

**Flt. Sgt. William Paterson
Clapham 1022894 RAFVR**



It was a cruel fate which befell a Halifax of 427 (Lion) RCAF Squadron from Leeming and a Lancaster from 622 Squadron at Mildenhall as they both returned from Bomber Command's worst raid of the war.

Both were heading back to England from the mauling the bombers had taken during the raid on Nuremburg on the night of 30/31 March, 1944 when they collided, crashing close to the border of Luxemburg and Belgium. Only one of the 15 men on board survived as they became the 89th and 90th Bomber Command losses on the night.

Londoner Bill Clapham was the wireless operator and was part of the crew of 427 Halifax III LV932 ZL-W. His aircraft crashed at Rachecourt on the Luxemburg border, close to the attractive Belgian Ardennes town of Arlon. Only the rear gunner survived and evaded capture.

They had taken off from Leeming at 2200 hours one of 795 bombers heading to the southern Germany city. Ninety-five were lost, including three from 427 Squadron. His experienced pilot, 'Turkey' Laird, was one of both the squadron's flight commanders to be killed.

The others who died were the pilot S/L George Laird DFC RCAF, second pilot Flt. Sgt. Arthur Stainton RCAF, flight engineer P/O John Morrison DFC, navigator P/O William Soeder RCAF, bomb-aimer P/O Joe Corbally RCAF and mid-upper gunner P/O Lloyd Smith RCAF. The surviving rear gunner was P/O Jim Moffat RCAF. Six of those, including Bill Clapham, are buried in Hotton War Cemetery while the flight engineer, who died on 20 April of his injuries while baling out, is buried in Arlon Communal Cemetery.

His name can be found on panel 144.

Sources: 427 Squadron Association/ Bomber Command Losses 1944 by Bill Chorley/The Nuremburg Raid by Martin Middlebrook.