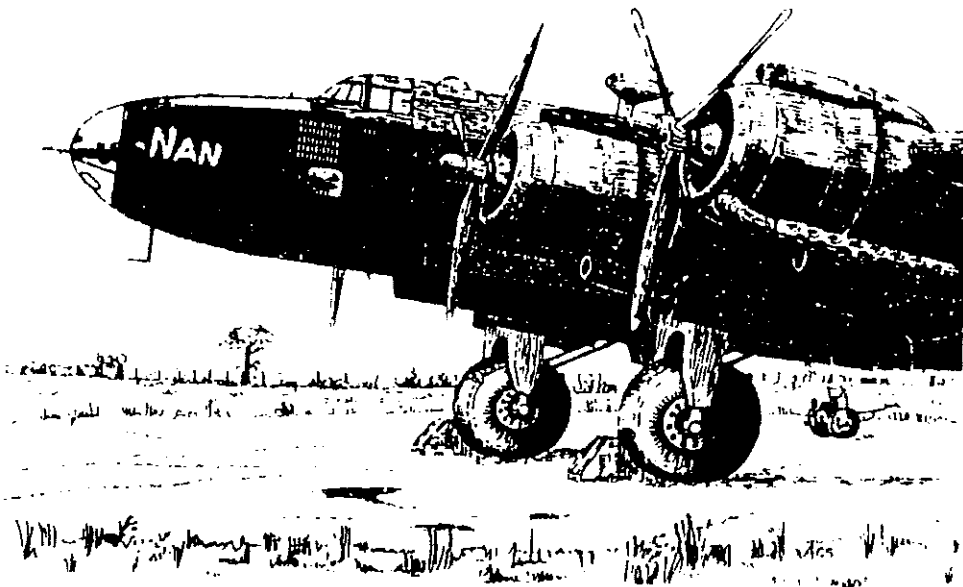




HALIFAX B. Mk.III MZ901/QB-N

FAILED TO RETURN

15/16. OCT. 1944



15/16th OCTOBER 1944

That night R.A.F. Bomber Command's main target was the German North Sea port and major naval base Wilhelmshaven. The raid in which 500 heavy bombers took part was one of 14 performed by the RAF since 1941. The U.S. Air Force had the port as a target on another 12 occasions.

While the mainstream of bombers went to Wilhelmshaven a small force of 37 aircraft, 22 Halifaxes and 15 Lancasters were detailed to lay mines in the Kattegat between Jutland and Sweden in order to disrupt the German sea traffic from Norway to Danish or German ports.

The participating aircraft took off from their bases about 18.30 and set course across the North Sea. On reaching the Danish coast they turned to pass over the northern part of Jutland en route to the mining areas with the code names Yewtree, krauts, and Silverthorn.

It was a moonlit night with rainclouds. Flight Sergeant A. C. Smith, airbomber in no. 10 RAF Squadron's Halifax LV785/ZA-C 'Charlie' remembered this as one of the more eventful nights because 'our route led right across a German night fighter airfield (not realized at the time) and some of the fighters intercepted our force'.

This happened in spite of the minelaying force being supported by Mosquito fighters from no. 100 Group Bomber Support Squadrons. - Two of these from no. 157 Sqd. took off from Swannington to patrol German airfields at Grove, SE of Holstebro and at Aalborg. F/L Whitlock/F/O Davidson in Mosquito MM643 took off at 18.25 intending to fly a high level intrusion (normally at 15,000-18,000 feet) but due to a failure in the Monica warning device (against enemies from the rear) they patrolled at 2000 feet. On return they reported the sortie to have been uneventful except for an observation at 20.20 hrs in the Ringkøbing area - an explosion on the ground W of Grove. - F/L Kelway/SGT Bell in Mosquito MM637 took off at 19.25 on a low level intruder operation against Grove airfield. From over the target area they observed an aircraft go down in flames at 21.00 hrs N of Grove. - Mosquito HR211 with LT Christie/WO Rann of 23 Sqd took off at 18.15 carrying a bombload on a low level patrol to Aalborg airfield. They found the target and dropped the load as intended.

However, in spite of these 'nuisance' patrols German night fighters were not prevented from taking off. They succeeded in tracking and shooting down some of the minelayers.

The aircraft observed at 21.00 hrs from F/L Kelway's Mosquito to go down in flames was Lancaster LM208/M from no. 207 Sqd. On its way to the Kattegat it crashed on the outskirts of Låstrup village, 14 km N. of Viborg and the crew of seven were all killed. Among them were two Canadians, F/O L.A. McIntyre, navigator and F/O W.A. Whitehead, airbomber of the R.C.A.F. - Fortunately the aircraft's load of mines did not explode and the village was saved from destruction.

Another Lancaster of 207 Sqd was shot down into the sea off Mariager Fjord. The aircraft NG143/R was on fire when it hit the surface. This crash was observed at 21.30 hrs from Halifax MZ910 of no. 10 Sqd which participated in the operation with six aircraft. Since then there has been found no trace of the crew, four British and 3 Canadian airmen who were all reported missing.

Halifax MZ826/ZA-M of no. 10 Sqd was hit by enemy shells on the return flight from 'Yewtree' and fire broke out. About 23.00 hrs it exploded in the air near Nr. Halne, N. of Ålborg. All crew except the navigator were killed. F/L Parks in a wounded condition saved his life by baling out. He evaded capture and was picked up by the Resistance and later in the month he was sailed out to safety in Sweden from where he returned to England.

The explosion on the ground in the Ringkøbing area, west of Grove airfield observed at 20.20 hrs from F/L Whitlock's Mosquito was the end of Halifax MZ901/QB-N 'Nan' of no. 424 'Tiger' Squadron, R.C.A.F. from airstation Skipton-on-Swale, Yorkshire. - On the ground people at Naur, a village 8 km NW of Holstebro saw two aircraft exchanging fire while flying on a southerly course. Moments later one of them dived to the ground and exploded on the boundary between two farms at Simonstrup, 6 km SW of Holstebro. Over-shooting shells from the German fighter found their way into the roof of a farm near Vind, a few kilometers further on and set it on fire. When the Halifax hit the ground some of the mines, that fortunately were not fused, were thrown clear and sank into soft ground. Soon after the crash German troops closed the area and later Luftwaffe technicians inspected the wreck that had broken up.

Against strong protests from the local population the Germans decided to bury the diseased crew of seven close to the crash site and without coffins and no clerical ceremony. They acted on orders of 1943 issued by the German High Command. Up till then funerals took place in churchyards in an orderly way with full military honours. Due to German civilian sufferings from 'terror-raids' this procedure was discontinued. However - -

war ended seven months later and soon after the German capitulation Resistance workers from Holstebro arranged a Christian funeral at Idom churchyard to take place on 15th June 1945.

The victims were transferred to Idom. For the ceremony the seven coffins, each of them covered with a British flag, were placed in a grass field adjoining the small churchyard, as this could not hold the numerous mourners wishing to pay their last respects. Among them were the British army chaplain, Mr. Perkins, a troop of Canadian soldiers from Flensburg, members of the Danish Resistance and many of the local inhabitants. - Sermons were held by the local vicar and Mr. Perkins. After interment in a collective grave a gun salute was fired by the Canadian troop and a soldier sounded 'The Last Post'. The ceremony ended with the congregation singing a hymn.

Since the end of the war much attended memorial services have been held at the graves on various occasions. And on Liberation Day, May 5th, wreaths are laid by officers of the Dragoons Regiment/Holstebro to honour this Canadian all-officer aircrew:

F/L	R.D. GUILD	J/18064	Pilot	Saint John, N.B.
F/O	J.P. GRACE	J/35251	W.Op.	Renfrew, ONT.
F/O	W.E. JORY	J/22936	A.Gnr.	Midland, ONT.
F/L	J.G. LEE, DFC	J/9311	Nav.	St.Thomas, ONT.
F/O	H.J. LOUGHRAN	J/41353	A.Gnr.	?
F/O	V.L. RILEY	J/35063	A/E	Castlegar, B.C.
P/O	N.A. SMITH	J/89362	F/E	?

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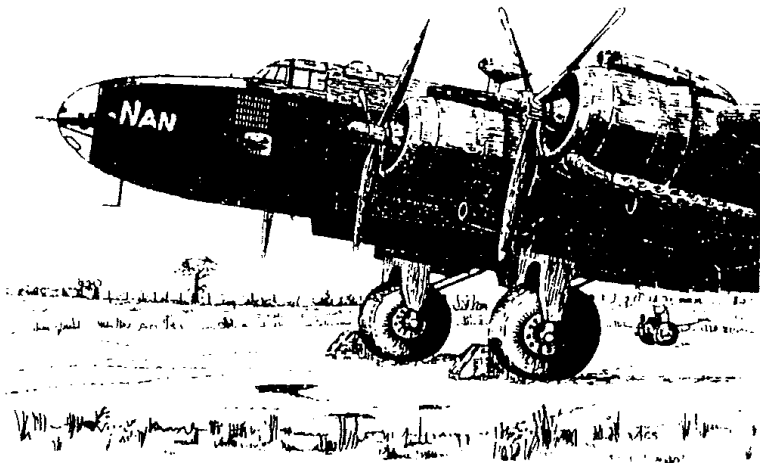
Halifax B. MK.III MZ901 was one of a batch numbered MZ896-939 and manufactured by English Electric Co.,Ltd.



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**Flyversergent, F/S A.C.Smiths rapport om
minelægningsoperationen ved Læsø d.
15/10-1944.**

EVALD
SØNDER