

Henry (Mick) Stanley

Wireless Operator - 405 Squadron Bomber Command Path Finder

Mick Stanley joined the RAF in 1942 and was assigned to 405 Squadron. The squadron, which was designated a Canadian Squadron with 50% Canadian crew, was selected for the elite No. 8 (Pathfinder) Group based at Gransden Lodge Airfield, with which it served until the end of the war. Through the last 20 months of the bomber offensive the squadron was equipped with the Avro Lancaster.



The Path Finder Force's motto was: 'We Guide To Strike'. It was a highly specialised force, dedicated to target-marking for the rest of Bomber Command, Main Force. Its crews also acted as guides and leaders on the long routes to the targets. On rare occasions they were reallocated to Main Force roles.

Only the best crews were offered the chance of becoming Pathfinders. All PFF aircrew were volunteers and the offer could be refused. Once a crew had joined the PFF, their performance was monitored. If they did not make the grade, they were out and back to an ordinary Bomber Command squadron.

Mick, a wireless operator flew some 60 operations with 405 Squadron including on the night of the 5th June 1944 when his squadron was targeting German defences at Conde sur Moireau behind Gold and Omaha beaches.

Eulogy for Mick Stanley, by Jennie Gray, 97 Squadron and Pathfinders historian

I did not know Mick Stanley personally but have come to know something of him through his wartime RAF logbook.

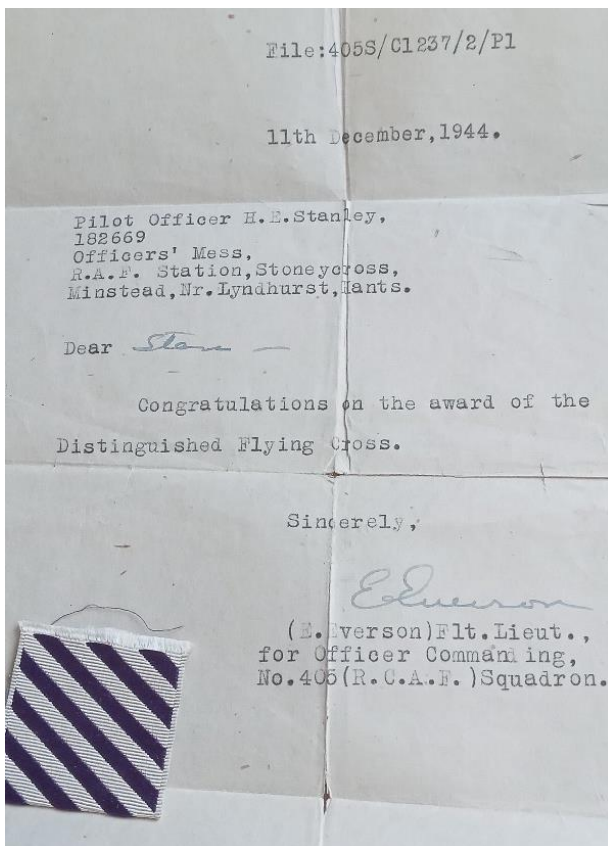
Mick was one of an exceptionally brave band of men - a member of Bomber Command's Pathfinders at the toughest period of the war. Mick was with 405 Squadron, made up largely of Canadians, which was stationed at Gransden Lodge in Cambridgeshire. Gransden Lodge was only four miles from another Pathfinder station, Bourn, where my own father was stationed at exactly the same time - autumn to winter 1943. By coincidence, they were both wireless operators. They may even perhaps have met in one of the local pubs where the aircrew loved to let off steam, crack jokes, fool around, and dazzle the local girls - RAF men in those days had all the glamour of rock stars.

However, life was very far from easy. Night after night, these incredibly brave young men flew on long trips over Occupied Europe, sometimes all the way to Nazi Germany, running a very high risk of being shot down by fighters or flak. These trips were known as operations

or 'ops', and every Pathfinder squadron regularly lost crews on ops. Each Lancaster aircraft carried a crew of seven young men, and it was not unusual for a Pathfinder squadron to lose two or more Lancasters per week. It does not take much arithmetic to work out the exceptionally high level of courage and commitment shown by Mick and his fellow aircrew when their chances of survival were so poor.

For example, on December 8th 1943, Mick broke his wrist whilst practising parachute drill. This simple little accident saved his life. He was grounded when his Canadian pilot Cloutier and the rest of the crew were killed on a Berlin operation on 14th January 1944. Mick did not fly again for another two months, but after that nothing could stop him! His battered old wartime logbook shows him flying with the RAF up until May 1946.

In his RAF career, Mick showed exemplary courage and dedication to duty, and rightly won the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was one of a very rare breed of men and will be greatly missed by all who loved and respected him."



Date	Time	Altitude	Target	Day	Remarks	Time	Height
3	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	BOMBING	1.40	
5	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	BOMBING - SUEWICK	3.15	
6	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	OPS - COMBE SUR HENRI - DMC	4.15	
7	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	ALBERTS (PARIS) - DMC	3.15	
10	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	VERSAILLES/MARSEILLE AIR - M.B.	3.15	
13	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	BRISBENS - M.L.	2.15	
17	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	BRISBENS - M.L. (Cont. previous)	2.15	
12	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	AIR TO AIR FIGHTS	1.55	
20	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	BOMBING - M.C. PRACTICE	1.00	
22	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	'Y' CROSS COUNTRY	1.30	
24	10.00	10,000	LANCASTER	W. OPERATOR	OPS - MIDDEL STRAETE (DACHAU)	1.15	
TOTAL HRS. FOR JUNE 1944.							
DAY						4.45	
NIGHT						2.20	

N. J. [Signature]
10/18/44

Mick Stanley was awarded the DFC in December 1944, on the same day his daughter, Jackie Stanley, was born.