

The Searchlight



INDEX

From the boardroom	3
Lost Wings 2025	4
A very personal journey	6
When experience is lacking	8

A tail wheel with a story

14

A new goal achieved!

16

Looking back on 10 years ago

18

A look into our research.

20

A unique visit from Germany

18

Udet-bojen

24

Experience or not

The fate of 4 inexperienced Luftwaffe pilots

Exposition 2025

30

Bullets on the track

32

Candles on wargraves

34

Guess who

35

Final editing: Peter van der Weide

Photos property of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe, unless stated otherwise



Udet-bojen

A unique story about a Luftwaffe general's idea that saved pilots' lives.



German visit

A unique visit from Germany



Experience or not

The fate of 4 inexperienced Luftwaffe pilots



Personal journey

A very personal journey to Schoonebeek

The year 2025 marked eighty years since the liberation and was a year filled with many activities.

But first, let me just say this.....

Over the past few months, we have been asked regularly when the next edition of our newsletter, 'The Searchlight', will be published. Unfortunately, we simply did not have the time to produce the newsletter, and we hope that the 2025 Year edition will make up for this somewhat. We are also very pleased to hear that our newsletter is missed.

It was a busy year and we started preparing early for our exhibition 'The Last Flight – The Air War around Schoonebeek', a beautiful exhibition that was open from mid-April to 8 May. We look back with great satisfaction on a well-attended exhibition.

As usual, there is a lot going on around 4 and 5 May. During this period, we provide the necessary guest lessons for primary schools in the run-up to the 4 May Remembrance Day.

This year's Remembrance Day ceremony was once again very impressive, and it is always wonderful to see how Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe and the 4 May Committee Schoonebeek complement each other so well in making Remembrance Day possible.

This year, we once again had the opportunity to give a number of lectures and organise a very interesting themed visit to the Trimunt Radar Station Löwe Bunker Preservation Foundation. After visiting the exhibition on Radar Station Löwe in the 't Rieuw regional museum, where we were given a guided tour of the exhibition, we then went on to Radar Station Löwe. There, we visited the various remaining structures and got a good impression of the site.

The year 2025 was also marked by Project Lost Wings. The ideas and plans were very ambitious and, exceeding expectations, the subsidies requested were approved fairly quickly and the

From the boardroom

many permits followed soon after. And with that, it became increasingly clear that many Lost Wings information panels would be added this year. The starting point this year was 49, and as I write this piece, the counter now stands at 73 Lost Wings information panels. But it doesn't stop there. We will end the year, which marks eighty years since liberation, with the installation of our 80th Lost Wings information panel.

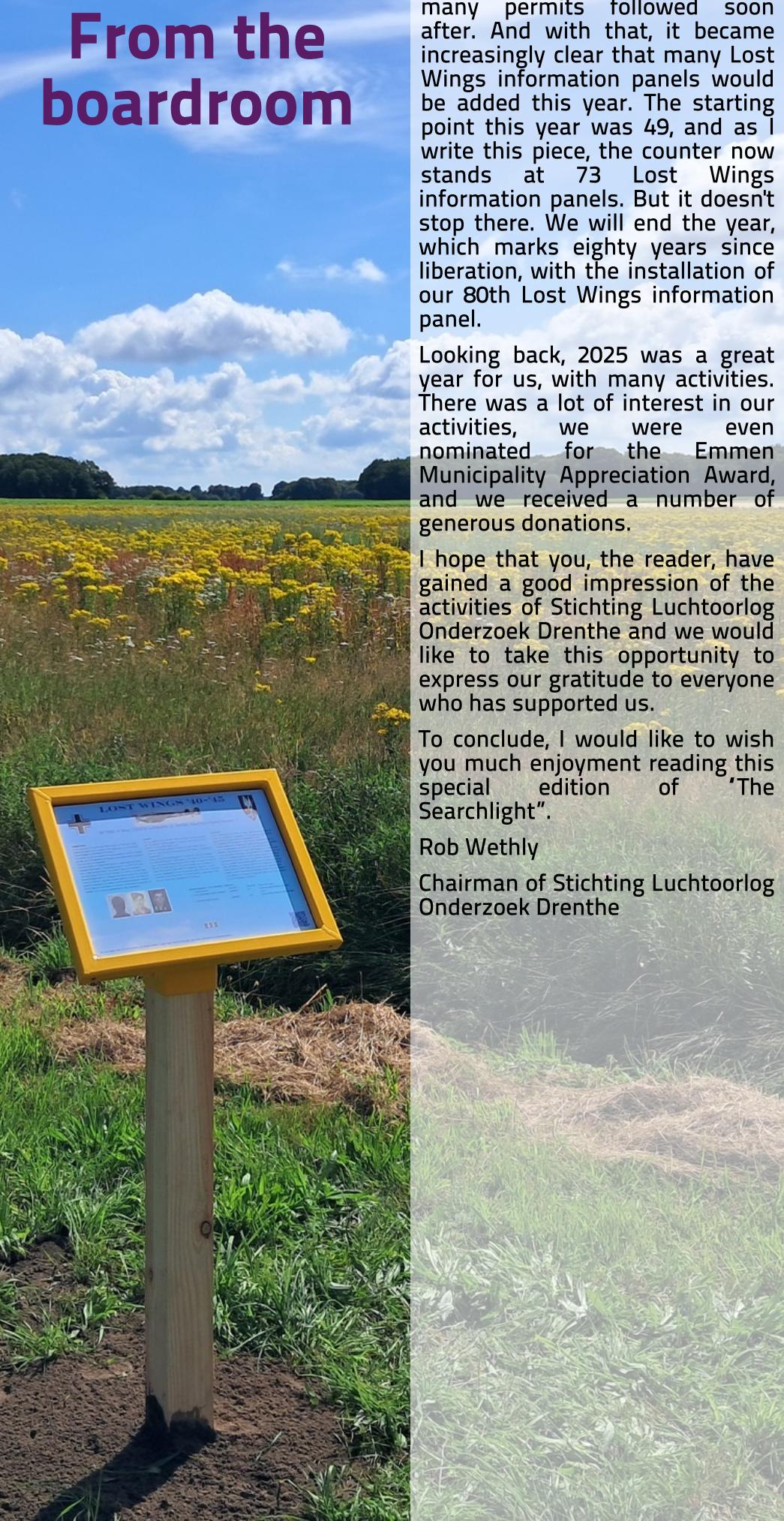
Looking back, 2025 was a great year for us, with many activities. There was a lot of interest in our activities, we were even nominated for the Emmen Municipality Appreciation Award, and we received a number of generous donations.

I hope that you, the reader, have gained a good impression of the activities of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe and we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to everyone who has supported us.

To conclude, I would like to wish you much enjoyment reading this special edition of 'The Searchlight'.

Rob Wethly

Chairman of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe



LOST WINGS 2025

In our previous annual edition, you could read that we had installed eight new Lost Wings information panels, bringing the total to 48. We were very pleased with that result, but 2025 would be a different story! In the context of 80 years of liberation, there were more opportunities to apply for subsidies from various authorities, making it possible to go big. And that's what happened, with no fewer than two anniversaries!

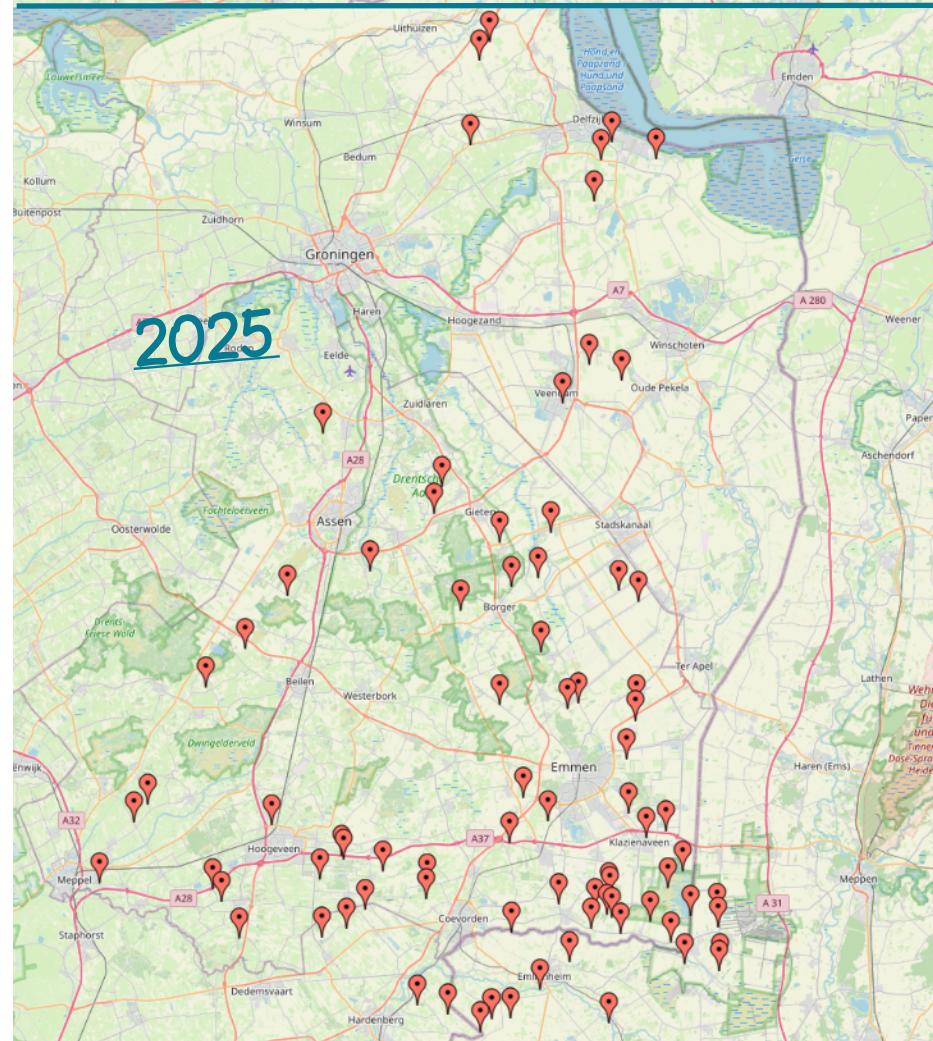
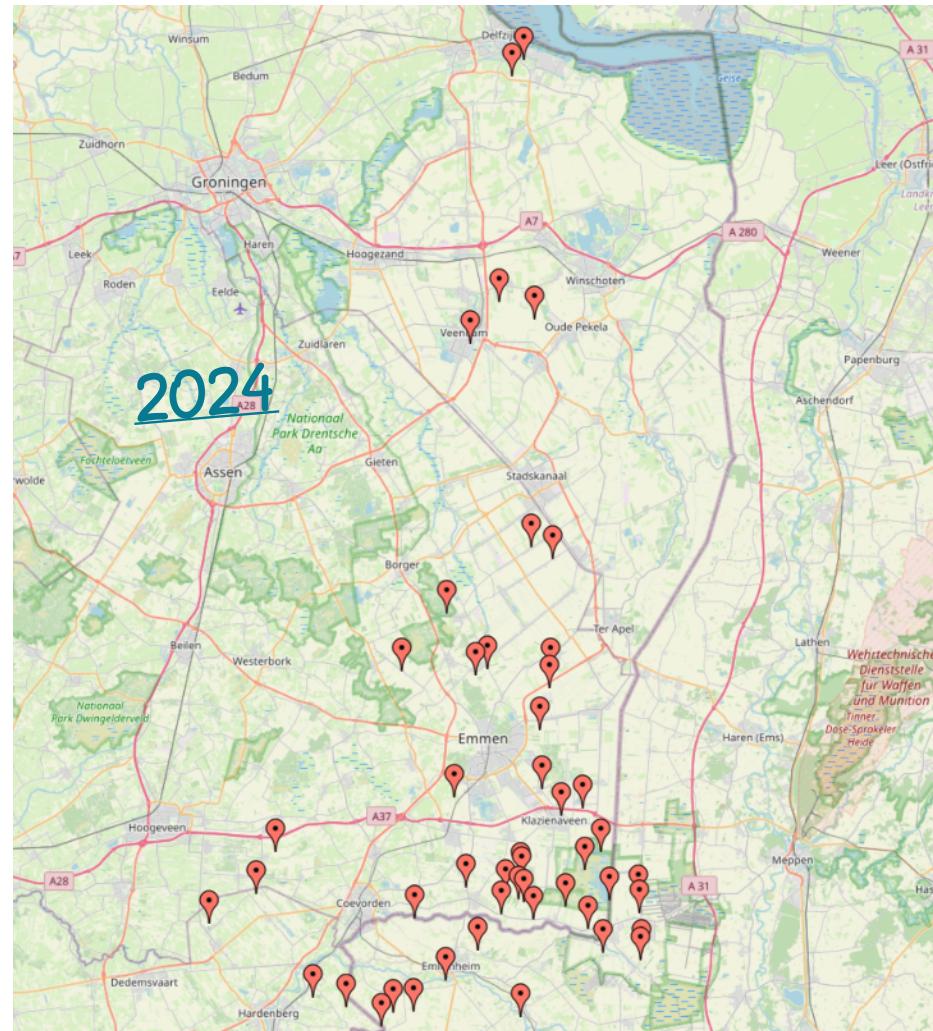
On 6 March, we installed the 49th, 50th and 51st information panels. All three were for a German Fw 190 crash that took place on 6 March 1944. This marked the joyful occasion of the 50th Lost Wings information panel and a major step in highlighting the many crashes that occurred on this specific day in the border area.

The first two weeks of April were marked by liberation celebrations and commemorations. During these weeks, we unveiled several information panels around Borger and Gasselte. The unveilings were mostly included in the route of the Drenthe Liberty Tour, which drove through the province in vintage vehicles.

Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe was one of the organisations selected for a grant from the Province of Drenthe. With this grant, we installed 12 new information panels. These panels are located throughout the province, in municipalities where we did not yet have any information panels, in order to spread the 'oil slick' even further.

As usual, the unveilings were accompanied by guest lessons at various schools and the presence of relatives. We ended the year with a total of 32 new Lost Wings information panels. It was an exceptionally busy year and the largest expansion to date. The coming years will be a little quieter in terms

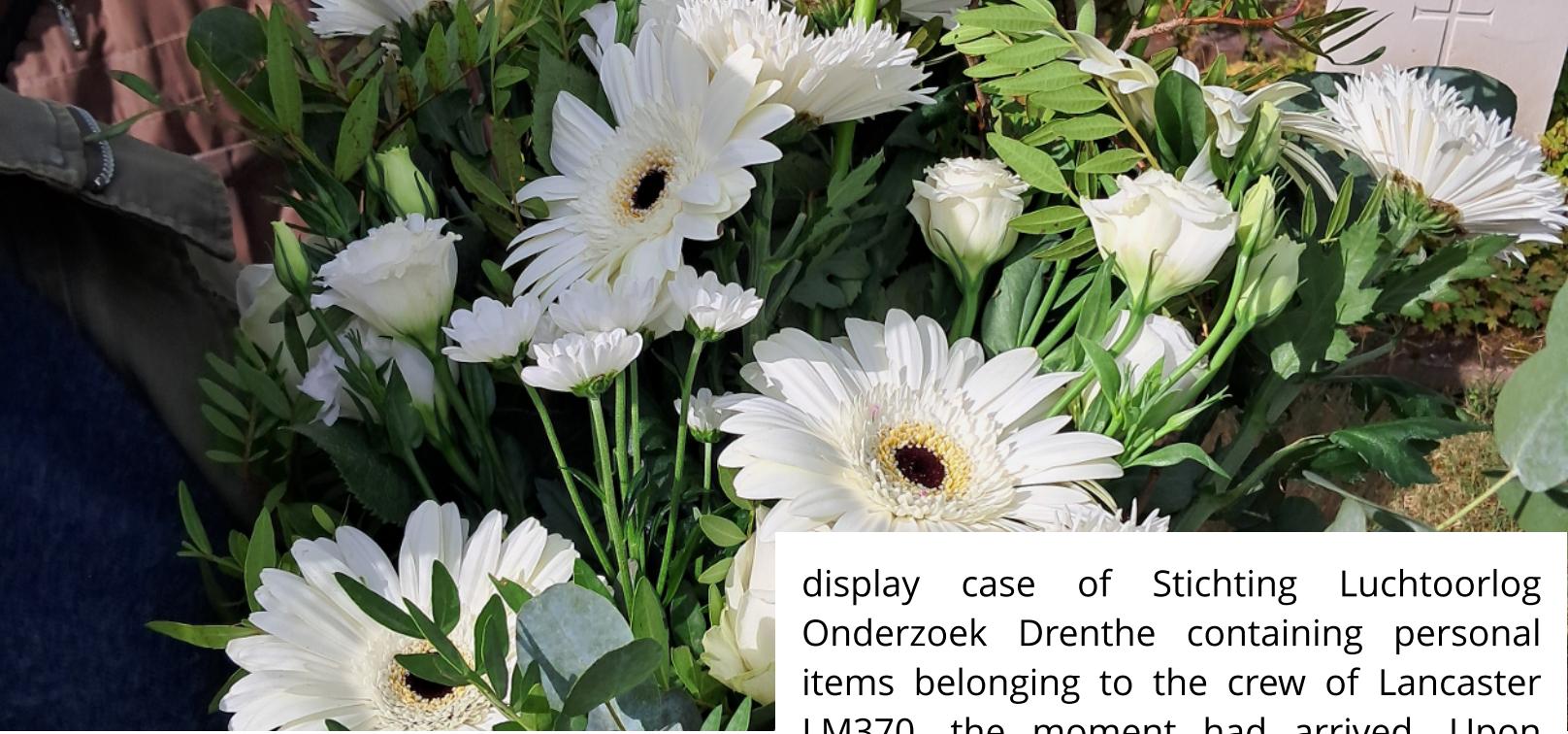
Yannic Wethly



Lost Wings 2025



A very personal journey.



Saturday 13 September marked the day. Due to illness, it had not been possible to visit on 4 May and participate in the Remembrance Day ceremony. It was a day marked by a very special visit to Schoonebeek by Judyann and her husband Richard Roblee.

Judyann Roblee, born in England in 1931, never knew her father. The marriage of her father, Guy Dermot Spyres, and her mother, Lillian Edith Rush, was terminated in 1934. Judyann's childhood was not easy. She had no contact with her father, and her mother left for Malaysia after the war, leaving Judyann behind with a guardian.

Guy Dermot Spyres was killed along with the entire crew of 101 RAF Squadron Lancaster LM370 SR-K2 on their way back from a mission to Berlin as a result of the fatal crash of the Lancaster LM370 SR-K2 on 18 November 1943 just outside Schoonebeek.

Saturday 13 September was a day with a special significance. After a short visit to 't Aole Gemientehoes, where she viewed the

display case of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe containing personal items belonging to the crew of Lancaster LM370, the moment had arrived. Upon entering the cemetery in Schoonebeek, Judyann visited her father's grave for the first time.

In silence and together with her husband Richard Roblee, Judyann paused at the grave of her father, a father she never knew, whom her mother did not speak highly of.

Many questions, but they remain unanswered.

After more than 90 years, this grave is the place where Judyann, on this personal and emotional journey, gives special meaning to her bond with her father.

The flowers she brought are placed in front of the gravestone and remained as a reminder of this special visit.

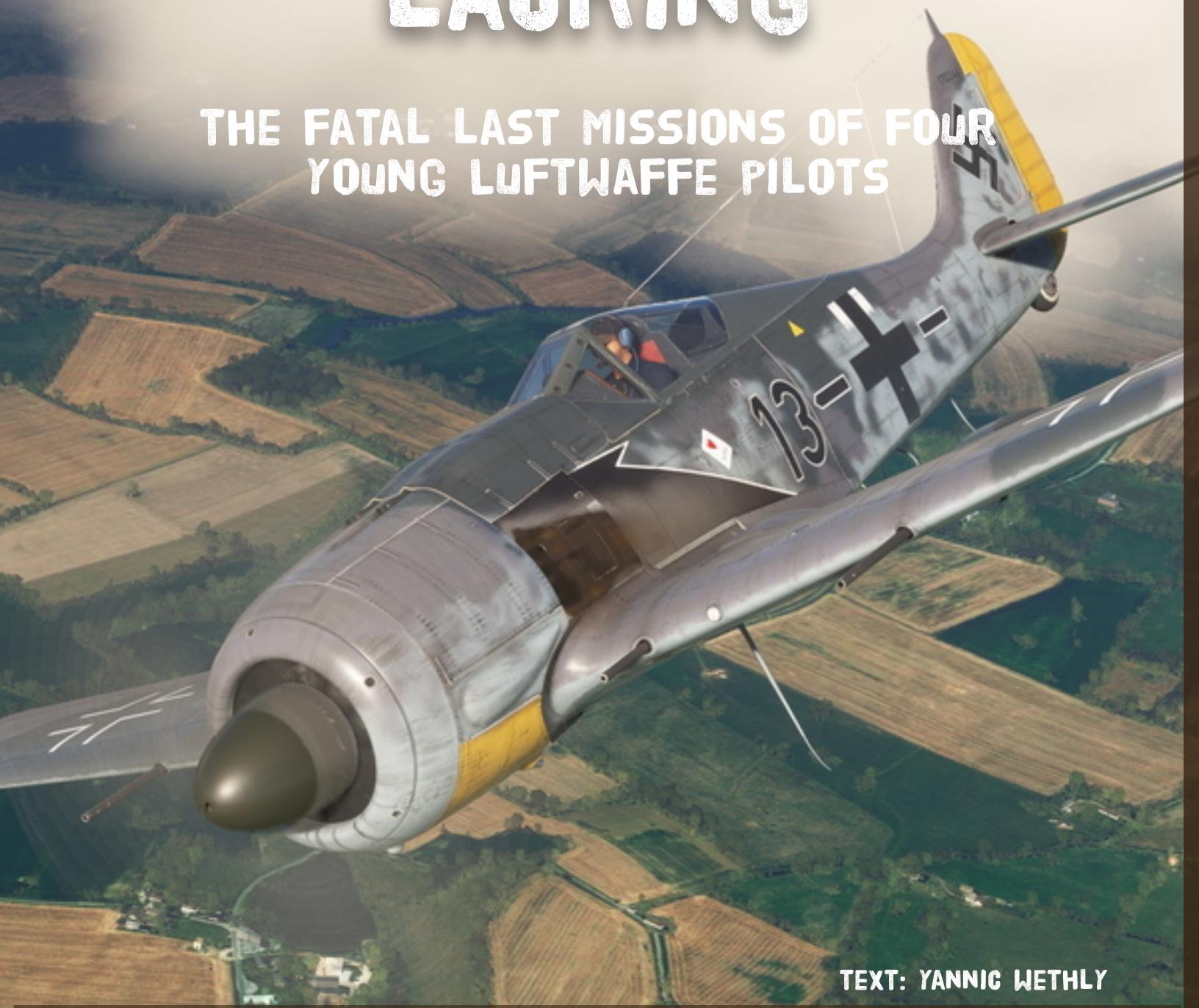
It was an honour to accompany Yannic, Judyann and Richard on this personal journey and to tell them about the crew of Lancaster LM370 SR-K2.

Rob Wethly

Chairman of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe.

WHEN EXPERIENCE IS LACKING

THE FATAL LAST MISSIONS OF FOUR YOUNG LUFTWAFFE PILOTS



TEXT: YANNIC WETHLY

A short week before the start of the Ardennes offensive on 16 December 1944, it was extremely busy at Flugplatz Fürstenau. Since 24 November 1944, Fürstenau had become the

home base of the Stab and I. Gruppe of Jagdgeschwader 26 (I./JG 26). At this stage of the war, I./JG 26 was on standby to intercept Allied Tieffliegers. These were Allied fighter-bombers such

as the Hawker Typhoon or P-47 Thunderbolt, which were often equipped with rockets or bombs and their standard onboard weapons and caused a great deal of damage.

The day began with a late morning flight. At around 11:05, six Fw 190s took off from Fürstenau and headed for Flugplatz Droepe, where these aircraft from the Gruppe were deployed as a forward unit.

At 14:00, the Geschwader received word that it should prepare for a mission scheduled to commence around 15:00. Ultimately, the aircraft of I./JG 26 took off between 14:50 and 14:55. The 26 Fw 190s had taken off again with the objective of Tieffliegerbekampfung, and eventually engaged in combat in the Jülich-Cologne area with about 30 American P-47 Thunderbolts belonging to the 411th Fighter Squadron. The air battle lasted from 15:35 to 15:45 and took place at an altitude of 4,000 metres. The Thunderbolts were carrying bombs, which were immediately dropped upon contact with the Fw 190s of I./JG 26.

"While leading Bur-

cher Squadron on an armed reconnaissance in the Juling area, I spotted 25 plus FW 190's northeast of Julich

I spotted 25 plus FW 190's northeast of Julich and immediately attacked

and immediately attacked, after jettisoning bombs", began Captain Ralph P. Scoble's statement.

"I was leading Blue Flight on an armed reconnaissance mission, flying top cover for the first two flights in the squadron. The Squadron Leader, Capt. Scobel, called in bogies passing below us. I started down to look at when he called them as FW-190's. We bounced them at about 5,000', and they dropped below the cloud cover. In the scramble that followed under the clouds I ended up on top of the lower overcast with my number two man, Lt. Allan, and Red Four, Lt. Tacy. I spotted three 190's at eleven o'clock to us at about 8,000',

heading almost North. The three of us climbed up to attack and ended up in a large lufberry with the FW-190's. We went around the circle about four times, none of us nor the enemy in position to fire. I broke out of the circle in the hope of getting into position to fire at them. As I chanelled back toward the circle, the tail man of the 190's broke out of the circle away from me and did two slow rolls, holding almost a straight course. As he finished his

Gefreiter Reinhard Anselment
(RL_10_266_0109)



second roll, I opened fire from about ten degrees at 150 yards. I closed to 100 yards and zero degrees still firing, observing many strikes and then fire, starting just in front of the cockpit and quickly blossoming out over the whole plane. I then stopped firing and watched him burn all the way to the ground. Seeing no more e/a in the vicinity, I set course for home.", Captain Melvin L. Steward recounted in his Combat Report.

The outcome of the air battle for I./JG 26 was recorded in the Kriegstagebuch. There was one claim: Lieutenant Waldemar Söffing of the 1. Staffel managed to shoot down one Thunderbolt in flames, for his 22nd victory. However, the 411th

Fighter Squadron reported no losses. On the other hand, four Fw 190s were shot down or damaged. The first, Fw

This device is a bit of an odd one out

190A-8 Wnr. 738134, was flown by Oberfeldwebel Anton Freiberger. He was shot down by a Thunderbolt near Düren-Eschweiler and managed to leave his aircraft, seriously wounded. The second, Fw 190A-9 Wnr. 205280, was flown by Gefreiter Reinhard Anselment. He was shot down by a Thunderbolt near

Neurath-Grevenbroich but was less fortunate and was killed in the crash. The third aircraft was an unknown Fw

Oberfeldwebel Anton Freiberger (RL_10_266_0089)



Fahnenjunker-Unteroffizier Kurt Eberhard Meyer (RL_10_266_0108), born 26 April 1924 in Aachen and immediately enlisted in the Luftwaffe after completing his primary education.

The fourth aircraft was Fw 190A-8 Wnr. 734021, flown by Fahnenjunker-Unteroffizier Kurt Eberhard Meyer, which we will discuss in more detail below.

The remaining pilots landed their aircraft at various bases around 16:00, with the last one switching off his BMW 801 engine at 16:35. At 17:00, the following was noted in the Kriegstagebuch: "Einsatzende", marking the end of another day of both gains and losses for

I./JG 26.

Now back to Fw 190A-8 Wnr. 734021, flown by Fahnenjunker-Unteroffizier Kurt Eberhard Meyer. This aircraft is a bit of an odd one out, as the air battle and most of the losses took place south of the Ruhr area, but this aircraft met its end just west of Meppen. It was reported that Kurt Meyer left the formation during the air battle with the Thunderbolts and was not seen again. His JG 26 file states "Meyer ist

während des

Luftkampfes vom Verband abgeplatzt und hat sich auf dem Nachhauseflug

wahrscheinlich

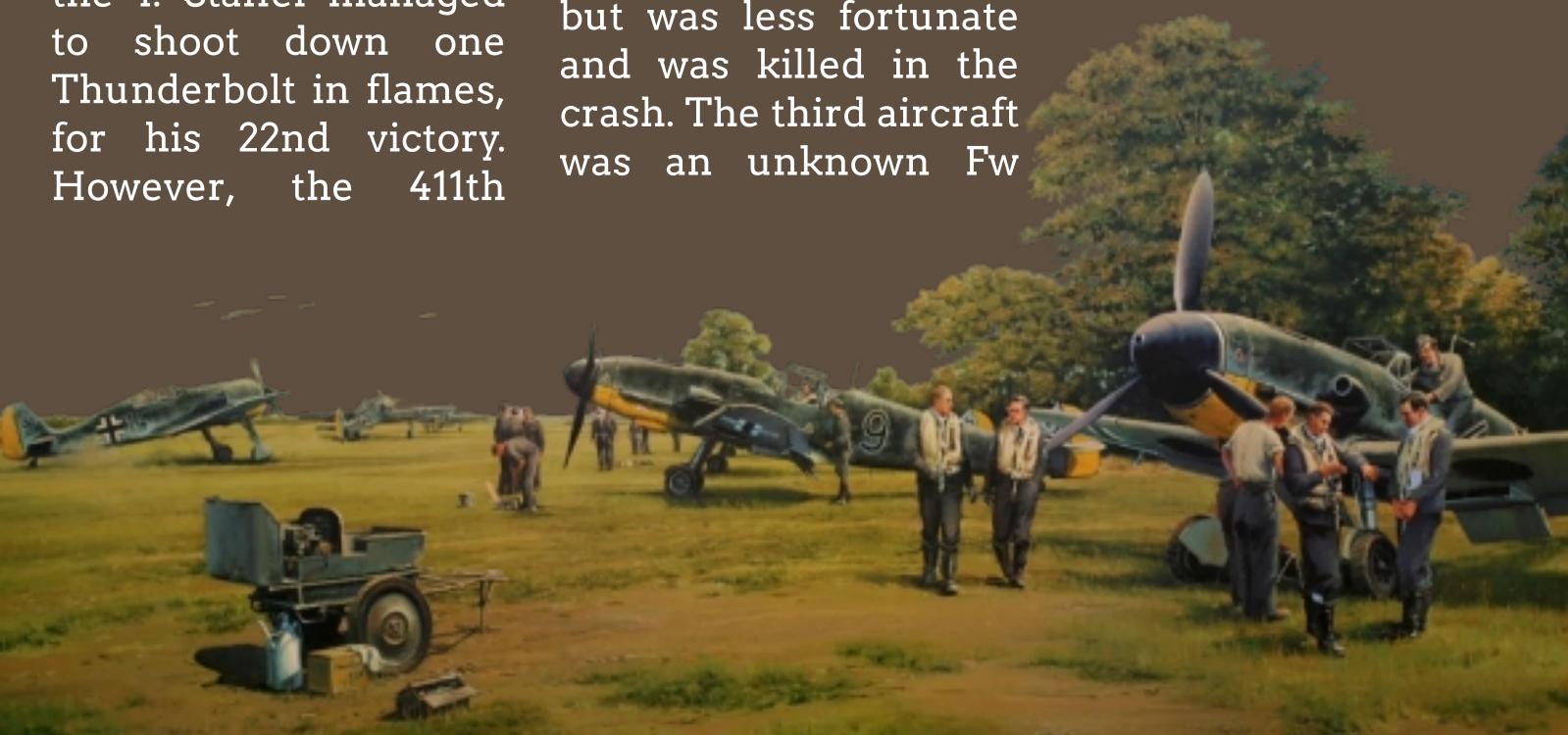
verorientiert, da er durch FT noch einige male die Bodenstelle anrief." The fact that the mission on 10 December 1944 was Kurt Meyer's first operational mission makes this explanation quite plausible. His lack of experience certainly did not help him...

The statement in Kurt Meyer's file continued:

"Die Zivilbevölkerung von Schöninghsdorf, bei Meppen, hat beobachtet, das Uffz. Meyer mit feindlichen Jägern in einen Luftkampf verwickelt und abgeschossen wurde." Kurt Meyer managed to parachute out of his aircraft. Nevertheless, he was killed. His body was eventually found by units from Flugleitung Plantlünne under the wreckage of his aircraft. The doctor also noted bullet fragments in his left temple.



Leutnant Waldemar Söffing (RL_10_265_0057)



Kurt Meyer was eventually buried in grave No. 51 at the Ehrenfriedhof in Lingen. in grave Nr.51. It is assumed that Kurt Meyer was also the victim of one of the Thunderbolts from the 411th Fighter Squadron, but all their claims are in the area of the air battle. This does not correspond with the observations of the civilian population of Schöninghsdorf that Kurt Meyer was shot down above Schöninghsdorf in an air battle.

Other Allied claims on

10 December 1944 include the claim for two damaged Fw 190s north of Enschede by two Spitfires from 401 RCAF Squadron. However, these Fw 190s were flying in a group of eight or more Fw 190s, which is inconsistent with a lone Fw 190 flown by Kurt Meyer. Another Spitfire from 401 RCAF Squadron claims a Bf 109 northeast of Hengelo, near Bentheim. However, this claim seems to correspond to a Bf 109 from Jagdgeschwader 27 that crashed near Springbiel.

So it is not known exactly who shot down Kurt Meyer's aircraft.

Kurt Meyer is a good example of the attrition suffered by the Luftwaffe. Most of the experienced pilots had already been killed, but to compensate for the shortage, new recruits were deployed operationally at an increasingly early stage. Often with little or no experience, they were no match for the often experienced Allied pilots. This too is part of the air war.



German military war graves at the Ehrenfriedhof of the Neuen Friedhof in Lingen (Rob Wethly)

2

CONFIDENTIAL

11 December 1944

11/12/44 11/12/44

**ALL FIGHTER SQUADRON
373 FIGHTER GROUP
A.P.O. 151, U.S. Army**

SUBJECT: Combat Report.

**TO : Commanding General, XXIX Tactical Air Command, AFM 151.
Attention: A-2**

1. The following is the combat report of the undersigned:

- a. Combat.**
- b. 10 December 1944.**
- c. 411th Fighter Squadron, 373rd Fighter group.**
- d. 1530 and 1545.**
- e. Julich Area.**
- f. Ceiling 5,000'; high overcast 15,000'; visibility 3 miles.**
- g. E/A FW-190s.**
- h. One (1) FW-190 destroyed; one (1) FW 190 damaged.**
- 1. I was flying Butcher Blue Two (2) on Capt. Steward's wing at 12,000 when twenty (20) plus FW-190's were spotted at approximately 7,000'. Following Capt. Steward, I dove down. The e/a had gone under the overcast at 5,000'; so when we went through a hole in it, I spotted ten (10) plus FW-190's dead ahead, flying at ninety (90) degrees to our course and slightly above us. Using the speed advantage, I pulled up and started firing from four hundred (400) yards and a forty (40) degree angle at the one nearest me. My first burst was a bit high and astern, which I corrected immediately and started seeing strikes on the forward part of the fuselage. I continued firing till dead astern. At this time the e/a was smoking badly and pieces of the ship started falling off. I saw the pilot bail out. His chute opened just as he passed my right wing, not more than fifty (50) feet away. I broke left and down. The smoking e/a went into a spiral to the left.**
- 2. Immediately after breaking off the attack in which Capt. Steward claims one (1) FW-190 destroyed, Butcher Red Four (4) called for some help. Two (2) FW-190's**

**Combat Report of
Second Lieutenant
James D. Allan**

Source: AIR-50-366

CONFIDENTIAL

Catalogue Reference: AIR-50-366

Image Reference: 15

A TAIL WHEEL WITH A STORY

On 24 December 1944, RAF Bomber Command sent 338 bombers, 248 Halifaxes, 79 Lancasters and 11 Mosquitos, to attack Lohausen airfield in Düsseldorf and Mülheim airfield in Essen; 164 aircraft bombed Lohausen and 160 aircraft bombed Mülheim.

The reason for these attacks is not entirely clear, but they may have been intended to prevent the transport of supplies by air from the Ruhr area to the battlefield in the Ardennes. Both attacks took place during the day in good visibility and the bombing was accurate. Six RAF bombers are lost, two Lancasters and one Halifax in the attack on Lohausen and three Halifaxes in the attack on Mülheim.

One of the Halifax bombers lost during the attack on Mülheim was the Halifax MZ489 from the 347th French RAF squadron Armée de l'Air Groupe "Tunisie". The aircraft crashed in Wersten, the southern part of Düsseldorf near the Fleher Wald and the Rhine.

Many pieces of wreckage were scattered across the area on the outskirts of Wersten and the banks of the Rhine.

"Werner Baum remembers the crash well, as a young boy hiding in the cellar of his parents' house during the bombing that began around 2.30 p.m. on Christmas Eve 1944. The enormous noise of the Halifax bomber crashing near his house was very noticeable; it was almost as if it had landed on top of their house."

"Werner Baum remembers seeing the wreckage of the Halifax together with two other witnesses to the crash (all young children at the time). It was clear to see that there were two bodies in the wreckage."

This involved pilot Sergeant

Louis Baillon and navigator Flying Officer Jacques Leroy, who did their utmost to keep the damaged Halifax stable for as long as possible, so that the other five crew members could escape from the doomed aircraft with their parachutes.

The Halifax exploded shortly after the five crew members managed to leave the aircraft. The pilot and navigator had no chance of survival and were killed. Of the seven-member crew of the Halifax, only two survived. The other three crew members were shot down as they descended with their parachutes in an attempt to land safely.

In the days following the crash, the two deceased crew members were recovered and buried, and the wreckage remained behind as silent witnesses.

In times of scarcity, people sometimes had to improvise, and so the tail wheel of the Halifax was given a new function and used as a wheel for a cart on a nearby farm.

Many years later, the tail wheel was added to the collection of a private collector as an heirloom. In February 2019, during excavation work on a plot of land on Auf' m Rott street, an aircraft engine was discovered. It soon became clear that this was one of the engines from Halifax MZ489.

After many years of collecting, it was time to make room, and various items from the collection were offered for sale. This is how the tail wheel of Halifax MZ489 found its way into my collection.



A new goal achieved!

The first step towards perhaps our own museum? Since the beginning of August this year, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe has had a permanent display case in the Aole



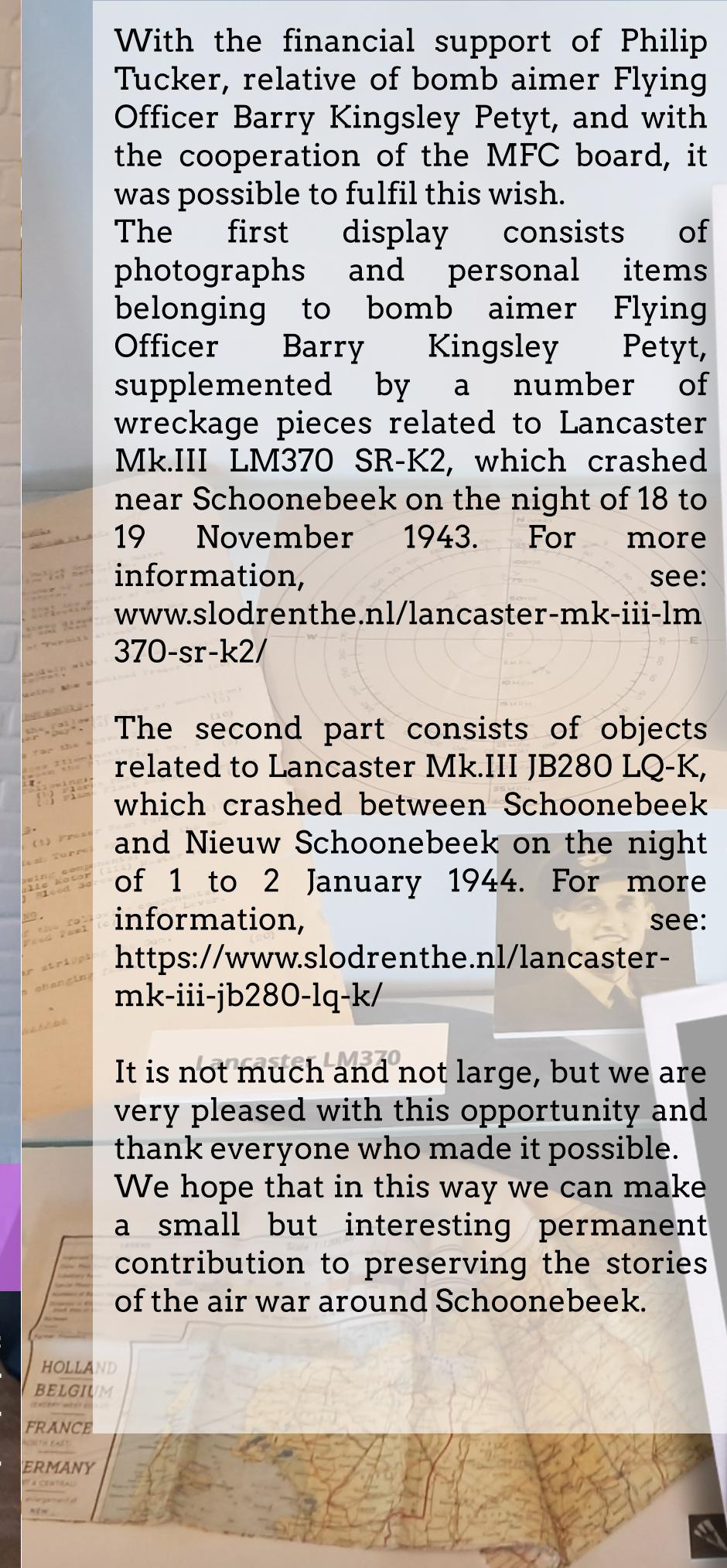
Gemientehoes in Schoonebeek. This display case serves as a temporary exhibition, giving us the opportunity to permanently exhibit items from our collection.

With the financial support of Philip Tucker, relative of bomb aimer Flying Officer Barry Kingsley Petyt, and with the cooperation of the MFC board, it was possible to fulfil this wish.

The first display consists of photographs and personal items belonging to bomb aimer Flying Officer Barry Kingsley Petyt, supplemented by a number of wreckage pieces related to Lancaster Mk.III LM370 SR-K2, which crashed near Schoonebeek on the night of 18 to 19 November 1943. For more information, see: www.slodrenthe.nl/lancaster-mk-iii-lm370-sr-k2/

The second part consists of objects related to Lancaster Mk.III JB280 LQ-K, which crashed between Schoonebeek and Nieuw Schoonebeek on the night of 1 to 2 January 1944. For more information, see: [https://www.slodrenthe.nl/lancaster-mk-iii-jb280-lq-k/](http://www.slodrenthe.nl/lancaster-mk-iii-jb280-lq-k/)

It is not much and not large, but we are very pleased with this opportunity and thank everyone who made it possible. We hope that in this way we can make a small but interesting permanent contribution to preserving the stories of the air war around Schoonebeek.





Looking back 10 years ago

Spring 2015

The SLO-Drenthe did not yet exist (just), and I was involved in the air war as a hobby, together with our current secretary Peter. Through the mediation of an SGLO member, I came into contact with a number of relatives from England, including the Cherryman family. A group of 14 relatives planned to attend the Remembrance Day and Liberation Day ceremonies on 4 and 5 May 2015 at the Nieuw-Dordrecht cemetery, where they were welcomed and accompanied by the Nieuw-Dordrecht RAF committee. The reason for involving me was as follows: On the evening of 22 March 1944, my father witnessed the crash of Lancaster MK-II, LL684JIN-B2. The aircraft landed behind the Kamerlingswijk neighbourhood in the Falke family's peat field. At 9:30 p.m., they had the fright of their lives. There was a lot of commotion that evening, and all the Peters family's children had to take shelter in the cellar as a precaution. Living on the Kamerlingswijk

on the corner of the Panden, my father Hendrik Peters saw the aircraft coming from the north, burning, flying over a house towards the old church and disappearing into the Bargerveen, after which there was a dull thud and the sky was lit up for hours in the peat bog. It burned until morning. The aircraft had taken off from Waterbeach air base in England shortly before half past six to carry out a bombing raid on Frankfurt. They encountered problems on the way there, turned back, and dropped their bomb load over Germany. When they arrived in the German-Dutch border area, they were attacked twice from below by a German night fighter, causing disastrous damage. The aircraft came down and, probably because some of the crew members were injured, they attempted to make an emergency landing, causing the aircraft to explode and scatter just above the ground.

On location

This was what my father and his friends found the next morning before they went to school. They were curious enough to run to the crash site first. The fact that the boys not only encountered aircraft parts but also saw (remains of) crew members lying there has stayed with them their whole lives. My father used to tell me these stories and details regularly, and I have always been able to remember them, partly because of my strong interest in this air war material.

All this meant that on the morning of 4 May 2015, with the permission of Staatsbosbeheer (the Dutch Forestry Commission), I was able to accompany a whole group of relatives to the crash site in the middle of the Bargerveen nature reserve. I considered it a great honour to be able to do this. The accompanying photo shows all the family

members, including Rosemary Cherryman with her son and daughter, slightly to the left of centre, and myself. At the site, Rosemary said that she only knew her father, Ivor Rich, from stories and photos in the family. It turned out that her father was killed on the evening of 22 March and Rosemary was born in September. So she never saw or knew her father personally. It was a very emotional moment for her and her children and very confronting to stand here where he lost his life.

The feeling I personally had after this tour characterises the "impact". It felt "great" to be able to do this for the families, I felt "small" on the walk back from the field.



A glimpse into our research;

a reported Fw 190 crash west of Meppen that ultimately crashed 60 kilometres from there.

On 26 November 1943, the American Air Force launched an attack on Bremen. A total of 505 American B-17 and B-24 bombers took off, of which around 430 actually reached their target. At the same time, a diversionary attack was carried out on Paris by 128 B-17 bombers. Both formations were escorted by a total of 353 P-47 Thunderbolt and 28 P-38 Lightning fighters. Although the formation flying towards Paris did not bomb the target, the mission was still a success. This was because the German air defence was split in two in order to attack both formations. This meant that the formation flying to Bremen could expect relatively little German opposition.

Nevertheless, 29 bombers and one P-47 Thunderbolt did not return from this attack. On the German side, 26 aircraft were lost.

As part of the German air defence, the aircraft of II. Gruppe, Jagdgeschwader 1 (II./JG 1) were also put on readiness. At 11:05 hrs, fifteen Fw 190s and two Bf 109s took off from Flugplatz Rheine to intercept the approaching bomber formations.

The Kriegstagebuch (war diary) of II./JG 1 provides an insight into this day:

“Einsatz mit 15 Fw 190 und 2 Bf 109 auf einfliegende jagdgeschützten

Boeingverband. 3 Fw 190 kehrten wegen Motorstörung und Unwohlseins der Flugzeugführer von Feindsichtung um. 11.32 Uhr Feindsichtung



BArch B 578/Ruttau, Walter

im Pl.Qu. DR von etwa 130 Boeing und 8-10 Feindjägern. Kampfdauer von 11.45-12.05 Uhr in den Pl.Qu.CQ-DS-EQ“

One of the fifteen Fw 190s of II./JG 1 was Fw 190A-5 Wnr. 410251 with markings Weiße 21. This aircraft was flown by pilot Unteroffizier Walter Ruttau. Walter Ruttau was a relatively new but promising pilot with the 4. Staffel of II. Gruppe. As far as can be ascertained, Walter Ruttau had been flying with the unit since August 1943 and managed to shoot down two aircraft during his time with 4./JG 1. Both claims took place on 10

October 1943 and involved a B-17 Flying Fortress, which he shot down at 15:07 hrs ten kilometres west of Münster, and a second B-17 Flying Fortress, which he managed to shoot out of formation (HSS, Herausschuß) at 15:15 hrs southwest of Rheine.

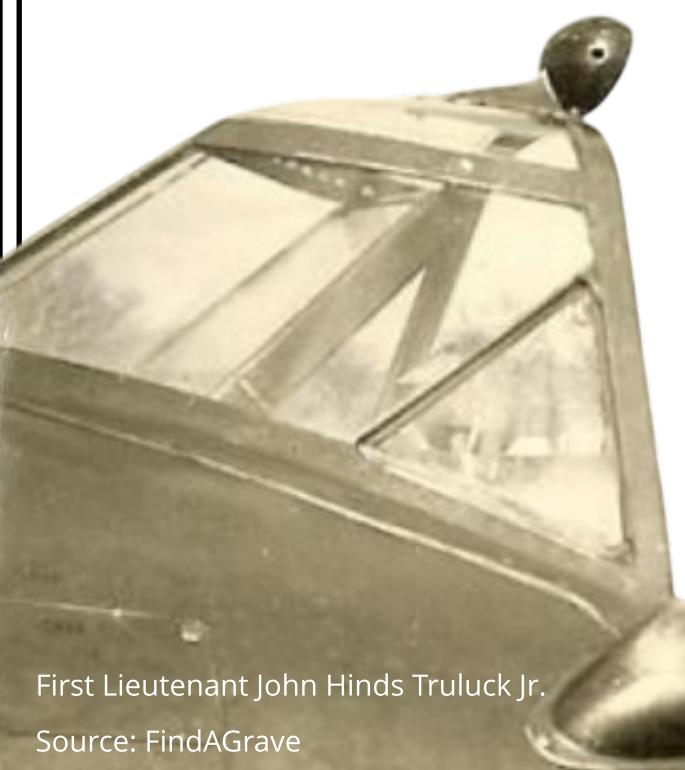
However, Walter Ruttau himself would meet his end on 26 November 1943. He was last seen at Pl.Qu. EQ-ER at around 11:55 hrs when his wingman had to make an emergency landing due to a damaged engine.

This was most likely Oberfeldwebel Detlef Lüth, who had to land his Fw 190A-6 Wnr. 550888 on its belly as a result of Luftkampf near Oldenburg.

Shortly before, the aircraft of II./JG 1 had broken up in Rotten (two aircraft) and Schwarme (four aircraft) due to problems with ice forming on the cockpit windows and a thick layer of fog. This meant that with the loss of his wingman, no one could protect Walter Ruttau anymore. He was on his own, but in the midst of the air battle, Walter Ruttau could not allow the bombers, which had just dropped their bombs on Bremen, to get away unseen. He thus continued his mission.

On his own, however, Walter Ruttau was easy prey for the American escort fighters. It is not known exactly what happened, but Walter Ruttau may have been shot down by First Lieutenant John Hinds Truluck Jr., flying a P-47 Thunderbolt from the 63rd Fighter Squadron, 56th Fighter Group, which was part of Podgate Blue Flight during this mission.

Another pilot from Podgate Blue Flight, First Lieutenant Harold Elwood Comstock, recounted: “At this time an Fw 190 was coming in at 10 o'clock and slightly below so I turned left and put a spray in his path to scare him off. There were only a few incendiary flashes on his wings, but he broke



First Lieutenant John Hinds Truluck Jr.

Source: FindAGrave

to the right and started to close on another P-47 when Lt. Truluck closed on him and fired. The e/a had hits all over him and after he had gone down a few thousand feet he broke into large flames.”

First Lieutenant John Hinds Truluck Jr. recounted: “An Fw 190 was closing on the tail of one of the 47's. I went down on him. As I approached to about 700 yards he broke away from the P-47 and headed into the sun. I followed him. He came out of the sun and started down. I was 800 yards behind him when I opened fire. He was carrying a belly tank. Pieces broke off all over the ship. He then exploded. I flew through the pieces of his ship.”

All this took place around 12:15 hrs in the Friesoyte area, according to the American pilots. It cannot be said with certainty that this Fw 190 was flown by Walter Ruttau. What can be said with certainty is that he did not return to Rheine in the afternoon. Because no one had seen him, he was declared missing at his last known location: west of Meppen. This information is relatively easy to find in books and on the internet and was interesting to us because it quickly leads you to the Dutch-German border area.



First Lieutenant Harold Elwood Comstock

Source: UPL29806 American Air Museum

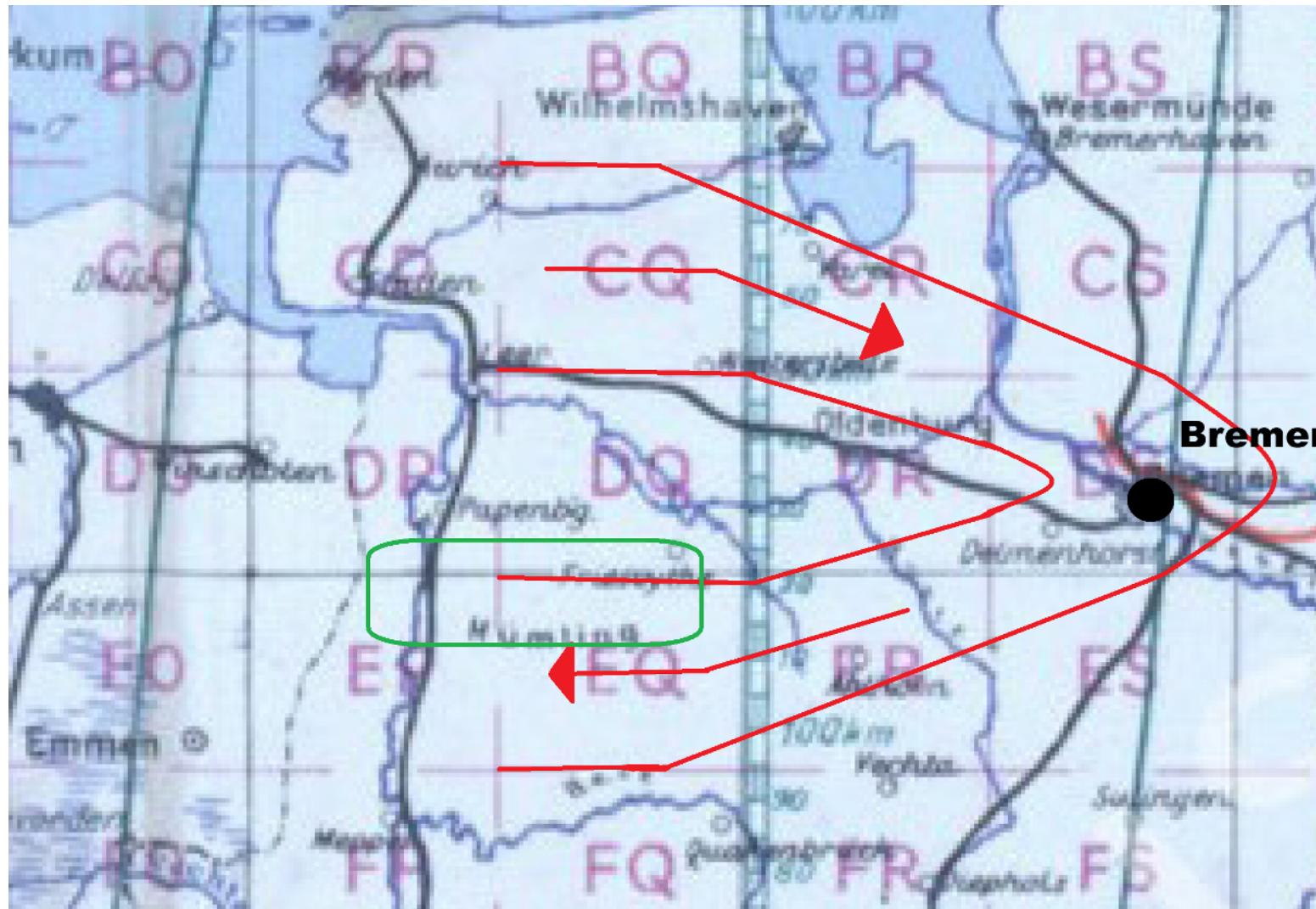
Furthermore, a German research group, amongst others active in the area around Meppen, claimed to have found the wreckage of Walter Ruttau's Fw 190 near Schöninghsdorf. To confirm this, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe conducted its own archival research. This research (and information from John Manrho) quickly revealed that this information and the conclusion of the German research group were inaccurate.

Walter Ruttau's file contained an entry dated 29 April 1944, stating that Walter Ruttau had been killed in a crash near Cloppenburg. Further investigation revealed that Walter Ruttau met his end at around 11:55 hrs west of Garrel (about twelve kilometres NNW of Cloppenburg). This proves that we can rule out Walter Ruttau's crash as having occurred in the Dutch-German border area, and that he did not lose his life near Schöninghsdorf. After finally being found, Walter Ruttau's body was recovered and repatriated: he was buried in the cemetery of his birthplace, Oels, in Silesia (now Oleśnica in Poland). The search for relatives and more information about his grave has so far been unsuccessful. The

transfer of these territories from Germany to Poland unfortunately does not make research in these areas any easier.

Nevertheless, Walter Ruttau also deserves to have his story told. We also consider it important to show his portrait photograph, which was found during our archive research, so that Walter Ruttau can have his face back. At the same time, it is a wonderful way for us to provide a glimpse into our research and to reward the time and effort invested in this case by publishing Walter Ruttau's story.

Plan Quadrat CQ-DS-EQ marked. The northern corridor was the incoming flight path of the bombers, which flew back via the southern corridor after dropping their bombs. The green area indicates the area where Walter Ruttau was last seen.



A unique visit from Germany

Another special visit took place on May 1st, when we had the honour of welcoming the relatives of Unteroffizier Rudi Lennhoff. Rudi was killed in the crash of his Bf 109 on 10 February 1944 and is still listed as missing in action.

As the reader may know, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe does not distinguish between Allied and German crews. This means that we also search for the relatives of German pilots. The search for Rudi's relatives had been going on for a number of years. It seemed to be going well: with the help of the local Historical Association, a cousin of Rudi's was found. However, after a brief email exchange, there was no further contact. Naturally, we found this very disappointing, but it must be respected.

At the beginning of 2025, I received an email out of the blue. The email was about Rudi and came from his second cousin and her husband, who had come across my email address somewhere in the family documentation and wanted to find out more about Rudi. I was delighted to receive this email and quickly made contact!

The contact was so successful that we invited the family to come to the Netherlands to view our exhibition "The Last Flight: The Air War around Schoonebeek" (in which Rudi also appeared) and then visit the crash site.

And so it came to be that Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe welcomed German relatives for the first time! A real first for us, and something we are very proud of.

The visit was very interesting, with similarities between Rudi and other family members being noted by the second cousin and her husband. They had also brought some personal

documentation with them, including a family tree and a picture of Rudi's parental home (which is still owned by the family!).

During the visit to the crash site, it turned out that the family had brought something else with them. A rose bush has been growing in the garden of the family home for about a hundred years. Just before leaving for the Netherlands, one rose had just bloomed. At the crash site, the circle was completed by placing this rose from Rudi's own garden where Rudi lost his life in 1944. A rose from the rose bush that he sometimes admired and probably pricked himself on. A very emotional but satisfying moment, both for the family and for us!



The parental home, still in the family



Udet - bojen

On the initiative of General Ernst Udet, head of the Luftwaffe, who visited the Seenotrettungsdienst (rescue service) on the canal in 1940 together with his General Staff Engineer Roluf Wilhelm Lucht, Roluf Wilhelm Lucht was commissioned to develop a new rescue device. This led to the creation of the 'Udet buoys' (rescue buoys).

The 'Udet buoy' was designed to accommodate four people for several days. In emergencies, several aircraft crews could also be accommodated at the same time.

The "Udet buoy" contained four sleeping places, dry clothing, bandages, emergency provisions, 25 litres of drinking water, an emergency transmitter (from "Udet buoy" no. 35 onwards), a bilge pump and a rubber dinghy. Sealing plugs and a hammer were available to seal any bullet holes in the wall.

For entertainment and relaxation, there was a bottle of brandy, two packets of cigarettes, a set of board games and two decks of cards.

There was also a signal pistol with 20 red, 10 white and 10 smoke cartridges and 10 parachute light cartridges to fire. There were also 10 long-burning torches. As well as all kinds of other things, such as: 1 bottle of brandy, 2 packets of cigarettes, 1 set of board games and 2 decks of cards.





The dimensions of a "Udet buoy" were approximately 4 x 3 x 2 metres. On the upper deck, they had a tower approximately 1.8 metres high with a signal mast and antenna.

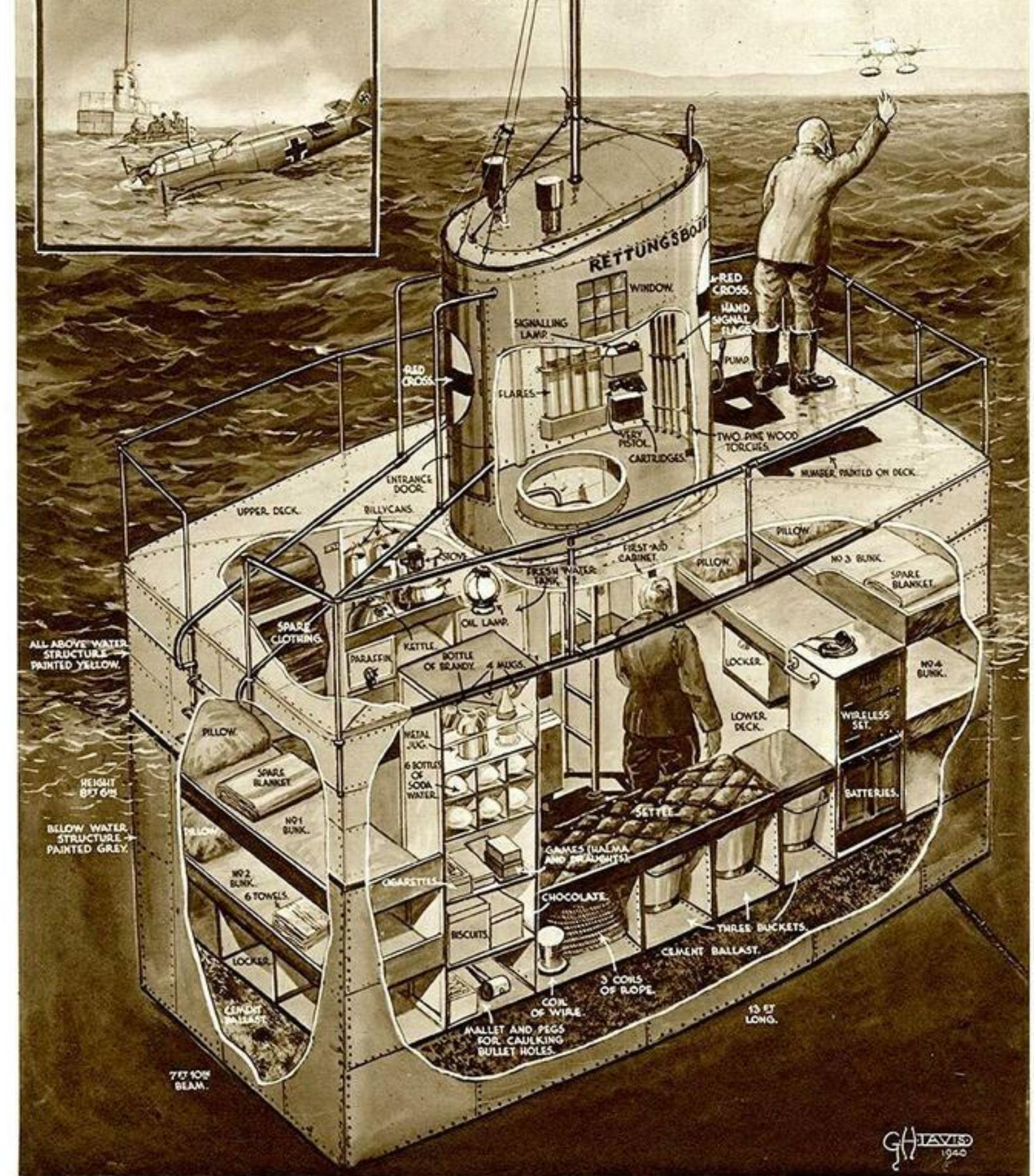
The deployed "Udet buoys" had a continuous white anchor light (visible from approximately 1,000 metres) that was powered by a collector. The burning time was approximately 30 days.

To indicate that a "Udet buoy" was occupied, a black anchor ball and a yellow-red striped flag were placed during the day. At night, a red and a white light also burned on the access tower.

The buoys are painted grey below the waterline and yellow above the waterline and are marked on the access tower with four red

crosses on a white background and the inscription: "Rettungsboje Generalluftzeugmeister Nr....". Around the outer edge of the "Udet buoy", close to the waterline, there are two tubular handrails to which swimmers can hold on and climb the ladder to enter the "Udet buoy".

A 100-metre-long floating line is attached to the 'Udet buoy', which is kept on the surface of the water by floating bodies – alternating in red and yellow colour. The tower also has a hanging lifebuoy attached to a 10-metre-long line. The lifebuoys were anchored to the bottom of the canal with two strong anchor chains/anchor ropes using buoy stones.



KNOWN TO THE R.A.F. AS "LOBSTER-POTS": A DIAGRAMMATIC DRAWING OF ONE OF THE NEW GERMAN RESCUE BUOYS ANCHORED TEN MILES OFF THE FRENCH COAST FOR USE BY NAZI CREWS FORCED DOWN BY R.A.F. ACTION IN THE CHANNEL.

Recent observations have revealed, placed in position at intervals along the French coast from Dunkirk to Cherbourg, a series of large metal buoys for the use of the crews of Nazi aircraft damaged during raids on Britain and so badly hit that they are forced down at sea. It is a known fact, of course, that a very large number of casualties have resulted from the damage done by the R.A.F. over the Channel or the coast to raiding aircraft, including the loss of valuable skilled crews who, having escaped from their sinking 'planes in the collapsible rubber boats provided, have nevertheless lost their lives through bad weather or their signals remaining unseen. The buoys, made of steel plating, are some

13 ft. long and about 8 ft. high with a beam of 7 ft. 10 in. Mounted on the upper deck is a 5-ft. tower carrying a tall mast with wireless aerials and signal halyards, and bearing the words, "Rettungsboje General Luftzeugmeister," with prominent Red Crosses on a white background on each side. The interior contains four bunks with bedding, a locker with clothing, and another containing emergency rations, besides "Halma" and draught sets. Other items include a mallet and hardwood pegs, apparently for stopping bullet holes. In the event of a forced landing at sea German aircraft come down as near as possible to a buoy to await rescue.



The concept proved to work when, on a stormy afternoon, a German aircraft crew was forced to make an emergency landing in the Channel. The water crashed hard against the fuselage, while the damaged aircraft quickly filled with water and began to sink. The men, exhausted and hypothermic, struggled out of the wreckage and tried to stay afloat. The chances of a quick rescue were slim – visibility was poor, the wind was picking up and the current was driving them further and further away.

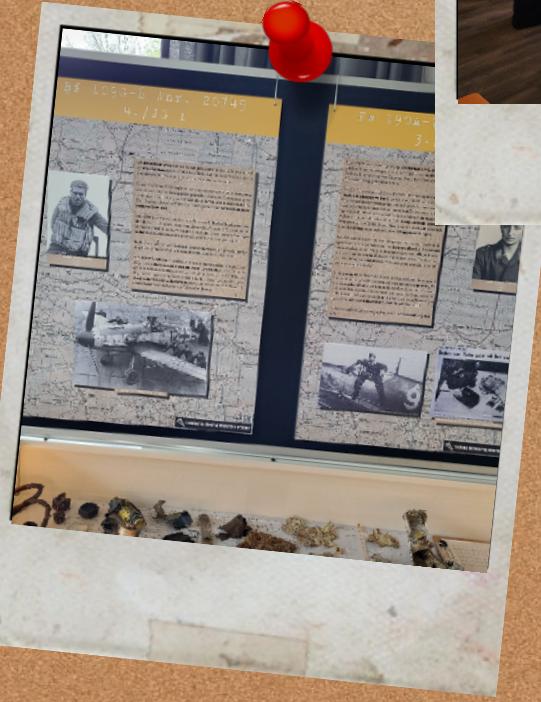
At that moment, one of the men saw a yellow dot in the dark, choppy water. It was a “Udet buoy”, only a few hundred metres away. Under extreme conditions, the men tried to reach the buoy.

With their last ounce of strength, the crew finally reached the buoy's ladder. The waves were crashing against them, the metal handles were slippery and exhaustion had reached its peak. Eventually, they managed to get themselves to safety. Some time later, a ship from the Seenotrettungsdienst appeared on the horizon, slowly approaching, after which the rescue team pulled the men out of the Udet buoy.



On 2 February 2017, a Udet buoy was found on the beach of Terschelling, on the Wadden Islands (NL). The buoy had ended up there and remained buried in the sand for years until the Bunker Museum at Terschelling decided to rescue it.

Exposition 2025



Exposition 2025

Beste heren,

Wat een ontzettend interessante tentoonstelling. Heel om u eens jullie te mogen bezoeken en mijn dochter te leren over jullie onderzoek & werkzaamheden. Ga zo door!

Dear Gentlemen, What an incredibly interesting exhibition. It was lovely to visit you and teach my daughter about your research and the work you do. Keep up the good work!

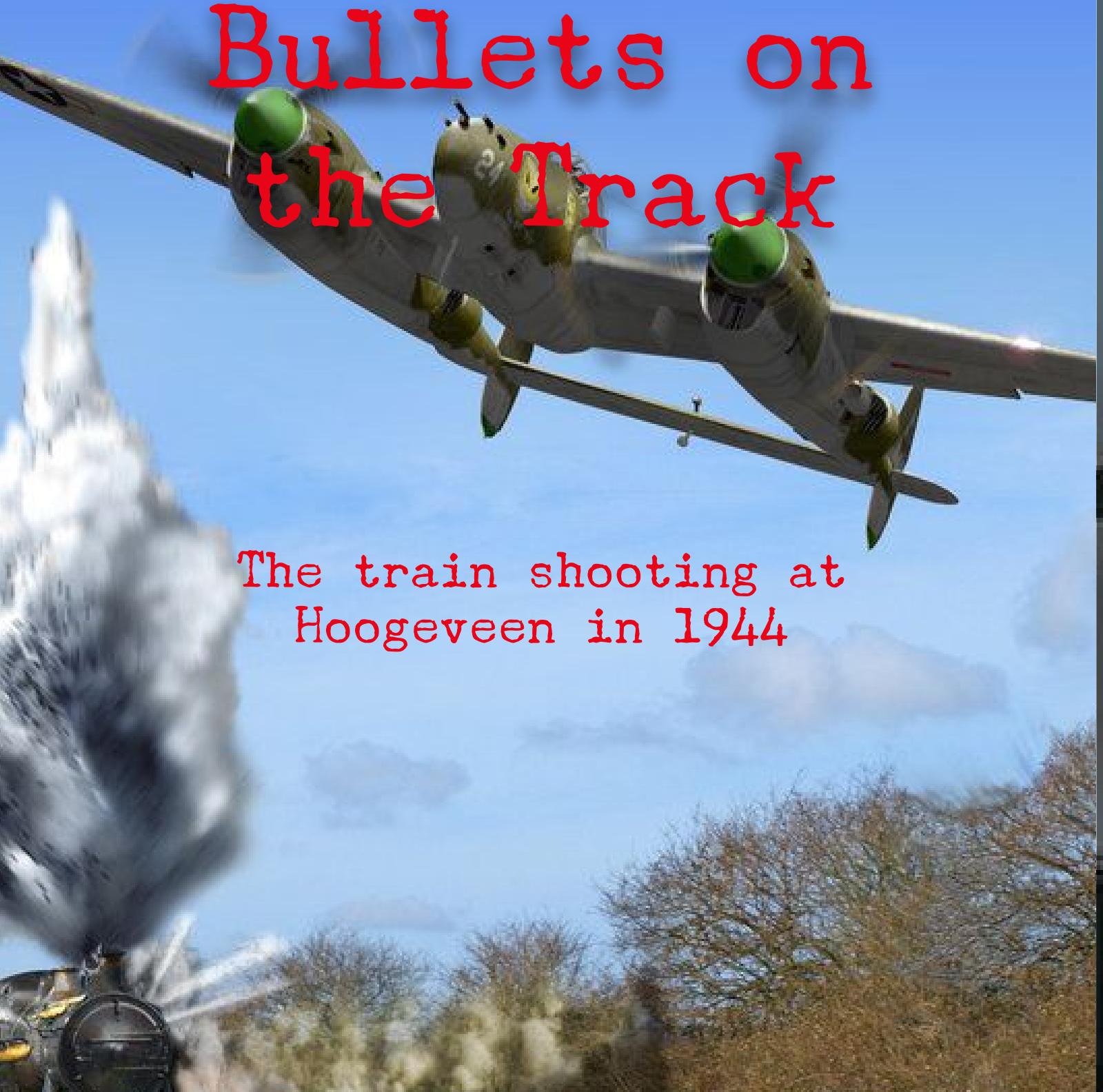
05.08.28

Thank you for a very informative exhibition and some wonderful photographs to make everything more personal.

Thank you for the splendid welcome and hospitality in Schoonebeek.

Bullets on the Track

The train shooting at Hoogeveen in 1944



In the early morning of November 5, 1944, the silence over the Drenthe landscape was rudely shattered by the roar of aircraft engines and the rattle of machine guns. A train traveling on the railway near Hoogeveen became the target of an

Allied air raid. What followed was a dramatic moment in local wartime history, with civilian casualties and the railway becoming a symbol of both the vulnerability and the courage of a region in wartime.

The railway as a lifeline and a target

Towards the end of World War II, railway lines in the occupied Netherlands came under increasing attack by the Allies.

Trains transported not only goods and German troops, but also prisoners, forced laborers, and sometimes ordinary civilians.

It was a strategic move to paralyze the German transport network, but it also posed significant risks to anyone who happened to be on board.

The train that passed Hoogeveen on November 5, 1944, was spotted by Allied fighter planes. Whether it was believed to be military transport on board, or whether it was a general disruption of rail traffic, has never been determined with certainty. What is certain is that the attack had fatal consequences.

Eyewitnesses and victims

Among the passengers were also civilians. According to local reports, several people were killed and injured when the train came under fire. Some carriages caught fire, others derailed. Local residents rushed to help, despite the danger of aftershot fire and possible explosions. The bravery of these people was often mentioned in later memoirs by survivors.

One of the survivors, then 19-year-old Jannes de Vries from Hollandscheveld, described the attack as "a rain of fire from the sky." He remembered people jumping from the train, hoping to find cover in the ditches alongside the tracks. Not everyone was so lucky.

The impact on Hoogeveen

The train bombing left deep scars on the community. Not only because of the victims, but also because of the fear it instilled. Hoogeveen, until then relatively spared from direct attacks, suddenly felt the war very close. The attack became a frequently repeated story in the years following the liberation, a reminder of the fine line between strategy and tragedy.

Witnesses speak out

Interview with Jannes de Vries (1925–2011)
Recorded in 2004 by the Hoogeveen Historical Society

"We heard the sound of airplanes, low, rumbling... I looked up and knew: this is wrong. A moment later the shooting started. Everything happened in a flash. I dove under the seat, but the bullets pierced the wood. People screamed.

Some jumped out of the train while it was still moving. I saw a woman stumble in the grass. There was nothing you could do but survive."

I DOVE UNDER THE COUCH, BUT THE BULLETS WENT RIGHT THROUGH THE WOOD.

Interview with Geesje Mulder (b. 1932), an eyewitness from Hoogeveen
Conversation from 1995, broadcast on RTV Drenthe

"My mother had heard something had happened at the railway. We went to look. I remember it was smoking, and the smell of oil and something I hadn't heard of at the time: burnt metal, and something... awful hanging in the air. There was a coat lying in the grass, red with blood. I'll never forget that image."

Interview with Henk Bos (1920–2002), resistance member

Excerpt from a private archive, released in 2000
"We knew the Allies were shooting at anything that looked like a transport. But the reports only revealed later that there were also civilians on that train. It was a hard lesson. Even liberation came at a price."



Colored impression of that day.

80 Lost Wings information panels commemorating 80 years of liberation



Photo Jacques Louwes



Photo Jacques Louwes

On 22 December, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe unveiled its 80th Lost Wings information panel. This information panel tells the story of the crash of B-17G Flying Fortress 42-37766 'Princess Pat', which crashed in Lageveen, near Zuidwolde, on 22 December 1943. Of the ten American crew members, four were killed in the crash. The other six crew members were eventually all taken prisoner.

After a few words by chairman Rob Wethly, councillor Albert Haar of the municipality of De Wolden also spoke. Yannic Wethly then read a personal message from the relatives of Second Lieutenant Donald Frank 'Don' Lembcke, which unfortunately could not be present. The first part of the ceremony was then concluded with the sounding of the Taps by Herman Slatman, followed by two minutes of silence. This was followed by the unveiling, which honoured Chairman Rob Wethly and Councillor Albert Haar. Finally, flowers were laid by, among others, Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe and the Hoogeveen Veterans Foundation.

A special bouquet was laid on behalf of Sintermeerten College in Heerlen. Two weeks before the unveiling, we were contacted out of the blue by a history teacher from this school. His school and class had adopted a grave at the American Military Cemetery in Margraten. They had just been informed that they had been assigned the grave of Second Lieutenant Maurice Wesley Mangis. Unfortunately, the distance prevented the teacher and class from attending in person, but they wanted to lay a floral tribute. On the morning of 22 December, they also placed a floral tribute at the graves of both Second Lieutenant Maurice Wesley Mangis and Second Lieutenant Donald Frank 'Don' Lembcke, who are buried next to each other at Margraten. In this way, the two locations, some 300 kilometres apart but inherently connected by history, are once again linked. And that exactly 82 years to the day!

Afterwards, visitors were invited to visit the De Wemme regional museum, where a mini exhibition had been set up. Here, they could also warm up with a cup of coffee or tea and a slice of homemade cake.

This 80th Lost Wings information panel is the crowning glory of this year of liberation for Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe, but it is also a major milestone for Project Lost Wings. What began in 2015 with the idea for three information panels around Zwartemeer has since grown into the largest project of its kind! With Lost Wings information panels in both the Netherlands and Germany, spread across various municipalities, we are extremely proud of this special milestone.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped, supported or encouraged us over the past ten years. We would also like to thank the people with whom we have had the privilege of working in various villages and municipalities on both sides of the border to realise a number of Lost Wings information panels. Without their enthusiastic response and initiatives, there would not be 80 information panels today!



Photo Jacques Louwes



Photo Jacques Louwes



Photo Jacques Louwes

Who am I?

Can you guess who I am?

I will give you five hints – from general to clear.

1 I was born in 1896 and became fascinated at a young age by machines that could fly.

2 During the First World War, I grew into one of the most successful German fighter pilots.

3 After the war, I became a famous stunt pilot and appeared in films thanks to my flying skills.

4 In the 1930s, I obtained a high position within the Luftwaffe, where I was responsible for the development of new aircraft.

5 My name is often associated with both technological innovation and tragic personal pressure, which ultimately led to my downfall.

5 My name is often associated with both technological innovation and tragic personal pressure, which ultimately led to my downfall.



Who am I?