



# Town of Ajax Street Dedication



Street Name: **Howes Street**

Name of Veteran: Charles Richard Howes March 10, 1920-Feb. 17, 2009

Rank: Able Seaman

Ship Served: HMS Ajax

Date of Service on Ship: Jan. 1938 to Jan. 1942

Year of Visit/Dedication: September 14, 2016

Veteran or Family Visit: Charles' wife Bridget and son Brian Howes

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

Charles Richard Howes was born on March 10, 1920 in Hackney, London to parents Ernest, a WW1 veteran, and Jessie. He was one of six children. Although of a reasonable academic standard, circumstances prevented Charles from continuing his education at the high school level so he left school at the age of fourteen. He had always had an interest in joining the Royal Navy so it was at this time that he asked his father if he could. He was told that in a year's time, if he still wanted to, his father would gladly give parental consent. In the meantime Charles began working as a Safe Breaker in the City of London.



Upon joining the Royal Navy in August 1936, Charles was posted at HMS Ganges, a shore base in Shotley, Suffolk. It was a training establishment where new recruits were inducted into Navy life. From there he joined HMS Caledonia in Scotland, another shore based establishment. From there to HMS Pembroke while he awaited assignment to HMS Ajax.

While in service Charles enjoyed boxing competitively and won several medals in that sport as well as for rifle shooting. He joined HMS Ajax in January 1938 and served for just over four years, a significant amount of time onboard a single ship. During this time he moved up in rank from Boy 1<sup>st</sup> Class to Acting Petty Officer. As an Able Seaman, Charles was involved in the Battle of the River Plate off the coast of Montevideo, Uruguay. It is remembered as the first significant naval engagement of the Second World War.



In January of 1942 Charles was transferred to HMS Hero, an H-Class destroyer that was part of convoy and patrol missions in the Eastern Mediterranean. After depth charging a German submarine they were able to retrieve invaluable ULTRA information for breaking the ENIGMA code. In 1942 Charles was assigned to guarding German POWs back to the UK for internment. He was then assigned to guarding POWs at Valkyria II in the Isle of Man until the end of the war. During this period he had been studying to become a Chief Petty Officer, but left the service in April 1945, prior to applying for the position.



While on leave in 1939 Charles had met his future wife Bridget. They kept in constant touch throughout the war and they married on May 16, 1943. They had one son and three grandchildren.

After leaving the Royal Navy Charles worked for twelve years in the tailoring industry. The family then moved near Romford, Essex and he began working for Fords Dagenham. Charles worked there for twenty five years until his retirement in 1982. Charles Richard Howes died on February 17, 2009, in his 89<sup>th</sup> year.