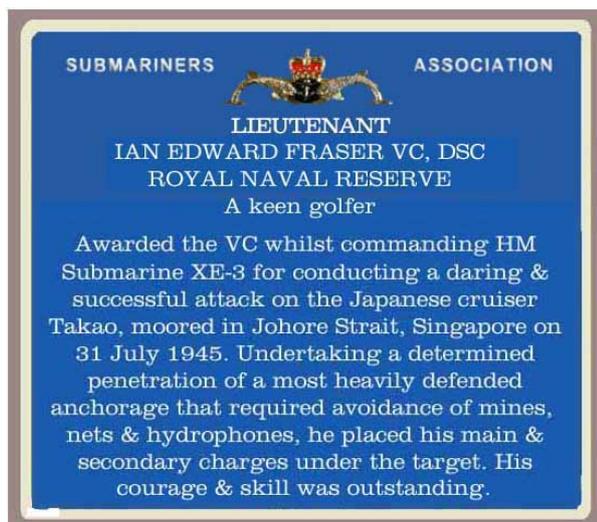


**Lieutenant Ian Edward Fraser VC, DSC,
RNR Honoured with Blue Plaque at
Leasowe Golf Club, Wirral, Merseyside.**



Lieutenant Ian Edward Fraser VC, DSC, RNR Blue Commemorative Plaque mounted at Leasowe Golf Club, Wirral, Merseyside 22nd February 2020.

As part of the Submariners Association initiative the twelfth Blue Plaque commemorating a WWII Submariner and VC holder was placed at the Leasowe Golf Club, Wirral, Merseyside on Saturday 22nd February 2020.

Approximately 130 guests, which included the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, *Mr. Mark Blundell*, the High Sheriff of Merseyside, *Mr. David Steer QC, DL*; the Mayor & Mayoress of Wirral, *Councillor Tony & Barbara Smith*; the Leader of Wirral Council, *Councillor Pat Hackett*; Commodore Jim Perks OBE Head of Submarine Fighting Arm; members of the Leasowe Golf Club and the Fraser family, joined veteran and serving submariners including the President of the Submariners Association, *Rear Admiral Niall Kilgour CB*; the National Standard, Manchester and Liverpool Branch members with Standards for the ceremony.

The commemoration service was led by Father David Gamble. Parish Priest of Our Lady of Victories Roman Catholic Church, Hightown, Liverpool. The President Rear Admiral Niall Kilgour CB provided detailed information on Lieutenant Ian Edward Fraser VC, DSC, RNR Naval career & citation for the award of the VC.



L to R – Captain of Gold Club, Mayor of Wirral, High Sheriff Merseyside, Lord Lieutenant Merseyside, R. Adm Kilgour CB, Lt Cdr Sandy Powell, Father David Gamble..

In view that the weather was extremely windy the service for the Commemoration of the Blue Plaque was conducted within the Golf Club. This was followed by the unveiling of the plaque, at the entrance porch to the Club by the President of the Submariners Association and Mr Martin Fraser (son).

Ian Edward Fraser was born in Ealing on the 18th December 1920 and was the elder son of Sydney Fraser, a marine engineer. He attended the Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe, and the school ship HMS CONWAY.

On leaving school he joined the Merchant Service and worked on merchant ships from 1938 to 1939 and later joined the Royal Naval Reserve initially with the rank of midshipman, serving on several destroyers.

After the outbreak of the 2nd World War he was called for service as a Lieutenant, RNR and on 1st Apr 1942 he was appointed to HMS Dolphin (5th Submarine Flotilla) 'for Submarine HMS SAHIB – standing by whilst completing' at the Cammell Laird Shipyard at Birkenhead 'and as the Navigator on commissioning'. After Commissioning and work up HMS SAHIB was sent to the Mediterranean and joined the 8th Submarine Flotilla based on the Submarine Depot Ship HMS MAIDSTONE at Algiers.



Lieutenant Ian Edward Fraser VC, DSC RNR

On 21st Jan 1942 HMS SAHIB sank the U-Boat U-301 off Corsica and Ian Fraser was awarded the DSC for his part in the attack.

On his return home from the Mediterranean he was appointed to the Submarine Depot Ship HMS CYCLOPS (7th Submarine Flotilla) at Rothesay 'for Submarine H44 as the First Lieutenant' on 8th Jul 1943. He served in H44 until 21st Feb 1944 when he was appointed to HMS VARBEL (12th Submarine Flotilla) at Port Bannantyne 'for X Craft Duties'.

On 7th Dec 1944 at the age of 24 he was appointed to the Submarine Depot Ship HMS BONAVENTURE at Port Bannantyne. HMS BONAVENTURE was sent to the Far East with a Flotilla of XE Craft – now designated as the 14th Submarine Flotilla and based at Subic Bay.



XE3 on Surface 1944

Ian Fraser was selected as the Commanding Officer of Submarine XE3 and tasked to carry out an attack on the Japanese Cruiser TAKAO at Singapore. HMS BONAVENTURE moved to a new base at Labuan Island closer to Singapore before launching the attack.

Leaving at about noon on 26th Jul 1945 Submarine XE3 was towed to her launch point by Submarine HMS STYGIAN (Lt Guy C Clarabut, DSO, DSC, RN). For the tow XE3 was manned by a Passage Crew led by Sub Lieutenant Frank Ogden, RNVR. With about forty miles to go to the target the 'Passage Crew' was relieved by the

'Operational Crew' and the attack commenced at approximately 1100 on 30th Jul 1945.

The attack, codenamed **Operation Struggle** is described as follows:

On 31 July 1945 in the Straits of Johor between Singapore and Malaya, Lieutenant Fraser, in command of an improved X-boat, HMS XE-3, attacked the Japanese heavy cruiser *Takao*, after making a long and hazardous journey through mined waters. Fraser slid the submarine under the *Takao*, which lay over a depression in the sea bed, and his diver Acting Leading Seaman James Joseph Magennis went out to fix the limpet mines to the bottom of the ship. The two side-charges then had to be released from XE-3, but the starboard charge stuck and Magennis climbed out again and after a nerve-wracking seven minutes released the charge. XE-3 then made for home. Magennis was also awarded a Victoria Cross, and Fraser became a lieutenant-commander. Sub-Lieutenant William James Lanyon Smith, RNZNVR, who was at the controls of XE-3 during the attack, received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO); Engine Room Artificer Third Class Charles Alfred Reed, who was at the wheel, received the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal



Takao

After the attack XE3 successfully met up with HMS STYGIAN and Fraser and his crew were relieved by the Passage Crew after some 50 hours without sleep.

The citation was published in a supplement to the [London Gazette](#) of 9 November 1945 and read:

Whitehall, 13th November, 1945.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS for valor to: — Lieutenant Ian Edward FRASER, D.S.C., RNR.

Lieutenant Fraser commanded His Majesty's Midget Submarine XE-3 in a successful attack on a Japanese heavy cruiser of the ATAGO class at her moorings in Johore Strait, Singapore, on 31st July, 1945. During the long approach up the Singapore Straits XE-3 deliberately left the believed safe channel and entered mined waters

to avoid suspected hydrophone posts. The target was aground, or nearly aground, both fore and aft, and only under the midship portion was there just sufficient water for XE-3 to place herself under the cruiser. For forty minutes XE-3 pushed her way along the seabed until finally Lieutenant Fraser managed to force her right under the centre of the cruiser. Here he placed the limpets and dropped his main side charge. Great difficulty was experienced in extricating the craft after the attack had been completed, but finally XE-3 was clear, and commenced her long return journey out to sea.



Leading Seaman James Magennis VC and Lieutenant Ian Fraser VC

The courage and determination of Lieutenant Fraser are beyond all praise. Any man not possessed of his relentless determination to achieve his object in full, regardless of all consequences, would have dropped his side charge alongside the target instead of persisting until he had forced his submarine right under the cruiser. The approach and withdrawal entailed a passage of 80 miles through water which had been mined by both the enemy and ourselves, past hydrophone positions, over loops and controlled minefields, and through an anti-submarine boom.

After he returned home Ian Fraser was appointed to HMS DOLPHIN on 16th January 1946 and also that year was awarded the American decoration of Legion of Merit.

Fraser retired from the Royal Navy in 1947 but remained in the Royal Naval Reserve. On retiring and realising that frogman-type diving (what is now called scuba diving) could do many sorts of underwater work that the old-type heavy standard diving gear was unsuitable for, he and some associates got hold of war-surplus frogman's kit and set up a popular public show displaying frogman techniques in a big aquarium tank in Belle Vue Zoo in Manchester, England.

Using the show's takings, and with his younger brother Brian, he set up a commercial diving organisation called Universal Divers Ltd, which

he was managing director of from 1947 to 1965 and, since 1983 (as former chairman). He was also promoted Lieutenant Commander in 1953 on the RNR list.



Rear Admiral Niall Kilgour CB presentation to Captain of Golf Club, Mr. Ian McGinn.

One of his early calls to underwater work was from the police to recover the body of a little girl who had drowned in a pond in Denton, Greater Manchester.

In January 1961 Universal Divers Ltd was involved in underwater survey on damage caused to the Severn Railway Bridge by collision by two barges.

He was made Justice of the Peace in Wallasey in 1957 and was awarded the clasp to his Decoration for Officers of the Royal Naval Reserve in 1963.

On the 18th December 1965 he retired from the Royal Naval Reserve, was made a younger brother of Trinity House in 1980 and in 1993 an honorary freeman of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral. A keen golfer he was also the Captain of Leasowe Golf Club.

He died on 1 September 2008 in Wirral, Merseyside.

Ian Fraser's Victoria Cross and other medals are on display in the Ashcroft Gallery in the Imperial War Museum in London.



Fraser Sons & Daughter

The unveiling ceremony was completed by Father David Gamble blessing the plaque and reading the Naval Collect. This was followed by Rear

Admiral Niall Kilgour CB presenting the Captain of the Golf Club, Ian McGinn with a framed picture of Fraser VC, X-Craft and his Career History.

Lt Cdr Sandy Powell then presented a framed picture to Ms. Nickie Fraser with a copy of Fraser VC citation, pictures of the Plaque and an X-Craft.

At the end of the ceremony all guest were invited for a most sumptuous reception courtesy of the Leasowe Golf Club. In summary it was an excellent day and everybody appeared to enjoy themselves.

The Submariners Association would like to thank the Captain of the Leasowe Golf Club and the Committee for allowing the plaque to be mounted at the Golf Club and providing an excellent reception for the guests following the ceremony.



Lieutenant Ian Edward Fraser VC, DSC RNR Medals

In addition we would also like to thank all serving and submariner veterans that attended the ceremony and in particular the National and Standard Bearer's from the Manchester & Liverpool branches and members who attended.

Author:

*Lieutenant Commander Frank (Sandy) Powell –
Blue Plaque Project Manager & Member
National Management Committee Submariners
Association.*

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