

Sergeant Reginald Alfred Bland 1379420 RAFVR



No. 144 Squadron - January 1942

Reginald Bland was born on 24 July 1914. His father's occupation was given as the 1939 Register in Portslade-on-Sea, Sussex. He had two parents, an older step-sister and

Reginald and Hannah Jane Burge. His family lived in Southend-on-Sea, Essex and Reginald was still living with his mother. His occupation was office sorting clerk & telegraphist.

Reginald enlisted in the RAFVR at the Euston recruiting office, and was selected for pilot training. In August 1941 Reginald was posted to the 16 Operational Training Unit in Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire to fly the Handley Page Hampden bomber.

On 26 December, Reginald was posted to No. 144 Squadron at RAF North Luffenham, Rutland. It is likely that Reginald did not form an operational crew until early Feb 1942, when a navigator and rear gunner were re-assigned from other aircraft. Reginald made at least one non-operational flight in early February and he and his crew flew one aborted operational mission on 24 Feb.

On the night of 26/27 February 1942 Reginald and his crew were briefed to undertake their second mission, to bomb Keil. At 2200 hours they took off in Hampden L4178 and presumably made their attack. However on return to the UK they failed to find their airfield, possibly due to poor weather. At 0300 hours they ran out of fuel and crashed into a railway cutting at Warmsworth, on the outskirts of Doncaster, some 70 miles north west of their destination. All of the crew, including 21-year-old Reginald, died in the crash.

The others who died were F/O Harold Aspey, observer; Flt. Sgt. John Gray, wireless operator/air gunner and Sgt. John Eves, air gunner. A memorial in commemoration of the lives lost in this incident is to be found in the Guest Lane Cemetery, Warmsworth, *pictured above*.

Reginald is buried in Portslade Cemetery, East Sussex, Sec. Z.Z. Grave 52

Reginald is commemorated on IBCC wall panel 10.

Photo sources: The Philip Woodhead RAF Archive, www.yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk

