

39521 Flight Lieutenant Bernard W. Hayward was navigator on Whitley Mk. IV K9048, when it was shot down near Fuglegårds Mark, 9 km NW of Hadsund on the 23/24th April 1940 after a bombing raid to Aalborg airfield. In a letter from November 1984 he tells:

I remember that I was on stand-by for another squadron the night I was shot down. On that flight as second pilot I was the navigator. That early in the war we had no special navigators as such but just pilots like myself with extra training. On long trips we took our turn as pilot also later on of course they had only one pilot.

As I remember we had no trouble finding the target as the night was clear. There was considerable flak and searchlight. We stick bombed the aerodromes. We were hit as the last bomb left. We did not catch fire and were still under control at about 16000 feet. The left engine stopped for lack of fuel. The right motor continued to run but it's oil tank was completely blown away. Without lubrication the right engine got so hot we had to shut it down for fear of fire.

After that we found we could not contact the rear gunner (A/C Hargreaves) on the inter-com. I went back and found that he had gone. The Germans told us afterwards they found him unconscious near some water (Limfjorden). He had tried to steer his chute clear of the water and had collapsed when he hit the ground.

F.Lt. Milne put the aircraft down with the wheels up in a plowed field. We had trouble getting it to burn as there was little gasoline left. We filled the cabin with maps etc. and fired a verie pistol in through the window. Since there was little sound involved in our crash, about 3 am no one came near us.

It was too cold to sleep even in our heavy flying clothes. At day light we started to walk and came to a railroad track. After discussing it, Milne and I decided to see if we could stay free. Lyne particularly and Ritchie were not so sure, so we told them to walk down the railroad and give themselves up. We never saw them again.

Milne and I kept walking through the country side. The people, especially the young were somewhat frightened of us. We asked for food in the early afternoon. One farm gave us food and told us to go to some nearby bush where there was an English speaking family living. The lady of the house we found was friendly and gave us food but asked us to stay in the bush until after dark when her husband would be home. We came back after dark and they were very hospitable and gave us food and drink. We discussed the possibility of us staying free and they offered us clothes if we wished. They said however it was pretty isolated in Denmark and they had no contact with the outside world for some time and they didn't think our chances were very good. We decided it might not be wise to involve them too much and there was no organisation. We asked them to phone the local police, who were very cautious as was the Germans to whom they in turn handed us. The Germans took us to Aalborg and our P.O.W.-life began. The next day they flew us to Germany in a Junkers transport.

Sgt. Richie was our front gunner and LAC Lyne was our wireless operator. We never saw them again after leaving them on the railroad. We crashlanded fairly close to Hadsund and the police trip at night was quite brief.

I lost all contact with Keith Milne when he left Oflag IXA as an escaper, although I knew he had been sent to a tougher camp. I was surprised to find from your letter that he had died (lung cancer three years ago). On my way home from the war I travelled with his wife from Ottawa to Winnipeg, where I got off.