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# CRAMAHE WAR VETERAN PROFILE: WALTER "WALLY" LEIGH

by Tom Philp  
THE INDEPENDENT

INDEPENDENT NOV. 6/08

British-born Walter "Wally" Leigh was no different than most men of the Commonwealth when England declared war against Germany on September 3, 1939. Exactly one day later, Wally and his best friend, Tommy Revell, enlisted,



even though Wally's parents protested he was only 17 years old. Wally had lied about his age in order to serve his country.

The young men from Barking, England joined the Royal Navy. After basic training in Portsmouth, Wally was sent to Whale Island for a gunnery course, succeeding to the point he was kept there as an instructor. But his desire to see "action" soon won over his senior

officers; Wally would go to sea. Tommy would not; he was killed in a single bombing raid while inside the medical building at Portsmouth.

Wally would spend the next six years aboard the corvette *Vetch* and the escort carrier *Trumpeter*, going where the war demanded. With his shipmates, Wally would patrol the waters off the west coast of Africa; perform convoy duty in the North Atlantic; deliver soldiers to France, where he would observe the horrific loss of Allied life on the shores of Dieppe; and be part of the last convoy to Murmansk.

Wounded badly when an ammunition magazine exploded while he was defending the *Vetch* from aerial attack, Wally would convalesce in Bougie, France, and return to active service where he would be mentioned in dispatches, and earn medals and commendations including a Royal Humane Society Scroll for saving a drowning sailor. Sixty years after the war, he would also receive an anniversary medal commemorating the Murmansk Run.

Ironically, Wally would also be part of the crew that took Canadian and British soldiers to Sicily, including members of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment based in Belleville, Ontario, a neighbouring city to the home he would find in Cramahe Township many years after the war.

Post-war, Wally and his wife, Olive, lived and worked in England before emigrating to Canada in 1989. Although Olive died in 2000, Walter "Wally" Leigh, veteran, still lives in Cramahe with his daughters Joan and Janice.



## ROBERT CLARENCE PICKELL



A/B Seaman

Served as a member of R.C.N.V.R. (Volunteer Reserve) March 1942 through August 1945. Convoy duty with Royal Navy to North Africa & Russia. Mr. Pickell made 3 round trips aboard the HMCS Iroquois, a tribal

class destroyer, on what was known as the Murmansk Run to the Russian port of Marmansk. This was known to be one of the most dangerous convoy routes for the Allied Forces.

## JOHNNIE BING



Master Warrant Officer (MWO - Retired)

Served as a member of Royal Canadian Electrical Mechanical Engineers (R.C.E.M.E.) in Canada, Korea and Northwestern Europe. Awards received:

CFVSM, SSM, CPSM, UNSM, CD & CLASP.



## GEORGE R. TOWNS

Signalman

Served with the Army, R.C.C.S., #3 S.W. Section October 1942 through February 1946 in the U.K. Europe in the Merchant Marines in the North Atlantic 1941-1942.

## CHARLES WILLIAM TWITCHETT



Private

Served as a member of the 47th Battalion, 4th Div. C.E.F. 1916-1919 in France. Awarded the Medal of Bravery in the field. Wounded in action Oct. 26, 1917.

## VICTOR ALPHONSE DELUCA



A/B Seaman

Served with the Canadian Merchant Navy during World War II. His awards include Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, 1939-45 Star, Atlantic Star and War Medal 1939-45.

## IRVING KERWIN



Signalman

Served with the Canadian Army, May 1951- May

1954. He served during the Korean War.

*In Honour of those  
Who protected us then  
And protect us now.*



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