

FUTURE OF THE ANNUAL "LAST WATCH CEREMONY"
HELD AT
THE ROYAL OAK ON THE QUAY

Wed, 15 Apr at 18:26

Dear Ben,

You probably have heard of this event to which the Mayor is always invited. This year it is not going to take place as Veterans Weekend has been cancelled due to Covid-19.

The usual procedure is to hold an indoor service in memory of a commemorative naval action that is timely with that particular year. Last year was Operation Neptune, the naval side of D-Day in 1944, thus the 75th anniversary.

I started this annual event in 2014 to commemorate the launch of HMS Royal Oak, also her loss 35 years later in 1939, it being the 75th anniversary. At that time it was known as the "Bell Ceremony" when each year at Noon eight bells were rung out.

In 2016 we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Jutland, in which HMS Royal Oak took part. That year was the first year we invited the Mayor, Richard Kosher, who is ex-navy. Also that year he was invited to unveil a large drawing of HMS Royal Oak, which still hangs in the pub.

In 2017 we commemorated the 75th Anniversary of the raid on Dieppe 1942 (Operation Jubilee). The Mayor that year was Kevin Brooks. As he was ex-army we substituted the White Ensign with the Union flag.

In 2018 we commemorated 100 years of the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet. That was attended by the last Mayor of the, now, disbanded Weymouth & Portland Borough Council. Gill Taylor and her consort Trefor Morgan.

I had a big event planned for this year's VE&VJ Days commemoration, Sadly it is not to be so, but if we are over this pandemic by August, we might still be able to put on a show, as there is no Carnival this year. Each year we have the wonderful Kathy Kay entertaining us for the day.

The bottom line is; As much as I really enjoy doing it, I want to hand the tradition on to someone younger.

If you know of any 'young salt' that would like to get involved please let me know.

Best Wishes to you and all at the Portland branch of the R.N.A.

ALVIN HOPPER