

Witnesses

In October 2019, Rien Luijks wrote about his memories of the crash:

'The first day of November 1944 was a grey dark day. The lands looking grey: empty and deserted. That day, in the late afternoon, around 16.30 me and my father were feeding the cattle in the barn, daily job. Around 16.30 I opened the barn door, I guess my job was done. Walking through the door there was a big, big bang. So big, the door slammed me back into the barn. A bit at loss I got up and ran outside, accompanied by my father. My grandfather was still on the floor; the door was blown out of his hands. No injuries.

There was a weird moment of silence outdoors, like the world had stopped for a moment. Until we realised something strange had happened. From the back of the yard we could see the adjoining field; the potato leaves burning, a strange smell. The smell from kerosene, which we had never smelled before. The bomber fuel was scattered all around, even into the wall of our home. Further down we could see the big flames and thick smoke rising from the Heenweg, the road where Hendrik Schot his kitchen garden used to be. Exploding ammunition, loud bangs, fire and smoke. An army of sound and vision; unreal to this. We could only just understand what might have happened.

Everybody from the Kijkuit started running towards the crashed bomber. Including me. Getting closer to the plane there was an indescribable devastation, a big hole across the Heenweg; taking away the road. In the big hole a chaos of clay, messed up parts of the plain, parts of the wings and engines. The crew was there.

As my mother explained to me later, the bomber came in flying from the direction of Lepelstraat, a nearby village, east of Kijkuit; just skimming Hendrik Schott his chicken barn, engines still running, to end the flight crashing into the Heenweg, just missing the kitchen garden. The front of the bomber; cockpit and wings were driven into the ditch, through the clay. The body and tail of the bomber ended up in the Heenweg and where the field and kitchen garden were.

There was no way the crew could be rescued. All but one, were trapped in the crashed bomber, and what was left of it. Powerless, not being able to help, the people of Kijkuit could only look in shock and horror. The crashed bomber, halfway buried in the clay, the back being on fire. Nothing could be done. The crew did not survive the crash.

If I remember well the Canadian army was there in less than an hour. The only thing they could do at that moment is cover the awful scenery. My mother more than once told me that one crew member was found away from the plane; his chute not open.

Winter 1944/1945, a tough winter. Through the winter the hole remained as it was, filled with water. A road diversion was done; to make it possible for the community to use the road again. At the site, the Canadian army put down a white cross, with text on it. In the spring of 1945, my father planted daisy flowers around the cross. Late in the summer of 1945 the bomber, along with the remains of the crew were recovered by the army.