Gilbert James MUGFORD (1913 – 1942)



Sgt, 1265929

Observer

Gilbert James Mugford

RAFVR

214 Squadron

25th June 1942

Age 29

214 Squadron



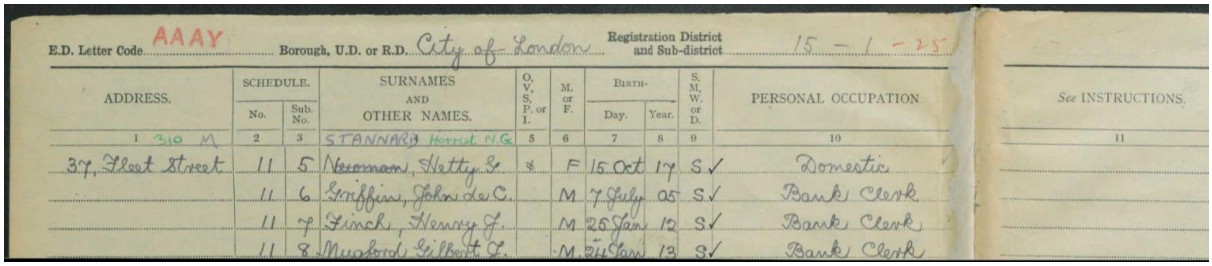
Gilbert James MUGFORD was born on 24th July 1913 when his family were living at 14 The Park, Ealing. His parents were Bank Clerk, James Henry Mugford who was born in Plymouth and his wife Emma Ethel nee Whetnall who came from Camden. They had married on 4th May 1909 in Harlington Baptist Church, Middlesex

He had an elder sister, Ethel, who was born in 1910 and an elder brother, Thomas Anthony who was born in 1911. In 1918, another sister, Marjorie was born and making the family complete was Leonard James who was born in June 1922. Sadly, Marjorie died in March 1923 when Leonard was just a baby.



14 The Park, Ealing, was the family home from when 1910 to at least 1935.

The 1939 Register shows that Gilbert followed in his father's footsteps finding employment as a Bank Clerk with C Hoare & Co, Bankers in Fleet Street.



E.D. Letter Code AAAY Borough, U.D. or R.D. City of London Registration District and Sub-district 15-1-25

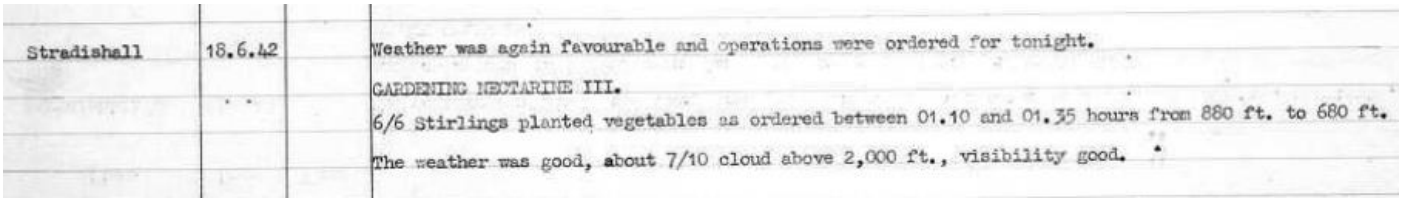
ADDRESS.	SCHEDULE. No.	SCHEDULE. Sub. No.	SURNAMES AND OTHER NAMES.	O, V, S, P, or I.	M. or F.	BIRTH- Day.	BIRTH- Year.	S, M, W, or D.	PERSONAL OCCUPATION	See INSTRUCTIONS.
1 310 M	2	3	STANNARD Horace N.G.	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
37, Fleet Street	11	5	Newman, Hetty S.		F	15 Oct	17	S ✓	Domestic	
	11	6	Griffiths, John de C.		M	7 July	05	S ✓	Bank Clerk	
	11	7	Finch, Henry J.		M	26 Jan	12	S ✓	Bank Clerk	
	11	8	Mugford, Gilbert L.		M	24 Jan	13	S ✓	Bank Clerk	

With the outbreak of war, most of the bank's staff were evacuated to a family house, Ovington Park, in Hampshire. In May 1941, the Fleet Street premises were bombed. The resulting fires were bravely extinguished by the household staff, led by Bertram Hoare, using water from the bank's artesian well.

It is not known when Gilbert Mugford joined the RAF but he was serving with 214 Squadron by June 1942.

214 Squadron converted to the mighty Stirling at Stradishall in April/May 1942, and after only a few operations, flew on the first 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne on 30/31 May. Three Group Stirlings flew ahead of the main force successfully illuminating the target with incendiaries for the following bombers. Further operations were to all the main targets plus mine-laying sorties off the enemy coast.

The squadron was kept busy during May and June 1942, with operations that would have taken Gilbert to Bremen and Essen and undertaking mine laying duties as part of Operation Nectarine III.



Stradishall	18.6.42	Weather was again favourable and operations were ordered for tonight.
		GARDENING NECTARINE III.
		6/6 Stirlings planted vegetables as ordered between 01.10 and 01.35 hours from 880 ft. to 680 ft.
		The weather was good, about 7/10 cloud above 2,000 ft., visibility good.

On 25th June 1942 a small raid on St Nazaire was carried out by just 21 aircraft. Gilbert's Mark I Stirling aircraft DJ973 BU-A took off from RAF Stradishall but turned back before reaching the target with engine problems. The pilot turned around and they began to limp their crippled aircraft home. They almost made it! At approximately 0349 hours, and just a handful of miles from their base, they crash landed coming down at Bears Farm, Hundon, 5 miles NW of Haverhill, and less than 3 miles from their airfield.

The other Crew members on board Stirling Mark I DJ973 BU-A were:

Sgt R B Appleby, Sgt Horace Sydney 'Chic' Barker, 646994, Flight Engineer, RAF, Sgt Eddie Hester Brown, Air Gunner RCAF, R83258, FS William Neilson Craig, 996848, Pilot, RAFVR, Sgt Douglas Edward Shrimpton, 1183690, Wireless Operator / Air Gunner, RAFVR and Sgt Peter Grenville Brothers, 1250057, W.Op./Air Gnr.

With no CWGC record, it is wondered whether Sgt Appleby might have been a sole survivor.

RAF Stradishall from the East South East.



Gilbert Mugford was laid to rest in Haverhill Cemetery, section U, grave 142.

Also in Haverhill Cemetery are two of his fellow crewmen, Canadian Sgt Eddie Hester Brown, RCAF and Sgt Peter Grenville Brothers.