

Flt. Sgt. John Stephen Huggard 35488
RAAF

John Huggard was an Australian Lancaster mid-upper gunner who was killed in a black night for No. 12 Squadron over the Baltic Sea.

He was part of the crew of Lancaster W4954 PH-V, which was one of four bombers and crews from the squadron lost during a mining operation off the Polish coast on the night of 28/29 April 1943. His squadron was based at RAF Wickenby in Lincolnshire.



John's aircraft was part of a major mine-laying operation staged by Bomber Command involving 207 bombers mining areas off the Danish and German Baltic coasts. This involved flying relatively low to lay mines leaving them vulnerable to both fighters and flak batteries. All four 12 Squadron losses were believed to be down to light flak.

W4954 was hit and crashed off Ostswine auf Usedom, near Swinemunde, in the sea. All seven men on board were killed and their bodies recovered and initially buried in Swinemunde before being reinterred in the Poznan Old Garrison Cemetery in Poland.

John, who enlisted in March 1941, came from the town of Parkes in New South Wales and was the 25-year-old son of John and Honora Huggard.

The others who died with him were the Irish pilot Flt. Lt. Ronald Ashton, flight engineer Sgt. Arthur Goodhand, navigator Sgt. Edwin Buscombe, bomb-aimer Sgt. John Mackintosh, wireless operator Sgt. Maurice Savage and 37-year-old rear gunner Sgt. Peter Lees.

John's name can be found on panel 052.

Sources: Australian Virtual War Memorial/Aviation Safety Network/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt/Bomber Command Losses 1943 by Bill Chorley.