



Town of Ajax Street Dedication



Street Name: **Keensford Court**

Name of Veteran: Raymond Francis Keens June 20, 1925-Sept. 29, 1994

Rank: Ordinary Seaman

Ship Served: HMS Ajax

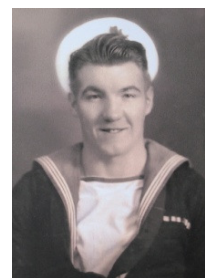
Date of Service on Ship: Nov. 1943 to May 1945

Year of Visit/Dedication: n/a

Veteran or Family Visit: n/a

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

Raymond Keens was born in Poplar, London on June 20, 1925. In 1936, his family moved to West Ham, which during the war was the most heavily bombed area of London's East End. In September 1939 Ray was evacuated with his school to Wiltshire but returned to London shortly after. He worked as a Clerk and by 1940 became a messenger with the National Fire Service relaying messages between fire crews and headquarters.



At the age of 16, Ray attempted to join the Merchant Navy, as the family lived in the East End of London, near the docks. He walked into the dockyard and signed up on the first merchant ship he came across. His parents greatly disapproved and refused to let him go. The ship he signed up for never returned.

In 1942 Ray volunteered to join the Royal Navy. On July 26, 1943 he joined HMS Glendower stationed at Pwllheli, Wales for gunnery training. Returning to Chatham on November 27, 1943 he signed the crew draft to join HMS Ajax and served aboard her until May 8, 1945. Ray then joined HMS Victory in Portsmouth Dockyard until he was demobilized in October 1946. His service records show that his conduct was exemplary throughout his career and his character assessment was also very good.

After Ray's time in the Royal Navy he applied to join West Ham Fire Brigade. His first attempt was unsuccessful so he applied for a job at the Ford car factory in Dagenham, Essex and worked there as a panel beater for a few years, making the Ford V8 pilot.



In June, 1948 Ray married Frances Mary Frazer. Together they had a son, and two daughters. He eventually joined West Ham Fire Brigade in June 1949 and was assigned to "Blue Watch" at Silvertown Fire Station. In 1969 Ray was injured while on active duty and this resulted in his having to leave the Fire Brigade. On his recovery he took a temporary job for the local council in the course of which he visited centres for mentally handicapped adults. He set up a good rapport with the clients and commenced working as an assistant supervisor in 1970. In 1972 he obtained a Diploma in the education of the mentally handicapped. He was made a supervisor and in 1974 became deputy head of the Brian Didsbury Centre – a purpose built centre with one hundred and twenty trainees and twenty staff. By 1977 he was centre head.

Unfortunately Ray's health deteriorated and he retired in 1983. He and his wife moved to Worcestershire and enjoyed a pleasant and peaceful life until Ray became very ill and died at the age of 69 years on September 29, 1994. At the time of his death he had four grandchildren and four great grand children. Family say Ray was very proud to have served on the Ajax and would have been honoured to have his name perpetuated in the Town.