

FO Malcolm Joseph Steel 424533 RNZAF

Malcolm was born on 23 October 1912 in Auckland, New Zealand the son of Joseph Steel and Jessie Violet Steel nee Evans. In 1940 he married Gwendolyn Williams in Auckland. They had one child. Educated at Seddon Memorial Technical College, Auckland University College and the Teachers' Training College, Malcolm was employed as a teacher by the Auckland Education Board when, in May 1941, he applied for service with the RNZAF.

Called up in May 1942, Malcolm completed his training in New Zealand in December 1942 with the award of his Wings, and in April 1943 he embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 28 OTU RAF Wymeswold, Leicestershire, Malcolm was granted a commission before completing his training at 1667 HCU RAF Sandtoft, Yorkshire and conversion to the Lancaster at RAF Hemswell, Lincolnshire. In May 1944 Malcolm was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire.



On 5/6 June 1944, Malcolm 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 Malcolm and his crew departed RAF Ludford Magna in Lancaster I NN705 (SR-O) tasked with ABC duties to Russelsheim.

At 01:53 Malcolm'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. This was Malcolm's 21st op.

Also killed: FO William Ross RCAF (Pilot); FS John MacDonald Reid (AB); FS Eric Schofield (Nav); Sgt Julian Charles Bracegirdle (AG/SDO); Sgt John William Briers (FE); Sgt Joseph Peter Rowley (WOp); Sgt Harry Twell (AG)

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

Malcolm is commemorated on Wall Panel 101

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com