

Town of Ajax Street Dedication



Street Name: **Chalmers Crescent**

Name of Veteran: James Waugh Chalmers Nov. 4, 1913 – Dec. 4, 1990

Rank: A/Leading Seaman

Ship Served: HMS Ajax

Date of Service on Ship: Feb. 1938 to Feb. 1941

Year of Visit/Dedication: n/a

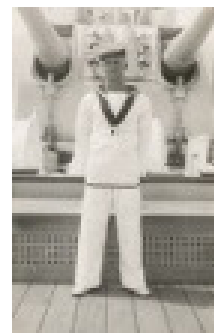
Veteran or Family Visit: n/a

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

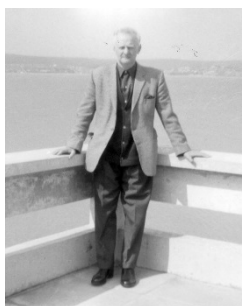
James Waugh Chalmers was born on November 4, 1913 in Clackmannanshire, Scotland to Robert Smith Chalmers and Mary Waugh. He had a twin brother, Robert and another brother, William who was born in 1920. James worked as a van driver before joining the Royal Navy at the age of 23.

Like many new recruits James joined the shore establishment HMS Pembroke for basic training, and remained there from April 28, 1937 to February 16, 1938. His first ship assignment was HMS Ajax as an Ordinary Seaman which began on February 17, 1938 and lasted until February 27, 1941. While onboard James moved up the ranks to Acting Leading Seaman.

During the Battle of the River Plate, in December 1939, James was part of the guns crew in Y-turret. The X-turret had been hit and Y-turret was disabled. Both incurred structural damage and there were seven men killed. The remainder of the guns crew and others were employed passing shells along the upper deck to the still serviceable forward turrets.



After his time onboard the Ajax, James joined HMS Woolwich as Acting Leading Seaman seeing action alongside the Mediterranean fleet. From there he spent time at the Royal Navy base HMS Nile at Ras el-Tin Point in Alexandria, Egypt. He served several other ships including HMS Harrow, a Hunt Class Minesweeper from December 1942 to September 1943 as a Petty Officer. By the end of December 1943 James joined HMS Serapis that was involved in escort duties with Russian Convoy JW57. In May 1944 he was transferred with ships of the 23rd Destroyer Flotilla for support at the landings in Normandy, known as Operation Neptune.



For the rest of World War Two James served on H.M.S Penn seeing action on the East Indies station based at Trincomalee and sinking a Japanese landing craft off the coast of Sumatra. He continued to serve the Royal Navy onboard HMS Adament, HMS Dartmouth, HMS Kelvin, HMS Duncanasby Head, HMS Tyne and Tyrian. On April 27, 1949 James was discharged to the Royal Navy Reserve.



After leaving the Royal Navy James worked as a Tram Driver and then as a Bus Driver in London. In 1948 he married Evelyn Rose Willard and they had one son, Robert. In 1958 the family moved to Portsmouth where James worked variously as an Officers Steward on RMS Queen Mary, a grounds-man, school caretaker and head porter in a hospital. James died on December 4, 1990 at Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth.