

THE SEARCHLIGHT

YEAREDITION 2023

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The clarifying of a P-47 Thunderbolt crash





'Down memory lane' with relatives of Warrant Officier John Edwin 'Jack' Thomas

Contract of



The visit of relatives of Sergeant Daniel 'Danny' Hanlon



Hoogeveen 1940?

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.



Candles on war graves 2023

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

'Down memory lane' with relatives of Warrant Officier John Edwin 'Jack' Thomas

On 26th November 1943, a major attack was launched shortly after sunset. 443 Lancasters took off together with seven Mosquitos to bomb Berlin. At the same time, 178 other aircraft took off for a diversionary attack on Stuttgart.

One of the Lancaster bombers that flew along on this mission to Berlin was Lancaster Mk.III DV247 AS-F. The Lancaster, filled with the usual seven crew members, belonged to 166 Squadron. At 16:45, pilot Warrant Officer John Edwin 'Jack' Thomas (DFC) took off with his aircraft from RAF Kirmington.

The outward flight went smoothly, and over the target the bomb load was dropped. Shortly afterwards, the aircraft was caught by a searchlight, which Jack skilfully managed to escape.

However, as the aircraft approached the German-Dutch border, it was attacked by Oberleutnant Dietrich Schmidt, Staffelkapitän of 8. Staffel, Nachtjagdgeschwader 1, flying Bf 110G-4 G9+KS.

The Lancaster was badly damaged: among other things, the tail turret was hit, leaving tail gunner Sergeant Wilfred O'Malley trapped in his turret. The elevator cables were also hit, rendering the aircraft uncontrollable.

The situation was untenable, and Jack decided it was time to abandon the aircraft. Together with four other crew members - navigator Sergeant William George 'Bill' Bell, flight engineer Sergeant John Joel 'Johnny' Robshaw, wireless operator Sergeant Edward Morgan Lloyd 'Eddie' Davies and bomb aimer Sergeant Douglas James 'Jim' Edwards - he managed to leave the burning aircraft in time.

It would later be revealed that both gunners, Sergeant Arthur Victor 'Vic' Collins (DFM) and Sergeant Wilfred 'Bill' O'Malley were unable to leave the aircraft and died in the crash.

Jack landed east of Schoonebeek, but broke his ankle during his landing. Thinking his ankle was no more than bruised, he managed to make his way towards Vlieghuis. In this hamlet between Schoonebeek and Coevorden. Tom Wilschut lived in a mobile home with his wife and daughter. In the middle of the night, Jack knocked on the door and was lucky that a patriotic Dutchman opened the door.

As Tom himself had no room in his mobile home, he took Tom to a neighbouring farmer. Here he hid Jack in the almost empty hay barn.



Warrant Officier John Edwin 'Jack' Thomas (collection SLO-Drenthe)

At the crash site of Lancaster DV247 AS-F, 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 next morning, Jack was awakened by the sound of approaching horses. Soon he realised that the horses were being followed by two men who had come to collect the last hay. At the risk of being stabbed by the pitchforks, Jack got up and identified himself. Soon thereafter, Tom entered the barn and started talking to the farmers. After a long conversation, he fetched two bicycles and left with Jack as if nothing happened.



Vlieghuis, August 1944 (collection SLO-Drenthe)

After cycling for a while, they arrived at the Stieltjeskanaal.

Here Jack was instructed to hide in a barge. This was Robert de Waal's barge. Here Jack went into hiding for several days.

As Jack was still walking around with a broken ankle, the possibilities for Tom to help Jack were slim. Together they decided that there was really little to do, and that Jack should just report himself to the hospital in Coevorden. "You may be a prisoner, but at least you are alive. Even after years you are alive. On the other hand if you stay here we will all be shot," Tom said.

Jack walked inside and was met by the nurses. Not much later, a policeman came and sat on the bed with him. Since this policeman did not speak English, he took out his handgun and started taking it apart, as a show of good faith. Not much later, some German soldiers also arrived. They took him to the hospital in Leeuwarden.

Leeuwarden was Jack's last 'stop' in the Netherlands. He arrived in Frankfurt am Main about two weeks after his crash, where he was interrogated in Dulag Luft before being transferred to Stalag 357 at Falinborstel.

Almost 80 years later, Jack's daughter and grandson came over. It was the honour of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe to take Hilary and Chris to the places where their (grand)father stayed 80 years ago. Via the Lost Wings information panel near the crash location of Lancaster DV247 AS-F at Emlichheim to then go via Schoonebeek towards Vlieghuis and the Stieltjeskanaal. We then followed Jack's path to the old hospital in Coevorden, and from there the old hospital in Leeuwarden.

We were honoured to accompany and provide Hilary and Chris with information during this emotionally charged day.



Chris and Hilary standing where the Sint Bonifatius Hospitaal of Leeuwarden once stood (collection <u>SLO-Drenthe</u>)

Candles on war graves 2023



We did our best and the weather was sadly not our friend this evening; strong wind and rain didn't help us. Nonetheless, we succeeded and every war grave was lighted with a candle.

Our way to commemorate these brave men and to keep the memory alive of what these men did for our freedom!.

Lest we forget.

For more pictures, scan or click on the QR-code!





On 29 November 1943, the Eight Air Force flew a raid to Bremen. This city had been targeted by B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators on several occasions during November. They were accompanied by hundreds of P-38 Lightning and P-47 Thunderbolt fighter planes during these bombing flights.

Several air battles were fought during the outward and return flights. During these skirmishes, several fighters were shot down from both sides. On the German side, about 30 fighters of type Bf 109, Bf 110 and Fw 190 were lost.

On the American side, several bombers were lost over the border and target area. Eight Lightnings also failed to return to their home base in England and ended up as wrecks in the Netherlands and northern Germany.

Of the P-47 Thunderbolts, nine did not return to England because of crashes due to enemy action or fuel shortages. The latter happened to a number of pilots who, after delivering fierce air combat, experienced a strong headwind from a westerly direction on the way back. As a result, they did not dare to cross the North Sea and were forced the Gasselternijveen crash site. What preto make an emergency landing in the west of the Netherlands.

The crash location of a number of P-47s could not be indicated with certainty, but in The facts surrounding the crash of a P-47

recent years information has come to light that has allowed some cases to be linked to a location.

The Dutch SGLO's current loss register describes the following:

1) Lt Windmayer, MIA/KIA, P-47D 42-7893, 56 FG, Noorthsea IJmuiden 2) Lt Peery, POW, P-47D 42-22484, 355 FG, Giesendam 3) Lt Hull, POW, P-47D 42-8598, 356 FG, Amersfoort 4) Lt Hecht, POW, P-47D 42-8631, 355 FG, Vreeland 5) Lt Asbridge, POW, P-47D 42-8502, 356 FG, Northsea near Den Haag 6) Lt Martin, KIA, P-47D 42-8692, 356 FG, Egede 7) Lt Beach, POW, P-47D 42-8601, 356 FG, Gasselternijveen

Two aircraft came down in Germany and therefore do not appear in the loss register. They were the following aircraft:

8) Lt Metzger, KIA, P-47D 42-8509, 356 FG, Werlte/Sögel 9) Lt Del Negro, KIA, P-47D 42-7893, 56 FG, Nutteln, Cloppenburg

Recently, the name Beach has been linked to ceded this change in the loss register at the request of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe?

Thunderbolt at Gasselternijveen:

1) Around 15:00 in the afternoon an American fighter came down in Gasselternijveen behind the AVEBE factory.

2) The pilot jumped out at the last moment and landed by parachute opposite to the AVEBE factory on a piece of meadow. He had suffered a complicated left lower leg fracture when jumping out or coming down.

3) Some local people saw the incident happen and rushed there with a wheelbarrow to pick up the pilot and possibly make him 'disappear'. This succeeded at first, but when they arrived at the farmhouse, German soldiers were already waiting for them. A doctor was called to provide first aid after which the pilot was captured and taken to the hospital in Groningen.

Until recently, it was not known who the pilot was. The aircraft was partly recovered and for a long time it was unknown which aircraft these debris belonged to.

In July 1987, a site survey was carried out on the agricultural plot where the aircraft came down (see photo below, collection SLO-Drenthe). With the landowner's permission, excavations were carried out by a passionate group of air war enthusiasts from Groningen and Drenthe. First with detector and shovel. When it turned out that serious parts of the aircraft were still present, a crane was called in and the last parts, including the engine, were salvaged. These remains were stored for a while in the War Museum 40-45 in Uithuizen. This museum no longer exists and the remains will no doubt now be in storage somewhere.

Unfortunately, the researchers involved were unable to determine which aircraft it was.

Making the mystery even more complete is the story of a respected historian from the Hoogeveen area. This one, in an 'anecdote' about the air war around and above Hoogeveen, describes a parachutist who landed on a meadow between Hollandsche Veld and Hoogeveen (Krakeel) shortly after the crash of 2Lt Albert Anthony Albino's P-38 Lightning 42-67051, which came down on Hoogeveen's station complex. This is approximately at the location of the current A37 highway.

According to the person who first helped him, the parachutist was injured on his hand and had a scratch on his face. With his parachute under his arm, the 'pilot' was walked to the Krakeelse Dijk, captured and taken away. At the time, no name of this parachutist was known to the residents on the spot.

Despite the fact that it has never been proven by paper archive material that a P-47 came down near Hoogeveen, there is a name associated with this parachutist. Namely that of 1Lt Warren Hammond 'Gus' Beach. Despite this, I do not doubt the story per se, but it will have been a different crew member/pilot.



7 303

ADLAGO 3.

Fornblatt 1

Nur für den Dienstrobrau b]

Angele über Gefangennahme eines Angehörigen der feindlichen Luftwafte.

Dienstotelle:

Fl.H.Kdtr. A 203/VI Feldpostnr.L 36 127 Lg.P.A.Amsterdam/Bentheim

C.rt: Leeuwarden

Zoit:

25.2.44 um 15,00 Uhr

Name und Vorname

BEACH H.Warren

Geburtsjahr 27.Nev.1915

Dienstgrad 915 l.Leutnant

verteiler

Bemerkungin

seiden.

egleitakven der Gefangenen

Die Austertigung an Ob.d.L.

ist auf kurzestem Weg zu uber-

Pie dem Gefangenen abgenømmonen Pariere, Dokumente, Karten Isw.

sind mit den Begleitkarten don

Gefangenen an das Dulag Luft Oberurnek zu übermitteln.

(Julsg Luft)l

Letzter Wohnort vor dem Kriege:

Erkennungs-Marke: 0-796644

USA

Ort und Zeit der Gofangennahme: Gasselter-Nijeveen am 29.11.43.

Nahere Angabe über die Gefangennahme (Algestürzt? Notgelandet? Abgesetzt? Typ des Flugzeuges?) Durch Kriegsmarine gefangenommen.

Thunderbolt

Sonstiges:

Anlage: Verzeichnis über beschlagnahmte Gegenstände in dreifacher Ausfertigung.

A copy of the original document on the capture of 1Lt Warren Beach. To be seen, at Ort und Zeit der Gefangennahme (place and time of capture): "Gasselter-Nijeveen am 29.11.1943." (collection SLO-Drenthe) Next, in Volume 3 of Sporen aan de Hemel, by Ab A. Jansen, is the story of 2Lt Thompson Ellis 'Tommy' White, pilot of B-17G 42-39761 'Fireball II', which came down near Zweeloo on 11 January 1944. This tells of Thompson White being in hospital in Groningen with a broken leg and sharing a room with one Gus Beach. Ab Jansen could not identify this pilot, but a light went on for me. What followed was a time-consuming investigation.

In addition to documentation from regional books, police reports on this crash and eyewitness statements, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe has recently been able to gather a lot of relevant archive material regarding this crash.

This research shows, using all the collected information, that 1Lt Warren Beach's plane was hit by anti-aircraft friendly fire from an American B-17 near Aschendorf. The plane lost oil pressure which eventually cost it its engine. This happened over Gasselternijveen. The aircraft plunged down and Warren Beach was able to 'get out' just in time in the last seconds of his flight.

With a complicated left lower leg fracture, he ended up in a Groningen hospital, where he later shared a room with Thompson White. After healing, Warren Beach was transferred to Stalag Luft 1, where he spent the rest of the war.

With all available information, it has been proven that the P-47 crash at Gasselternijveen was that of Warren Beach. With this, another Drenthe crash has been clarified and can be seen by all in the SGLO's updated loss register.

Returning freed pilots from 356th Fighter Group on the wing of a P-51 Mustang. Far right on the wing Warren Beach (collection SLO-Drenthe)

The visit of relatives of Sergeant Daniel 'Danny' Hanlon

On 1 December, we had the honour of receiving Kathleen and Chris in Hardenberg. As relatives of Daniel 'Danny' Hanlon, flight engineer of Halifax Mk.II W7651 DY-M, they visited his grave and the Lost Wings panel at the crash site in Radewijk.

Halifax Mk.II W7651 DY-M crashed at Radewijk on 17 June 1942. The crash killed all eight crew members. Three of them are still missing to this day.

More information about the crash and about Daniel Hanlon can be read on the following page. 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 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.

One of the bodies recovered belonged to the Scottish flight engineer, Sergeant Daniel 'Danny' Hanlon.

Early in the war, Danny enlisted in the Royal Air Force. Here he was admitted and given identification number '948764', after which he began his training as a flight engineer. After successfully completing his training, Danny was assigned to RAF 102 (Ceylon) Squadron at the end of 1941. 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!





Sergeant Daniel 'Danny' Hanlon (collection SLO-Drenthe)

Hoogeveen 1940?

By Peter van der Weide

This summer, Hoogeveen airfield was plunged back to 1940. Soldiers from the Police Corps were guarding a brand new Fokker DXXI. Just like the real thing, but not quite. Eelde had an airfield, so did Havelte later in the war (Fliegerhorst). But what exactly about the air force and airfields in the Netherlands?

Air Force Pioneers

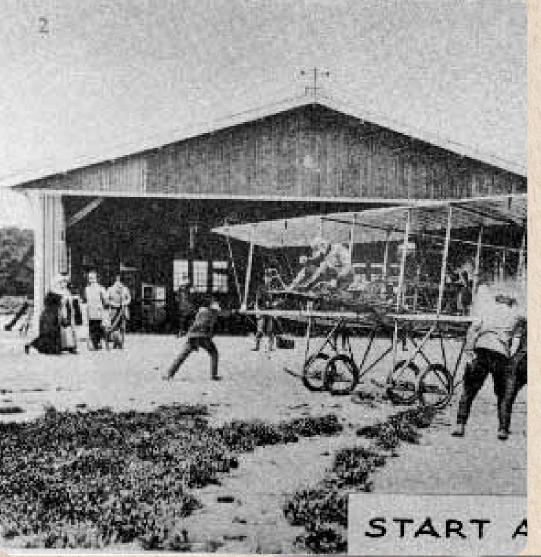
On 1 July 1913, the Aviation Department was established. It came under the command of Captain H. Walaardt Sacré, who never held a pilot's licence himself. Over a year later, the Netherlands mobilised due to the outbreak of World War I.

The Aviation Department was part of the Army and was based at Soesterberg. Its equipment consisted of one, rented aircraft "The brig of Van Meel".

The Aviation Department then consisted of almost a dozen Farman oneand-a-half-deckers. From the first day of mobilisation, they patrolled the country's borders. By the end of World War I, the LVA consisted of nearly 100 aircraft due to looting.

One of the main proponents of military aviation was Karel Doorman, who would go down in the Java Sea in 1942 as a Rear Admiral. Anton Plesman, founder of KLM, also flew with the LVA in his younger years.

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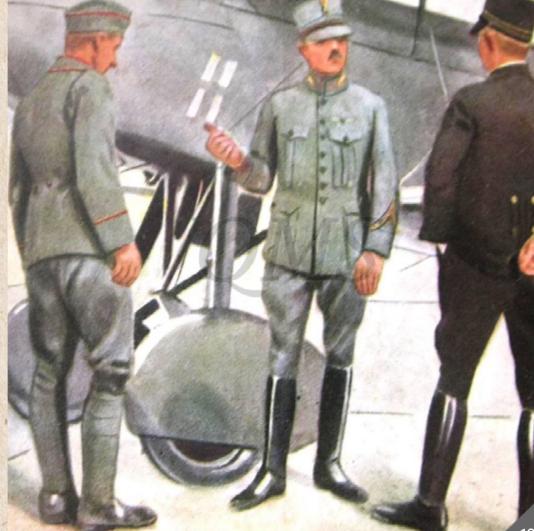


The four-year plan

Before May 1940, the LVA underwent some name changes. For example, on 1 November 1938, the Aviation Brigade was set up, which changed to Air Defence Command on 1 July 1939. From that date, the LVA was called Arm of Military Aviation (Wapen der Militaire Luchtvaart; M.L.). From the mid-1930s, the Netherlands too wanted to improve national defence. An urgent programme from 1937 mentioned, among other things, the purchase of anti-tank artillery, aircraft and tanks. Meanwhile, the LuVA's equipment had become obsolete. In 1937, it consisted of 49 C-Vs, 12 C-Xs, an eleven D-XVI fighters and nine D-XVII fighters. A fouryear plan was therefore begun for the LuVA in 1938.

Three regiments

The air fleet was to consist of three main units. The 1st Aviation Regiment (1LvR) for air defence. The 2nd (2LvR) to support the Field Army outside the Fortress Holland. The 3rd was for flight training. 1LvR was made up of a Strategic Group (reconnaissance and bombing) and a Hunting Group. 2LvR consisted of four **Reconnaissance Groups and** a Field Army Hunting Group for the protection of scouts and ground support of the Field Army. It involved a total of 162 aircraft for 1LvR and 192 aircraft for 2LvR.



Major General Best

In 1938, the Air Defence Command was established under the command of Major General P.W. Best (together with his staff shown in the photo below). This brought the many components of air defence (searchlights, air defence circles, aviation brigade, anti-aircraft artillery) into one organisation. As early as 11 April 1939, the LuVA was mobilised. A general army mobilisation did not follow until 28 August 1939.

For safety's sake, the LuVA flying units were spread across several airfields. Eventually, all flying units left Soesterberg to be accommodated on fields within the Fortress Holland as much as possible. The first regiment was under Major-General Best's Air Defence Command and had its bases at De Kooy, Schiphol, Bergen, and Waalhaven. The staff was based at Schiphol. The second regiment fell under the Field Army Commander (staff at Zeist) and used the airfields Hilversum, Ruigenhoek, Ypenburg, and Gilze-Rijen.

During May 1940, however, some aircraft would also use Haamstede, Buiksloot, and De Zilk airfields. The Depot Air Force (training), as the third regiment, did not take part in the battle. It used bases Souburg (Zeeland) and De Vlijt (Texel), among others.



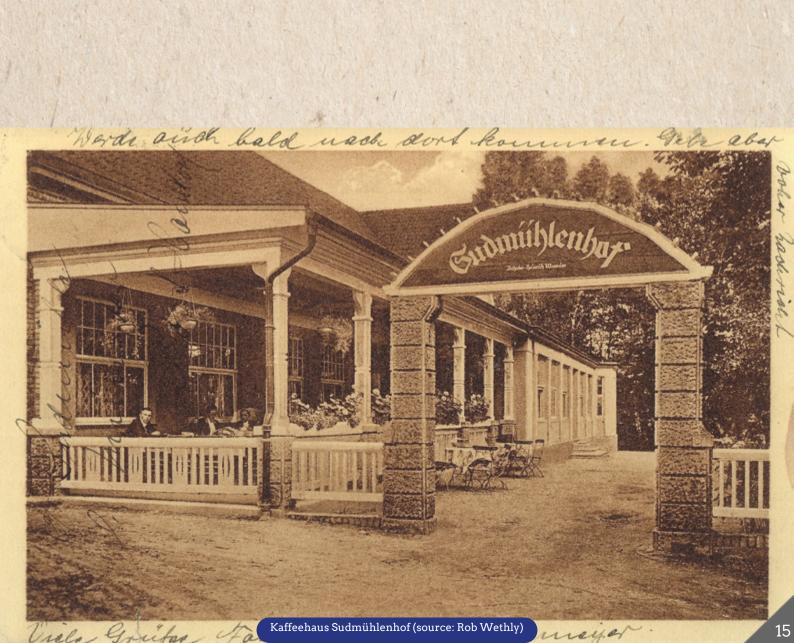
Kaffeehaus Sudmühlenhof near Münster August 12th, 1940

By Rob Wethly

One of the most famous Hampden bomber missions during World War II was the 12 August 1940 attack on the aqueduct at Gelmer of Dortmund-Ems Canal near Münster.

On the night of 12 August 1940, a group of 11 Handley Page Hampden bombers stationed at RAF Scampton were designated for an attack on the Dortmund-Ems-Canal, with the specific target being the aqueduct at Gelmer 'target M.25' that leads the canal across the river Ems, just north of Münster. The Dortmund-Ems-Kanal, had been attacked by the RAF on several previous occasions without much success and it was known to be well defended by FLAK positions on either side of the canal, creating a true defence line through which the attacking aircraft would have to fly.

During the 12 August 1940 action, two bombers were shot down while others were badly damaged but managed to return to base.



The target 'target M.25'

The canal viaduct the 'Alte Fahrt', 'target M.25', near Münster-Gelmer was built between 1893 and 1897 as part of the construction of the Dortmund-Ems Canal.

By the end of World War I, the viaduct was no longer up to its task and was replaced in 1939 by a new canal viaduct the 'Neue Fahrt', 'target M.25a'.

One of the attacking Hampden bombers, Hampden P4410 OL-H of RAF 83 Squadron, received a direct hit during the 12 August 1940 attack on the aqueduct and crashed in the immediate vicinity of Kaffeehaus Sudmühlenhof in Münster, northeast of Münster, directly on the Sudmühlenteich.

This is a short summary of an extensive story. More details, a comprehensive description of this mission and unique background information will appear in a separate publication. "Neue Fahrt"

"Alte Fahrt"

Dortmund-Ems-Kanal

In the red circle 'Alte Fahrt', 'target M.25' and in the yellow rectangle 'Neue Fahrt', 'target M.25a' (source: edited image from Google Earth)

The 'Alte Fahrt', 'target M.25' 2023 (source: Rob Wethly)



Looking back and forward

Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe has experienced and done a lot in 2023. This year was the first full year that our new website was available. Nonetheless, also this year we have been constantly working on improving the setup and adding information. Among others, all war graves in Drenthe have been added, with if available a picture of the persons and the story of their fatal crash.

Several new Lost Wings information panels have also been placed, bringing the tally to 40 panels! Also in 2024, we hope to place several more panels. Our goal, of course, is to reach 50!

Even then, the website will be further expanded with detailed pages belonging to the newly-placed Lost Wings panels.

Stichting Luchtoorlog Ondeerzoek Drenthe has had the opportunity to receive relatives several times in 2023, as has been shown twice in this edition. We hope to host next of kin again in 2024, as this is the most appreciated token of thanks we can receive.

We also hope to set up a number of exhibitions (of various sizes) in 2024 and thereafter. Since we unfortunately do not have our own museum, an exhibition is the way for us to show our collection to the public. Objects, stories and photographs are combined to share as beautifully and clearly as possible the air war over Drenthe and its surroundings.

We also want to try a new form of publication in 2024. Since we have a number of topics we like to write about in more detail, we will therefore create a booklet available online. One of these will be about the article 'Kaffeehaus Sudmühlenhof near Münster -12 August 1940' written by Rob Wethly.

We hope that this new form of publication interests the reader, and we can then add it to our working methods.

Finally, we would like to thank you for your interest in our foundation. We appreciate that there is an audience that, like us, feels it is important not to let these stories go to waste. Even in 2023, we have had to learn about "war" again all over the world, but especially in Europe. All the more we hope that we reach as many people as possible to show not only the statistical and material side of war but especially the human side of war.

We hope to see you again in 2024!



don. De motoren en A overgroote deel van de wrakstukke govondon. Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe wishes you a merry, pleasant and beautiful Christmas and already a happy New Year!

Waar aenleiding van hot op Woonsdag 22 Maart 1944, te on-

Waar aanleiding van het op Woensdag 22 Waart 1944,te en tuig 21,30 wur, neersterten van een brandend Engeladt Viig Uig (bennenverper) aan de Westalijde van de Kenerlingewijk en der Ewartemeer, gemeente Emanon, heb ik -<u>Sletze van der Poek, Hoofdwechteneester, bekoorende tot opgen</u> <u>Sletze van der Poek, Hoofdwechteneester, bekoorende tot opgen</u> <u>Sletze van bekomen Opdracht van mijn Groepscommendent een</u>

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V E H B A A L .

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zoek ingesteld.

Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe

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