



Squadron Leader Donald (Dimsie) Stones DFC and Bar
19 June 1921 – 22 October 2002

Donald Stones was born in Norwich and attended Ipswich School from 1930 to 1937, writes Alan Wyatt. On the River Debden near the Felixstowe Ferry he met a Canadian RAF Wing Commander Percy Sherren and was inspired by him and his family to apply for a short service commission in the RAF. He was successful and started flying training in early 1939.

After initial training, he joined 32 Squadron in 1940 in January 1949 flying Hurricanes. The Squadron was sent to Gravesend in March and he was billeted with a local family. There was a lot of hanging around due to freezing fog and he asked his hosts if he could borrow a book to read. He picked one at random and walked up to the Mess to have breakfast. Two of his fellow pilots noticed the book sticking out of his great coat pocket, removed it and started laughing. Donald looked at its title for the first time. It was "Dimsie goes to School", a children's book. That nickname remained with him throughout his service and until his death.

He transferred to 79 Squadron which was posted to Merville in France in May 1940 and serious combat began. Many missions were flown in his beloved Hurricanes. He claimed 5 enemy shot down in one week with one other shared. He was then shot down and crash landed near some of his victims. Ten days after their arrival the Squadron, or what was left of it returned to England as Dunkirk fell. On 4th June 1940, a few days before his nineteenth birthday, a

telegram arrived for him which gave him the news that he had been awarded the DFC for his bravery in France. He was decorated by the King "in the field" at Biggin Hill on 22 June. He then participated in the Battle of Britain until his plane was hit by enemy fire and, following a forced landing he went to hospital with shrapnel to one leg.

There followed a posting to an instructors' course. In May 1941, he was sent back to 79 Squadron but in July he was ordered out to Malta to join 249 Squadron. He then served with the Malta Night Fighter Unit. He was transferred to 605 Squadron where he became temporary commanding officer. In April 1942, he was awarded a Bar to his DFC. There followed a posting to Egypt as an instructor and he then commanded 155 Squadron in India. On 15 May 1943, he was wounded by ground fire whilst leading an attack in Burma and this ended his operational career.

Following his recovery from wounds and dysentery, he became a test pilot in India and was then loaned to Vickers Armstrong. Whilst participating in a prank, a detonator exploded under a colleague's car and Dimsie lost an eye. He was posted to a staff position at the Air Ministry but, unable to fly any more, he left the Service in 1946 and joined the Colonial Service. After qualifying for a private pilots' licence, he returned to Africa and became an agent and demonstrator for a number of aircraft manufacturers. He was instrumental in selling jet trainers to the Ghanaian and Zambian air forces. He endured six coups d'etat in the 1960s but finally left Africa and retired when the sale of jet trainers to Idi Amin fell through after Amin had all of his trainee pilots shot on their return from training in Italy.