



Town of Ajax Street Dedication



Street Name: **Nicholls Court**

Name of Veteran: Jack Nicholls 1912-

Rank: Royal Marine

Ship Served: HMS Ajax

Date of Service on Ship: 1939 to 1945

Year of Visit/Dedication: September 1988

Veteran or Family Visit: Jack Nicholls

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

Jack Nicholls was born in 1912 in Oxford, England. He joined the Royal Marines as a boy bandsman in 1927 at the age of 15. He was a percussionist in the Royal Marine Band on HMS Ajax and played instruments such as drums, xylophones, vibraphones and glockenspiels. Jack explained while he visited the Town of Ajax in 1988, ***“in those days, cruisers and larger ships carried bands, and all bandsmen were members of the Royal Marines...”***. As a percussionist in Ajax’s band, Jack played at concerts, shipboard cocktail parties, and anywhere music was needed.



At the Battle of the River Plate in December 1939, Jack and the other musicians had ballistics calculation responsibilities for the four inch guns on ‘A’ Turret. He was stationed midship where he calculated the angles on which the guns were to be placed, and the trajectory arcs which the shells must follow to reach their targets. ***“All bandsmen on British ships did the same type of job during action. But because we were so far down, it would have been almost impossible to get out if we were sunk. I was lucky but because of our battle jobs, our (bandsman) casualty rate was very high during the war.”***



Jack left Ajax to serve aboard the new cruiser HMS Dido and took part in heavy action off Crete and Malta. ***“Those battles were a lot more dangerous than the Plate”***, said Jack. Shortly after the evacuation of Crete he was transferred back to his first ship, HMS Ajax and was involved in several Mediterranean battles.



After the War Jack joined Morris Motors Ltd. and continued to play in orchestras on land and aboard cruise ships. He then retired and visited ‘his’ street in the Town of Ajax in 1988.