

Guard who made history mourned

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The Headland Evening
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by MORT BIRCH

VETERANS gathered to pay a special tribute to a man who holds a unique place in British naval history.

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Members of the Nuneston Branch of the Royal Naval Association flanked his hearse behind their standard which was dipped in homage during the crematorium service.

Members of the Nuneston and Stockingford Branch of the Royal British Legion and other Ex-service Associations waited at the entrance to the chapel to add their homage.

His wife Janet Ruiz said: "They really did miss you. The family were very grateful and he would have loved it."

Known as "Spanish Fred", he was born in San Sebastian in Northern Spain, but was among 4,000 children evacuated to England in 1937 by the Basque Government to allow them to escape the horrors of the Spanish Civil War.

He lived in Coventry, worked at the Alvis, but then the intruder, who had escaped the iron rule of Spanish dictator General Franco, found himself fighting against the Forces of Adolf Hitler.

Called up into the Royal Navy in 1942, he was assigned to Coastal Defences as a radar operator and at dawn on D-Day his motor launch ML147 escorted Canadian landing crafts on to Juno Beach.



UNIQUE... Alfredo Ruiz, the only Spaniard to have served in the Royal Navy, who has died on June 14 at 84.

After the war he lived in Coventry, but spent several years in Nuneston where his second wife Janet was warden at Kingswood Court, the sheltered accommodation in Kingswood Road, and was also at Shepperton Court.

When hostilities ceased, he went back to the Alvis where he stayed until he was made redundant and he then spent a few years at an engineering factory at Eckall until he retired.

He and his wife lived in Wales for a while, but then settled at Barwell where he was living when he died at the age of 84.

Jack Kilgus, president of the Nuneston Branch of the Royal Naval Association, said: "Last a couple of years ago he was a regular attendee at our meetings. He was a nice fella and very popular."

Although he became a British Citizen, he never lost his love of Spain and he returned regularly to visit his family and friends in San Sebastian.

He used to say: "I happened to have a choice and a privilege to live in two countries. The one in which I was born, which is always in my heart, and my adopted one."

After the funeral, his ashes were buried in the cemetery at Fulvingby, the village where his wife Janet was born. "That was where he wanted to go," she said.

His final resting place is a long way from the foothills of the Pyrenees in his homeland, but at the heart of the country he came to love and learned to hate.



HOMAGE... members of the Nuneston Branch of the Royal Naval Association flank the hearse as their standard bearer Ted Colchin leads the way.



TRIBUTE... The White Ensign along with the red and yellow colours of his native Spain on "Fred" Ruiz's coffin as it is carried into the funeral home.