



T/Cpl Lewis Stodel 1020798

Served in the Royal Air Force from 28 October 1940 to 11 December 1945

My father was born Lewis Stodel on 24 April 1914 in Leeds, Yorkshire. He was the only child of Kate Phillips and John "Jack" Stodel (Jacob) who were married in London in 1913. His father was a Private in World War I and perished in Gallipoli on 12 August 1915, aged 24. We think his mother left him with a family member (possibly her sister) and remarried. She doesn't seem to have played a part in his upbringing, as I remember my father telling us that he was raised by his aunt.



Little is known of his early years. From what I recall from things he told us while I was growing up, he grew up in Chapletown Road. He left school when he was 16 years old and presumably started his apprenticeship then. He became a cabinet maker, and from about 1937 he was also a drummer in a band. He worked until October 1940, at which time he left to join H.M. Forces.

My father served in the RAF from 28 October 1940 to 11 December 1945. I don't recall him relating too much about these years, and if he did, maybe I was too young and inattentive to absorb everything, but I remember him telling us that he was an airplane mechanic, and stationed in Alexandria. I don't know to what extent he saw active service, but I clearly remember a scar on his shoulder, which he told us was from a bullet wound. Whether true or not, and whether related to the war or not, I don't know, but mention was made of this on his RAF Certificate of Service and Release.

R.A.F. Form 2520/11

**ROYAL AIR FORCE
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE AND RELEASE**

SERVICE PARTICULARS

Service Number } 1020798 Rank T/CPL of L. STODEL.
(Block Letters)

Air-Crew-Category and/or R.A.F. trade FITT. 2.A.

Air Crew Badges awarded (if any) NONE

Overseas Service M.E. 17.6.42 to 11.12.45

R.A.F. Character V.S. (see notes on back of certificate on opposite page)

Proficiency A Superior (" ")
" B Satisfactory (" ")

Decorations, Medals, Clasps, Mention in Despatches, Commendations, etc. AFRICA STAR
1939-45 STAR. DEFENCE MEDAL

Educational and Vocational Training Courses and Results NONE

DESCRIPTION

Date of Birth 24.4.14. Height 5.4"

Marks and Scars SCAR, RIGHT SHOULDER

Specimen Signature of Airman L. Stodel.

Brief statement of any special aptitudes or qualities or any special types of employment for which recommended :-
Trained as a Fitter Airframes and has had experience in the maintenance and repair of aircraft, particularly on skin repairs and veneer work for which he shows particular aptitude. A reliable and conscientious worker of superior technical ability, has proved himself to be a capable supervisor of technical personnel

Date 8/12/45 [Signature]
GROUP CAPTAIN
Signature of Officer Commanding

My father served in the Middle East from 17 June 1942 until his release in December 1945. I have photos of him in and around Cape Town in June/July 1942, and then I have photos of him in El Ballah from September 1942 onwards. It is my understanding that after joining the RAF and completing his training, they travelled to Egypt via South Africa, stopping in Cape Town for a short while.



Lewis Stodel, second from left.



Self on a Beer
"Spotted Dog"
Retreat
1942

Lewis Stodel, left.
(The Spotted Dog, known as Spotty, was an iconic roadside restaurant in Retreat.)



Meredith Hagisey
and the crew.
May 1942

Lewis Stodel, centre



Union Jack Club
Cafe Town
1942



El. Ballah
Sept 1942

Lewis Stodel, back.



El. Ballah
Oct 1942

Lewis Stodel, left.



Oct 1942
El. Ballah



El. Ballah.
Xmas. 1942.

Lewis Stodel, second row, centre (under the propellor blade).

My father was awarded four service medals: 1939-45 Star, Africa Star, Defence Medal and War Medal 1939-45.



After the war, he returned to England and again worked as a cabinet maker. He also resumed his role as a drummer in a band.

I believe that during his time in Cape Town in 1942, he did what no doubt many others did - he picked up a phone book and made contact with others with the same surname. One of the Stodels he contacted owned a furniture manufacturing factory. In April 1947 he wrote to the owner, and a month later he was offered a position as a cabinet maker, and later that year my father arrived in Cape Town on the Carnarvon Castle to start his next phase of life.

He met my mother, and they were married in Cape Town on 1 January 1952.

He died in Cape Town on 12 August 1977 (co-incidentally on the same date as his father, but 62 years later).

Written by Philip Stodel
January 2024

Gallery

These photos are all undated.



Lewis Stodel, front row, left.



Lewis Stodel, front row, centre.

Lewis Stodel, second from left.

Lewis Stodel, left.



Lewis Stodel, front.

Lewis Stodel, right.





Lewis Stodel, front left.