



Lynn Dramnitzki and her cousin Karen Goebel stand with a memorial plaque for the crew of a Lancaster Bomber shot down in The Netherlands during World War II. The plaque was unveiled in November 2019.

Kitchener family attends ceremony in Netherlands honouring their uncle and his bomber crew shot down in World War II

By LYNN DRAMNITZKI

On February 19, 1944, the crew of R.C.A.F. 408 Squadron's Lancaster bomber LL720 left their base at Linton-on-Ouse, Yorkshire. They were part of the armada of over 800 bombers conducting a raid on Leipzig, Germany. A German Night Fighter shot down their plane at 5:40am, as they were returning to base.

The crew, Pilot Elmer Stanley Winn R.C.A.F. (age 23), Flight Engineer Ellis Willam Bolt R.A.F. (age 24), Navigator James Richard Leaman R.C.A.F. (age 21), Bomb Aimer John Raymond Bonneville R.C.A.F. (age 23), Wireless Operator Reginald Herbert Wade R.C.A.F. (age 26), Air Gunner Norman H. Brown U.S.A.F. (age 21), and my Uncle, Air Gunner Eldore Dramnitzki R.C.A.F. (age 22), were all killed.

The wreckage of that plane lay hidden until 2013 when historians began searching for any remnants from the plane and found parts of a Lancaster Bomber about 20 feet from the riverbank near Paal, The Netherlands.

On November 9, 2019, my cousin, Karen Goebel, her husband Gerry, daughter Kimberley, my husband Jon and I stood on the dyke at the hamlet of Paal, (about 35kms west of Antwerp) listening to Jaap Geensen explain how he and Mark Zwartelé, historians from the Werkgroep Archeologie Hulst, found the wreckage of LL720. We came to Paal to attend a special ceremony to unveil a plaque honouring our uncle and the crew of that bomber.

Eldore was the youngest child of Caroline and Gottlieb Dramnitzki. He joined the R.C.A.F. in August 1942, and was sent overseas in August 1943. His military records described him as, "Good solid type, keen to be an air gunner. Neat, well-mannered, and sincere."

In the fall of 2012, Jaap and Mark began their search for an English bomber that was rumoured to have crashed during the Second World War in what is now the Saeftinghe Bird Sanctuary along the Westerscheldt River.

They found what they were looking for in May 2013. There were serial numbers on those parts, but nothing that identified the bomber to which they belonged. Jaap then began the detective work to identify the plane, which was Canadian, and its crew. He spoke to eyewitnesses and searched the records at Vlissingen and Schoonselhof War Cemeteries and the German and Dutch Archives.

After narrowing the search to two planes, Jaap obtained John Bonneville's records

from the Canadian National Archives and confirmed without a doubt that the plane was the bomber LL720. Jaap then began the search for the crew's family members and, with the group Wings to Victory, plan for the installation of a memorial near the crash site.

In July 2019, seemingly out of the blue, I received an email from Jaap through the K-W branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (I was the Secretary), informing me about the finding of LL720, and that a memorial plaque for the crew would be installed in the coming months.

And so, a group of about 90 people gathered at the Paviljoen 't-Schor on a beautiful Saturday afternoon to unveil the memorial plaque.

John Bonneville's nephew Pat and his wife Terrie, Assistant Canadian Military Attaché Sgt. Jo Anne Wiseman, representatives from the Dutch Air Force and Wings to Victory, and people from the area were in attendance.

There was music by the Canadian Scottish Memorial Pipes and Drums and the Bierkaal Brass played the Dutch and Canadian anthems.

Jan-Frans Mulder, the Mayor of Hulst, welcomed everyone to the ceremony, and Jaap told the story of how he and Mark found the plane.

Karen, Pat and I then unveiled the plaque. The haunting strains of the Last Post were sounded, and the crowd fell silent for two minutes.

After flowers and wreaths were laid at the base of the plaque, Karen, Pat and I spoke, through our tears, of our lost loved ones, of our everlasting gratitude for everyone who made this day possible, especially Jaap and Mark. We also expressed our abiding thanks to the people of The Netherlands for their continued honour and care for all of the Canadians killed there in the war. The afternoon finished with a fly over arranged by Wings to Victory, and a reception in the Paviljoen for all of those who attended to share our stories.

The following morning, we were invited to attend a Remembrance Day service at the historic Kloostersande Church. In a moving ceremony, a candle was lit for each member of the LL720 crew and for many of the local soldiers and civilians who had been killed in the war.

For more information about LL720, and other aircraft that were downed in the southwestern Netherlands in the Second World War, visit www.wingstovictory.nl.



Region of Waterloo
MUSEUMS



Stacy McLennan
Collections Curator
and Registrar

ARTIFACTS

From our Collection

Coffee drinkers in the 1800s often had a coffee bean roaster, like this one, in their homes. Coffee beans were purchased green, roasted to bring out their flavor, and then ground, often with a mortar and pestle. This particular roaster dates from the 1850s and would have been used in a hearth. The handle rotates the cylinder, moving the beans so that they roast evenly. Later, roasters were adapted to be used on iron cook stoves.



Stacy McLennan is the Collections Curator and Registrar for Region of Waterloo Museums. Stacy can be contacted at smclennan@regionofwaterloo.ca



Waterloo Region **HALL of FAME**

In 1906, **Charles Harry Boehmer** (1877 to 1963) of Kitchener, Ontario began to study opera in Milan, Italy. He gave concerts in Italy and the United States to great acclaim. Charles later toured South American with an Italian opera company and, in 1919, was engaged by the Chicago Opera Company. Later in life, Charles returned to Kitchener and joined the family business, A. & C. Boehmer Box Company, becoming president.

Visit the Hall of Fame exhibits located on the second floor of the Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum.



10 Huron Road, Kitchener
519-748-1914

www.waterlooregionmuseum.ca



On exhibit to August 3, 2020



Schneider Haus

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
466 Queen Street South,
Kitchener
519-742-7752

www.schneiderhaus.ca



On exhibit to April 26, 2020



McDougall Cottage

HISTORIC SITE

89 Grand Avenue South,
Cambridge
519-624-8250

www.mcdougallcottage.ca



Her Story

A Woman's Life,
1850 to 1900
Doctor, Tailor, Chef, Activist,
Farmer, Writer, Artist,
Entrepreneur - Victorian
women could claim these
vocations and more.

On exhibit to August 3, 2020

Connect with us   

www.regionofwaterloo.ca/museums

TTY: 519-575-4608