

P/O John Reginald Cecil Gutcher J/92128 RCAF

John Gutcher was a 21-year-old Canadian mid-upper gunner who was killed along with his crew when their aircraft crashed in France, possibly following a mid-air collision with a second Lancaster. Less than three months later his brother was killed when his Lancaster was shot down.

John was part of the crew of Lancaster ND527 LE-O of No. 630 Squadron, one of four bombers lost on a 5 Group raid on the key rail junction at the town of Givors, on the Rhône, a raid intended to hamper

German reinforcements reaching Normandy from southern France.

ND527 had taken off from East Kirkby at 2117 hours on the night of 26 July 1944 and was homebound when it crashed near the small village of Saint-Ignat, north-east of Clermont-Ferrand. Almost simultaneously a No. 83 Squadron Lancaster also crashed, one exploding in the air and the other attempting to crash-land only to hit a row of trees. All 14 men on board the two Lancasters were killed.

John was in an experienced crew that included another three Canadians for which the Givors raid was their 18th operation after joining the squadron in the late spring with their first raid coming on 1 June.



He came from the small town of Massey in Ontario and was the son of John and Elizabeth Gutcher. After leaving school, he had worked as a mill worker and a tractor driver before enlisting in Winnipeg in September 1942.

John and his crew are buried in Des Carmes-Dechaux Communal Cemetery in Clermont-Ferrand and are remembered on a striking memorial (*pictured*) in the churchyard at Saint-Ignat.

The others who died on board ND527 were the pilot F/O Harold Wilson RCAF, flight engineer Sgt. Frederick Arnold, navigator F/O Ambrose Bain RCAF, bomb-aimer F/O Alexander Lindsay RCAF, wireless operator Sgt. Percy Gilliatt and rear gunner Sgt. David Fontaine.

His name can be found on panel 043.

Sources: 630 Squadron Association/aerosteles/Canadian veterans.

