

In Memory of Flying Officer James Edward Traill

1920 - 1945

(Royal Canadian Air Force – No. 161 Squadron)

Age: 24

Parents: William Traill & Maria Pretty

Conflict: World War II

Country Enlisted In: Canada

Country of Death: Belgium

Relation: Paternal 2nd Cousin 3X Removed



Flying Officer James Edward Traill, aged 24, served with the Royal Canadian Air Force as a Wireless Operator / Air Gunner attached to No. 161 Squadron, a unit closely associated with clandestine Special Operations Executive (SOE) missions over occupied Europe. Born in Ontario in 1920, Traill moved with his family to Lanark, Ontario, where he received his schooling before answering the call to service in November 1942.

After completing training as an air gunner, he went overseas in May 1943 and was stationed for a period at Gibraltar, a key Allied air and naval hub. In the midst of war, Traill found a brief moment of personal happiness when he married Eileen Rogers on 17 January 1945 in Westminster, England, only weeks before his final mission.

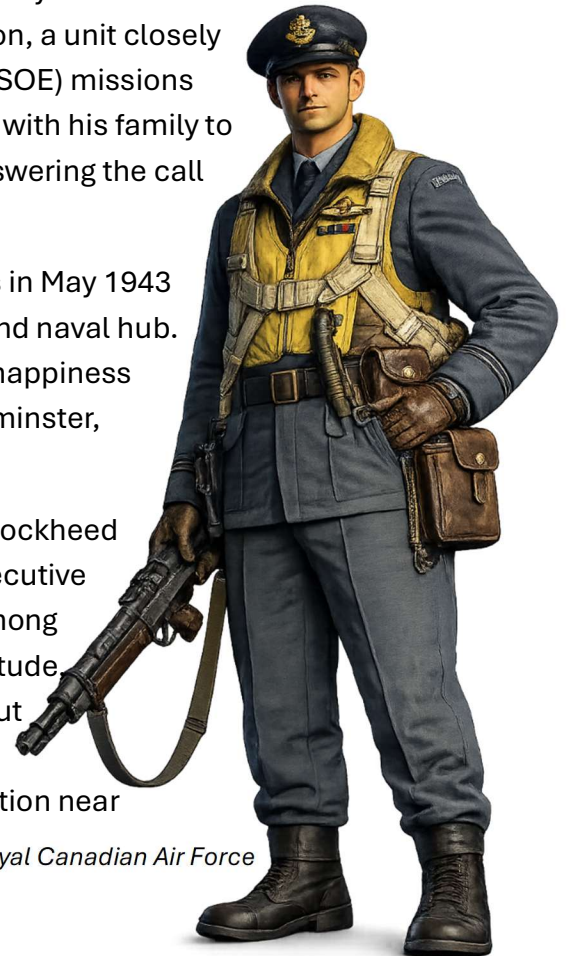
On 21 March 1945, Flying Officer Traill was serving aboard Lockheed Hudson aircraft T9445, engaged in a Special Operations Executive mission known as Operation “Norvic.” These flights were among the most hazardous undertaken by Allied airmen — low-altitude, nighttime operations flown under radio silence, often without navigation lights, carrying agents or supplies deep into enemy-held territory. While returning from this covert operation near Samrée, Belgium, Hudson T9445 was

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tragically shot down in error by a United

States Army Air Forces P-61 Black Widow night

fighter near Lamormenil, close to Dochamps. In the darkness and confusion of nocturnal air patrols, the RAF aircraft was mistakenly identified as hostile. The Hudson crashed, and



all four crew members were killed in what stands as a somber instance of wartime friendly fire.

Initially reported missing, Traill was later confirmed killed in action. He was first buried at Fraiture, Belgium, and subsequently exhumed and re-interred at Heverlee War Cemetery, Brabant, Belgium, where he now rests among fellow Commonwealth airmen.

Flying Officer Traill's service reflects the quiet courage of those who flew the shadow war —

missions seldom publicized, yet vital to the Allied cause. His loss, only two months after his marriage and mere weeks before the end of the European conflict, underscores the profound personal sacrifices borne by young airmen who served far from home. He is remembered not only for the uniform he wore, but for the life interrupted, the family he left behind, and the steadfast commitment he showed in the most perilous of duties.

