





The Extraordinary Life of Squadron Leader Basil Gerald Stapleton DFC, Dutch Flying Cross

**Squadron Leader
Basil Gerald "Stapme" Stapleton
DFC, Airman's Cross (Dutch)
(1920 - 2010)**

One of the Few, Ace with 8 Victories

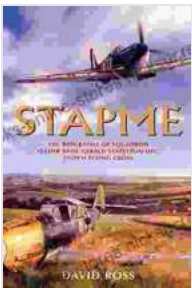






Tall, blond and sporting a splendid handlebar moustache, Stapleton was the epitome of the dashing fighter pilot. As the Battle of Britain opened in July 1940, he was flying Spitfires with No 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron and saw action off the east coast of Scotland. He was instrumental in the destruction of two German bombers before the squadron moved to Hornchurch in late August. As the battle intensified, within a few days Stapleton had engaged the enemy fighter force escorting the Luftwaffe's bombers, and was credited with probably shooting down two Messerschmitt Bf 109s. By the beginning of September No 603 was one of the most heavily engaged squadrons, and Stapleton accounted for a Doerner bomber on September 3 and a Bf 109 two days later. The latter flown by Franz von Werra, who later became famous as "The One who Got Away", being generally regarded as the only Axis POW to escape from Canada and make it back to Germany. On September 7th Stapleton's Spitfire was hit by enemy fire but he managed to force-land his badly damaged aircraft. A young couple having a picnic in an adjacent field gave him a restorative cup of tea before driving him back to his airfield. On September 15th (Battle of Britain Day) Stapleton shot down a Doerner bomber and a Bf 109 fighter. By the end of the Battle on October 31st, he had destroyed two more Bf 109s and probably a further three. On November 11th he gained his final success when he shot down a Bf 109 over Ramsgate. A few days later he was awarded a DFC. During that summer of 1940, 13 of his colleagues were killed and others seriously wounded - including his friend Richard Hillary (later the author of *The Last Enemy*) who was badly burned. He returned to ops in August 1941 to command No 247 Squadron on Typhoons. He received the Dutch Flying Cross for his part in the Arnhem operations. Forced to land inside German lines in December 1944, he spent the rest of the war in Stalag Luft 1 on the Baltic coast.

A Forgotten Hero of the Skies

During the tumultuous years of World War II, the Royal Air Force (RAF) stood as a beacon of hope against the encroaching darkness. Amidst the countless brave airmen who risked their lives in defense of freedom, one name stands out as a testament to courage, determination, and unwavering resilience: Squadron Leader Basil Gerald Stapleton DFC, Dutch Flying Cross.



Stapme: The Biography of Squadron Leader Basil

Gerald Stapleton DFC, Dutch Flying Cross by Brent Schlender

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language	: English
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Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
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Early Years and the Call to Duty

Basil Gerald Stapleton was born on March 17, 1919, in the picturesque town of Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, England. Little did he know that destiny had a grand adventure in store for him. As war clouds gathered over Europe, Stapleton answered the call to serve his country, joining the RAF in 1940.

Training and the Path to Bomber Command

Undergoing rigorous training, Stapleton honed his skills as a pilot, displaying exceptional aptitude and a thirst for knowledge. His unwavering

dedication propelled him up the ranks, and soon he found himself assigned to the prestigious Bomber Command, a force tasked with carrying out strategic bombing raids against Nazi Germany.

The Heart-Pounding Missions

As a member of Bomber Command, Stapleton embarked on countless perilous missions over enemy territory. Night after night, he and his crew ventured into the treacherous skies aboard the iconic Lancaster bomber, a formidable aircraft that became synonymous with the RAF's unwavering spirit.

Flying through intense flak, Stapleton navigated the darkness, relying on his keen instincts and unwavering determination. With each successful mission, he and his comrades in arms brought hope to those below and chipped away at the enemy's resolve.

The Night That Changed Everything

On the fateful night of January 15, 1943, Stapleton's Lancaster bomber was shot down over the Netherlands during a raid on Berlin. Forced to bail out, he landed in enemy territory, evading capture with remarkable resourcefulness and daring.

Despite the extreme danger, Stapleton's spirit remained unbroken. He established contact with the Dutch Resistance, a network of brave individuals dedicated to fighting the Nazi occupation. With their invaluable assistance, he organized an escape route for downed Allied airmen, helping them evade capture and safely return to England.

Recognition and Honors

For his extraordinary bravery and unwavering dedication, Squadron Leader Basil Gerald Stapleton was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and the Dutch Flying Cross. These prestigious honors serve as a testament to his exceptional service and the profound impact he had on the course of the war.

A Legacy That Lives On

Beyond his military achievements, Stapleton's legacy extends far and wide. His unwavering resilience and determination inspired countless others, both during the war and in the years that followed. His story serves as a reminder of the indomitable spirit that can triumph over adversity and the extraordinary lengths to which individuals can go in the pursuit of freedom.

Remembrance and Recognition

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in the forgotten heroes of the RAF Bomber Command. Among them, Squadron Leader Basil Gerald Stapleton stands as an enigmatic figure, a true embodiment of courage, sacrifice, and the unyielding spirit that defined a generation.

Monuments and memorials have been erected in his honor, including a commemorative plaque at his former school, The King Alfred School in Somerset. His story continues to be passed down through generations, ensuring that his legacy and the sacrifices made by countless others during World War II will never be forgotten.

The life of Squadron Leader Basil Gerald Stapleton DFC, Dutch Flying Cross, is a testament to the extraordinary bravery and unwavering determination of those who fought for freedom during World War II. His story serves as a reminder of the human cost of war and the enduring

power of the human spirit. As we commemorate the sacrifices made by the brave men and women of Bomber Command, let us honor their memory and draw inspiration from their unwavering courage.

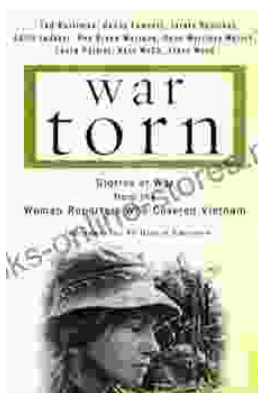


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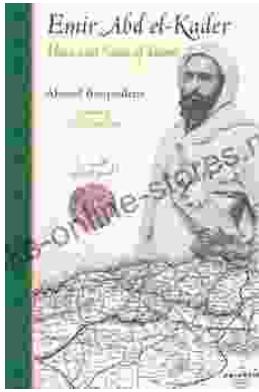
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