



Town of Ajax Street Dedication



Street Name: **Martinworth Lane**

Name of Veteran: Wallace Martin Dec. 29, 1906 – Aug. 14, 1977

Rank: Petty Officer - Cook

Ship Served: HMS ACHILLES

Date of Service on Ship: 1939 - 1943

Year of Visit/Dedication: June 2024 (previous visit October 2013)

Veteran or Family Visit: John Martin (son), and family (previous visit Daughter and family)

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

Wallace Martin was born in Chepstow, South Wales on December 29, 1906. He did not know his father and lived his early life with his mother and his siblings, sister Zella, stepsister Dorothy, and stepbrother Trevor. Wallace became a coalminer in his early teens and had a very difficult life due to the hardships of the times. He decided to better his life by heading to the sea and at the tender age of seventeen he ran away to join the Royal Navy. Due to his young age he had to return home to get his mother's permission as she was required to sign his enlistment papers, which she finally agreed to do for him.



In 1926 Wallace was assigned to the Vivid, his first ship. He went on to serve the Hood in 1928, the Tiger in 1929, and then returning to the Vivid in 1930. He was stationed in Philomel in 1931, Dunedin in 1934, and Philomel again in 1936. He was then assigned to the Drake, the Salamander, and the St. Angels from 1936 through 1938. In 1939, he was assigned to H.M.S. Achilles where he served during the Battle of the River Plate. This was the first major sea battle of the Second World War, and it was a great victory when much of Europe had been occupied by Germany and Britain feared invasion. During the battle four men were killed and nine wounded on the Achilles out of a total complement of 567, of which, five officers and 316 ratings were New Zealanders.

Wallace continued his service from 1943 to 1948 aboard the Monowai, Drake, Gambia and returned to port in Philomel. While serving the Gambia, Japan surrendered on the September 2, 1945. The Gambia fired the last shot against the Japanese Homeland on August 9, 1945 and had the honour of representing New Zealand at the formal surrender.



In 1948, Wallace joined the Royal New Zealand Navy and continued his service with the Tamaki, Lacklan, and the Bellona until his retirement in 1953. While serving the Tamaki, the Navy had quarters on Motuikie Island on the Waitemata Harbour in Auckland, the men were taken by a Fairmile boat to the island every day, if the weather was rough the boat was anchored around the other side from the wharf and the ratings had to carry the officers through the surf to the beach. Families were taken down on Sundays, where cricket was played and a proper Navy meal was served, before being taken back to Auckland.

During his long service Wallace turned down the promotion to Warrant Officer, which paid more money, just so he would not lose contact with all his "buddies". He had an excellent career record and was awarded the British Empire Medal (B.E.M.) on March 1, 1950, at Government House, Auckland for exemplary service. His rank was Chief Petty Officer Cook.

When Wallace Martin finally retired, he became a Warden on the gates at Philomel in Devonport so he could stay in contact with the Royal Navy. He spent his free time at the Browns Bay R.S.A. where he enjoyed playing Billiards. Unfortunately, he became ill with Leukaemia and died in Auckland Hospital on August 14, 1977, at the age of seventy.