Harold Gillbanks





Rank: - Joiner 4th Class

Number: - D/MX 71344

Service: - Royal Navy, H.M.S. Exeter, (Sunk during the Second Battle of the Java Sea, 1 March 1942)

Died: - Died from Pellagra Oedema whilst a prisoner of war at Makassar Celebes, Indonesia 13/06/1945 Age: 35 years.

Cemetery: - Ambon War Cemetery, Indonesia 28. E. 5.

Harold was born on 3 May 1910 in Batley the son of Benjamin and Ann Ellen Gillbanks (nee Binns, m. 1909, registered Barnsley). In 1911 the family lived at 47, Shay Terrace, Bradford Road West, Batley with his two half-sisters Elsie Irene Gillbanks 1901 and Gladys 1902. Sarah Alice was born in 1913.

In 1934 he married Eleanor Amelia Taylor, registered St Asaph. Peter was born in 1935 followed by John 1936 and Ann 1941. In 1939 the family was living at

Carlinghow, Marsh Road, Rhyl, North Wales and Harold was working as a journeyman carpenter.

Japan attacked British, American and Dutch territories across Asia and the Pacific during December 1941. After Japan declared war the navy sent HMS Exeter to join HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse but whilst en route news came through that the Japanese had attacked and sunk both ships.

This attack by land-based aircraft shocked the navy and showed how vulnerable the fleet were without adequate air support. HMS Exeter now diverted to escort duties in support of the Malaya campaign until assigned to the American British Dutch Australian Command (ABDACOM).

As part of this force Exeter set out from Surabaya on 27 February 1942 to engage the Japanese following reports that enemy ships were in the area. The Allied navies suffered a disastrous defeat at the hand of the Imperial Japanese Navy. HMS Exeter hit early in the battle, withdrew. Two days later, she attempted to escape approaching Japanese forces but sank on 1 March in the Second Battle of the Java Sea.

The Japanese picked up 714 officers and men from HMS Exeter together with survivors from HMS Encounter and Pope and they became prisoners of war. Harold was amongst them and was eventually taken to a POW camp at Makassar Celebes, Indonesia where he died of Pellagra Oedema on 13 June 1945. Information was received from Landforces, Melbourne.

GILLBANKS. Harold	D/MX.71344	R.N.	Shipt. 4th class	H.M.S. EXETER	3.5.1910	Batley, Yorks.	13.6.1945	5. Pellagra, whilst a Prisoner of War in Japanese hands.	Macassar, Celebes, Dutch East Indies



Thanks to National Museum of the Royal Navy