

FS John Stanley Rigden 745328 RAFVR

John was born on 19 September 1919 in Balham, London, the twin son of John Harold Rigden and Winifred Hannah Rigden nee Mason. In 1942 he married Joan E Deeks in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Their son was born after his death.

John joined the RAF just before war was declared and was posted to 138 Sqn at RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire in November 1942.

On the night of 16/17 February 1943, John participated in "Operation Gunnerside", the dropping of 6 Norwegian Commandos and containers to the north of the Heavy Water facility at Rjukan, 120 miles NE of Stavanger. On the night of 26 February 1943, the Norwegian Commandos successfully destroyed the Norsk Hydro Plant. With their supply of heavy water cut off, the German scientists who had been working on the atomic project had to give up, and Hitler was not going to get the atomic bomb.

On 14 March 1943, John and the crew were tasked with "Operation Bronse", the insertion of a 3 man Czechoslovakian SOE Bronse team to Bohemia. The team was tasked to organize the resistance, carry out intelligence surveillance activities, and transmit information back to London. The group radio was codenamed "Blanka".

John, operating as the Navigator, and the crew, together with the 3 man Czech team departed RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire, in Halifax II BB281 (NF-O) destined for a drop zone near Brno, SE of Prague. Deteriorating weather conditions in the drop area prevented the planned operation continuing and the decision was made to return to base. Whilst flying to the south of Munich, the aircraft was hit by German anti-aircraft fire and crashed in the Perlacher Forest. Only one crew member and one Agent survived the crash, but they died later of their injuries.

Also Killed: Sqn Ldr Christopher Francis Gibson DFC (Pilot); WO1 Douglas Clark Lisson RCAF (Pilot); WO2 Maurice Tallier Peter Myers RCAF (WOp/AG); FS Arthur Stokes DFM (WOp/AG); Sgt Malcolm John Hudson (FE) died 11 April; Sgt Harold John Sharood (AG); Sgt Leo Peter Ward (AG); Lt Bohumir Martinek (Agent); František Vrbka (Agent) died 23 March; Antonin Kubec (Agent)

Originally buried in Munich West Cemetery, in November 1947 John was moved to Durnbach War Cemetery, Bayern Germany

John is commemorated on Wall Panel 232

John's twin, Trooper Frank Geoffrey Rigden was killed on 12 June 1942 whilst serving in Egypt with the 2nd Royal Gloucestershire Hussars.