

COMMANDER STANLEY KEANE DSC (R28-30)

He was born on 16 July 1912 and joined the RAF immediately after leaving the College. By 1935 he was a flying instructor. Prior the start of WW2 he rose through the ranks and transferred to the Royal Navy (Air Arm) in 1939.

During WW2 he flew Swordfish from 3 Aircraft Carriers – HMS Furious off Norway, HMS Ark Royal, from which he took part in the sinking of the German battleship Bismarck and HMS Avenger on the North Russian Convoys. He also flew from a number of Naval Air Stations in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, including Lee-on-Solent, where 2 other OFs **Peter Lloyd-Bostock (28-31)** and **Peter Simpson (32-36)** were both serving at the time.

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross on 25 June 1940, while serving on HMS Furious "For daring and resource in the conduct of hazardous and successful operations by the Fleet Air Arm on the coast of Norway". During an attack on the enemy he had half his undercarriage shot away. When he returned to the carrier he insisted on letting all the other returning aircraft land first, in case his damaged one might encumber the flight deck. When they had all landed he was practically out of petrol, it was blowing a gale and the ship was pitching badly, but he made a perfect landing.

However his most noteworthy operation must be in connection with the sinking of the Bismarck on 27 May 1941. At the time he was a pilot on HMS Ark Royal and was involved in the raid that led to the sinking of the Bismarck. It is unclear which pilot actually fired the crucial torpedo that led to the capsize, but according to an excellent article at www.kbismarck.com/article2.html it was between Keane and one other. This article is an excellent and very detailed description of the sinking of this great ship. Keane was mentioned in dispatches for his involvement in this attack.

After WW2, he served at the Empire Flying School at Hullavington in Malta, for 2 years with the Royal Australian Air Force at Point Cook in Australia and then joined HMS Glory for a tour which included the Mediterranean and Korea. On his return he joined RNAS Stretton, by now a Commander and it was there that nearly 2 years later, he was killed in a flying accident on 12 May 1954, the cause of which was never discovered.

Perhaps his best epitaph will be the words of this last Commanding Officer – "His happy manner, his wit and his humour brought joy and happiness wherever he went. He was loyal, always considerate, always forgiving. I never heard him speak harshly of anyone and I am convinced that he met his death as he had lived – fearlessly and with a smile."