



# Town of Ajax Street Dedication



Street Name: **Empson Court**

Name of Veteran: William E. Empson July 13, 1920-Nov. 7, 2008

Rank: Able Seaman

Ship Served: HMS Ajax

Date of Service on Ship: 1938 to 1945

Year of Visit/Dedication: October 1999

Veteran or Family Visit: Bill Empson

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

William Empson was known to family as Bill and to his shipmates and others as 'Poopdeck Pappy'. He was born on July 13, 1920 in Dover, Kent, England to Shepard James Henry Empson and Frances Emma Empson. Bill was the youngest of seven children including; Thomas (died as an infant), Alice, Rose, Shepard, Thomas and Frances. He attended St. Mary's Infants School in 1925 and from there moved to the Dover National (St. Mary's) Boys School in 1927, leaving in December, 1934.



On January 7, 1935 Bill started working as a conductor on the Dover Municipal Trams. He resigned that post in August, 1936 and joined the Royal Navy on August 24. After training in the art of seamanship and gunnery, he joined the fleet.

On January 11, 1938 Bill joined HMS Ajax and was present during the Battle of the River Plate. He left that ship four years later on June 11, 1942. That same year he qualified as a gunner QR2, and as a Diver.



In January 1943 Bill passed his exams to become a Petty Officer. That same year, on April 4 he married Patricia Florence Law at St. Ethelreda's Church, Ely Place, London. After the war they started a family, welcoming Christopher James (1946), Margaret Patricia (1948), Mark Edward (1951), Helen Frances (1953), Simon Paul and Sarah Ellen (1955), Francis Bernard (1959), and Timothy Gregory (1961).

In 1961 Bill left the Royal Navy as a Chief Petty Officer. After working for Pfizer in Sandwich and Harvey's in Margate he retired in 1985. He then devoted his time helping Patricia run the small Guest House they owned in Margate until she died in March, 2005. Bill had hoped to re-visit the Town of Ajax for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate in 2009 but died 2008.