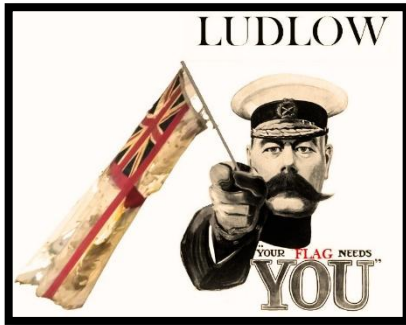




SAVE OUR FLAG



This year, 2025, marks the 80th anniversary of the Allied victory in World War Two. A triumph for freedom over oppression.

For much of that time, the White Ensign of HMS Ludlow has been *laid up* at St Laurence's church in Ludlow but before that, the flag 'sailed' with the officers and crew of the ship, named after the town, as they protected convoys in the Atlantic and North Sea.

The flag is a tangible link to the ship and its crew who, whilst performing their duty for the nation, would not have known each morning, if they would survive to the next. It is also a direct link to the people of Ludlow in war torn Britain. Now, the White Ensign of HMS Ludlow is in a very

poor condition; it can be saved but to do so, we need help.

The ship was originally built at Philadelphia in 1916 for the United States Navy, as a Caldwell-class destroyer. She was launched in 1917 as the USS Stockton and so served until 1922, when she was 'mothballed'. In 1940 she was transferred to Britain with some 44 other vessels, as part of a support package and recommissioned into the Royal Navy as HMS Ludlow, a Town-class destroyer assigned to the Rosyth Escort Force. This British classification title recognised the link between towns in Britain and America, sharing the same name.



Between October 1941 and March 1942, *Warship Weeks* were organised in towns and cities throughout Britain to raise funds for the war effort. Once the target had been raised, the community *adopted* the ship and its crew. The people of Ludlow seem to have 'adopted' HMS Ludlow of their own accord and sent the crew gifts such as board games, wireless sets and books. The 'ladies of Ludlow' also used their sewing skills to produce the White Ensign flag in silk, which was ceremonially 'dedicated' at St Laurence's church. Sent to the ship with the town's coat-of-arms, the ensign 'sailed' with the crew during Atlantic and North Sea convoy escorts, including a search after a deadly attack on Convoy HX84 by the German

battleship *Admiral Scheer*. She later played a support function during the D-Day invasion. The ship was also 'adopted' by Hartlepool during a Warship Week in March 1942

HMS Ludlow was decommissioned in June 1945. At low tide, her remains may still be seen off Fidra Island, Firth of Forth, near Yellowcraig Beach, where she sank as a result of target practice by the RAF in July 1945. As her White Ensign was never 'government issue', the Ministry of Defence has confirmed that no government regulation can prevent it being conserved for future generations.



The ship had four Commanders during her Royal Navy service. Guy Bouchier Sayer was the first, so serving between October 1940 and August 1941. He went on to become Vice Admiral Sir Guy Bouchier Sayer OBE DSO. He was the Naval commander during the allied invasion of Malaya in 1945. In retirement he was involved with conservation on Dartmoor.

Lt. George Blackler took command in November 1941. He was ultimately promoted to Lt. Commander and awarded the OBE in 1946 for his work as a member of Naval Party 1734, part of the allied administration in occupied Germany. Lt. John Trevor Kay took command between August 1942 and March 1943, when he transferred to HMS Ulster, serving in the Far East. He died in 1999 at Ross-on-Wye.



The last of commander was Angus, Marquess of Graham (later 7th Duke of Montrose), who insisted his ship be 'piped' in and out of port with bagpipes. He also gave that honour to HMS Montrose, when she left Harwich on 6th June 1944, laden with troops bound for the Normandy beaches. Amusingly, he also kept a pet jackdaw onboard but, in his efforts to recapture his pet one day when it escaped, he less amusingly fell and broke both his arms. The bird was never seen again. It was through the Marquess and his family that the Ensign and ultimately the ship's bell, were delivered for display in St Laurence's church.

The White Ensign was recognised as being in a poor condition in 2016, when efforts were made to raise funds for its conservation. Donations were made towards the £4,000 then needed but due to various circumstances and then covid, the project was not seen through. Now, in 2025, urgent action is required if the flag is to be saved.

We are now likely to need more than £6,000 to conserve and then maintain this and other historic textile artefacts. It may be more but we have to start somewhere, if we are to start at all.

The church building of St Laurence in Ludlow is over 800 years old and presents a mammoth task to maintain. There is no 'spare cash' to preserve textiles and thus, in the case of the White Ensign of HMS Ludlow, we must seek help from the public and interested groups.

"In a nutshell then, it's up to the good people of Ludlow to decide what happens with the Ensign."

Major A G Greenwood – Ministry of Defence 2024

Will you help?

Thank you for reading...

Eric Griffiths

Contact: ludlow.ensign@stlaurences.org.uk



We are grateful for any contribution. The 'giving' options currently available are:

- 1/. BACS – Payable to Ludlow PCC. **Reference 'Ensign Appeal'** at CAF Bank Sort Code 405240 Account 00016766.
- 2/. Cheques payable to Ludlow PCC. Please mark it '**Ensign Appeal**'.
- 3/. Contribution placed in a yellow Gift Aid envelope marked '**Ensign Appeal**' available in St Laurence's church.
- 4/. www.crowdfunder.co.uk – SAVE OUR FLAG

If you are UK taxpayer, providing your name and address with any type of contribution, will allow us to claim Gift Aid from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs, enhancing your gift by 25% at no extra cost to you.