

PO Ralph Martin Slade 89316 RAFVR

Ralph was born on 22 May 1911 in New York, USA, the son of John Slade and Olive Temple Slade nee Temple. In 1941, just over 2 weeks before he was killed, he married Barbara in Scotland, having just 48 hours together before he was posted to Norfolk.

As a child, Ralph accompanied his widowed mother as she toured both the UK & USA as an actress, until he commenced his teenage education in London. On leaving school, Ralph was employed as a Bank Clerk until 1935 when he followed his Mother's career and became an actor.

Ralph joined the RAF in 1940 and trained as an Observer, gaining his commission in December 1940. Originally flying the Blenheim on 114 Sqn at RAF Leuchars, Fife, he was posted on to 21 Sqn on 4 July 1941 making a crew with a newly arrived pilot and WOp/AG from 17 OTU RAF Upwood, Cambridgeshire. Ralph had 2 months/50 hours Blenheim experience.



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 Ralph, operating as the Observer, and the 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, Ralph'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 Ralph and his pilot were recovered, his WOp/AG was never found.

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: Sgt James Eric Singleton Bevan (Pilot); Sgt Leonard Richard Mynott (WOp/AG)

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

Ralph is commemorated on Wall Panel 242

Photo Source: www.rafwatton.info