

Sgt Julian Charles Bracegirdle 2209182 RAFVR

Julian was born on 30 September 1924 in Manchester, Lancashire, the son of Charles Edmund Bracegirdle and Bertha Bracegirdle nee Raynor.

Educated at Buxton College, Derbyshire, Julian was employed as a journalist in Southport, Lancashire when, in May 1943, he volunteered for service with the RAF.

Trained as an Air Gunner and Special Duties Operator, in May 1944 Julien was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire.

On 5/6 June 1944, Julian was involved in D Day ops on a Special Duties Patrol. The Lancaster developed engine problems requiring the feathering of the starboard outer engine. On feathering, both inboard engines cut out and, at 00:50 on 6 June, the captain was forced to ditch the aircraft 25 miles south of Beachy Head. At 02:00 the whole crew was picked up by HMS Orwell.

On 25/26 August 1944 Bomber Command was tasked with three major raids to Russelsheim, Rhein-Main, Germany, Darmstadt, near Frankfurt, Germany and Brest, France. A combined total of 1311 sorties was achieved, a new record for Bomber Command. Ten 101 Sqn crews were allocated to the op, with two crews failing to return.

At 20:32 on 25 August Julien, operating as the Special Duties Operator, and the crew departed RAF Ludford Magna in Lancaster I NN705 (SR-O) tasked with ABC duties to Russelsheim.

At 01:53 Julian's aircraft was intercepted by Oblt Hermann Leube flying a JU88 of 4./NJG 3 operating from Gutersloh Airfield. The Rear Gunner reported that they were 30 minutes into the return from Russelsheim and flying at 15,000 ft when they were attacked from below. The starboard wing was quickly engulfed by flames and, despite the order to bale out given, the Rear Gunner was the only crew member to escape before the aircraft crashed ESE of Florennes, France, killing the rest of the crew.

Also killed: FO William Ross RCAF (Pilot); FO Malcolm Joseph Steel RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt Joseph Peter Rowley (WOp); FS Eric Schofield (Nav); Sgt John William Briers (FE); Sgt John MacDonald Reid (AB); Sgt Harry Twell (AG)

Originally buried in Grand Faillly American Cemetery, France, in February 1947 Julian was moved to Choloy War Cemetery, Meurthe-et-Moselle, France.

Julian is commemorated on Wall Panel 12

Photo Source: dambustersblog.com

