

FS Edward James Merchant 560185 RAF

Edward was born on 3 December 1909 in St Pancras, London, the youngest son of Arthur Merchant and Mary Merchant nee Lord.

On 15 March 1937, 75 Sqn re-formed at RAF Drifffield, Yorkshire from "B" Flight 215 Sqn as a Heavy Bomber Sqn within Bomber Command. By this time, Edward had qualified as a pilot and was posted to the squadron.

On 4/5 April 1938, two crews were detailed to undertake night cross-country training down to the south coast and return; the flight would be between 700 - 800 miles.

At 18.25 on 4 April 1938 the crew departed RAF Drifffield in Harrow II K6995 (75-V). The training flight went without incident until in the final stages.

At 00.25 on 5 April the wireless operator transmitted a message to RAF Drifffield to say they were over Hull, Yorkshire and reported there was a heavy ground fog. Just after 01:00 another message was received to say that they were nearing base and that the wireless operator was reeling in the aerial cable as they prepared to land. This was the last that was heard of the aircraft.

With Edward's aircraft now overdue, both air and ground searches began; however, it was not until 07:00 that a local man driving between Hull and Tibthorpe sighted the wreckage of an aircraft near Tipthorpe Low Wood, 4 miles West of the airfield, and raised the alarm. All on board had been killed in the crash, thought to have been caused by Edward descending to try and ascertain his position and flying into a tree or the ground.

Also killed: Sgt Ronald George Cowley Marshall (Pilot); Cpl Walter Greaves; LAC George Jeffrey Humphries; AC1 Ronald Herbert Fish (WOp)

Edward is buried in St Pancras Cemetery, Camden, London

Edward is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected