

John 'Joe' Atkinson was John's flight Commander in 'A' Flight, and was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Joe had joined 609 on 29th November 1940 after serving with No. 234 Squadron at St. Eval in Cornwall. He had studied at Oxford, where he joined the University Air Squadron. A 'modest, scholastic and amusingly introspective person', he is regarded as a true English gentleman. He was to remain with 609 until 5th April 1943, becoming the squadrons longest serving pilot in a single posting when he was sent as a supernumerary Chief Flying Instructor to No. 59 Operational Training Unit at Boulmer, Northumberland. He was later to be made a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, or KCB, following a successful post war diplomatic career. He had, however, been prematurely killed off on 2nd October, when the Biggin Hill Senior Intelligence Officer had informed 609's Intelligence officer, Frank 'Ziggy' Ziegler: "You know about poor old Joe? He's missing". 'Ziggy' promptly replied: "If you look behind that door, you will find him gorging tea". Operations had not noted the direct return of Atkinson and Belgian Pilot Officer Raymond Dopere and reported them both missing, Joe himself listening to the conversation.