PO Jaroslav Vlastimil Skutil 82529 RAFVR



Jaroslav was born on 24 May 1910 in Louny, Bohemia, the son of Jaroslav Skutil and Bozena Skutilova nee Heverova.

An employee of the Pardubice Post Office, during the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Jaroslav was a key member of the resistance and was responsible for communications at the illegal regional HQ of the Pardubice Police Department and held the role of "propaganda officer". In August 1939, Jaroslav was successful in establishing a connection with Prague using an illegal radio and headed a resistance group who were involved in sabotage work against the German occupation.

In February 1940 the Gestapo conducted raids on members of the resistance; however, Jaroslav managed to escape arrest, arriving in Marseille, France in April 1940 where he became a member of the Czechoslovak Foreign Army. Following the fall of France, Jaroslav sailed to the UK where he was accepted into the RAFVR and became one of the first members of 311 (Czechoslovak) Sqn.

On the 1 October 1940, Jaroslav, operating as the Air Gunner, and the crew departed RAF East Wretham in Anson I R9649 (KX-T) on an orientation training flight. Whilst returning to base due to bad weather, the aircraft crashed near Elton near Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. Five of the eight-man crew, including Jaroslav, were killed, the remaining crew parachuted to safety. The report from the investigation into the accident stated that the Anson crashed almost vertically into the ground whilst on fire.

Based on the testimonies of the surviving crew members, during the return flight the navigator requested a confirmation from the pilots of the position of the aircraft. Ten minutes later, the navigator received a second position report from the Czech Wireless Operator, and a disagreement arose between the Wireless Operator and the Navigator because they had problems entering the position of the aircraft. Meanwhile, the British instructor went to the front of the aircraft and stood at the end of the navigator's table, right next to the box with the Verey Pistol. A subsequent explosion was heard, and the Captain turned around and saw a fire on the floor underneath the navigator's table. Alerting the crew, they tried to extinguish the fire, but they were unsuccessful and, as the aircraft quickly filled with smoke, the Captain gave the order to bale out. The Commanding Officer of the squadron concluded that it was probably the British instructor who put his hand in the box with the Verey Pistol, accidentally pressed the tap and fired a flare into the floor of the aircraft.

Also Killed: PO Josef Slovak (Nav); Sgt Frantisek Koukol (WOp/AG); Sgt George Owen Powis (WOp/AG); Sgt Oskar Valosek (Pilot)

Jaroslav is buried in Peterborough (Eastfield) Cemetery, Cambridgeshire

Jaroslav is commemorated on Wall Panel 242

Photo source: findagrave