Defence in 1969 and in December 1971 he became Commanding Officer of the frigate HMS Hermione and also Captain of the 5th Frigate Squadron. In February 1973 he assumed command of the 3rd Submarine Squadron at HMS Neptune, the Clyde Submarine Base. He took command of HMS Bristol in April 1975 until June 1976 and then was appointed to command the 8th Frigate Squadron in HMS Ajax 15 July 1976. In August Ajax sailed for Canada and visited St John's, Newfoundland, Halifax and Ottawa. The climax of the trip was the visit to Oshawa, the port on Lake Ontario for the town of Ajax, named after the cruiser of the Battle of the River Plate fame. HMS Ajax, the frigate, received the Freedom of the City. During the passage home the ship took part in NATO exercises, with ships from Canada, America, Portugal, Holland, France, Germany and Norway. She arrived at Devonport 25 September 1976.

A maintenance period was followed by visits to the Clyde and Dundee. On 29 November 1976 the Ajax began a Deep Water Fish Patrol and in the New Year took part in various exercises, including 'Locked Gate' and 'Spring Train'.

On 7 January, 1977 Captain Squires was appointed an Aide-de-Camp to the Queen and on 10 March 1977 Flag Officer 1st Flotilla as Acting Rear Admiral until October 1978. He was promoted Rear Admiral 20 June 1977. In December 1978 he was appointed Flag Officer Submarines and Chief of Staff, Operations, The Fleet until December 1981. Rear-Admiral Squires was appointed Vice-Admiral on 2 May 1980. He became Flag Officer, Scotland and Northern Ireland from January 1982 until December 1983 and Admiral Superintendent/Port Admiral, HM Dockyard, Rosyth from August until December 1983.

'Tubby' attended the 2011 HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association reunion and was in seemingly good health.

He died 30 June 2016.

## **PETER COBB: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX**

**1 MARCH 1977 to 27 DECEMBER 1978**

Peter Cobb was born in Shanghai in 1930, and educated at Wellington College and the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. He served in the East Indies and the Mediterranean as a Midshipman before joining the Submarine Branch in 1950.

As a Lieutenant he took command in 1958 of HMS Seneschal in the Home Fleet. Promoted to Lieutenant-Commander in 1962, he was appointed to HMS Narwhal until 1964 when he was promoted Commander and appointed to the Submarine Tactical Analysis Establishment at Rothesay until 1965. He next took over the submarine HMS Dreadnought until 1969 when he joined the staff of Director of Naval Plans at the Ministry of Defence in London.

He was promoted Captain in 1970 and after leaving the Ministry of Defence took command of HMS Gurkha from 1970 to 1971 in UK waters, the Persian Gulf and the Far East. In 1972 he moved to Devonport where he commanded the Second Submarine Squadron. Following a course at the Royal College of Defence Studies Captain Cobb was appointed to Fleet Headquarters, Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations, at Northwood in 1975 until January 1977.

He was appointed to HMS Ajax in March, 1977 and also became Captain of the Eighth Frigate Squadron. In September 1977 HMS Ajax was adopted by the City of Truro at the Centenary Celebrations. The ship was re-dedicated on 3 December 1977 after a seven-month refit at Devonport. The service was attended by Sir Desmond and Lady Dreyer, and the Mayors of Ajax, Canada, and the City of Truro.

In April, 1978, the Ajax went to the assistance of an Indian merchant vessel, the State of Kerala, near Falmouth. She had defective steering and was dragging her anchor. A messenger line was passed, but before the tow could be passed, the Kerala surged ahead, towing her anchor. The Ajax, also dragging her anchor was unable to move seaward without risking a collision, but eventually the Kerala passed clear and the Ajax, a few cables off shore, was able to move into deeper waters.

Captain Cobb left the Ajax in December 1978.

He died 25th June 2017 aged 87.

## **MICHAEL JOHN FIELDING RAWLINSON: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX**

**28 DECEMBER 1978 to 7 JULY 1980.**

Michael Rawlinson was born in Hornchurch, Essex in 1931, joined the Royal Navy in 1949 and completed his flying training as an Observer in 1951. Between 1952 and 1963 he flew from five aircraft carriers - HM Ships Indomitable, Theseus, Albion, Hermes and Victorious. He saw service in the Korean theatre of operations in the Royal Australian Navy vessels HMAS Vengeance and HMAS Sydney. Following promotion to Lieutenant Commander he commanded 849 Squadron at Royal Naval Air Station, Brawdy, Wales, after which he commanded the Royal Naval Observer School at RNAS Lossiemouth in the rank of Commander in 1966. After two years he was appointed in command of HMS Defender in the Mediterranean and Far East.

From 1971 to 1972 he was in Naval Operations at the Ministry of Defence and then assumed command of HMS Plymouth from 1972 to 1973 during which time he visited the West Indies, Iceland and the Mediterranean again. After promotion to Captain he joined the Directing Staff of the Royal Naval Staff College, Greenwich and subsequently the Admiralty Interview Board. In 1976 he was appointed Assistant Director of the Directorate of Naval Air Warfare at the Ministry of Defence.

Captain Rawlinson was appointed to the command of the Eighth Frigate Squadron in HMS Ajax on 28 December 1978. The ship took part in exercises in the South Atlantic and showed the flag at Agadir, Morocco. In August 1979 Ajax visited the Clyde area for exercises and in October and November, in company with HMS Scylla, visited the ports of Haifa and Toulon,

during a Mediterranean deployment. The City of Portsmouth being twinned with both these ports, Ajax acted as messenger and carried letters containing the City's official greetings for presentation to the Mayors of Haifa and Toulon. The ship also called at the Greek islands of Santorini and Patras. (Santorini surrendered to the cruiser Ajax in 1944)

The Ajax arrived back at Portsmouth 13 December 1979 with battle ensigns flying to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate. On 17 December Captain Rawlinson presented the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth with a gift from Haifa.

In January 1980 Captain and Mrs Rawlinson visited 4th Thames Ditton (Ajax) Sea Scout Group. The ship sailed from Devonport for the Clyde early in February and visited Newcastle at the end of the same month. After main leave she sailed for Liverpool at the end of April, with three Ajax Venture Scouts on board, for a week.

In May the ship was in Scottish waters and visited Aberdeen. From Aberdeen, in company with HMS Active and RFA Green Rover, she sailed for the Baltic and visited Karlskrona and Stockholm followed by a visit by Ajax and Green Rover to Copenhagen. Karlskrona was celebrating its 300th anniversary as a city. HMS Ajax then spent a day at the naval cemetery at Hano Island, and Captain Rawlinson presented copper plaques from HMS Victory to commemorate the English sailors of the Napoleonic Wars who are buried there. One hundred of the ship's company put the cemetery into good order, after which a service of remembrance was held. The ship's company was entertained at a barbecue and at sunset Ajax weighed anchor and did a steam-past the harbour.

Two days later all three ships entered Stockholm and immediately the ships' companies were involved in a programme of tours, visits and sports. The ships had about 6000 visitors. Captain Rawlinson had the honour of calling on King Carl Gustav XVI.

While the Active sailed for Bremen, Ajax and the Green Rover proceeded to Copenhagen. After the Baltic deployment Ajax returned to Devonport where three more Ajax Venture Scouts joined her for a week.

Captain Rawlinson left the ship on 7 July 1980 to take command of Royal Naval Air Station, Yeovilton, HMS Heron from August 1980 to February 1982. His next appointment was a spell at the MOD and then to HMS Bristol October 1982 until February 1983.

### **TIMOTHY MICHAEL BEVAN: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX 7 JULY 1980 to 3 APRIL 1981**

Rear Admiral Bevan C.B. was born in London on 7 April 1931 and was educated at Eton College before joining the Royal Navy in 1949 when he entered the Britannia Royal Naval College. His early years of service under training were spent at sea in the cruiser HMS Glasgow operating in the West Indies and the cruiser Superb, off South America. As a Sub-Lieutenant he served in the aircraft-carrier Illustrious.

Promoted to Lieutenant he was posted to the Royal Yacht Britannia during her first commissioning in 1954 before he served as Flag Lieutenant to the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean, Admiral Edwards.

Specialising in Anti-Submarine Warfare, in 1958 he became the Torpedo and Gunnery Officer of the frigate HMS Londonderry early in 1960, again in the West Indies and South American waters and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander during this time.

After a course at home in 1964 he joined the Leander frigate HMS Naiad as First Lieutenant for her first commission. Other interesting roles he had up until then included Navigating Officer of a coal-burning Island class trawler and First Lieutenant of HMS Reclaim, the last ship in the Navy fitted with sails.

Promoted to the rank of Commander in 1966 he commanded the destroyer Decoy which was then a trials ship and Caprice in 1967, then in the Far East and Home waters. A further course followed in August 1968 before taking up an appointment on the Planning Staff at the Ministry of Defence, London.

He returned to sea in 1971 to take command of the frigate Minerva serving in Home waters and the Far East. In 1972 he became a member of the Directing Staff at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. He was promoted to the rank of Captain in December 1975.

Captain Bevan took command of HMS Ariadne for the first time in April 1976 to November 1977. At that time the ship was the half-leader of her squadron, serving at home and in the West Indies, and was present at the Silver Jubilee Fleet Review in July 1977. After a further appointment at the Ministry of Defence on the Policy Staff, he took command of HMS Ajax and F8 in July 1980 until the ship's refit at Gibraltar in mid-August. Upon arrival at Gibraltar he and the ship's company transferred to HMS Ariadne, this time as Leader of the Eighth Frigate Squadron, July 1980 to April 1982. He was appointed in command as Captain Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth in June 1982 until September 1984. At some stage he was advanced to the rank of rear-admiral and was awarded a C.B. in June 1986. He retired on 16 May 1987. He died on 6 June 2019.

#### **JEREMY MICHAEL PORTER: CAPTAIN OF HMS AJAX 4 APRIL 1981 to MAY 1983**

Captain Porter was born in London on 2 January 1937. He grew up in Farnham, Surrey and was educated at Wellesley House, Broadstairs and at Eton College. His father retired as captain in 1954 and was commander of the cruiser Suffolk which shadowed the Bismark during the early stages of the action which led to the sinking of the German battleship in 1941.

Captain Porter joined the Navy in 1955 at the age of eighteen. He spent much of his early service in the Mediterranean and from 1961 to 1963 he was Flag Lieutenant to Admiral Sir Deric Holland-Martin, GCB, DSC when he was Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Mediterranean and also held the NATO appointment of Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Mediterranean. In 1964 he specialized in Navigation, subsequently navigating the frigate HMS Mohawk in the Persian Gulf, and HM ships Torquay and Eastbourne in the Dartmouth Training Squadron.

Promoted Lieutenant-Commander in January 1967, he served for a year with the Army as one of the three RN students on the Army Staff Course at Camberley. He returned to sea in 1969 as the first Navigating Officer of the new guided missile destroyer HMS Norfolk and was promoted Commander at the end of that appointment.

As a Commander he commanded the frigate HMS Brighton from November 1971 to June 1973 spending half that time in NATO waters and half in the Far East. Next came a two-year appointment in the Naval Warfare Division at the Ministry of Defence, followed by two years as a Training Commander at the School of Maritime Operations, HMS Dryad. He then served as the Commander of the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, from April 1977 to December 1978.

On promotion to Captain in December 1978 he was appointed to HMS Dryad as Captain (Training), responsible for all training at the School of Maritime Operations.

Captain Porter assumed command of HMS Ajax and the First Frigate Squadron (comprising eight Leander Ikara class frigates - HM ships Ajax, Arethusa, Aurora, Dido, Euryalus, Galatea, Leander and Naiad) on 4 April 1981 on the completion of the Ajax's refit at

Gibraltar. After satisfactory sea acceptance trials at the end of April she returned to Devonport on 15 May where the re-dedication service was held on 16 June 1981. HMS Ajax was present at Devonport's Navy Days at the end of August. This was followed by Sea Training after refits at Portland after which the ship returned to Devonport. Before the end of the year Ajax had visited Hamburg and Aberporth, which was followed by an assisted maintenance period and Christmas leave.

Early in 1982 the ship visited Stavanger, after training exercises, which was followed by a joint maritime exercise in Scottish waters. Then on to Copenhagen in March. After sea training which lasted until Easter, the ship's company was recalled from leave and preparations made to sail on the 20 April 1982 to relieve a frigate which was required to take part in the Falklands Operation. HMS Ajax then proceeded to Augusta, Port Said, through the Suez Canal, and Djibouti. The ship was then on Gulf Patrol with HMS Amazon until 10 May when she sailed for Singapore in company with the Amazon and RFA Gold Rover. She took part in Exercise Starfish in conjunction with the New Zealand, Australian and Malaysian Navies. Then to Colombo, where the Ajax towed into the port the merchant ship 'Singapore Island' which was in trouble. On 29 June 1982 she joined ships of the US Navy for Operation Gunzo.

The Ajax returned to Devonport on 29 July and summer leave. After a further Maintenance period and training a Submarine Warfare Training exercise at Faslane followed. On 25 October Ajax sailed for Gibraltar, docking for essential repairs. Leaving Gibraltar 18 December 1982 she arrived at Devonport in time for Christmas leave. Between July 1983 and 1985 Captain Porter was Director of Training and Staff Duties. Captain Porter died on 4 May 1985 aged 48.

#### **PETER CHARLES ABBOTT: CAPTAIN HMS AJAX MAY 1983 to DECEMBER 1984**

Admiral Sir Peter Abbott GBE CBE was born on 12 February 1942 and was educated at Queen's College Cambridge before being commissioned in the Navy in 1964. He commanded the minesweeper HMS Chawton from 1972 to 1975 and then joined the staff of the Senior Naval Officer in the West Indies. He commanded the frigate HMS Ambuscade from 1976 to 1980 when he was made second-in-command of the aircraft carrier HMS Bulmark. He was the attached to Chief of Defence Staff during the Falklands in 1982.

He then commanded the frigate HMS Ajax and the First Frigate Squadron from May 1983 to December 1984.

Captain Abbott became Director of Navy Plans January 1986 to 1989 and promoted Rear-Admiral Flag Officer Second Flotilla in August 1989 until January 1991 moving on to become the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff between February 1991 and September 1993. He was made Vice-Admiral Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic in November 1993 until August 1995. Admiral Sir Peter Charles Abbott became Commander-in-Chief, The Fleet in October 1995 until September 1997 and Vice-Chief of Defence Staff in 1997 until he retired in 2001.

In 1994 he was awarded a KCB and in 1999 a GBE.

He died 28 September 2015.

#### **JOHN F. S. TRINDER: CAPTAIN HMS AJAX DECEMBER 1984 to JUNE 1985**

John F. S. Trinder was Captain, Fishery Protection Squadron from July 1980 until October 1982 followed by appointment as Naval Assistant to First Sea Lord January 1983-September 1984. In December 1984 he commanded the 1st Frigate Squadron HMS Ajax and HMS Euryalus until 1986 and on HMS Euryalus from June 1986 until June 1987.

He became Seamen Officer Appointments October 1986 until March 1989

[Few records exist for him]