

PO Stanley Ernest Watchorn 169505 RAFVR

Stanley, known as Stan, was born on 6 July 1917 in Syston, Leicestershire, the youngest son of Harry Dobney Watchorn and Harriett Ada Watchorn nee Langman. In 1940 he married Joyce Alice Dodding in Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire.

Educated at Loughborough College School, before joining the RAF and training as an Air Bomber, Stanley was employed as a manager in a Grocery Store and Cafe, and was also a theology student. Completing his training at 1656 HCU where he crewed up, in July 1943 Stanley was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire. Stanley was awarded his commission in December 1943, announced shortly before his death.

On the night of the 14 January 1944, 498 aircraft, with twenty provided by 101 Sqn, were dispatched for the first major raid to Brunswick, Germany, of the war. Brunswick was a smaller than usual target for Bomber Command and the raid was not a success. The Luftwaffe tracked the force when it was still only 40 miles from the Lincolnshire coast and fell among the bomber stream with deadly effect downing 38 Lancasters, three of which were from 101 Sqn with the loss of 24 men.

Between 16:30 and 17:10 the 101 Sqn Lancasters departed RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire en-route to Brunswick Stanley, operating as the Air Bomber, and the crew were flying Lancaster III DV287 (SR-N).

At 18:30, whilst outbound, Stanley's aircraft was intercepted at 19,500 ft by Oblt Martin Drewes of the 11./NJG 1 flying a Lichtenstein-equipped Bf 110 from Leeuwarden airfield. Using the deadly 20mm "Schrage Muzik" upward firing cannon to deadly effect, the Lancaster's port wing and fuselage was set alight. Stanley's aircraft was seen to descend and explode just above the ground near the Dutch border village of Klazienaveen, killing 8 of the 9 man crew. The navigator managed to bale out and evade capture with the assistance of the Dutch resistance.

Also Killed: PO Joseph Walter Slater (Pilot); FS John Francis Stafford (AG/SDO); FS Maxwell Chambers Patterson (Pilot); Sgt Peter Mitchell (WOp/AG); Sgt George Thomas McLatchie (AG); Sgt Leonard Easdon (AG); Sgt Arthur William Louis Schneider (FE)

Stanley is buried in Emmen (Nieuw Dordrecht) General Cemetery, Drenthe, Netherlands

Stanley is commemorated on Wall Panel 112