

## Henry Allingham (now) the Worlds oldest man

6 June 1896 Born in Upper Clapton, London

21 September 1915 Joins Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) aged 19. Rated as Air Mechanic Second Class

May 1916, Joins HMS Kingfisher the vessel is subsequently involved in the Battle of Jutland

1917 Posted to the Aircraft Depot at Dunkirk, where he remained until the end of the War involved recovering crashed aircraft from the front lines.

1919 Discharged from the RAF and works for Fords until his retirement  
1920

1939, helps re-open the port of Harwich by working on a system to neutralise German magnetic mines

2003 Awarded France's highest military honour, Chevalier, Legion D'honneur  
With three other veterans of World War I, Henry lays a wreath at the Cenotaph to mark the 90th anniversary of the outbreak of the War

September 2004, as the last remaining founder member of the RAF, attends the unveiling of the British Air Services.

April 2006 becomes a resident at St Dunstan's National Centre in Ovingdean.

6 June 2007 celebrates his 111th birthday on HMS Victory in Portsmouth

November 2008 Along with three other veterans of World War I, Henry lays a wreath at the Cenotaph to mark the 90th anniversary of the Armistice



March 2009 presented with his promotion to Officier, Légion d'Honneur by the French Ambassador in London.  
6th June 2009, celebrated his 113th Birthday onboard HMS President, London.

He is one of three British men still alive who actively served in the First World War, is the last surviving founder of the Royal Air Force, has long held the record for being the oldest man in Europe and earlier this year he became Britain's most ancient man ever after overtaking John Evans, a Welsh former coal miner who died in 1990 aged 112 years and 295 days.

But when Mr Allingham woke up yesterday morning at St Dunstan's care home for blind ex-service personnel, in Ovingdean, near Brighton, the supercentenarian was informed that he had suddenly achieved the highest age-related accolade for men.

Tomoji Tanabe, a Japanese retired civil engineer, had died peacefully in his sleep overnight. He was 113 years' and 274 days' old and had more than 50 great-grandchildren. Having foregone alcohol and cigarettes all his life, Tanabe had become the world's oldest man in January 2007.

That mantle has now passed to Mr Allingham – the first time a British person has ever held such a title.

A St Dunstan's spokesman said that the oldest man on Earth greeted the news by simply returning to bed after breakfast for a celebratory nap.

For someone who has seen three different centuries, six monarchs, two world wars (and 18 world cups), becoming the oldest living man is, perhaps, something of a non-event.

Mr Allingham is quieter these days, but no codger at heart. In contrast to Mr Tanabe's asceticism, he attributes his longevity to "cigarettes, whisky and wild, wild women".

### **Left Henry in 1916**

The Air Mechanic First Class is best known publicly for his war record, because of the many public engagements he has attended – up to 70 some years – including regular meetings with the Queen, politicians and soldiers returning from theatres of war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yet he dislikes talking about conflict, saying only: "War's stupid. Nobody wins."

He added in an interview recently: "Like so many, I have tried to forget my time in the war. In the last few years I have met other veterans, and we never spoke one word of the war, not one."

One of the many remarkable things about him – particularly given the mores of his time – has been his willingness to talk about mental health. "I've had two major breakdowns," he recalled, "one during the war and one after. But both when I was trying to do the work of three men.

"The trick is to look after yourself and always know your limitations."

On the key to a long and prosperous existence, he added: "I don't know if there is a secret, but keeping within your capacity is vital."



Henry Allingham was born on 6 June 1896 in Clacton, east London, and his father died when he was a baby. One-hundred-and-thirteen years later his dynasty includes six grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, 14 great-great-grandchildren and one great-great-great-grandchild.

Mr Allingham's earliest memories include cheering WG Grace at the Oval in 1903 and hearing news of the Wright brother's first flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903. Watching soldiers returning from the Boer War – an occasion which eventually inspired him to join the military himself.

In 1915, shortly after his mother's death, he joined the Royal Navy Air Service, initially to help maintain sea planes. But high casualty rates – and Mr Allingham's enthusiasm for taking to the air – meant that he soon joined in with air missions, serving as a spotter with Britain's fleet of flimsy biplanes. A year later he narrowly escaped death at the Battle of Jutland; a German shell hurtling towards his ship the armed trawler HMS Kingfisher, ricocheted on the water and whistled clear over the ship's deck. He went on to fight at Ypres – where standing in two-feet of water in the trenches particularly haunted him – the Somme and Passchendaele.

Yet another of the exciting episodes in Mr Allingham's life began in 1919 when he left the air force and went into the burgeoning motorcar industry, joining the design department at Ford cars in Dagenham. The engineering skills he learnt there were put to use during the Second World War as a designer of counter-measures to the German navy's magnetic mines.

The 113-year-old spent over half a century married to his first and only wife, Dorothy, with whom he tied the knot in 1919, shortly after returning from the First World War. Together they had two daughters, Jean and Betty, who emigrated to the US and both died in the 1980s.

### **From the “ Royal Navy Newsletter”**

Henry Allingham, Britain's oldest man and only surviving Naval First World War veteran, will celebrate his 113th birthday on 6 June 2009 with a party held by the Royal Navy, with whom he saw service during the Great War.

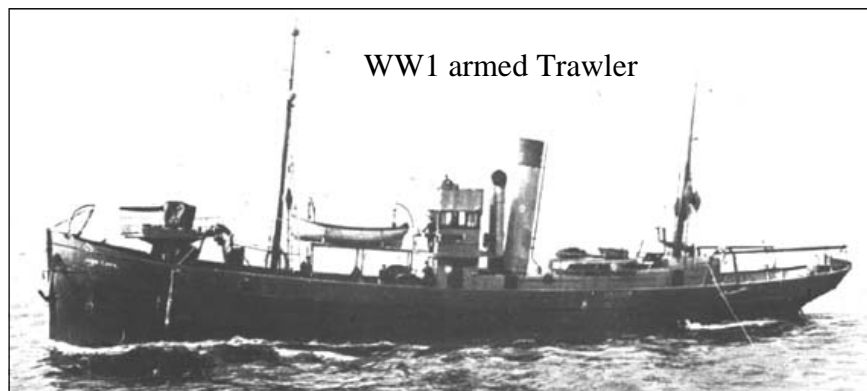
The party, to be held at HMS President in London, will be attended by members of Henry's family, most of whom reside in the USA, as well as close friends and members of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

Rear Admiral Simon Charlier, the Head of the Fleet Air Arm, the modern descendant of the Royal Naval Air Service in which Henry served, will be the senior serving military officer present.

To commemorate such a historic milestone the Royal Navy is helping their oldest member to celebrate in style. A birthday cake and card signed by the First Sea Lord will be delivered by fast raiding craft of the Royal Marines, and a decanter of Pussers Rum, Henry's favourite tippie, will be presented on behalf of the Fleet Air Arm by Rear Admiral Charlier.

Uniquely Henry witnessed the horrors of the Great War at sea, on land and in the air. On the 31 May 1916, Henry was onboard the armed trawler Kingfisher at what became one of the greatest naval battles of all time, Jutland. He also flew on many seaplane patrols looking for enemy vessels. Henry also saw service on the Western Front, as part of a team which recovered downed aircraft, often involving venturing into No Mans Land.

In his time he has seen six monarchs and twenty one prime ministers come and go.



WW1 armed Trawler

*Story cobbled together from the following*

By Jerome Taylor 'the Independent on Sunday' London. Saturday, 20 June  
The Royal Navy Newsletter website & The St Dunstons newsletter website



## **HMS PRESIDENT**

*There have been many ships moored in London named HMS President-  
Left the last 'floating' HMS President -now a  
very up-market Night Club/Function centre/  
Hotel.*

### *A brief history*

There had been a drill ship moored in London since 1 April 1862. This was the 58-gun frigate HMS President, berthed at the West India Docks and training ship of the local Royal Naval Reserve. They were joined in 1872 by the Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers. This ship was named Old President on 25 March 1903,

and was sold for scrapping on 7 July 1903.

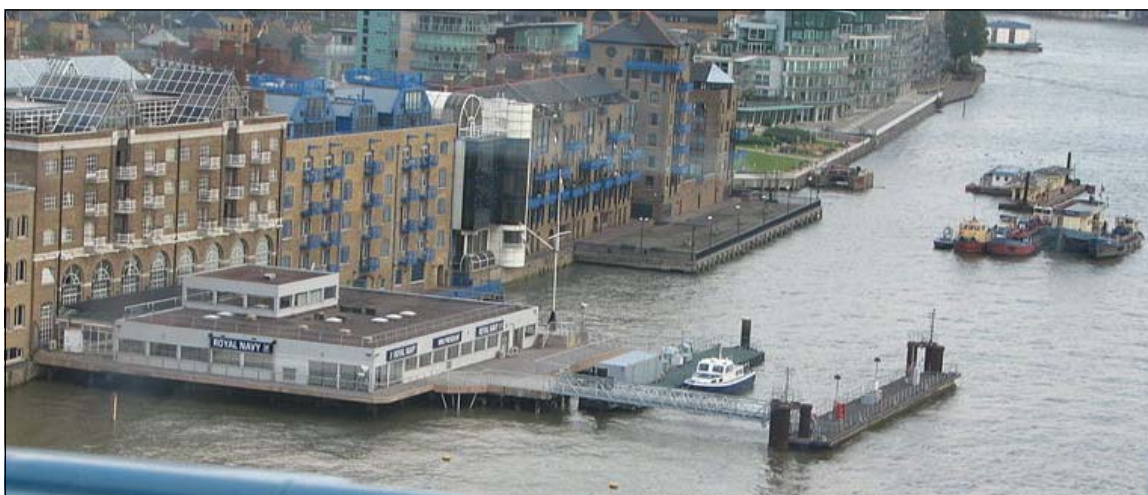
With the passing of the Naval Forces Act by Parliament on 30 June 1903, the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve was created. The London Division was established on 10 November 1903 and held its first drill night at the Fishmongers' Hall. It then moved to the Osprey class sloop HMS Gannet then moored in the Thames. The Gannet had been renamed HMS President on 16 May 1903. She served for nine years as the centre's home, until being paid off on 31 March 1911. She was replaced by HMS Buzzard, which had been serving as a training ship at Blackfriars since 19 May 1904. She took the name HMS President on 1 April 1911. This President served until 23 January 1918, when she was lent to the Marine Society, finally being sold on 6 September 1921.

It was intended to replace her with the Anchusa class sloop HMS Marjoram, but she was wrecked on her way to being fitted out. She was instead replaced by her sister HMS Saxifrage, which was renamed HMS President on 9 September 1921.

She was originally part of the flower class built in Renfrew, a small class of convoy protection ships built to look like merchant ships, she was designed to attract German U boats that she would then try and destroy with hidden weapons.

HMS President is listed on the National Register of Historic Vessels.

She was moored at King's Reach on 19 June 1922. She was joined in 1938 by HMS Chrysanthemum, which served as a drill hall and gave extra space for activities. HMS President was taken over in 1939 for the training of DEMS gunners and sailors. The Reserve division had been closed by April 1940. The division was reformed in October 1946 and continued to serve as the London base.



Above the present HMS President  
A 'Stone Frigate'  
Used as a naval reserve training centre