Sgt Rudolf Skalicky 787283 RAFVR



Rudolf was born on 7 September 1918 in Hemz, Pardubice, Bohemia, the son of Rudolf and Terezie Skalicy.

After completing his education in Hnatnice**,** near Ustí nad Orlicí, Rudolf trained as a locksmith and worked in Yugoslavia until he was called up for compulsory Military Service, serving with the infantry regiment in Vysoke Myto, Pardubice.

After the German occupation and the abolition of the Czechoslovak Army, Rudolf's full-time military service was terminated, and he left for France via Poland. On 22 November 1939 Rudolf arrived in Marseille, France where he joined the Czechoslovak Army Abroad. In May 1940, Rudolf was transferred to its air group.

The French capitulation prevented Rudolf completing his training, and he was evacuated to the UK, arriving on 16 July 1940. Rudolf was accepted into the RAFVR on 24 July 1940 and, after gunnery training, was posted to 311(Czechoslovak) Sqn at RAF East Wretham, Norfolk.

On 28/29 December 1941, Bomber Command was tasked with an attack on the German naval shipyard and harbour installations at Wilhelmshaven, Lower Saxony, Germany. A combined force of 86 Wellingtons, including thirteen 311 Sqn crews were allocated to the raid.

At 17:16 on 28 December Rudolf, operating as the Rear Gunner, and the crew departed RAF East Wretham in Wellington Ic T2553 (KX-B).

Hit by flak above the target, twenty minutes into the return flight, the left engine caught fire; however, the crew managed to extinguish the flames and shut down the engine. Continuing the flight home, a propeller blade detached from the windmilling engine and embedded into the fuselage by the Wireless Operator's position, damaging the hydraulic system and making the aircraft uncontrollable. The aircraft was successfully ditched in the North Sea, 60 miles West of Petten, Noord-Holland. Although five of the crew were able to get into the dinghy, Rudolf went down with the aircraft.

Shortly after midnight on 2 January 1942, after five days in the dinghy, the 2nd Pilot succumbed to the conditions, and the crew buried him at sea. Two hours later, the navigator died. At 15:00 on 3 January 1942 the dinghy was washed ashore on the beach near Petten, Noord-Holland.

Also Killed: FO Josef Mohr CWCx3 MzC (Nav); Sgt Joseph Tomanek (Pilot)

Rudolf has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey

Rudolf is commemorated on Wall Panel 242

Photo Source: findagrave