

Squadron Leader L W F Stark
DFC & Bar AFC

Lawrence William Fraser "Pinkie" Stark was born on 16th November 1920, joining the RAF in 1940 at the age of 19. After training in Canada, he returned to the UK in the middle of 1941 as a staff pilot at No 10 Air Gunnery School flying Boulton and Paul Defiants. In December he was posted to 182 Sqn at Sawbridgeworth flying Typhoons. On the 10th January 1943 Pinkie was posted to 609 Sqn at Manston. On 12th March he shot down a Fw190. Whilst at Matlask with 609, in August, he was commissioned, and on 2nd November 1943, shot down the squadron's 200th victory, a Ju88 15 miles NE of Paris and also destroyed a Bf110 on the ground. The squadron held a party to celebrate its 200th kill. He shot down another Ju88 on 2nd November, and on 4th January 1944 shared a Do217. On the 27th he destroyed a Caudron Goeland, and on the 30th got a Fw190. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in February 1944 just prior to his posting to 263 Sqn at Beaulieu as a Flight Commander flying Ground Attack missions. On the 3rd July 1944 he was hit by flak over the Brest Peninsular and had to bale out into occupied territory. However, for eight days he was sheltered by the Maquis, returning to the UK on the 13th July courtesy of the Royal Navy. Posted to the Gloster Aircraft Co as a Test Pilot, he was awarded a Bar to his DFC in November 1944. In October he received a Bar to his DFC. In March 1945 Pinkie was posted to 164 Sqn, flying Typhoons, as part of 123 Wing attached to the 2nd TAF at B77 Gilze-Rijen, Holland. Four days later he was posted to the command of 609 (WR) Sqn as the squadron's last wartime commander. He finished the war with 5½ confirmed solo victories and 1 shared. After disbanding the squadron on the 15th September 1945 he was posted to Celle on 35 Wing as S Ad O. At the end of October 1946, Pinkie was posted to A&AEE at Boscombe Down until March 1947 when he was sent to ETPS. At the beginning of the following year, on the 7th January, Pinkie returned to Boscombe Down where he remained until 1951. On the 1st January 1950 he was awarded the Air Force Cross, and in 1951 went to 32 Sqn flying Vampires. On the 26th October 1953 Pinkie was posted to Derby as Aircrew Allocation Unit Interviewing Officer where he was awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre. In the middle of 1954 he was posted back to Boscombe Down, this time for a conversion course on Hunter, Swift and Gannet aircraft. On the 8th October, a posting to the Central Experimental and Proving Establishment in Canada arose where Pinkie took part in several cold weather trials on different kinds of aircraft. On the 6th March, Pinkie returned to the UK with a posting to RAE Bedford and the Blind Landing Experimental Unit, performing automatic landing trials on Vulcans, Canberras, Varsity's and Comets. Retiring from the RAF on the 15th November 1963, Pinkie joined Elliott Bros at Rochester in their sales department, followed by the Aviation Services and Repair Department as Service Manager (Civil). On the 1st September 1977 Pinkie flew Concorde from the left hand seat, and on the 15th May 1978 became the Airport manager at Rochester Airport, retiring on 31st March 1987. Pinkie quotes as the two most outstanding events in his life, "The command of 609 (WR) Sqn and piloting Concorde". He died on 1st August 2004.

12th March 1943

Pinkie Stark's Logbook

12th March. Typhoon F (DN406). Patrol North - South Foreland. 55 minutes. Attacked four Fw 190's between Dunkirk and Mardyck. 1 Fw 190 "Destroyed" No. 1 (Sgt Leslie) "damaged" one Fw 190. I was hit by 2 - 7.9 mm bullets, one in the oil tank)

Form 540 Operations Records Book

An early morning raid on London with some 40 e/a making landfall sees all avl Typhoons in the air, of which 2 comprise the standing patrol (take off 0644) the rest scrambled at 0729 (all off in 3-1/2 mins. Unfortunately Hornchurch Control are unable to give any useful information despite the e/a having flown over their heads and merely direct the standing patrol (F/O van Lierde and F/O Skett) which is very low on fuel, to a point 15 miles NE of base "quite low". The others take this vector and there is some stooing around in the Estuary. Haze reduces visibility and F/O Evans is the only one to see anything, some 30 unidentified a/c in the distance. Norwegian 331 Squadron knock down 5, controlled by North Weald, and

in the evening Erik Haabjoern goes to visit them, asked if they had been celebrating he replied, " No but I have"

Otherwise there are 11 patrols and 1 scramble and the earlier disappointment is somewhat allayed when F/Sgt Stark and Sgt Leslie (airborne 0942 down at 1037) get a FW190 DE and another DA, - told of bandits near Calais they investigate and find 4 e/a at 1000ft just off the coast, lose them in the sun and then see 3, another 3 e/a at sea level between Dunkirk and Mardyck. Sgt Leslie attacked the nearest from below and astern at short range, seeing strikes, after which the 190 turned sharply for home trailing white smoke. Stark attacked the leader from 100yds astern and after shooting off pieces it was seen to be on fire. It turned slowly to port and Stark had to pull up to avoid a collision, last seeing the 190 in a 30 degree dive at 300ft, inverted and trailing clouds of black smoke. Meanwhile FW190 number 3 had got behind Stark and opened fire hitting the Typhoon. Leslie returned from the French coast just in time to drive him off and F/Sgt Stark should be duly grateful.

Enemy casualties: 1 FW 190 destroyed F/Sgt Stark
1 FW 190 damaged Sgt Leslie.

Diary of F/Sgt Bob Walling

March 12th. In an early morning raid on London a Norwegian squadron from North Weald shot down five Jerry fighters. We had a scramble, and the kites patrolled the deck, but did not go into action. On a patrol later in the morning, Flt-Sgt Stark and Sgt Leslie had a scrap with three FW190's. Stark got a very probable Probable – when last seen the FW was upside down at 300ft diving towards the sea with flames coming out of it. Leslie managed to get one damaged. Starks aircraft was holed through the oil tank and rudder-trimming tab. Lallemand was awarded the DFC.

BOLTON PILOT SCORES FW190 SHOT DOWN OVER DUNKIRK

A recent air battle against odds of two to one which ended in the destruction of one FW190 and severe damage to another over the beach at Dunkirk has just been described by a pilot of the West Riding of Yorkshire Typhoon Squadron. He is Flight Sergeant Laurence W. F. Stark, of Bolton.

"Sergeant T. D. L. Leslie, of Carshalton, Surrey, and I were flying about three miles off Calais," he said, "when he saw four aircraft coming up behind us. He called to me and we both turned sharply. Then I recognised them as FW190s."

When over the beach between Dunkirk and Mardyck, Flight Sergeant Stark attacked the leading machine from about 100 yards astern and saw his fire going home on the fuselage and starboard wing. "Several pieces flew off the enemy aircraft," he said, "then flames shot out from around the cockpit. The enemy turned slowly to port and I had to pull up to avoid a collision. Turning steeply, I saw him below me now only about 300 feet up, going down in a steep dive almost on his back, with clouds of black smoke mingling with the flames."

Dog Fight

By this time a regular dog – fight had developed, and the flight – sergeant had to turn his attention to another F.W. which was coming round on his tail. As he turned to meet this attack a third F.W. crossed twice in front of him. He fired a burst at it each time, but could not be sure that he hit it.

"The second machine was still behind me," added the Flight – sergeant, "and fired several times without hitting me. Then at last I felt strikes on my aircraft, and oil began to flow around the cockpit. Just then, Sergt. Leslie attacked the Hun. He made off and we flew back to base. On landing I found just two bullet holes in my Typhoon, one of them in the oil tank."

Sergt. Leslie had previously attacked another of the F.W.s from 75 yards' range. He saw strikes on the fuselage and wings. It pulled up sharply and then went steeply down with white smoke coming from it. This aircraft is being credited as "damaged."

Flight-Sergeant Stark was formerly at Bolton School and Manchester College of Technology. He was studying to be an engineer when he joined up in 1940. He is 22 years old.

Bolton Evening News. 12th March 1943

5th October 1943

Form 540 Operations Records Book

"A real red letter day - our 200th e/a destroyed-- by P/O Stark who thus gets a share of the sweepstake , of which Sgt. Evans is the winner. The 200th was a Ju.88, as was the 100th which F/Lt Howell and P/O Hill shot down almost exactly 3 yrs previously.

Stark and Ross were airborne at 13.17 and set course for Chalons sur Marne, parked on an airfield south of Soissons they saw several 110's and set 2 on fire, scattering the groundcrews. As the flak came up they sped south and immediately spotted a Ju88 about 5 mls to stbd and going north. Stark made a climbing turn attack and from 250 yds his first burst set the stbd engine on fire and a second burst from 100 yds hit the port engine and cockpit, the e/a crashed into a wood, a sample of which Stark, being rather low collected in his intake.

C in C Leigh Mallory signalled that "He was not surprised after the magnificent performance of the Squadron this year." At the celebration party on 20th October in the Hotel Majestic, Folkestone "The Goat" was promoted to Group Captain , and enjoyed the beer and cigarettes. Pilot Officer Stark went on to claim 5 enemy aircraft destroyed, plus 1 shared and 1 on the ground before, as a Squadron Leader, taking command of 609 in March. 1945.