

**Lt Henri Alexandre Drouilh - Agent**  
**Chevalier de Legion de Honneur; Compagnon de la**  
**Liberation; MM; Croix de Guerre 14-18 (avec 5 Palme);**  
**Croix de Guerre 39-45; Medaille de la Resistance;**  
**Colonial Medal (Koufra Clasp); MiD - UK**

Henri was born on 11 February 1891 in Panama City, Panama, to a French father and an American mother. Educated in Germany, England and France, on leaving school he worked as a Public Works Engineer under his father in Indochina.

Between 1913 and early 1914 Henri completed his national service in the Colonial Artillery in Vietnam. In August 1914 Henri was mobilised and served as an artillery officer in France until he transferred to the French Air Force in June 1917. In September 1917 Henri was awarded his wings at Etampes and returned to the front on Escadrille 103. Before he was demobilized in August 1919, Henri shot down four enemy aircraft and was wounded twice.



Henri returned to civilian life and worked around the world as an engineer in the oil and petroleum industry. In September 1939 whilst working in the Central African Republic, Henri was mobilised in the 214th Aviation Regiment and when France capitulated in June 1940, he joined the British Forces in Nigeria where he joined the Free French. Henri served in Africa until October 1941 when he moved to the Middle East.

In October 1942 Henri joined the FAFL General Staff in Camberley, Surrey before he was posted to the secret services of Free France in January 1943. Henri set up the parachute section of the French Section of SOE and from his arrival in March 1943 until his death in December, Henri and his section ensured the parachuting of 57 agents in 26 operations, as well as 49 pick-ups, allowing the infiltration of 140 agents and the exfiltration of 235. Henri also completed three parachute missions over occupied France.

At 22:05 on 16 December 1943 Henri and one other Agent departed RAF Tempsford in Halifax II LW280 (NF-K), to be dropped together with supplies to the Resistance. The mission was aborted due to ice and fog in the drop zone area, and the crew returned to England with the full load. The weather conditions in England were equally poor. Unable to land due to fogbound airfields and, running short of fuel, the crew was ordered to abandon the aircraft. The pilot gave the order for everyone to bale out and at 05:45 the aircraft crashed at Hale Fleet, 1 mile south of Penny Hole Flats, near Halliard Way, Tollesbury, Essex.

Three crew members and one Agent were found safe in the water and were picked up by the RASC operated No 1 Motor Boat Company, but sadly four of the crew were recovered from the water. Later that day, the body of a middle aged man in civilian clothes was washed up at high tide on the beach at Brightlingsea, close to the crash site. The papers on him suggested he was a War Correspondent; however, this was the cover for Henri.

Also Killed: Sgt James Johnstone Hannah (WOp/AG); Sgt Tom Bailey Hawkes (FE); Sgt John Lynch (Navigator); Sgt Robert Marshall (Air Bomber)

Henri is buried in Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey

Henri is commemorated on Wall Panel 272 (Not Yet Erected)

Photo Source : [ordredelaliberation.fr](http://ordredelaliberation.fr)