



THE FINAL RAID

On 24th June 1945 twenty-six India-based Royal Air Force B-24 Liberators from 159, 355, and 356 Squadrons attacked the two railway bridges at Tha Makham, near Kanchanaburi, Siam. RCAF F/Lt Roy M. Borthwick, a 24 year old pilot from Vancouver, BC, skippered 159 Squadron Liberator KH398 on the operation. F/Lt Borthwick made five passes unscathed, each time approaching from 1000 feet, descending to 500 feet, dropping a single 1000-pound bomb, and then dropping lower and hugging the ground to avoid anti-aircraft fire while his gunners fired back at Japanese ack-ack positions and railway targets of opportunity. Early in the raid a bomb from F/Lt Borthwick's aircraft scored a direct hit on the steel-and-concrete bridge. This was followed by another direct hit by Liberator EW173, skippered by New Zealand P/O Johnny Haycock. In all, three spans of the main bridge were destroyed. The focus then turned to the wooden bypass bridge, where two gaps were blown. While the steel bridge was not repaired until post-war, POWs were forced to repair the wooden bridge which remained in use until 1947.

RCAF F/Lt R.M. Borthwick (J21490) and his bomb aimer, RCAF F/O W. Drew (J44132), were each awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for "cool judgement, courage and great devotion to duty."

The other crewmen of KH398 were: P/O. C.F. Nesbitt*, P/O. E.R. Kennedy*, Sgt. R. Meredith*, F/Sgt. E. Johnson, Sgt. W.M. Ross*, Sgt. J. Knauts*, Sgt. J.S. Blyth (Royal Canadian Air Force)



Presented by 101 (North Island) Squadron
Royal Canadian Airforce Association
2016