

Sgt James Eric Singleton Bevan 1164941 RAFVR

James, known as Eric, was born on 15 May 1922 in Burry Port, Carmarthenshire, the son of Ernest Meredith William Bevan and Elizabeth Kathleen Rowena Bevan nee Edmunds.

Educated at Torquay Grammar School and Hele's School, Exeter, in June 1940 Eric joined the RAF straight from school. After 5 months of Initial training and some basic flying training he arrived at RAFC Cranwell and in March 1941 completed his flying training and was awarded his wings. The following month, Eric progressed to 17 OTU at RAF Upwood, Cambridgeshire where he crewed with his WOp/AG. On 4 July 1941 the two were posted on to 21 Sqn at RAF Watton, Norfolk, making a crew with an experienced Blenheim Observer who had arrived the same day.

On 16 July 1941, 36 Blenheims, escorted by Spitfires, were allocated to carry out a daring mast high attack on ships in the docks at Rotterdam. At 15:35 Eric and his crew departed RAF Watton, Norfolk in Blenheim IV V6240 (YH-B), in the first wave of 19 aircraft, the target ship was the Strassburg.

The first wave attacked the Strassburg which suffered little damage; however, various buildings in the docks area received direct hits. Whilst on the attack, Eric's aircraft was hit by flak from Flakship Vp1107 and crashed in the Waalhaven in the heart of Rotterdam's dockland, killing all on board. The bodies of Eric and his Observer were recovered, his WOp/AG was never found. Eric had completed just one week on Ops.

Bomber Command considered the raid an outstanding success, not only because of the tonnage of shipping claimed as destroyed or damaged, but also because 'only' four Blenheims were lost out of the 36 aircraft that attacked the docks. This, however, was at the cost of 9 lives.

Also Killed: PO Ralph Martin Slade (Observer); Sgt Leonard Richard Mynott (WOp/AG)

Eric is buried in Rotterdam (Crooswijk) General Cemetery, Zuid-Holland, Netherlands

Eric is commemorated on Wall Panel 130

Photo Source: www.rafwatton.info

