



Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe

THE SEARCHLIGHT

SEPTEMBER 2023

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Final editor: Yannic Wethly & Peter van der Weide	



Two Vickers Wellington crashes in Municipality of Borger-Odoorn: a remarkable history



Flashmob exhibition KULTOURsommer, juni



Flight Sergeant Alexander Henry 'Alec' Milton



Unveiling 40th Lost Wings information panel: Halifax Mk.II W7651 DY-M



Lost Wings information panel revised: from unknown to known crash

Would you like to stay up to date on the developments of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe? Scan or click on the QR-code and sign up for our email list.



A background image of a soldier in a trench, wearing a brown uniform and a garrison cap, waving his right hand. The scene is set in a dark, muddy trench with a blueish-grey sky. The words "TILL WE MEET AGAIN" are painted in white on the trench wall above the soldier.

TILL WE MEET AGAIN

Would you like to help?

We are already happy and grateful with the smallest donation to support our work!

Do you have objects, photos or other materials from the war? We are highly recommended!

In addition, we are looking for volunteers who want to place a candle at Commonwealth war graves in their immediate living environment on Christmas Eve.

Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe
IBAN: NL69 RABO 0359 4545 26

To sign up as a volunteer or for questions,
please send an email to: info@slo-drenthe.nl

BUY WAR BONDS

Two Vickers Wellington crashes in Municipality of Borger-Odoorn: a remarkable history



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During the Second World War, a total of nine Allied and German aircraft crashed in the present Municipality of Borger-Odoorn. Each war year, at least one aircraft crashed, so the residents of the Municipality of Borger-Odoorn also experienced the complete course of the war in this area.

It is the first two crashes that, upon closer inspection, have more in common than one might initially suspect. The two crashes have remarkable similarities, collectively telling a different, under-researched story.

On 3 July 1941, at 22:53, Wellington Mk.Ic R1492 GR-M of 301 RAF (Ziemi Pomorskiej) Squadron took off from RAF Syerston for a bombing raid on Bremen. The pilot, Flying Officer Wacław Butkiewicz, needed a copilot before departure, so Group Captain Bolesław Feliks Stachon jumped on board to fly with him as copilot.

On the way out, at around

00:34, the Wellington was shot down by a German Messerschmitt Bf 110D-3 night fighter flown by Oberleutnant Helmut Lent.

The salvo probably (fatally) injured Group Captain Bolesław Feliks Stachon. This because the other five crew members managed to leave the aircraft safely by parachute. Not much later, Wellington R1492 GR-M crashed burning at 1e Exloërmond, with its copilot still in the aircraft. The remaining five crew members were made prisoners of war and taken away to various camps.

This crash was the Municipality of Borger-Odoorn's first 'introduction' to a plane crash. Almost one year later, events would repeat themselves in remarkably similar fashion.

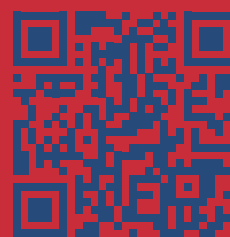
On 2 July 1942, at 23:12, Wellington Mk.IV Z1314 GR-M of 301 RAF (Ziemi Pomorskiej) Squadron took off from RAF Hemswell for a bombing raid on Bremen. The aircraft was



Group Captain Bolesław Feliks Stachon

At the crash site of Wellington R1492 GR-M, there is a Lost Wings information panel placed by Stichting Luchtvaart Onderzoek Drenthe.

Scan or click on the QR-code to learn more about this crash!



flown by Wing Commander Maksymilian Longin Brzozowski.

On the way out, at around 01:26, the Wellington was shot down by a German Messerschmitt Bf 110F-4 night fighter, again flown by Hauptmann Helmut Lent.

The salvo wounded navigator Flying Officer Stanislaw Atenski in both legs, and probably killed rear gunner Sergeant Stanislaw Kedzierski. On the orders of pilot Wing Commander Maksymilian Brzozowski, the remaining crew managed to leave the aircraft. They were all captured over the course of several days.

The observant reader may have already noticed, but both crashes have remarkably much in common. Both Wellingtons were part of the same squadron, 301 RAF (Ziemi Pomorskiej) Squadron, and on top of that with the same squadron code 'GR-M'. Wellington Z1314 was literally the aircraft that replaced Wellington R1492.

However, there are even more similarities: both aircraft took off for an attack on Bremen, and both were shot down by a night fighter flown by Helmut Lent. Also, both Wellingtons had crew members of unusually high rank: Group Captain Boleslaw Feliks Stachon and Wing Commander Maksymilian Longin Brzozowski.

In addition, some crew members of both aircraft had been assigned with each other on several occasions as crew for a mission.

Thus both events, only to a few hours, one year apart, have remarkably much in common.



Wing Commander Maksymilian
Longin Brzozowski



Sergeant Stanislaw Kedzierski



An unknown Wellington crash

Flashmob exhibition KULTOURsommer, June 2023



On 11 June 2023, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe gave a small 'flashmob' exhibition to a group of German cyclists at three locations. This was done as part of KULTOURsommer.

First up was a small presentation near the crash site of Messerschmitt Bf 109G-6/U4 Wnr. 20745, flown by Unteroffizier Rudi Lennhoff. This was followed by a presentation of, and at, the 25 war graves at Schoonebeek General Cemetery. Last followed a presentation and ascent of Air Guard Tower Schoonebeek 7Z3.

It was a successful (but warm) afternoon!

Scan or click on the QR-code for more information and photos.



Flight Sergeant Alexander Henry 'Alec' Milton

On 3 February 1943, Halifax DT630 VR-T of 419 RCAF (Moose) Squadron departed RAF Middleton St George at 18:34 as part of an attack wave of 263 aircraft. During the outward flight, the crew was slightly behind schedule, and also lost contact with rear gunner Flight Sergeant Alexander Henry 'Alec' Milton.

About 25 minutes away from the target, Halifax DT630 VR-T was attacked from behind and below. It was a German Messerschmitt Bf 110G-4 night fighter of 10./NJG 1, with pilot Oberfeldwebel Karl-Heinz Scherfling on board. It attacked Halifax DT630 VR-T over Schoonoord at an altitude of 5300 metres.

Alexander later stated that an evasive manoeuvre had been carried out, a so-called 'corkscrew'. Somehow this order from Alexander towards pilot Pilot Officer Jack Douglas 'Mac' MacKenzie had gotten through.

The evasive manoeuvre did not help: the entire fuselage of the aircraft was pierced by the German night fighter's cannon fire. Two crew members were (fatally) injured. The cannon fire also ignited the incendiary bombs on board, burning through essential cables and pipes running to the engines and controls. A second attack followed soon after.

Alexander continued to deliver defensive fire despite all the chaos, so that his crew members could safely exit the aircraft. He continued firing until it was also time for him to abandon his turret.

At 20:55 Halifax DT630 VR-T crashed in Odoornerveen. Alexander was one of three crew members who managed to leave the aircraft safely. The other four crew members were killed. They were buried in the Commonwealth War Graves section of the General Cemetery at Sleen.

In the search for more information on Flight Sergeant Alexander Henry 'Alec'

Milton, [an article was recently posted in the local online newspaper of Chiswick](#) (a district of west London). This is where Alexander is said to have lived after the war.

As a result of this article, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe got in touch with Alexander's family. They were able to share a photograph of Alexander with us, so that Alexander too has now regained his face. In addition, the family shared a small biography and a booklet compiled from Alexander's letters to Jessie, his girlfriend and eventual wife.

Alexander was born on 19th May 1916 in Kensington. His father, Alexander John Milton, was a calico printer who had married Elizabeth Susan Skinner in 1904. Alexander was their only child.

Alexander was educated at Margate College



Flight Sergeant Alexander Henry 'Alec' Milton

and developed an interest in Economics. It seems probable that he joined Barclays Bank as a junior clerk soon after leaving school.

His service record reveals that he initially joined the Army and was given a desk job but, perhaps influenced by the fact that his future wife's brother David was in the RAF, he applied for pilot training in the RAF. However, his eyesight was not good enough and thus, he was trained as an Air Gunner instead.

In addition to the almost daily loss of friends and comrades who never returned, Alexander faced imminent death on at least four occasions. On 6 May 1942, his Wellington crashed on landing at Wellesbourne and burst into flames. Alexander was thrown clear but the rest of the crew all died. On 6 October he had to bale out when both engines of his Wellington failed. On this occasion, the rest of the crew were lucky to survive. On 3 February 1943, his Halifax was shot down over Holland and on the Long March his life was saved by a party of Russians who kept him going when he was dying of hunger.

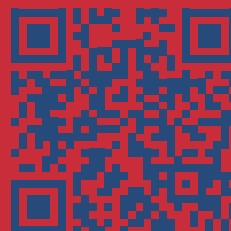
Alexander was liberated on 11 April 1945 and married Jessie on 28 May that year. He returned to his old job at Barclays Bank and eventually became a branch manager.

"I remember him as an unfailingly cheerful man who always remembered his nephews and nieces at Christmas and birthdays. Few members of the family had any idea what he had gone through, only those who occasionally had to calm him down in the middle of the night when his memories came back to haunt him."

Oliver Linton, niece of Jessie

At the crash site of Halifax DT630 VR-T, there is a Lost Wings information panel placed by Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe.

Scan or click on the QR-code to learn more about this crash!



Alexander and Jessie Milton



Family visit at the Lost Wings information panel of Wellington Mk.IV Z1409 BH-A

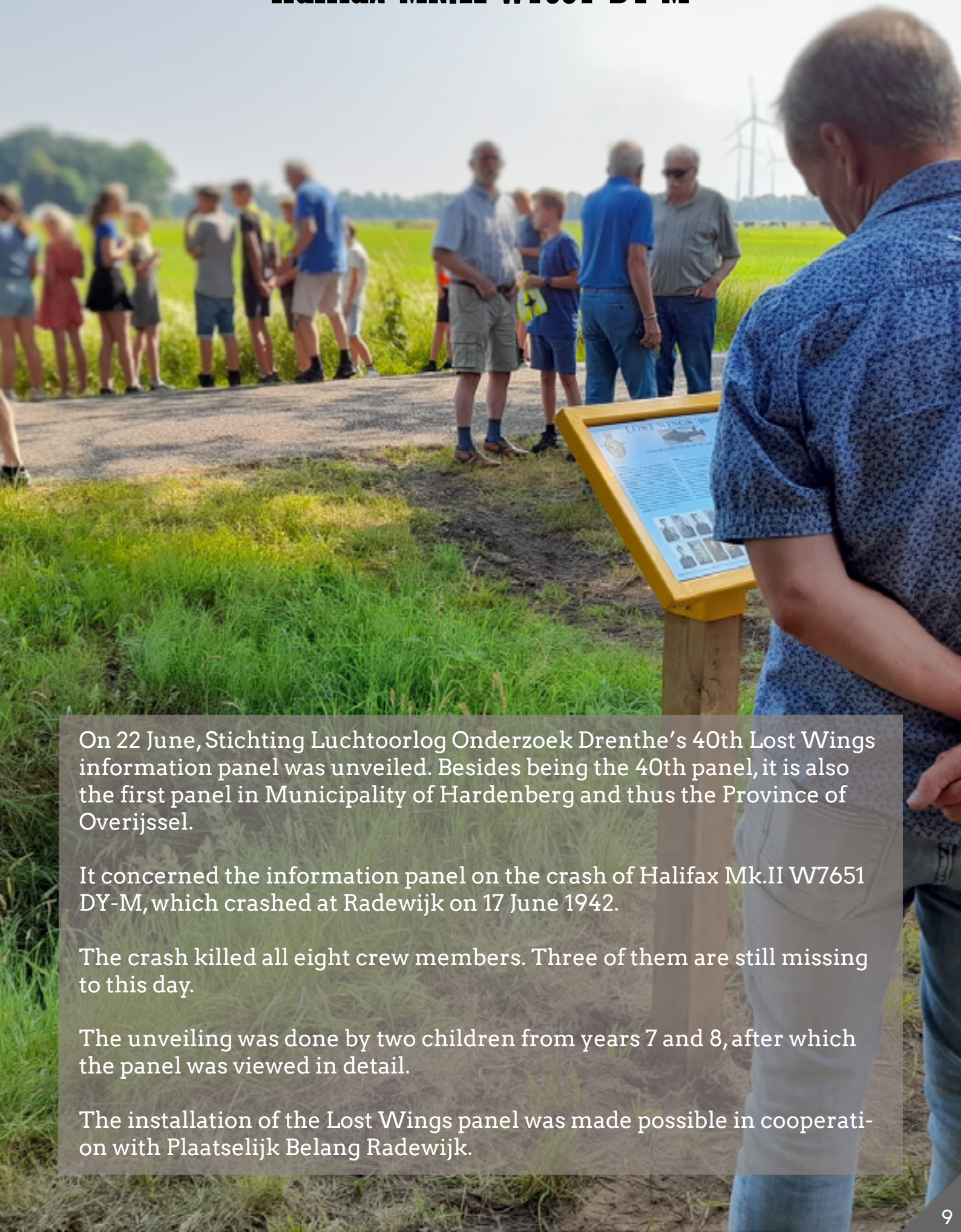
On 1 June, relatives of Warrant Officer Henryk Kazimierz Kowalski visited the Lost Wings information panel near the crash site of Henryk's aircraft, Wellington Mk.IV Z1409 BH-A.

They attached a 'poppy cross' on the panel's pole with a personal text. Deeds like this are for us the 'icing on the cake' and are extremely appreciated.

Scan or click on the QR-code to learn more about the crash!



Unveiling 40th Lost Wings information panel: Halifax Mk.II W7651 DY-M



On 22 June, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe's 40th Lost Wings information panel was unveiled. Besides being the 40th panel, it is also the first panel in Municipality of Hardenberg and thus the Province of Overijssel.

It concerned the information panel on the crash of Halifax Mk.II W7651 DY-M, which crashed at Radewijk on 17 June 1942.

The crash killed all eight crew members. Three of them are still missing to this day.

The unveiling was done by two children from years 7 and 8, after which the panel was viewed in detail.

The installation of the Lost Wings panel was made possible in cooperation with Plaatselijk Belang Radewijk.

On the night of 16-17 June 1942, the Royal Air Force carried out an attack on Essen with 106 bombers. The damage in Essen as a result of the bombardment was very limited. This was because only 16 bombers managed to find Essen. 56 other bombers bombed occasional targets, of which 45 aircraft bombed Bonn as secondary targets. One of the aircraft that took part in this attack on Bonn was Halifax Mk.II W7651 DY-M of 102 RAF (Ceylon) Squadron.

On the way back, after bombing Bonn, Halifax W7651 DY-M was intercepted shortly before 03:00 and attacked by a German Messerschmitt Bf 110 night fighter of 8. Staffel, Nachtjagdgeschwader 1, which had been taken off from Twente airbase. The German night fighter was flown by pilot Oberleutnant Wilhelm Dormann.

Halifax W7651 DY-M crashed as a result of this attack around 03:00 near Radewijk. The crew probably tried to make a belly landing, during which the aircraft overturned and exploded. All crew members died in the explosive blaze.

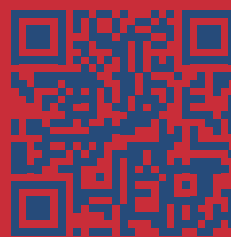
Of the crew of Halifax W7651 DY-M, five bodies could be (partially) recovered and subsequently identified. They are buried in the Commonwealth War Graves section of the Protestant Cemetery in Hardenberg. The three other crew members were not recovered and remained missing. They are commemorated at the Runnymede Memorial.

After meeting with Plaatselijk Belang Radewijk, it was decided to place a Lost Wings information panel near the crash site of Halifax W7651 DY-M. The day started with a guest lesson from Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe to the children of years 7 and 8 of primary school De Ravelijn, in nearby Den Velde. The information panel was then unveiled on location by two children from years 7 and 8.

Those present reflected on the sacrifice of the crew members, and the events and impact of the Second World War in general.

At the crash site of Halifax W7651 DY-M, there is a Lost Wings information panel placed by Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe.

Scan or click on the QR-code to learn more about this crash!



The webpage of Halifax W7651 DY-M is one of the first pages on our website where each crew member has a personal biography.

A drop-down menu on the page allows you to read these life stories; when possible supported with photos and quotes.

Scan or click on the QR-code above to read the crew members' biographies!

In the coming period, all other pages of crashes where there is a Lost Wings information panel will also be expanded with the biographies of the crew members.

New cycling routes past Lost Wings information panels

Behind the scenes, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe is hard at work creating new, updated cycling routes.

By means of a number of cycle routes, the Lost Wings information panels that are widespread will be connected. In this way, we are trying to connect stand-alone crashes to give more emphasis to the air war theme in general.

As a pilot, four cycle routes have been created: Cycle Route Lost Wings Schoonebeek, Cycle Route Lost Wings Klazienaveen, Cycle Route Lost Wings Twist and Cycle Route Lost Wings Emlichheim. These routes can be found on our website.

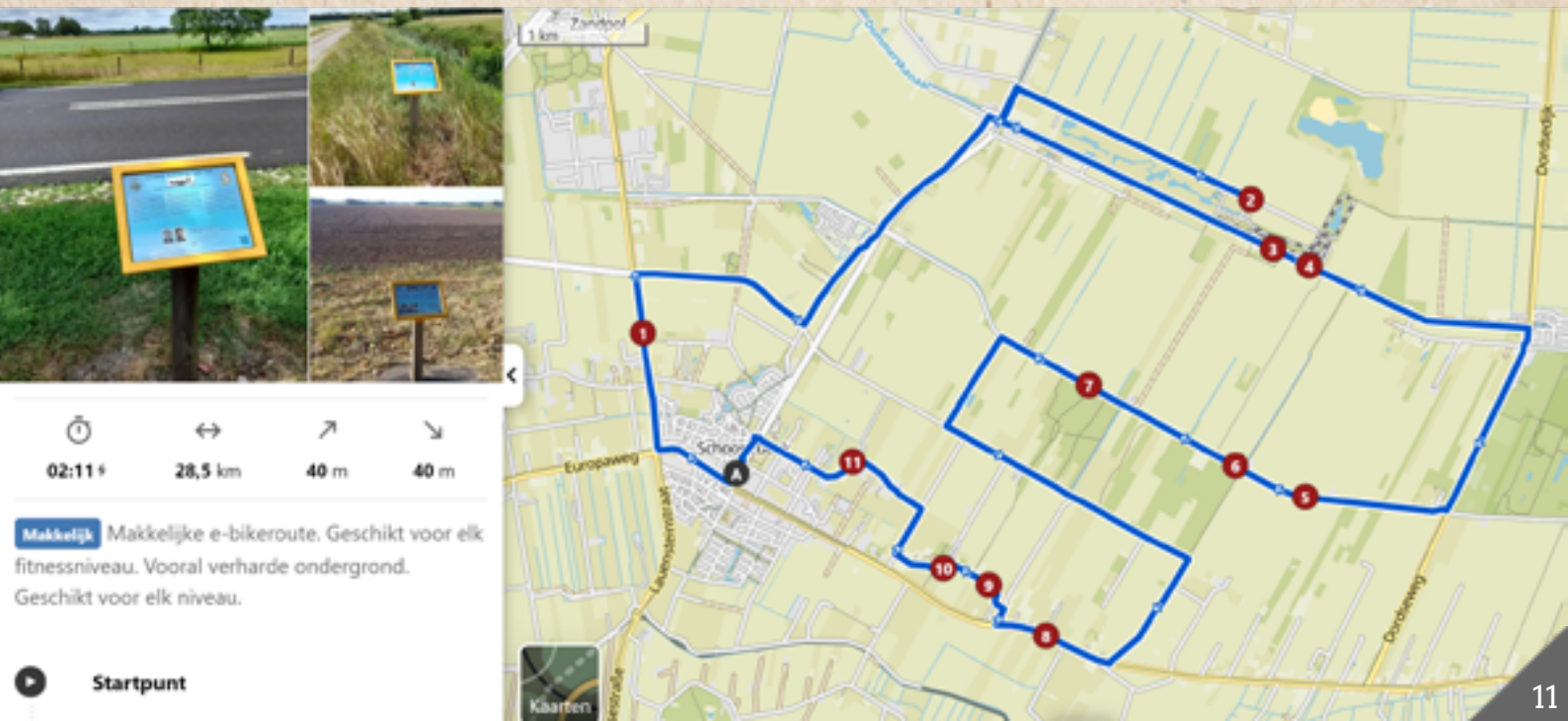
As more Lost Wings information panels are installed, more bicycle routes will be created.

The cycle routes will be published on Komoot's website and app. Here, each Lost Wings information panel will get its own so-called 'Highlight', allowing other Komoot users to add a Lost Wings information panel to their own routes.

With this possibility, visiting a Lost Wings information panel will become very flexible, hopefully allowing as many people as possible to make use of it.

When creating an account on Komoot, you get the first region (a province) for free. You can then take all cycling and walking routes in this region for free.

Scan or click on the QR-code to view the cycling routes!



Lost Wings informatie panel revised: from unknown to known crash



With the placing of the project Lost Wings information panels in the Municipality of Emmen, there was also one panel placed of an unknown German fighter.

Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe had the suspicion that it had been a Fw 190A-7 crash, of Jagdgeschwader 11. But which specific aircraft, and who the pilot was, was not known.

Thus, this was the information that could be read the last couple of years on the information panel in Weiteveen

However, after both in-field and archive research, this panel has been revised to what it should be: information about a specific aircraft and its pilot

Read the story on the next page!

On 10 February 1944, 169 B-17 Flying Fortress bombers took off from English airfields. Around noon, Braunschweig was bombed, after which the entire air fleet flew westwards back to England via the Netherlands. Throughout the flight, they were escorted by two Fighter Groups P-38 Lightnings, one Fighter Group P-51 Mustangs and eight Fighter Groups P-47 Thunderbolts.

At 12:16, 25 Fw 190 fighters from the 3. Staffel, Jagdgeschwader 11 took off from Rheine airfield. They were on their way to the area in the morning to intercept the bombers, but they were too late. They decided to land at Rheine airfield and were refuelled there. These aircraft then engaged the returning bombers of the 388th Bomb Group. This happened around 12:45 in the area above Meppen and Lingen.

Over the Dutch border area, the US fighter escort was relieved by a new group of fighters. As a result, the German fighters were greatly outnumbered at that point.

On 10 February 1944, several aircraft crashed in south-east Drenthe and the border region. After seeing a German fighter crash just across the border, residents saw another plane come down in the moor near Weiteveen, burning at high speed. The plane made a deep crater that filled with water within minutes. The identity of the pilot was unknown. No parachute was seen and the wreckage was inaccessible.

In the 1960s, local iron traders tried unsuccessfully to recover the wreckage. However, they found a bag containing papers, photographs and a toilet bag. The personal belongings were sent to the Red Cross, but were lost there. Names were not recorded and the trail to the pilot's identity came to a dead end here.

Field research by Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe in 2015, in collaboration with Staatsbosbeheer, yielded only circumstantial evidence. Ammunition remnants, small wreckage and parts found with paint residue did confirm the crash of an Fw 190. German archives revealed that the body

of the pilot, must have been recovered just across the border in Germany. Two aircraft of the Jagdgeschwader (JG 11) involved crashed in this area. The German pilot jumped out of the aircraft over the Ruhlerveld and did not survive the jump. The aircraft flew unmanned against the ground near Weiteveen.

The last doubts about who the pilot of this aircraft was, were removed during a visit by Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe to the German Vermisstensuchgruppe Ikarus in Bramsche. There, after editing the 1951 photo and comparing it with other photos, it became clear that this was Feldwebel Alfred 'Allan' Gaedicke.



ST. GROUWINGEN.
V. 3. 3. 3. / TEL. 6.

V E R B A A L
van een Engelsch-
per) in den avond van
Zwartemeer, gemeente Emmen,

25. III. 1944

Naar aanleiding van het op Woensdag 22 Maart 1944, te on-
gevoer 21,30 uur, neerstorten van een brandend Engelsch Vlieg-
tuig (bommenwerper) aan de Westzijde van de Kamerlingwijk on-
der Zwartemeer, gemeente Emmen, heb ik -
Sietze van der Roek, Hoofdwachtmeester, behoorende tot opgemeld
Groep, na bekomen opdracht van mijn Groepscommandant een onder-
zoek ingesteld.

Bij aankomst bleek mij, dat het omlaag gestorte Engelsch
Vliegtuig was een vier motorige bommerwerper, waarvan de wr-
stukken over eenige honderden meters verspreid lagen.

In verschillende delen daarvan woeedde een hevige
Bij het vliegtuig werden geen brisant- of brandbom-
gevonden.

De motoren en het overgrootste deel van de wrakstukke
onder het vliegtuig en over het veld lagen ver-

