

Sgt Grayham Bancroft Byrne 1547072 RAFVR

Grayham was born on 30 May 1923 in Blackburn, Lancashire, the eldest child of Arthur Byrne and Mary Byrne nee Bancroft.

Educated at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Blackburn on leaving education Grayham was apprenticed to a shuttle manufacturer supplying the local mills.

Grayham volunteered for service when he was 18, and joined the RAF as an Air Gunner, joining 138 Sqn at RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire from 419 Sqn in April 1944.

At 22:30 on 18 July 1944 Grayham, operating as one of the Air Gunners, and the crew departed RAF Tempsford in Halifax V LL364 (NF-B) destined for France to drop supplies to the Special Air Service (SAS) who were operating in the area. This was one of two parachute drops expected in the area, the second by a Liberator of the 850th Bomber Squadron, 801st/492nd Bombardment Group, USAAF who were tasked with a drop to the Resistance of the Maquis Camille at Peinture.



Using the Rebecca/Eureka radio navigational system, as the Halifax turned towards the Eureka beacon and crossed over the route for the drop zone (DZ Dick 89), the Liberator turned over a nearby village to line up its run to drop its supplies on DZ Dick 28A. At 01:00 the two aircraft collided in mid air near Marigny-l'Eglise, France some 9 miles south of Avalon, Eastern France. Both aircraft crashed, killing all on board.

The crew were buried by German forces in the nearby cemetery where they remain today.

Also Killed: Flt Lt John Allan Kidd (Pilot); FO Kenneth Robertson Urquhart RCAF (Nav); PO Cyril Frederick Thomas Miles (FE); FS Bernard Stroud (AB); Sgt James Revill Moody (AG); Sgt Charlie Taylor (WOp)

Grayham is buried in Marigny-L'Eglise Communal Cemetery, Nievre, France, the crew are the only CWGC burials in the churchyard.

Grayham is commemorated on Wall Panel 139

Photo Source: Aircrew Remembered