

Portraits
of
Henry Allingham, 2005



Rob Munday



A reflection hologram portrait of Henry Allingham by Rob Munday



A laser-transmission hologram portrait of Henry Allingham by Rob Munday



A lenticular portrait of Henry Allingham by Rob Munday.

Henry William Allingham (6 June 1896 – 18 July 2009)

Henry Allingham was born on the 6th of June 1896 and died at the age of 113 years. At the time of the shoot, he was the oldest man in the UK, the oldest surviving World War 1 British veteran, a founding member of the Royal Air Force, and the last known survivor of the Battle of Jutland. At the time of his death, he was the oldest man in the world and the 12th-verified oldest man of all time. He was also the longest-lived man ever recorded from the United Kingdom.

In August 2005, he led the nation in the Lord's Prayer at the Cenotaph in London to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the outbreak of World War 1. In 2003, he was awarded The Legion d'Honneur, France's highest decoration established by Napoleon Bonaparte in May 1802 for gallantry in action or distinguished service in military or civilian life.



Henry joined the Royal Naval Air Service in 1915 as an aircraft mechanic and acted as an observer and gunner searching for U-boats, Zeppelins, and mines over the North Sea. In May 1916, he was ordered aboard HMT Kingfisher as it set out to join the British Battle Fleet, to help launch a Sopwith Schneider seaplane to look for the German Battle Fleet. It was night when the Kingfisher met up with the fleet and Henry witnessed the ensuing 'Battle of Jutland'; he recalls "seeing shells ricocheting across the sea".

The Battle of Jutland was the greatest naval battle of the First World War, and although the Royal Navy lost more ships, it was considered a British victory as the Royal Navy retained command of the seas and maintained the blockade of Germany, which ultimately brought Germany to its knees. Henry also instrumented the very first reconnaissance aircraft camera during World War I.

The sitting

I invited Henry Allingham to sit for a holographic portrait in November 2005. A month later, in December 2005, he travelled to my Richmond-Upon-Thames studio to be recorded. During the three-hour shoot, two types of portraits were created. First, I shot several digital parallax image sequences using my unique VIP camera system,

the same camera that I built to record my portrait of Queen Elizabeth II in 2003/2004, for an eventual lenticular portrait or holographic stereogram. My friend Patrick Boyd assisted with the lighting.



A sequence of parallax images from Rob Munday's VIP system



Henry in Rob Munday's VIP studio.

Henry then moved to my ruby pulsed laser portrait studio, where three 40 * 30 cm glass plate master holograms were exposed.



Left: Rob Munday prepares to record a pulsed laser master hologram in his hologram portrait laser studio.



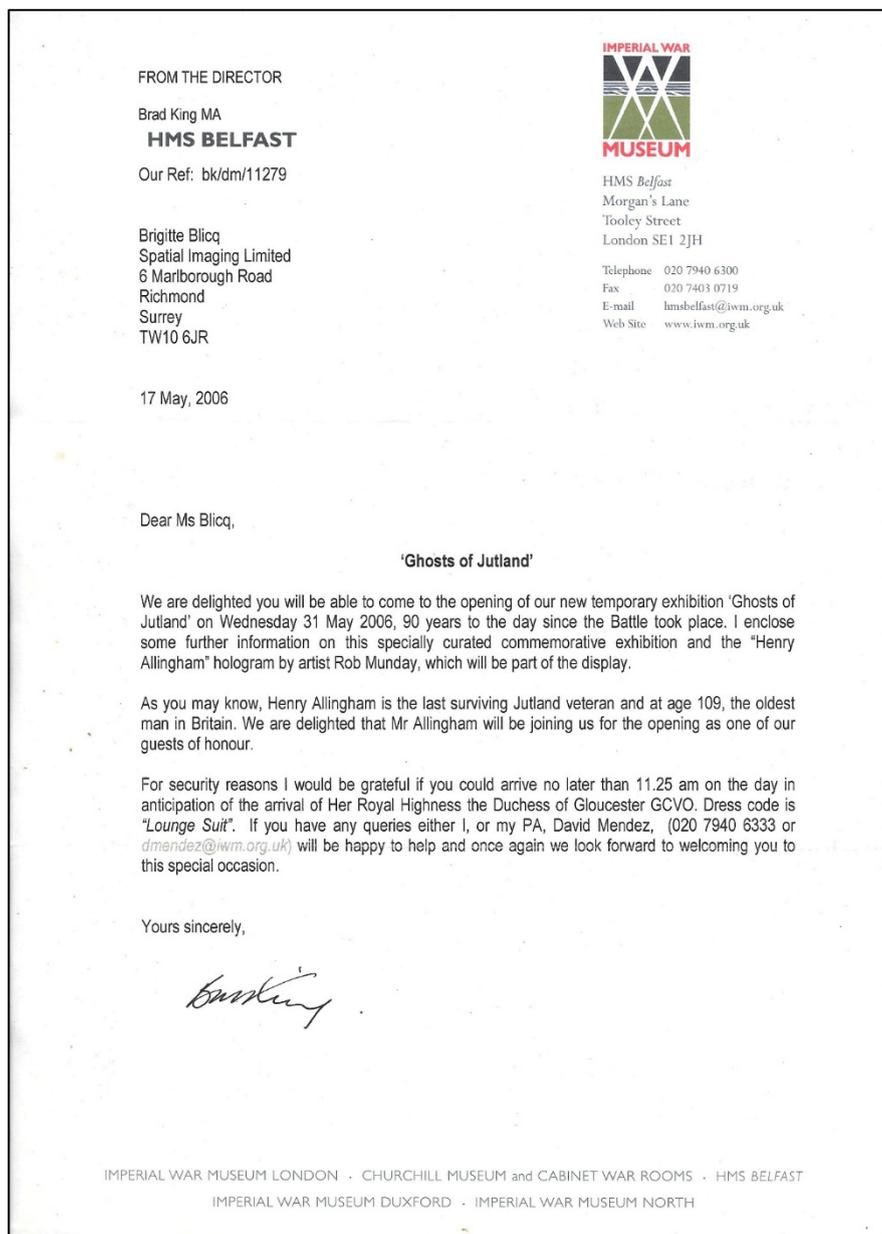
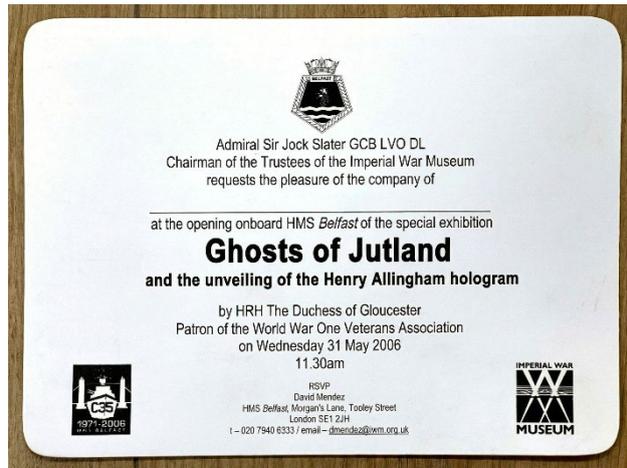
Right: The 30-nanosecond moment that Henry Allingham was immortalised by the pulsed laser.

Soon after the portrait was recorded, I learned that a special exhibition was to open on 31st May 2006 to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Jutland and to remember the 8,648 British and German sailors who lost their lives in the battle. The exhibition 'Ghosts of Jutland' was to form part of London's floating naval museum on board the HMS Belfast.



The HMS Belfast in front of Tower Bridge.

The unveiling



Given that Henry is the last known survivor of the Battle of Jutland, I felt that it would be extremely fitting to donate a holographic portrait of Henry to the museum so that it could be displayed alongside his biography in the new exhibition. I also proposed that HRH The Duchess of Gloucester GCVO, the patron of the World War 1 Veterans Association, unveil the holographic portrait in the presence of Henry to mark the opening of the exhibition and raise awareness of the battle. Both proposals were accepted, and the event was duly organised.

A gold coloured 40*30 cm pulsed laser portrait reflection hologram and a life-sized full colour lenticular portrait were provided for the opening. HRH The Duchess of Gloucester arrived at 11.30 a.m. on the 31st May 2006 to unveil my portrait.



At the top, the HRH The Duchess of Gloucester meets Henry Allingham, and at the bottom, meets Rob Munday.

Following a speech by HRH The Duchess of Gloucester, she unveiled my holographic portrait by switching on the illumination light using a radio-operated remote-control switch.



Top left: *The Duchess of Gloucester and Henry Allingham unveiling the hologram.*
Top right and bottom: *Henry poses for the press.*

The hologram was displayed on board the HMS Belfast before being donated to the Imperial War Museum. The hologram is a celebration of the life of Henry Allingham that spans three centuries, and a copy of it was

toured around schools and other venues in the UK to raise awareness of the First World War and the role that many thousands of servicemen like Henry played in it.

I was interviewed live on BBC4's Saturday Morning Report on 3rd June 2006, and Henry's life, the exhibition opening, and my portrait were the subjects of a BBC News article.



Left: Henry Allingham's portrait in the Ghosts of Jutland exhibition. Right: Henry Allingham and Rob Munday.

Artist statement.

One problem with presenting history to children and adults alike through the use of photographs and film footage is that the people depicted in those images do not seem real. Perhaps because of modern television and computer imaging techniques, perhaps because of the poor quality of the images, it is extremely hard to identify with those people and accept that they were real people made of flesh and blood, just like us. People who had the same concerns that we do, who loved their children and who were loved by them, who did not want to die but fought and died for their country, sometimes in the most horrific manner. We have become so immune that even watching people die on film and in news articles has become relatively easy to accept. Again, we disassociate ourselves from the reality – they are 'just' images.

Ironically, a pulse portrait is often quoted as 'looking dead', like a three-dimensional death mask. In this context and for the reasons above, however, I believe that the portrait of Henry Allingham was used in perhaps the most significant application of a holographic portrait to date. When children look at Henry's portrait, they will look at the man himself, frozen in time - a man who, 90 years ago, stood aboard HMT Kingfisher and saw the shells ricocheting across the sea. That stood shoulder to shoulder and was friends with those fuzzy, black and white people shown by the old film footage. I believe that the hologram reminds viewers in a much more powerful manner that the people who died on that day were as real and alive as we are now.

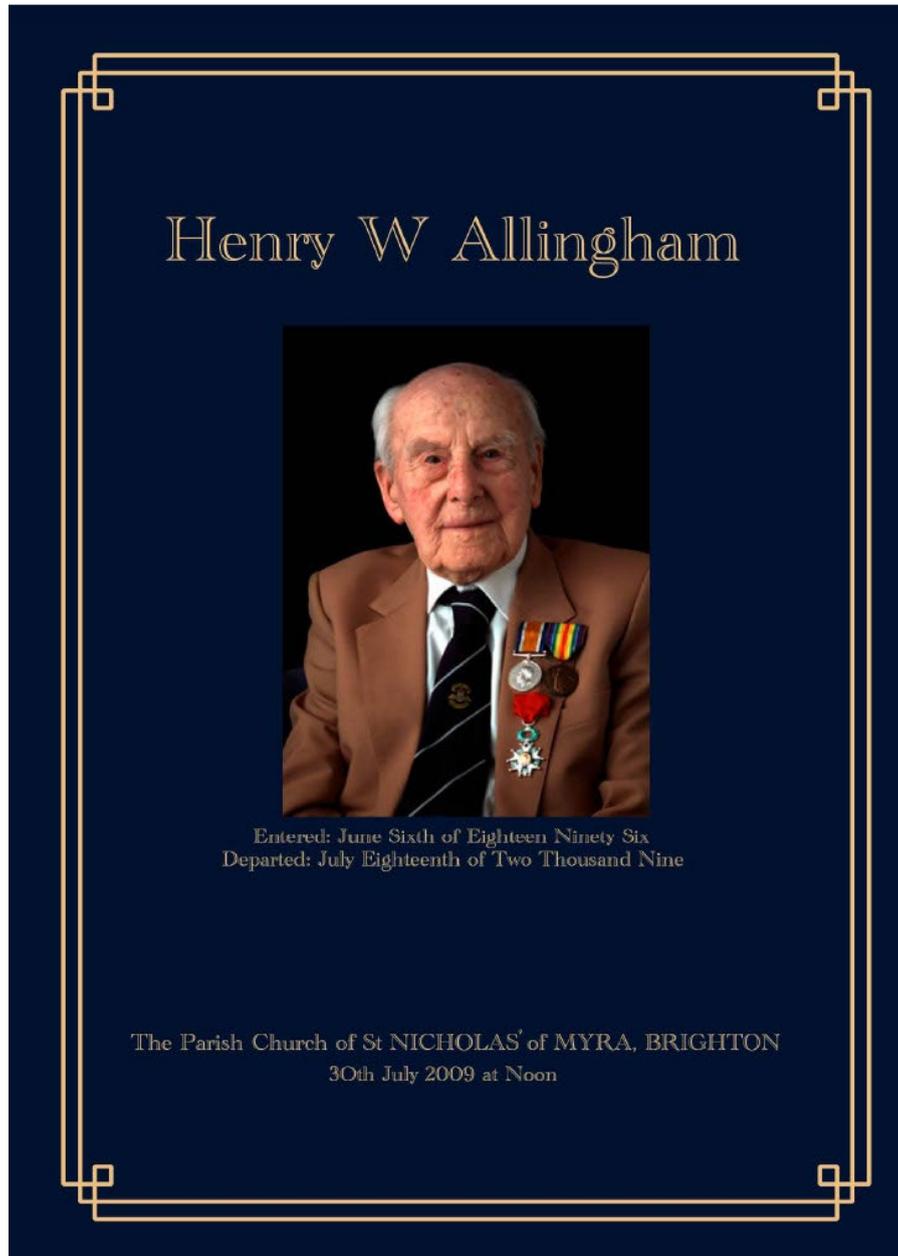
This holographic portrait is a celebration of the life of Henry Allingham, which spans three centuries. A copy of it will be toured around schools and other venues in the UK to raise awareness of the First World War and the role that many thousands of servicemen like Henry played in it.



The lenticular portrait made for the opening of the exhibition was donated by me to St Dunstan's home for blind veterans, now Blind Veterans UK, in Ovingdean, near Brighton, where Henry spent his final years.

Henry Allingham died of natural causes in his sleep at 3:10 am on 18 July 2009 at his care home, aged 113 years and 42 days. Rob was honoured that his portrait was placed in St Nicholas' Church, Brighton, for Henry's funeral, and his portrait was also used for the front cover of the Order of Service.





The Order of Service for Henry Allingham's funeral depicts Rob's portrait.



Mourners read the Order of Service.



Rob Munday with Henry Allingham.



The team.

From left to right and top to bottom: Assistant Olivier Pitavy, Dennis Goodman, Rob Munday, Brenda Goodman, Henry Allingham, and Beth Meades (PR Chillie Media). Thanks also to Patrick Boyd who assisted with the lighting of the stereogram portrait and took these photographs.



*A 3D anaglyph version of the lenticular portrait of Henry Allingham by Rob Munday.
Use red/cyan stereoscopic glasses to view the image in 3D*

All rights reserved – © Rob Munday 2005