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Family members, invited guests and the De Lijnbraak working group during the special unveiling. (Photo: Bas Delhij)

## Ceremony with a smile and a tear in Vierlingsbeek

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**VIERLINGSBEEK | The unveiling of an information board as a tribute to the Canadian crew of a Handley Page Halifax II of the 405 Squadron that crashed on 3 April 1943 around 23:00 at De Lijnbraak in Vierlingsbeek, attracted a wide national and international interest last Saturday. It was a ceremony with a smile and a tear. Especially for the family members of the seven-man Canadian crew of the Handley Page Halifax II that crashed at De Lijnbraak in Vierlingsbeek on 3 April 1943, it was a meeting to remember. They never thought they would ever visit the crash site of their blood relatives.**

Of the seven crew members, five (pilot William James McAlpine, Howard McQueen, Floyd Edward Luxford, John Day White and Joseph Walter Halikowski) died in the crash on 3 April 1943 around 23:00 hours near De Lijnbraak (behind the current Vivara on the Overloonseweg) in Vierlingsbeek. The two gunners, William Laurence Murphy and Ernest Bradley, managed to bail out of the burning aircraft and save their lives, but were subsequently captured by the Germans.

Hugh Adsett, Canada's ambassador to the Netherlands, was also present in Vierlingsbeek. Adsett was one of the guests invited by the WW2 plane crashes and emergency landings working group in the municipality of Boxmeer/De Lijnbraak. Under the watchful eye of about two hundred interested people, he discussed the special relationship that his country, where then Princess Juliana and her children stayed because of the capitulation of the Netherlands to Nazi Germany during WWII, under the watchful eye of about two hundred interested people.

Adsett also thanked all the volunteers of the working group for all the unbridled and meticulous detective work they have done and the organization of the tribute they paid with the unveiling of the information board (which includes witness reports, technical reports about the circumstances, photos and drawings). Leo Janssen elaborated on the findings of the working group: "It is a great honour for me to be able to be there, in the presence of a number of family members of the crew at the time. Boys who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Let's never forget that, lest we forget."

Mayor Marieke Moorman and Deputy Marc Oudenhoven also chose words to the same effect, who, like the ambassador, addressed the importance of peace and security now and in the future, especially for our children, grandchildren and future generations. But also the eyewitness accounts of Piet Kaanen and Pierre Timmermans, who more than eighty years later can still remember the crash of the Allied plane in detail, the speech of Mike McDonnel, a nephew of the pilot McAlpine, poems, music by the big band The Thompson Bridge Band from Grave, wreath laying, the playing of The Last Post and the national anthems of the Netherlands and Canada and to top it all off, the fly-by of pilot Robert van Diemen in a Harvard, made a deep impression.

After the beautiful ceremony, after a short walk under the musical accompaniment of two bagpipe players, the information board was unveiled near the crash site, at the Timmermans farm vending machine on the Overloonseweg in Vierlingsbeek. Both at Vivara and at the crash site, a number of military vehicles from the Second World War could also be admired. After the unveiling, tulips were 'scattered' at the crash site itself in memory of the crew, those seven Canadian young men who, like all other liberators of the past, fought so hard for our current freedom.