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FIRST D.S.O. TO BE AWARDED TO NIGHT FIGHTER OBSERVER

Flight Lieutenant C.F. Rawnsley, 39-year-old observer to Wing Commander John Cunningham, the night fighter pilot, has been awarded the D.S.O. - the first to be given to a night fighter observer in Fighter Command. He already holds the D.F.C. and the D.F.M. and bar.

Rawnsley, one of the oldest members of aircrew in the Command, has shared in 16 of his pilot's 18 night bomber "kills" over this country. He was also flying with Cunningham when the Wing Commander shot down a daylight raider last year.

The famous partnership began three years ago - in the winter of 1940 to 1941, when the Luftwaffe started their mass night attacks on British cities. Rawnsley was then a sergeant and Cunningham a flight lieutenant, in the county of Middlesex squadron.

During the first five months of 1941 he helped his pilot to shoot down a dozen German raiders, a "bag" which included three in one night. For his share in these victories he won the D.F.M. and bar, and soon after he was commissioned in the same year he won the D.F.C. On this occasion the official citation mentioned "the brilliant tactics and perfect teamwork" which both pilot and observer had displayed in their fight with the night bomber.

Last year both Rawnsley and Cunningham spent six months training new night fighter crews and since their return to operations early this year they have accounted for three enemy aircraft - all of them fast F.W.190 fighter-bombers.

One night recently they came home on one engine - the other had been put out of action by the debris of an enemy aircraft they destroyed - and on another occasion a bullet from a rear gunner of a Ju. they were attacking passed between them.
