



## **No. F1814 Captain Karel Šeda**

11 November 1901 - 15 July 1942

Karel Artur Šeda was born in Brno, Moravia on 11 November 1901, the son of František and Helena Šeda. By profession, a mechanical and electrical engineer, his military record describes him as 175 cm tall with chestnut coloured hair and brown eyes.

His military career started in 1921 when called up for national service in the infantry regiment no 24. For some reason, full time service was postponed and did not commence until October 1925. From the start, Šeda showed aptitude in military matters and completed his national duty with the rank of sergeant in a vehicle battalion. Though following his civilian career, he continued soldiering as a reservist and by 1929 promoted to a reserve lieutenant in the artillery.

When the Germans invaded he escaped to France through Hungary to Belgrade, which was in the former Yugoslavia. He eventually arrived in Agde in the South of France where he joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Division. Because of his previous training and experience he was quickly promoted to the rank of Captain. He wore a French uniform and fought some of the best German soldiers in the Panzer divisions, near the Loire and to the east of Paris with only light weapons.

Eventually France fell and he escaped with fellow Czechoslovak Soldiers from Sete aboard and Egyptian ship called the SS Mohamed Ali El Kabir, which was a merchant ship flying under a British

flag. They went in a large convoy of boats to Gibraltar trying to dodge the lethal German U Boat Submarines and then over to Liverpool landing there on the 7<sup>th</sup> July. The SS Mohamed Ali El Kabir was torpedoed a few weeks later on August 7<sup>th</sup> with a loss of life of 120 people, which shows how dangerous these trips were.

From Liverpool he was transported to a tented village in the grounds of Cholmondeley Castle Cheshire. Here all Czechoslovak Troops assembled from where ever they had managed to escape in France, until they had enough air crew so go and make new squadrons in the RAF and fight alongside the British. Those in the Army had to wait longer before they could go and fight back in France again as part of the British Army that re invaded France in 1944.

In between the Army had to do lots of different training so they would be ready. Captain Seda and the Czechoslovak troops were based near Coventry City when the Germans completed bombed almost all the houses and shops and factories. Captain Seda and the Czechoslovak Army troops helped the British Home Guard to try and put the fires out and save peoples lives.

Captain Seda loved all sport and especially motor sports. He was good at skiing, swimming and horse riding, and was very keen to do the parachute training when it was offered. This would allow him to parachute behind German lines in France and take them by surprise during the coming invasion. This parachute training was done at Ringway Airport near Manchester.

Usually there was 3 days of theory and some practise before going up in a plane to do the jumps. On 12th July 1942, 23 Czechoslovak troops went to do their training, including Captain Seda.

Šeda had already completed one jump successfully that day and during the afternoon boarded the plane for his second. Conditions were good with the wind described as 'not at all high'. Staff Captain Sacher, the jump master, went first and was on the ground watching Šeda make his descent. Only some twenty yards away, he witnessed Šeda's fall into tragedy. At thirty feet a sudden gust of wind appeared to oscillate from the ground which caused the chute to swing uncontrollably. Caught at the wrong moment of the pendulum motion, Šeda fell heavily on his back and head, the rubber helmet offering little protection against the sheer force of the landing. Immediate medical attention was at hand and the captain taken by ambulance to Davyhulme Military Hospital. Tragically he died shortly after being admitted.

Arrangements were made to cremate Captain Šeda at Manchester Crematorium on 20 July 1942. His ashes were placed in a marble urn and kept in the Chapel of Rest. They remained there without question until 22 June 1962.

It was agreed that Captain Seda ashes should be buried at Brookwood as it was now the national monument to all Czechoslovak casualties on August 11<sup>th</sup> 1964. Unfortunately, no family could be located at the time and only 1 official came from the Embassy. For some unknown reason he never received a headstone until this year. He will be the only Army representative at Brookwood and his headstone is the only one with a Czechoslovak Lion on. This is because the rules regarding the design of the stone changed.

Finally this brave man has received the honour and respect he deserves and he is remembered properly.