

# Historical statement of facts

On Tuesday, September 26, 1944, shortly after noon, six fighter-bombers of the Hawker Typhoon type took off from Deurne airport near Antwerp. The aircraft were from the 175th Squadron of the Royal Air Force (RAF). It was an armed reconnaissance flight over the Netherlands, where Operation Market Garden came to an end after the dramatic events around Arnhem.

The aircraft were flown by William Hurrell and five of his fellow pilots. For Hurrell it was his third reconnaissance flight and in the records of the RAF he was described as a promising pilot.

## **Attack**

Around 1 p.m. the squadron were flying over Apeldoorn, when they were surprised by an attack by a superior force of as many as fifty German Messerschmitt Bf 109 aircraft. "Scatter and each man to himself" was the motto of the English pilots. But the planes of Hurrell and his colleague Clarke were almost immediately hit.

## **Eyewitness**

Clarke nevertheless managed to reach the homebase in Belgium, where the remaining four aircraft also arrived unscathed. Nothing was heard from William Hurrell. Later it became known that Eefdenaar Gerrit van Zeijts, 9 years old at the time, saw a British aircraft fall straight from the sky on that day.

Van Zeijts, now 84, was sitting on the ridge of the roof of his parental farm. He had seen aerial combat before, but had never witnessed a crash. The aircraft landed in a pasture a few hundred meters away from Van Zeijts' high vantage point.

## **Crater**

Together with his brothers, Gerrit van Zeijts went to the scene one day later to see what was left of the plane, which turned out to be very little. The brothers only found scattered debris around a deep crater. The aircraft had drilled so deep into the ground that the hole had already been filled with groundwater. No traces of the pilot were found at that time.

## **Missing man**

Aviator William Hurrell entered the records as a "missing person". The crater in the Eefdese field was filled in after the war and used as arable land. It is currently a meadow. In September 1945, during a first investigation, a number of engine parts, two identification plates of the aircraft engine, and a signet ring with the initials "WH" were found. Hence, it was almost certain that it was the Typhoon M852 of William Hurrell.

## **Transfer**

On 23 June 1946, mayor J.O. Thate transferred the recovered items to Captain I. Ness of the Missing Inquiry Unit The Hague and Brussels, who was visiting the then municipality of Gorssel at the time.

More about William Hurrell and his family, can be found elsewhere in this information set.

*(This information is partly based on data from Historical Society De Elf Marken)*