



Town of Ajax Street Dedication



Street Name: **Bellerive Lane**

Name of Veteran: Frederick Secker Bell Aug. 17, 1897- Nov. 23, 1973

Rank: Captain

Ship Served: HMS Exeter

Date of Service on Ship: August 25, 1939 to April 12, 1940

Year of Visit/Dedication: June 2022

Veteran or Family Visit: HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association

Veteran of the Battle of the River Plate: Yes Died at Battle: No

Frederick Secker Bell was born in London, England on August 17, 1897 to Colonel Frank Burnham Bell and Minnie (Wootton) Bell. He was educated at Marfield Grange in Kent and then at the Royal Naval Colleges in Osborne and Dartmouth. He enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1910 and at the outbreak of World War One he was one of the last cadets to graduate from the college.



Bell served as a Midshipman with HMS Cumberland and HMS Challenger during the Cameroon Campaign from 1914 to 1915. He also served HMS Canada in the Grand Fleet at Jutland before specializing in submarines.

After WW1 Bell served on the China Station, a British Warship dry docked in Singapore. After that assignment he went on exchange duty to the Australian Station where he was promoted to Commander in 1931. He was also the Director of Naval Intelligence at Naval Headquarters in Melbourne after serving HMAS Australia. While stationed in Australia he met his future wife, Dulcie Carmel Cohen, whom he married in Melbourne in October 1938.



Upon Bell's return to England, he went through the Staff College at Greenwich and then did staff work at the Admiralty. After this he was assigned to HMS Repulse as Commander. During his three years with the Repulse, he was appointed Governor of Haifa when martial law was declared there in 1937.

Frederick Secker Bell was promoted to the rank of Captain in December 1938 and was later given command of the 8-inch gun cruiser HMS Exeter, in which he took part in the Battle of the River Plate in December 1939.

Near the beginning of the Battle of the River Plate the Graf Spee made a direct hit on the Exeter's bridge, killing all but three of her officers. Bell was one of the survivors, and was able to continue the action until the Exeter sustained further damage and was listing heavily. As she had only one turret still in action, Harwood ordered Bell to return to Stanley for repairs. Bell was awarded the CB (Companions of the Order of Bath) and after the war became Aide-de-Camp to King George VI, a post he held between 1947 and 1948, after which he retired.



Captain Bell at the premier of the movie 'The Battle of the River Plate' with actor John Gregson and his wife. Photos courtesy of Getty images

Captain Frederick Secker Bell died on November 23, 1973 at the age of seventy six.