

STICHTING LUCHTOORLOG ONDERZOEK DRENTHE

THE SEARCHLIGHT



Term: Winter | Issue 2 | Date: April 5, 2018

CREPT UP FROM BEHIND

Thursday 24-2-1944, a sunny, but with 3 degrees and a bit of wind a fresh February day in the Drenthe border area.

It is 'Big Week' and on this day the Eight Airforce sends 867 bombers from England to various targets including Schweinfurt and Gotha in Germany.

This bomber stream is escorted by various fighter groups and thus protected by hundreds of P38 Lightnings, P51 Mustangs and P47 Thunderbolts.

One of these P 47 Thunderbolt fighters, taking off at East Wretham, belonging to the 359 FG, was flown by the 24-year-old pilot Albert T Niccolai.



AIRWAR WITHOUT BORDERS

On December 2, the Dutch-German exhibition 'Air War Without Borders' was opened in the Twist, Germany.

After being extended twice, until the 4th of March, this was the most successful exhibition ever.

Director R. Gaidosh expressed it the best: I am proud and very grateful to be part of this co-operation.

We share his opinion!

LOST WINGS ROUTE

2 years ago, the first info-board of the Lost Wings Route was unveiled and this



year all locations will have an information board.

Already 3 primary schools and a secondary school have announced that they will visit several signs in 2018 as part of the National Commemoration.

460 SQUADRON

The article "460 Squadron" is to honor the teams of people from different countries who keep the memories alive of the 460 Squadron crews whose aircraft crashed in their region during World War II. For those who have built

memorials and have helped tracing the families of the crew, plus the local residents who have given a decent burial for the crew and in some cases even with full military honor.

CREPT UPFROM BEHIND

Albert T Niccolai, from Wisconsin USA, gets into a fight with a 109G above Twist. This German aircraft plunges promptly lowered to lower altitude by the P47 or Niccolai. Because it has a higher dive speed compared to the Me 109 he gets in sight while diving. Concentrated on his prey Niccolai does not notice that he is being creped up by a 2nd Me 109 flown by Uffz Albert Boeckl of the 12./JG26. The aircraft of Niccolai gets the brunt and dives down steeply at 650 km / h. Niccolai was not able to jump out of the plane, possibly wounded by German bullets. At 12.30 hrs the P 47 D razorback with workno. 42-8636 and sq.code CR-F hits a hole in the 4m thick swampy peat layer of the Ruhlermoor and disappears with the pilot. The only thing visible is a watery hole that is unreachable at that moment for those who would like it. It was not until the winter of 1946 that during the construction of a transport road for oil extraction, it became possible to reach the crashsite at a distance of 200 m. Some aircraft parts are removed from the peat together with some human remains, that the pilot may be identified.. Niccolai has found his final resting place in Wisconsin. Later, a wooden memorial panel is placed on a tree at some distance. A few years ago this wooden sign disappeared without trace to resurface during the exhibition at the Ölmuseum in Twist.



In October 2016 yours truly is involved with redevelopment work for the German State and on the location we encountered the last remains of the Thunderbolt including the engine, tailwheel and many small aluminum parts. After consultation with German authorities, it was decided to clean up the remains and after checking the material, it was released and made available to us. SLO-Drenthe makes grateful use of this tangible memory during exhibitions and lectures.

Harrie Peters, Treasurer SLO-Drenthe

460 SQUADRON

These are the stories of some 460 Squadron Lancasters which crashed in enemy territory:

Lancaster ED421, piloted by F/Sgt Alex Richards RAAF, shot down just north of Berlin on 24 August 1943 – only three survived to become POWs.

In 2002, a team of young Germans located this crash site and the crash sites of two other BC aircraft that were shot down within 20 minutes of each other and with a radius of 50km.

This brought closure to the families of the crew members who were KIA. Each of the next generation of all these airmen now has a piece of their Veterans aircraft.

The 24 August 1943 club has been formed in Sydney Australia, with the next generation of one of the Veterans in each of these three aircraft regularly getting together.

The writer is one of these – my father F/Sgt James Munro RAAF was the Bomb Aimer, one of the three survivors of Lancaster ED421.

460 SQUADRON

Lancaster ND463, piloted by F/O Mick Cusick RAAF, shot down near Wuston on 24 March 1944 while attacking Berlin. Only the Wireless operator survived to become a Prisoner of War (POW).

Cusick's family thanked the people of Wuston for treating their cousin and his fellow crewman with respect in their deaths by providing them with a Christian burial and a remembrance service on the day after the crash which was performed by the local Pastor Paul Jacobs.

Lancaster DV174, piloted by F/Sgt Bruce Plant RAAF crashed near Speyer in Germany on 23 September 1943, with all on board KIA. Erik Wieman and Peter Beckel of the IG Heimatforschung Rheinland-Pfalz (Historical Research Community Rhineland-Palatinate) worked closely with 460 Sqn Veterans & Friends Group to locate all the families of the crew. Each family now has a plaque including pieces of DV174. At the unveiling of the memorial, Erik presented the RAAF representative with a fire extinguisher used unsuccessfully to fight the onboard blaze, which is now in the museum of the current 460 Squadron RAAF in Canberra, Australia.

A geocache had been located under the memorial so as Erik states 'people walking by will know what happened there and the families of the courageous crew should have a memorial to remember where their relatives died that night in 1943.'

This story should not be forgotten.



Erik Wieman, WGGCDR Ruth Elsley RAAF and Peter Beckel (with the extinguisher) at the memorial unveiling of the Lancaster DV174.

Lancaster EE132, piloted by F/Sgt Rober McPhan RAAF, crashed into a farm near the village of Lopik in the Netherlands on the 3 September 1943 raid on Berlin - only the two gunners survived. There has been a very close relationship over many decades between the local residents especially Joop van Vliet and Bob Spence, treasurer of 460 Squadron Veterans & Friends Group, whose father F/Sgt John Spence was the bombaimer. A memorial was built near the crashsite and is continually maintained. Joop has written a book on this night and the overall Bomber Command story that is included in the local class curriculum. Bob attended a memorial service which included a fly over by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Lancaster.

Lancaster ND586, piloted by F/O Arthur Probert RAAF crashed in the old village of

Mesnil in the north of France at 23.41 hours on 10 April 1944. Whilst on the raid to bomb the railway junction and marshalling yards at nearby Aulnoye during the run up to D-day-all on board were KIA.

A French team led by Bernard Feutry searched the world for the families of the crew.

In 2012 a memorial was built and unveiled on ANZAC Day (25 April) 2013 with several crew family members present.

With the local Mayor's approval, the memorial was renovated and upgraded in October 2017. Their research highlighted that two of the crew both attended Toowoomba High School in Southern Queensland - two of the current students from the school correspond (as pen pals) with students in the village of Vieux Mesnil.

Lancaster PB471, piloted by F/Lt Alex Jenkins RAAF, the only survivor. As his aircraft was plummeting to earth, the cockpit exploded, throwing him into space still strapped to his pilot seat. The relationship with the local residents of Linkout Lummen has remained strong all these years with a memorial built and a street named after the pilot.

460 SQUADRON

Lancaster JB610, piloted by P/O Ken Godwin RAAF crashed on 19 February 1944. Thorsten Perl who was researching the story of Norwegian Journalist Nordahl Grieg who was KIA while flying with a 460 Sqn crew as a journalist on 2 December 1943 recognised that P/O Godwin flew the legendary 460 Sqn Lancaster G for George on that raid and also determined that Godwin was shot down in the early hours of 20 February 1944. Thorsten was surprised that the German authorities had never recovered the wreck despite the Steinhuder Meer (Sea) being only 3m deep and the crash site being only 140m from the shore. P/O Godwin is honoured on the walls of the Runnymede Air Forces Museum as his body was never found. Thorsten put together a team to successfully locate Lancaster JB610 lying upside down with its tail wheel close enough to the surface to have been contacted by the bottom of their search dinghy. We are now working with Thorsten to be given permission from authorities to access the wreckage before the area is declared a national park.



Thorsten Perl and his team searching for Lancaster JB610 in the Steinhuder Lake.



De grafsteen van Lancaster W4984 piloot F/Sgt Beresford Davis RAAF met zijn portretfoto en een Poppy cross tijdens Remembrance Day 2017.

Lancaster W4984, piloted by F/Sgt Beresford Davis RAAF, crashed near Oud Schoonebeek (Drenthe), 14kms SSE of Emmen Holland on 24 May 1943. Only the Bomb Aimer F/Sgt Goldthorpe RAAF survived, with the six other crew members buried in the Oud Schoonebeek General Cemetery, The Netherlands. As readers well know, the six graves of the crew are well tendered by Rob Wethly, his family and the Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe (Foundation Air war Research Drenthe), with flowers and crosses being placed on special days such as ANZAC Day (25 April) and Remembrance Day. Five of the six head stones have a photo of the crew member. Despite an intensive international research involving many researchers, a photo of Wireless Operator F/Sgt Jack Stanley Biffin RAAF has not yet been found.

Squadron Veterans and Friends Group are incredibly grateful to all the individuals and teams who have located the crash sites and are honouring the fallen of 460 Squadron who were shot down over enemy territory in WWII. Amazingly, crash sites are still being officially located, over 70 years after those fateful nights.

460 Squadron RAAF was formed on 15 November 1941, flying Vickers Wellington bombers. Their first bombing operation of World War II was on 12 March 1942. In late 1942 they converted to the Avro Lancasters flying their first bombing raid in the heavy bombers on 22 November 1942. In the 37 months until their last bombing raid of the war on 25 April 1945, they became one of the leading squadrons in RAF Bomber Command but this came at a horrific price.

Maart 42 – April 45

Number of serving aircrew 3057
Number of missions 6264
Tons of bombs dropped 24856
Lost aircrafts 196
Number of aircrew Killed In Action (KIA) 1018
Number of aircrew Prisoner of War (POW) 201
Number of aircrew Evaded Capture (EVD) 10

Richard Munro,
460 Squadron Veterans &
Friends-group
Februari 2018.

TWICE TODAY!

Around noon on Monday, November 29TH 1943, a Messerschmitt Bf109 takes off to intercept more than 360 US bombers from the 8th Airforce on their way to Bremen. The B17 bombers are escorted by 38 P38s and 314 P47s. Above the Dutch border, the fighter was probably hit by friendly fire, damaged by a Werfer-Granate 21. The pilot decides to jump and lands with his parachute near the crashsite. The pilot gets in touch with his base and while he waits for help, he tells residents that he had crashed twice that day!

The Americans weren't lucky either. Due to clouds and disturbances in the "Blind bombing equipment", 200 B17s abort the mission.

But who was this Luftwaffe pilot? To what Jagdgeschwader did he belong? Two important questions that we would like to see answered.



SLO DRENTHÉ INSPIRES STUDENTS

From childhood on, I'm interested in the Second World War. Thanks to stories from my grandfather and grandmother and my cousin who collected almost everything from the Second World War, my own interest became even bigger. My cousin bought a metal detector a few years ago and I went along with him to search for the remains of crashed aircraft with the metal detector. Through the work of my cousin, we came into contact with Harrie Peters, who has been researching crashes in the area for years.

One crash intrigued him for a very long time. A German crash in which the fate and identity of the pilot were unknown. Because of the research and the general interest in crashed aircraft in Southeast Drenthé, they came into contact with Rob Wethly, who mainly dealt with the air war in Nieuw-Schoonebeek and Schoonebeek.

In order to gather more information and results, my cousin, Harrie, Rob, started a study group, focusing on air war in Drenthé, the current Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthé (Airwar Research Foundation Drenthé). They are still trying to solve the missing pilot's crash. To ensure that family members know what happened to their relative's.

The search for remnants of airplanes, researching who the pilot was and the establishment of SLO Drenthé, ensured that I chose this as the subject for my script called: Air War in Drenthé, and especially the crashed aircraft between Weiteveen and New Schoonebeek. I haven't regretted it, I even became an enthusiastic special beneficiary of the foundation. Jorine de Vries, special supporter SLO Drenthé.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Autumn 2018

SLO-Drenthé will give a lecture in the VOC at Hardenberg.

Lost Wings Route

The Esdal College Klazienaveen receives lectures from SLO-Drenthé on 10 April in school and at crashsites

May 4, 2018

Commemoration of the dead in New Dordrecht and Schoonebeek.

May 5, 2018

We are invited to come to Assen and take place on the square of Freedom, will you be there?

THE PURIT, 73 YEARS AGO

"Gentlemen, The clock in the engine room stood still at 13.30 on Friday, March 23. This was the time when the factory was exposed to such a sudden bomb attack from airplanes that it was impossible for many to get out of the factory and the office to flee to the shelter."

It is not entirely clear why the Allies decided to bomb the factory in Klazienaveen. They were probably afraid that the Germans would take the stock of coke as fuel for their cars. There was also a suspicion among the Allies that the Germans had stored ammunition supplies at the factory. A few days before the bombing, air reconnaissance was carried out above the factory. The attack was carried out by the 266th and 193th Squadron of the RAF. Both squadrons flew with the Hawker Typhoon Mk.Ia and Ib. At least 50 bombs and other projectiles were dropped and yet the vital parts of the factory were spared. However, some serious phosphorus fires broke out.

Six people were killed immediately during the bombing. Two men died later of the injuries. One victim was found after five days. In the canal, in front of the factory, were several cargo and peat vessels that were attacked as well.

Eyewitnesses saw the Hawker Typhoons approach, diving, using the canal as a guide line. During the first volley, the skippers who were still on board, jumped ashore or even into the canal in panic. One ship was sunk by bombs and seven other ships were damaged by the bombing and the shelling.

Hotel Wieringa was completely destroyed by an unfortunate direct hit. During the days after the bombing the factory and Klazienaveen were the target of shelling several times.



OLD NEWS

Illegal newspaper Trouw writes in March about a message from Radio Oranje:

S.D. SPY! In the vicinity of Hoorn is a male person, aged about 30 years, blond hair, blushing face, wears glasses, dressed with cap, equipped with gun and Gestapo proof of identity. He is seen in the company of two women on a tandem. He tries to get along with the population.

Be careful!

EXTRA, EXTRA!

This year "De Schijnwerper" and the English version "The Searchlight" will appear 6 times.

In addition to the four editions, that appear quarterly, we issue a special May-edition and an annual edition at the end of this year. The May-edition contains all the details of the commemorations and celebrations. The annual edition will contain all the highlights of the entire year.