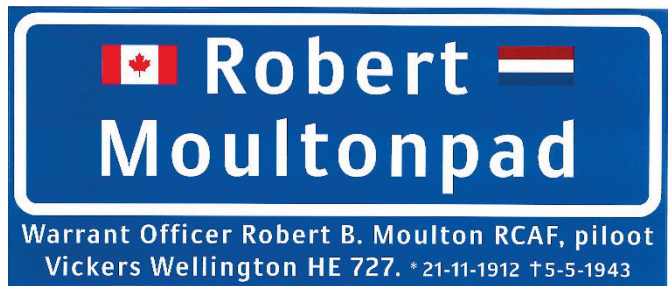


Wilnis, April 29, 2019.

Unveiling of nameplate Robert Moultonpad (lane) and information panel.

Welcoming speech Mr. Jan van Loo.

Madame Sabine Nölke, Ambassador of Canada to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr. Maarten Divendal, Mayor of the Town De Ronde Venen, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests.



On May 5, 1943, the Vickers Wellington Bomber with registration NA-K HE 727 crashed in a meadow in Wilnis not far from the village center.

The Vickers Wellington belonged to 428 Ghost Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force. The night before she had taken off from Dalton Airfield in the county of Yorkshire in England.

There were five crewmembers on board. The destination was Dortmund.

From a military point of view, the attack was successfully.

After the bombing, on the home flight, the machine was shot at by a Messerschmitt Me-110.

In the Questionnaire for returned air crew of May 9, 1945 Flight Sergeant Howard Hoddinot, Wireless operator / Airgunner, stated the following about this when the aircraft was attacked by a German night fighter (in short):

"I could feel the indescribable impact of the bullets fired by the night fighter. I received orders from the pilot via the intercom to abandon the plane. I put on my parachute and went to the front hatch where I gave the pilot his parachute. At that time the plane was already on fire. However, I had the impression that the plane was still under control. But during my descent I saw that the plane was going down".

It is clear, from this statement by Flight Sergeant Howard Hoddinott, that the pilot, Warrant Officer 1st Class Robert Moulton, has not shirked responsibility for his crew members and the civilian population. Robert Moulton could also have left the plane by parachute.

According to Howard Hoddinott's statement, the pilot was still in control of the aircraft when Howard Hoddinott and Flight Sergeant Gordon Carter jumped out of the aircraft.

It is therefore almost certain that Robert Moulton has attempted a controlled landing in which the uncertainty about the fate of the other crew members, Flight Sergeant Adrien Thibaudeau and Flight Sergeant Joseph White and the dangers for the civilian population will have been decisive. The Canadian authorities also assume this according to a backgrounder of 27 November 2002.

Who was Robert Moulton?

Robert Moulton was born in Brockville, Ontario, on November 21, 1912 from Sophrona Moulton, born to Mc Namara and Benjamin Moulton.

Robert had a younger brother, named Thomas Adrian Moulton, who served with the Cameron Highlanders in the Netherlands for four months. Robert might have lived and worked in Brockville for many years, just like his brother.

Brockville is a beautiful old town on the Saint Lawrence River and located approx. 115 km south of Ottawa.

Robert loved to read, was a member of St. Peter's Anglican Church, sang in the church choir and even played the violin. He was also an enthusiastic rower.

After the Brockville Collegiate Institute and the Brockville Business College, it turned out to be difficult to find a good job. Eventually he succeeded and he could continue to build on his future. However, when World War II broke out, he was so gripped that he decided, like many others in Canada, to leave his family, friends, and volunteer with the Royal Canadian Air Force. There was a great demand for pilots and Robert wanted to become a pilot.

After his training in Canada and England, he received an appointment at Dalton Air Base in the county of Yorkshire. There, squadron 428 RCAF, the Ghost Squadron, flew the very dangerous missions to Germany with twin-engine Vickers Wellington bombers. The Vickers Wellington NA-K HE 727 also left on May 4, 1943 with five crew members including pilot Robert Moulton.

44,927 Canadian soldiers fell during the Second World War. The Canadian Robert Moulton from Brockville, Ontario, died in Wilnis on 5 May 1943.

A story of immense bravery and the ultimate sacrifice of a real captain and two of his crew members. Lest we forget!

The local RTV-station also paid attention to it. Click here----->



Vickers Wellington B Mk X

Monument near the crash site



VICKERS WELLINGTON Mark X NA-K HE 727

On 5 May 1943, a Vickers Wellington Mark X (radio code NA-K, serial number HE 727) crashed in a pasture in Wilnis, near the present-day Mijdrechtse Dwarsweg-Ir Enschedeweg roundabout. The Vickers Wellington – with its five-man crew – was part of 428 (Ghost) Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and had taken off the previous night from Dalton Airfield in the county of Yorkshire, England.

Its destination was Dortmund. The attack on Dortmund was until then the most significant Allied air attack on a German city during the Second World War.

Of the 596 bombers that took part, 31 failed to return. Of these, 21 crashed in the Netherlands.



No 428 Squadron RCAF badge

From a military perspective, the attack was a success and was able to deal a massive blow to the city. More than 1200 buildings were destroyed; more than 2000 others were severely damaged, including the Hoesch Factories and the Dortmunder Union Steel Mills. The bombardment cost almost 700 people their lives, including approximately 200 prisoners of war who had been put to work as forced labour to aid the German war effort. Nearly 1100 people were wounded.

On its return flight after the bombing raid, the Vickers Wellington came under fire from a Messerschmitt Me-110 piloted by Hauptmann Hans-Dieter Frank. The bomber caught fire and lost altitude.

The pilot, Warrant Officer Class I Robert Moulton, ordered the crew to bail out of the aircraft. Navigator Flight Sergeant Gordon Carter and the Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Flight Sergeant Howard Hoddinott bailed out successfully and were taken prisoners of war. They both survived the war. Evidence suggests that the pilot, Robert Moulton, tried to carry out a forced landing to keep the burning aircraft from crashing into the heart of the village of Wilnis.

The aircraft struck the ground approximately one kilometre north of the village and, shortly after impact, sank almost entirely into the soft, peaty soil. Pilot Robert Moulton died in the crash, despite Flight Sergeant Hoddinott having offered him his parachute.

Air Gunner/Bombardier Flight Sergeant Joseph White and Rear-Gunner Flight Sergeant Adrien Thibaudeau also died in the crash but were formally declared missing.

Partial remains of Robert Moulton were the only ones recovered at the crash site, and these were buried in Wilnis.

During a salvage operation in September 2002, the Aircraft Recovery Unit of the Royal Netherlands Air Force and the Recovery and Identification Service of the Royal Netherlands Army were able to recover and identify the remains of the three crewmembers.

Their remains were subsequently laid to rest in three individual graves in the cemetery of the Dutch Reformed Church in Wilnis, during a ceremony with military honours.

The recovery of the three crewmembers took place thanks to the initiative of the Stichting Berging Vickers Wellington 1943 (Foundation for the Recovery of Vickers Wellington 1943) in Mijdrecht. Seven years of campaigning and legal action preceded the recovery.



CREW VICKERS WELLINGTON NA-K HE 727:

-Pilot: Warrant Officer I Robert B. Moulton, reg. 74234, born 21 November 1912, Brockville, Ontario, Canada, RCAF, Killed in Action.

-Navigator: Flight Sergeant Gordon C. Carter, reg. 119839, born 9 April 1920, Fairfax, Manitoba, Canada, RCAF, POW.

-Wireless Operator: Flight Sergeant Howard H. Hoddinott, reg. 1344173, born 11 November 1920 in Newfoundland; he later resided in Edinburgh, Scotland, RAF, POW.

-Air-Gunner/Bombardier: Flight Sergeant Joseph White, reg. 114141, born 28 September 1921, Thorold, Ontario, Canada, RCAF, Killed in Action.

-Rear-Gunner: Flight Sergeant Joseph E.A. (Adrien) Thibaudeau BA, BSc, reg. 94389, born 28 July 1921, Saint Eustache near Montréal, Quebec, Canada, RCAF, Killed in Action.



Text and information:

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 President Salvage Vickers Wellington 1943 Foundation