



Town of Ajax Street Dedication



Street Name: **Quaintance Avenue**

Name of Veteran: Jack Quaintance April 26, 1924-Mar. 30, 2006

Rank:

Ship Served: HMS Ajax

Date of Service on Ship: 1945 to 1947

Year of Visit/Dedication: June 2005

Veteran or Family Visit: Rosemarie Quaintance, wife

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

Jack Quaintance was born on April 26, 1924 in Queenborough, Isle of Sheppy, Kent. As a child he was a member of the local small-bore shooting club. He attended the local primary school and sat his exams at the age of twelve. Having passed he obtained a scholarship to technical college, where he studied until the age of sixteen. On leaving Jack took up an apprenticeship at Sheppy glue and chemical works. For a short time during the war he joined the A.R.P. (Air Raid Protection) as a messenger boy while also serving for the Queenborough Home Guard where he was selected to join the secret army.



"In 1941 I was approached by a local farmer, Lieutenant W G Johnson, who asked if I wanted to join some rough stuff. I signed the Official Secrets Act and reported to a farm at Cowstead Corner".

Jack commented on his training for the 'secret army',



"We were shown how to make vicious booby traps such as a hole full of sharp flints in the side of a bank activated by a trip wire. Perfect for killing motorcycle riders and foot soldiers. We also put booby traps under cushions and attached explosives to the toilet chains inside water cisterns."

"We were armed with .38 Smith and Wesson revolvers from the US Navy, Fairbairn Sykes commando knives, Thompson .45 sub machine guns with box magazines, .300 Remington rifles, and 9mm Sten guns. We carried the Stens as you would a shotgun and shoot at string-pull targets. We also had a Winchester .22 bolt action rifle with 5-shot magazine, silencer and telescopic sights for taking out German officers. Jolly good tool, very tradesman-like. I enjoyed shooting it."

"We were eventually stood down in November 1944 and returned to our normal lives. We never received any official recognition at the time, but I later received the Defence Medal. I joined the Royal Navy early 1945 and served on HMS Ajax. As soon as the war ended we were sent to the River Plate, Uruguay, to pick up the German sailors from the Graf Spee. I later served in Palestine and Israel."

After Jack's service with the Royal Navy he was transferred to the Merchant Navy, serving twelve years out of thirty-three on deep sea work. In 1957 a job with Trinity House brought Jack to Harwich. He joined the Grange Band (later called the Harwich Royal British Legion Band) in 1959 and played with them well into his eighties. He was also secretary of the HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association. Jack suffered a stroke in early 2005, and died on March 30, 2006.