

LEADING AIRCRAFTSMAN BASIL JACKSON

Born 19th March 1923 - Passed away 9th AUGUST 2018

Basil was born in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, in a suburban town called Hampton on 19th March 1923

Enlisting in May 1943, Basil joined his first Unit, 34 Wing Aerial Photographic group (140,69 and 16 Squadrons at Northolt). Due to the airfield not being ready for use he was detached to General Eisenhower's HQ in Norfolk House, St James's Square to handle War Room intelligence gathering for the intended beach landings and dummy runs over Picardy.

By the end of May 1944 operational activity had intensified over Normandy. Basil spent D-Day in a 69 Squadron Wellington photographing the supply ships and beach landings, using a hand-held F24 camera. There were dog-fights all around him and the Wellington he was flying in experienced a few hits. Safely returning to base his photographs were destined to the news agencies for press release.

At the end of June 1944, Basil had left Northolt and moved onto Portsmouth to join a convoy for the beach landings. The convoy was attacked a few times, but no serious damage or casualties were sustained. After reaching the beachhead, Basil and his crew were informed that his destination airfield was still occupied for rearm and refuel operations and that they were to wait under canvas in Normandy apple orchard. This brief period of respite was spent under constant enemy bombardment and in Basil's own words *'was the worst part of my service life with enemy shells falling day and night in our area. Also, no sleep whatsoever with explosion noises'*.

Basil followed Field Marshall Montgomery ever Eastward and was based at Amiens, Brussels, Eindhoven and Northern Germany. His main duty was to provide oblique viewprints to advancing platoon commanders, sometimes by parachute.

When the war ended in Europe, allied forces were shipped to Far East Asia to deal with the Japanese situation. Here Basil fought to free the Mekong counties including French Indochina and Saigon. He was in these zones from 1945 until 1947.