

FO John Weddell 170390 RAFVR

John was born on 13 September 1922 in Alnwick, Northumberland, the son of John Weddell and Julia Weddell nee Carmichael.

Educated locally, before war was declared he was employed as a butcher in the family business.

John enlisted in the RAFVR in 1940, trained as an Observer and was commissioned in November 1943.

On 26 November 1944, John's mission (Operation Fleckney I) was to parachute an intelligence agent, Paul Penczock, alias Paul Woderski, behind the enemy lines close to the town of Arnstadt in Germany. At this time the blind-drop was the deepest penetration into Germany. Their agent was a former Wehrmacht soldier of Polish/German extraction who had

surrendered to the British on 9 August 1944 near St Omer, Normandy. Penczock admitted to being a Communist with a desire to attack the Nazi regime and was recruited by the Americans (OSS). His objective on this mission was to re-engage with former associates and establish a sabotage network.

At 20:48 John, operating as the Navigator, and the crew departed RAF Tempsford in Hudson III T9463 (MA-L). The aircraft flew via France and Belgium before successfully dropping Penczock at the drop-zone and began the return to base.

At 02:00 on 27 November 1944, the aircraft crashed in a meadow near Drogny, near Houffalize, Belgium. The impact had gouged a trench in the field and the tail had broken off. John was still in his seat but had not survived the crash. At the time of the crash the area was in Allied territory, enabling the bodies to be retrieved, identified by a 161 Sqn member who flew out from RAF Tempsford to do so, and buried locally.

Initially believed to be shot down by an enemy night fighter, post war records have no Luftwaffe claims for the night; however, a claim from a USAAF P-61 from 422 Night Flying Squadron which was patrolling between 00:23 and 03:00 near the Hudson crash site has a claim for a successful attack on a Me110, a similar profile to the Hudson and this may be the reason for the loss of T9463. No Me110s were reported as lost that night.

Also Killed: Sqn Ldr Reginald Eric Wilkinson DFC MiD (Pilot); Flt Lt George Henry Ash DFC (Air Gunner); Flt Lt Frederick John Joseph Champion DFM (WOp/AG)

John is buried in Brussels Town Cemetery, Belgium

John is commemorated on Wall Panel 262

Photo Source: www.inmemories.com/Cemeteries/brussels

