



Stichting Herdenkingsmonument Mierlo-Hout  
**News letter**  
7th year Volume No.3  
July 2021

**Royal award**

**May 4 and 5**

**NL-Doet**

**Just another memorial**

**10 years of  
Remembrance  
Monument**

**Hello friends,**

### **Royal Award**

**On April 26, two members of our Foundation received a royal decoration from Mayor Blanksma.**

**Mario Coolen and Jan Dijstelbloem were both appointed as Member of the Order of Oranje Nassau.**



**Mario Coolen.**

**He was involved in the creation of the current monument from the very beginning.**

**He has been chairman of our Foundation since 2005.**

**He also ensures that the surroundings of the Monument look spic and span every year.**

**Since the 1990s, he has also been active in the Mierlo-Hout district council.**

**On the board of the neighborhood council, he works for the committees Green, Historical awareness and Neighborhood decoration.**

**He was one of the co-founders of the weekly newspaper De Loop.**

**He contributed to the annual Mierlo-Hout arms festival.**

**He is committed to the restoration and maintenance of the war graves in Parish of Saint Damiaan de Veuster.**

**He is the developer of a historical and nature route in Mierlo-Hout.**

**Not to be forgotten, he is the founder of the internet news site Railcam.nl, which is viewed all over the world.**

**If we see what Mario was and is currently committed to, this is a fair appreciation.**

-----



(foto ED)

**Jan Dijkstra**

**Jan Dijkstra is no stranger to us as a foundation.**

**He is one of the two in-house photographers who record all the festivities of our foundation every year. Partly thanks to him, a beautiful yearbook can also be made every year.**

**Photography and hiking are his passion.**

**He has been active in many places administratively.**

**Take from his commitment:**

- **Patron of the Unitas Music Association**
- **Board member of the Mierlo-Hout Business Association (OVMH)**
- **Board member Mierlo-Hout Promotions, entrepreneur fair**
- **Photographer at Weekkrant De Loop**
- **Active at Sinterklaasstad Helmond**
- **Volunteer in the 't Brandpunt neighborhood building in Brandevoort**
- **Since 1998 in-house photographer for men choir Lambardie**
- **Etc, etc, etc.**

**Also for Jan it is a justified and deserved distinction.**

**To both  
Congratulations with this Royal Award.**

## NL-DOET



A beautiful and sunny end to the adoption year with students. F| ©Mario Coolen

### **NL-Doet around the memorial monument Mierlo-Hout**

**On Friday morning, May 28, the HMMH Foundation again took part in the annual volunteer action of NL-Doet / Oranje Fonds. Traditionally, on that morning, at the memorial monument and the memorial stone in Slegersstraat, children from primary schools in Mierlo-Hout carry out cleaning jobs.**

**The monument is in turn adopted by one of the schools in the district. In this way, the foundation tries to involve the students as much as possible in the history of the 2nd World War and the importance of freedom. This initiative has also been supported wholeheartedly by the school management for many years.**

**In 2020, the students of the Child Center Mierlo-Hout were invited to adopt the monument. Next, NL-Doet also marks the end of the adoption year.**

**After a long period of rain, wind and low temperatures, everyone was treated to a lovely sun on this morning. The children immediately set to work diligently cleaning the sidewalk, but the flagpoles, benches, signs and even the fencing also received a thorough cleaning. After all that hard work, it was time for a snack and as a token of appreciation, the foundation awarded a certificate for a year of good care. This certificate was received by Concierge Willy on behalf of Miss Dominique. Ofcourse you are immediately in good hands with a concierge, because the certificate is probably already hanging in a nice place, on a nail in the school building.**

**From September it will be OBS 't Hout's turn. Then this school is again invited to adopt the Mierlo-Hout memorial monument in the 77th year of liberation.**

## May 4 and 5

This year again a sober May 4 and 5 celebration.

The COVID-19 virus is still around.

Nevertheless, we as the board, in an appropriate manner and linked to the guidelines, did not let these two days pass by.

On May 4 at 8 p.m., our chairman and the secretary laid a flower arrangement at the monument.



F | © Cofoto

On May 5 at 8 p.m. Gerben van Els played the Last Post again.

This year it was again broadcasted live in collaboration with RAILCAM.NL.

We hope that next year we can commemorate and celebrate both festivities in a normal way.



F | © Cofoto



F | H.Raaijmakers

These two stones were placed on the bench at the monument.

## Just another memorial

# Lancaster Monument "De Rips"



## Lancaster III OL-Y NE 165, De Rips.

During the Second World War on February 21 1945, a Lancaster bomber of the British Air Force crashed into the Rips.

Departed from RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire, Wednesday February 21 1945 at 5.07 pm, the Lancaster OL-Y NE 165 aimed to participate in a Pathfinder Mission at Gravenhorst, Germany. Near Gravenhorst lies Mittelland, a division of the Dortmund-Eems canal and a strategically vital waterway for Nazi Germany. The intention was to break through the dikes of the canal. 177 aircrafts, 165 of which were Lancasters, were to take part in this attack.

Lancaster OL-Y NE 165 crashed at 8.45 pm near the Gertruda-Hoeve, after it was hit by a Luftwaffe night fighter. There were eight crew members on board. Only Flying Officer EH Eddie Hansen (21 years old) survived the crash.

- Gp/Cpt **Coran Evans-Evans**, 43 jaar
- Lt **Bill Fitch**, 29 jaar
- Sqn Ld **Jock Wishart**, 23 jaar
- Lt **Sydney Marsh**, 22 jaar
- F/O **C. Coombes**, 22 jaar
- F/Sjt **R.J. Takle**, 27 jaar
- F/O **D.A.J.W. Ball**, 24 jaar

The seven crew members are buried at War Cemetery Mierlo, in graves D 5 to 11



F | © Stiwot



F | © Jan Dijkstra

**Eddie H. Hansen at the graves of his perished comrades.  
This photo was taken in Sept 2018 during his visit to War Cemetery Mierlo.**

## His story.

The mighty Lancaster bombers are a piece of WWII history. Veteran rear gunner Flying Officer Eddie Hansen flew Lancasters and tells Frazer Guild why he wants one of the few left to be kept here in WA. At 12,000 feet (4,000 meters) above dark Europe, the life of Perth man Eddie Hansen was changed forever. The Lancaster's tail gunner was on his 54th operational war flight and his luck had already lasted longer than usual for one of a bomber crew who was constantly chased by the Luftwaffe night fighters. With a three-quarter moonlight, the four-engined bomber was a near-perfect target and the "skipper" group Captain Evans-Evans spun the plane back and forth so they could keep an eye on the blind spot beneath the plane. The specially gathered crew was satisfied with their Path Finder mission to the Mittelland Canal near Gravenhorst. The Path Finders' job was to mark the target for their next bombers, and although on their way home they knew they were still very vulnerable to the German aces that had already killed thousands of Lancaster crews. Mr. Hansen could see the hunters' activities and the occasional fireball that appeared when another Lancaster was hit. He had a hunch that something was flying somewhere around them and asked the skipper to continue spinning the plane back and forth so they could continue searching. After going straight through a left turn, Flying Officer Hansen saw a blinding flash of burning gasoline. This was immediately followed by intense heat and orange light streamed down the rear gun turret. The plane was on fire and I said this over the intercom, "skipper, we got hit".

Evans-Evans replied, "I know", and immediately after this he shouted at us to jump out. "Fire streamed past me and then I saw part of the left wing break off and the Lancaster turned into a spinning flight that pinned everyone in the fuselage because of the centrifugal force." Because of this danger, Eddie Hansen had insisted on getting a parachute of the type used by the pilots instead of one to be hung in the hull next to the dome. As the plane went down, he tugged on the cable that opened the dome's double sliding door and pressed his butt into the slip current. Then he pulled the parachute cord, risking it catching fire from the flames streaming down the hull from the front. The parachute opened and he went off the plane like a cork from a champagne bottle. The back of his head hit the top of the dome and he was unconscious. I vaguely remember coming to, hanging under the chute and seeing a fire on the ground below me. I thought I was going to land on the plane and then passed out a second time. He came to in a plowed field. His head and chest ached and he sprained both ankles. His seven colleagues were dead in the burning plane 300 meters away.

Eddie Hansen dragged himself away on his elbows to find a safer place to hide, not knowing whether he had landed in friendly or enemy territory. After a day or so in the safety of the woods, he turned to see a large man standing next to him wearing clogs. The Dutchman, Toon Verkampen, was looking for Eddie and after assuring him that he was in friendly territory he took him on his back and carried him out of the woods to his bicycle which was nearby. The rescuer stuffed the lucky Eddie on the bike and pushed it to the Fleuren farm where British soldiers had been called up. The war was over for Eddie Hansen, who had been awarded a DFC, (Distinguished, Flying Cross) the year before for his craftsmanship and bravery during the Path Finders marking flights.

F|Stiwot

*"Lest we forget" 1940 -1945 "Opdat wij niet vergeten"*





September 1944: De winkels en woonhuizen van de families Coolen en Van Bladel. Dit pand stond tot 1984 op deze plek. Uiterst links het raam van de werkplaats van waaruit Francien Coolen zag dat een zwaar gewonde soldaat de koepel van zijn tank verliet en moeizaam kruipend, onder hevig vuur de veiligheid van de openstaande boerderijdeur trachtte te bereiken.

### Sept 1944:

The shops and houses of the Coolen and van Bladel families.

This building stood on this site until 1984. Current slice of the monument.

On the far left the window of the workshop from which Francien Coolen saw that a badly wounded soldier left the turret of his tank and struggled to reach the safety of the open farm door, crawling under heavy enemy fire.



**Lt. John Bruce Millar**  
 \* 14 - 11 - 1923  
 † 22 - 09 - 1944



Tijdens de zware gevechten, die vooral gingen om de bevrijding van Mierlo-Hout en het deel van Helmond gelegen westelijk van de Zuid-Willemsvaart, verloren velen het leven. Op deze locatie overleefde de 20-jarige Britse soldaat John Bruce Millar. Levensgevaarlijk gewond zocht hij redding in de boerderij aan de overzijde van de weg, waarvan een stabdeur half openstond.

De 22-jarige Francien Coolen, actief lid van het Rode Kruis, was getuige van de gebeurtenis en begaf zich, met gevaar voor zijn leven, dwars door de vuurlinie om mogelijk nog iets voor deze man te kunnen doen. Terzelftied stierf in haar armen, John Bruce Millar gaf zijn leven voor onze vrijheid. Zijn laatste rustplaats werd het militaire kerkhof in Mierlo.

Francien Coolen ging door met het bieden van humanitaire hulp in Nederland, Duitsland en de overzeese gebieden en bleef tot op hoge leeftijd actief lid van het Rode Kruis.



Een dramatische situatie bracht twee jonge mensen samen, heel even maar...  
 Het was 22 september 1944.

**Francien Hermans-Coolen**  
 \* 27 - 09 - 1921  
 † 24 - 05 - 2010

During the heavy fighting, which preceded the liberation of Mierlo-Hout and the part of Helmond located west of the Zuid-Willemsvaart, many lost their lives.

20-year-old British soldier John Bruce Millar was killed at this location.

Life threateningly injured, he sought rescue in the farm on the other side of the road, whose stable door was half open.

The 22-year-old Francien Coolen, an active member of the Red Cross, witnessed the event and, at the risk of his own life, crossed the line of fire, in order to possibly do something for this man.

In vain, he died in her arms. John Bruce Millar gave his life for our freedom.

His final resting place was the military cemetery in Mierlo.

Francien Coolen continued to provide humanitarian aid in the Netherlands, Germany and the overseas territories and remained an active member of the Red Cross well into old age.

A dramatic situation brought two young people together.

Just a minute .....

Sept 22, 1944.

**Reader's help needed: Question about bombing August 28, 1944.**

On August 28, 1944, a bombing raid took place at the railway crossing in Mierlo-Hout. A number of houses on the former Helmondscheweg, now Mierloseweg, were completely swept away. In 't Haagje there was one fatality during the same bombardment: Antoon Smits, only 16 years old.

Fortunately, there are a number of diaries and eyewitness accounts that tell the stories of this day. However, I am curious if there are any residents who have information about this bombing. Photos, letters, diaries, everything is welcome. Each piece of information can be the last in a much larger puzzle. Who knows who lived on the then Helmondscheweg during the bombing of the odd numbers 1 to 15? Hopefully we can soon publish a full article about that particular day in August.

~ Jeroen Koppes – [j.koppes@tracesofwar.com](mailto:j.koppes@tracesofwar.com)



**For more information about our Foundation, please refer to our website:**

**<https://monumentmierlohout.nl>**

**Telefoon : 0622606053 ♦ Bankrek : NL33RAB00149510217**