



John Hannah 1921 - 1947

Sergeant John Hannah was one of three airman stationed at Scampton to receive the Victoria Cross, the others being Wing Commander Roderick "Babe" Learoyd and Wing Commander Guy Gibson.

John Hannah was born in Paisley, Scotland and joined the Royal Air Force in 1939. He trained as a wireless operator and promoted in 1940 to Sergeant, when he was attached to No 83 Squadron as a wireless operator/gunner in Handley Page Hampden bombers at the age of 18.

As a result of action on 15th September 1940 he was awarded the Victoria Cross and the citation accompanying the award read:

'The KING has been graciously pleased to confer the VICTORIA CROSS on the undermentioned officer in recognition of most conspicuous bravery :-

652918 Sergeant John Hannah :-

On the night of 15th September, 1940, Sergeant Hannah was the wireless operator/air gunner in an aircraft engaged in a successful attack on an enemy barge concentration at Antwerp. It was then subjected to intense anti-aircraft fire and received a direct hit from a projectile of an explosive and incendiary nature, which apparently burst inside the bomb compartment.

A fire started which quickly enveloped the wireless operators and rear gunners cockpits, and as both the port and starboard petrol tanks had been pierced, there was grave risk of the fire spreading. Sergeant Hannah forced his way through to obtain two extinguishers and discovered that the rear gunner had had to leave the aircraft. He could have acted likewise, through the bottom

escape hatch or forward through the navigators hatch, but remained and fought the fire for ten minutes with the extinguishers, beating the flames with his log book when these were empty.

During this time thousands of rounds of ammunition exploded in all directions and he was almost blinded by the intense heat and fumes, but had the presence of mind to obtain relief by turning on his oxygen supply. Air admitted through the large holes caused by the projectile made the bomb compartment an inferno and all the aluminium sheet metal on the floor of this airmans cockpit was melted away, leaving only the cross bearers.

Working under these conditions, which caused burns to his face and eyes, Sergeant Hannah succeeded in extinguishing the fire. He then crawled forward, ascertained that the navigator had left the aircraft, and passed the latter's log and maps to the pilot. This airman displayed courage, coolness and devotion to duty of the highest order and by his action in remaining and successfully extinguishing the fire under conditions of the greatest danger and difficulty, enabled the pilot to bring the aircraft to its base.

In 1941 John contracted tuberculosis probably caused by his weakened condition caused by his severe burns. He was discharged in December 1942 with a full disability pension. He was briefly a taxi driver but his health deteriorated and it became increasingly difficult for him to maintain his wife and three small daughters and he died on 7th June 1947 and is buried in the churchyard of St. James the Great at Birstall, near Leicester. On his headstone is the inscription

"Courageous duty done in love, He serves his Pilot now above."

His Victoria Cross is displayed at the RAF Museum, Hendon, London.

Memorial in Scampton Churchyard.

As John Hannah was buried in Leicester and not at Scampton it was decided in the 1970's to develop a rose in his honour. The bloom was red, the colour of the VC ribbon and a garden was created at RAF Scampton.

When the base closed in the 1980's the roses were moved to the churchyard for safe keeping.



652918 FLIGHT SERGEANT
J. HANNAH, VC.
ROYAL AIR FORCE
7TH JUNE 1947 AGE 25



COURAGEOUS DUTY DONE
IN LOVE
HE SERVES HIS PILOT NOW
ABOVE

Flight Sgt
John
Hannah
is buried at
St James
the Great
Church,
Birstall,
Leicester

Loved and
remembered Al
Janet Han
aged 65 Y

