

Henry Allingham

Henry Allingham was born on the 6th June 1896 and is now 110. He is 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. 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 Allingham as a young man

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.

Henry was invited by Rob Munday to sit for a holographic portrait in November 2005. A month later, in December 2005, Henry travelled to Rob's Richmond-Upon-Thames studio to be recorded. During the three hours shoot two types of portraits were created. First Rob shot a number of digital parallax image sequences using his unique VIP camera system, the same camera that he built to record Her Majesty the Queen.



Henry in the Rob Munday's VIP studio



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

Henry then moved to Munday's ruby pulsed laser portrait studio where three 40 * 30 cm glass plate master holograms were produced.



Rob Munday prepares to record a pulsed laser master hologram in his laser studio



The moment that Henry was immortalised by the pulsed laser

Soon after the portrait was recorded Rob 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 navel museum on board the HMS Belfast.



HMS Belfast in front of Tower Bridge

Given that Henry is the last known survivor of the Battle of Jutland, Rob 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. Rob also proposed that HRH The Duchess of Gloucester GCVO, the patron of the World War 1 Veterans Association, was asked to 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 gratefully accepted and the event duly organised.

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



On the right the HRH The Duchess of Gloucester with Henry Allingham and on the left with Rob Munday

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



The Duchess of Gloucester and Henry Allingham unveiling the hologram



Henry with his hologram

The hologram was displayed for some weeks on board the HMS Belfast before being donated to the Imperial War Museum.



Henry Allingham's portrait in the Ghosts of Jutland exhibition

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. When children look at Henry's portrait, they will be looking at the man himself, frozen in time - a man that in 1916 stood aboard HMT Kingfisher and saw the shells ricocheting across the sea.



The team.

Top left, Olivier Pitavy, Dennis Goodman and Rob Munday. Bottom from right, Brenda Goodman, Henry Allingham and Beth Meades