

Graham Cooper Rolland
1922 - 1941

Hugh M. Clark
1916 -1941

Ernest Bainbridge
1913 - 1941



**They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.**



Cemetery in Strijen 12 August 2021

Remember

Ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of the RAF's Bristol Blenheim crashing into the pilot whale just next to the entrance to the harbor in Strijensas on 12 August 2021, killing all three crew members.

At 2.00 pm the following are present at the cemetery of Strijen: The organizer Anton de Man with his wife, Dominic Hoogsteder Lt. Colonel Retd of the Air Force on behalf of veterans Hoeksche Waard and on behalf of "Het Land van Strijen", Piet Niemansverdriet, Cees Dubbeldam, Jaap de Koning, Wout Moret and some interested parties. From this solemn commemoration is a film made by filmmaker Jan Lips, which will be sent to the families of the three deceased soldiers. It concerns E. Bainbridge 28 years Gunner Sergeant, HM Clark 24 years Pilot Officer Observer and GC Rolland 18 years Pilot Officer.

From 1947 to 2019, the relatives of these three crew members regularly visited the graves of their loved ones. The families were also invited on August 12 this year, but the delta variant of the Covid virus prevented their presence.

The English flag was flown at half-mast in the cemetery and "The Last Post" was played. Piet, Cees and Wout laid a Poppy wreath at the graves of the soldiers. Jaap de Koning laid a wreath on behalf of the people of Strijen and Strijensas and Dominic Hoogsteder laid a flower arrangement on behalf of the veterans. After this ceremony the English national anthem was played and the meeting in Strijen was concluded.

Then we went to the ferry in Strijensas where Anton de Man had agreed with the skipper that he is just outside the port would stop the boat and there Piet Niemansverdriet laid a bouquet of sunflowers in the water and run the boat back to the dock.

Finally, at the cemetery in Strijensas, we laid a Poppy wreath together on the spot where the soldiers were buried on August 15, 1941. After the war they were reburied in Strijen.



Colonel Retd of the Air Force on behalf of veterans Hoeksche Waard reads the poem: "For The Fallen" written by Laurence Binyon.



Flowers on the water at Strijensas

It was a sober but impressive ceremony, these people sacrificed their lives for our freedom and we must not forget that.



Jaap de Koning, Wout Moret, Piet Niemansverdriet en Cees Dubbeldam.



In Memoriam

August 12, 1941- August 12, 2021

On Tuesday 12 August 1941, the Royal Air Force undertakes a very daring attack on two power stations near Cologne. Because it is a precision attack and the heavy bombers operating at night do not achieve this precision, 54 Bristol Blenheim bombers from No. 2 Group designated for daylight attack.

The attack will be conducted low-flying. An elaborate plan was devised; diversionary attacks in northern Germany and northern France were to lure the German fighters away in order to realize a free passage for the Blenheims. 'Force 1', 18 aircraft 9 of 82 and 9 of 21 Squadron, went to 'Kraftwerken Fortuna' at Quadrath, and 'Force 2', 38 Blenheims, from 18, 107, 114 and 139 Squadron to 'Goldenbergwerk' at Knapsack West, resp. southwest of Cologne. Although the very low-flying (between 10 and 30 mtr.!) aircraft managed to surprise the German anti-aircraft defenses on the Dutch coast, one of the Blenheims was hit in such a way that it crashes into the pilot whale near Strijensas, killing the entire crew. . On 14 August 1941 they were buried with German military honors at the cemetery in Strijensas. (photos) In 1946 the bodies were transferred to the cemetery in Strijen, it was their first and last operation.



Graham Cooper Rolland
1922 - 1941

Graham Cooper Rolland was born in Bolton Lancashire 19 August 1922 as the son of a Scotsman, Dr. William Rolland and his wife Phyllis Rolland née Houghton. Graham went to school in Scotland, at Loretto in Musselburgh, near to Edinburgh. He was a good scholar and a keen athlete. He played cricket, hockey and rugby football in the school teams. He had intended to become a Chartered Accountant, but leaving school in 1940, like many of his class-mates, he felt the call to join the Royal Airforce, That he did and went through the various stages of training, being granted commissions 'for the durations of hostilities' as Pilot Officer on probation 25 May 1941 together with Hugh Clark. Their trainig was concluded at No. 13 Operational Training Unit on the Bristol Blenheim bombers. From here they were posted to No 82 Squadron on 5 August 1941. With this unit Graham, Hugh Clark and Ernest Bainbridge took off from Watton airfield in England for their, it turned out, first and last operational flight, on 12 August 1941. On that date around 12.30 hour the plane crashed near Strijen Sas in Holland and on august 14 they where buried on the cementary in Strijen Sas.



Hugh M. Clark
1916 -1941

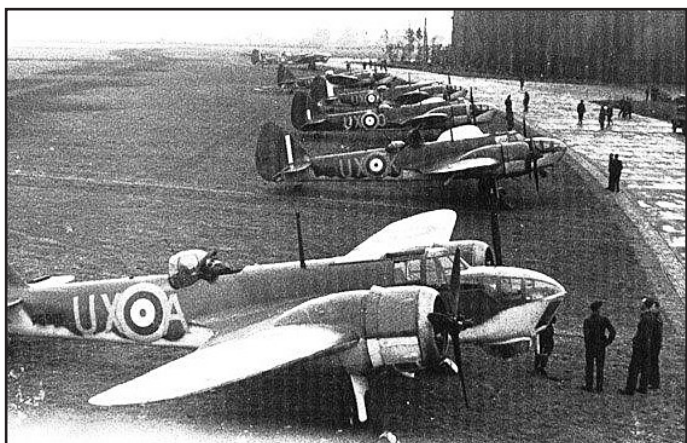
Hugh Maxwell Clark was born 2 September 1916 in Hong Kong as the second child of Douglas and Dorothy Clark. Hugh moved to the UK with his mother, older brother and younger sister around 1921. Hugh was educated at Tonbridge School in Kent and at the University of Cambridge where at first he studied French and German, but then changed course to do English Literature. He graduated in 1938. It's unknown when he joined the Royal Air Force. His training was concluded at the No. 13 Operational Training Unit on the Bristol Blenheim bombers. From here he, Graham Rolland and Ernest Bainbridge were posted to No. 82 Squadron on 5 August 1941. With this unit Hugh, as observer in Graham Rolland's crew, took off in Bristol Blenheim T2437 from Watton airfield on 12 August 1941 for a daring attack on power plants near Cologne, Germany. This was their first, and as it turned out, only operational flight. The Blenheim was hit by Flak and crashed near Strijensas, killing all aboard. Hugh was only 24 years old.

After the war in 1946 the three man are buried at Strijen Protestant Cemetery, where their graves can be visited.



Ernest Bainbridge
1913 - 1941

Ernest Bainbridge was born in Shilton, County Durham 13 July 1913 as the second son of Anthony Bainbridge and his wife Jane Bainbridge née Kipling. The family moved house quite often as a result of Anthony's work with the railroad. Ernest, who is described as modest and a gentleman became a 'gentleman's outfitter assistant' and married Elsie Lund in October 1940. It was also the year he joined the Royal Air Force. Their training was concluded at No. 13 Operational Training Unit on the Bristol Blenheim bombers. From here he, Graham Rolland and Hugh Clark were posted to No. 82 Squadron on 5 August 1941. With this unit Ernest Bainbridge, as air gunner in Graham Rolland's crew, took off in Bristol Blenheim T2437 from Watton airfield on 12 August 1941 for a daring attack on power plants near Cologne, Germany. This was their first, and as it turned out, only operational flight. The Blenheim was hit by Flak and crashed near Strijensas, killing all aboard. Ernest was only 28 years old. To make matters even worse, Elsie lost her unborn child in the weeks after the crash.



82 Squadron Blenheims, Watton in 1940



Wreck of the Blenheim after it had crashed burning in the pilot whale of Strijensas.



The crew that died was buried by Germans, with military honors in Strijensas. Mayer Bolman of Strijen was also there. On the 3 chests the English flag. After the war they were reburied in the cemetery in Strijen. Until the outbreak of the Corona pandemic, family members of the fallen aircrews visited the cemetery almost annually.



Port of Strijensas 2021

12 August 2021

Commemoration on the
cemetery in Strijensas.

Photo below:

Piet Niemansverdriet (left) is interviewed.

