

Nathan's RAF Story

Nathan Max attended school at the Liverpool Institute from 1935 and although he does not appear on the school memorial, he was still on the school roll in 1938.

He enlisted into the RAF on 1 December 1941 at Euston and was placed in the reserves on 12 December 1941. On the 24 January 1942 he was recommended for pilot training. On 5 October 1942 he was sent to 1 ACRC (Air Crew Reception Centre) 27 Wing in Ludlow.

He was posted on 16 December 1942 to South Africa for training as an air gunner. He was based in Bulawayo from 31 Jan 1943, then sent to 28 E.F.Ts. (Elementary Flying Training school) on 1 May 1943 and he eventually ended up at RAF Moffat in Rhodesia on 17 June 1943. He joined 178 Squadron on 21 December 1943.

178 Squadron operated in support of the Allied armies as they advanced through Libya. In January 1944 Nathan flew five missions from the squadron's base at El Adam, Libya, to attack harbour installations at the German-held Greek ports of Khalkis and Piraeus, and to mine their harbours. He carried out two more similar attacks in February before the squadron moved to Celone, part of the Foggia Airfield Complex in Italy on 1 March 1944 and started attacking targets in Italy and the Balkans.

Nathan died on the night of 18/19 March 1944 on board Liberator EV812. The squadron's operational order for the mission in which he died stated: 'As a direct result of the attacks on SOFIA it is believed that PLOVDIV is now replacing the Bulgarian capital as the centre of government. The Main BELGRADE-SOFIA-ISTANBUL railway also passes through the town and the Marshalling Yards are very active.' Their objective was: 'to cut the main railway line, to destroy repair facilities and rolling stock in the Marshalling Yards at PLOVDIV and to remind the Bulgars that they cannot escape the consequences of their pro-axis policy.'

Liberator EV812, piloted by Warrant Officer Ells, took off from Celone Airfield and headed for Plovdiv at about 19:30hrs on 18 March but failed to return. The Squadron Operational Record Book states that the aircraft on the mission were attacked by night fighters and three crews reported seeing a burning aircraft falling through the air.

The crew were listed as missing, and when nothing was heard of them for nearly a year, they were presumed dead. They are commemorated on the Malta Memorial at Floriana, Valletta. Nathan's name is on Panel 15, Col. 1.