

Information on the crew and loss of Wellington bomber X9700, LN-B

Source:

AWM 237 (65) NAA : A705, 163/63/86 Commonwealth War Graves records

W R CHOLEY : RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, Page 120, Volume 1941.

Aircraft Type: Wellington

Serial number: X 9700

Radio call sign: LN - B

Unit: ATTD 99 SQN RAF

Summary:

Wellington X9700 took off from RAF Waterbeach at 2334 hours on the night of 16th August 1941 to bomb Duisberg, Germany. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it failed to return to base.

Crew:

RAAF 404077 FO Wells, G L Captain (Pilot)

RAF 101480 PO Norman Dotchin, N (2nd Pilot)

RCAF J3270 PO Casey, William Aloysius (Observer)

RAF 952493 Sgt Frederick Walter York (Wireless Air Gunner)

RAF 912087 Sgt R M Williams (Air Gunner)

RAF 1181874 Sgt Gerald R Crane (Air Gunner)

The aircraft was shot down by a night fighter and crashed at 0215 hours at Roggell (Limburg), 9kms north west of Roermond. Five of the crew were killed and Sgt Williams was taken prisoner. He is reported to have spent the remainder of the war at Stalag Luft III (POW # 6436) and possibly in hospital at Alkmaar Marine Lazarett.

Wellington X9700 crashed between the Dutch villages of Roggel and Neer on a farmland called Ophovenerveld. Those killed are buried in the Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Locality Gelderland, Netherlands. The town of Nijmegen is located south of Arnhem, and the cemetery is situated in the southwest part of the town.

Flying Officer GEOFFREY LLOYD WELLS

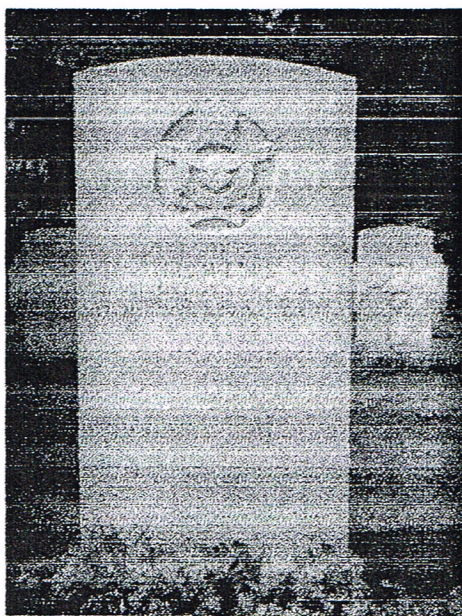
404077, Royal Australian Air Force

who died age 26

on 17 August 1941

**Son of Henry Leslie and Elsie Irene Wells, of Auchenflower, Queensland,
Australia.**

Remembered with honour JONKERBOS WAR CEMETERY



Pilot Officer NORMAN DOTCHIN

**101480, 99 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
who died age 19
on 17 August 1941**

Son of Norman A. and Emily Dotchin, of Bedford.

Remembered with honour JONKERBOS WAR CEMETERY



PILOT OFFICER
NORMAN DOTCHIN -
AUG 6, 1941

Pilot Officer WILLIAM ALOYSIUS CASEY



Pit.-Off. William A. Casey.
Ridgetown, Ont.

**J/3270, 99 (R.A.F.) Sqdn, Royal Canadian Air Force
who died age 24**

on 17 August 1941

Son of John D. and Helen McNally Casey, of Ridgetown, Ontario, Canada.

Remembered with honour JONKERBOS WAR CEMETERY

Sergeant FREDERICK WALTER YORK

952493, 99 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

who died age 25

on 17 August 1941

**Son of Walter George and Florence Lizzie York, of Wellingborough,
Northamptonshire.**

Remembered with honour JONKERBOS WAR CEMETERY



Sergeant GERALD CRANE

1181874, 99 Sqn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

who died age 21

on 17 August 1941

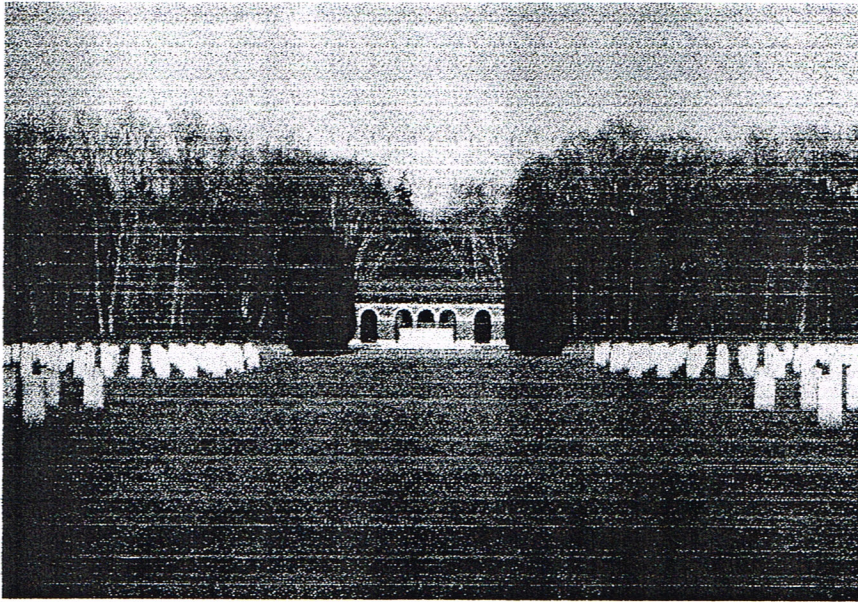
Son of George H. and Beatrice E. Crane, of Sherborne, Dorsetshire.

Remembered with honour JONKERBOS WAR CEMETERY

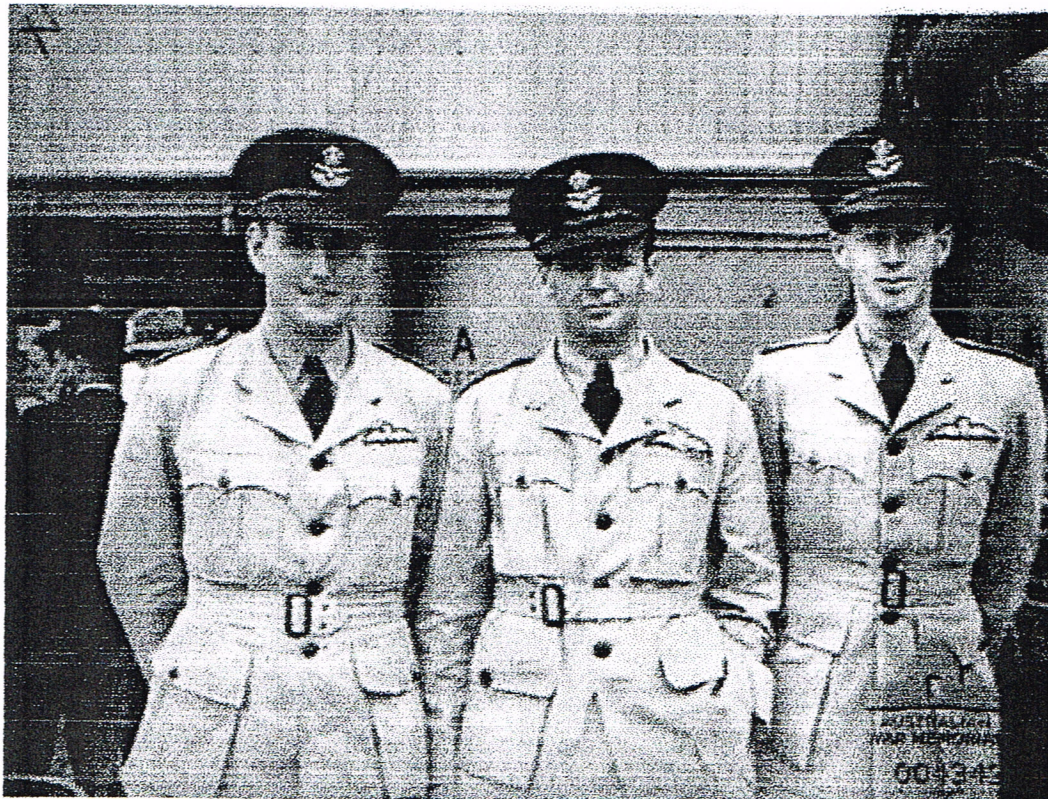


SGT GERALD CRANE

Jonkerbos Cemetery:



Here is a photo of P/O Lloyd Wells (far right) the day he shipped out for England.



ID number 004342
Photographer Department of Information
Object type Black & white
Place made Australia: New South Wales, Sydney
Date made October 12 1940
Physical description Black & white
Collection Photograph

Description

Departure of the ship 'Largs Bay' with the first party of RAAF members to complete their training within Australia under the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS). Left to right are shown 402044 Pilot Officer (PO, later Flying Officer [FO]) William Wallace Anderson; 402060 PO (later FO) Sydney Douglas Marshall; 404077 PO (later FO) Geoffrey Lloyd Wells. FO Anderson was lost on operations over France with 258 Squadron, RAF on 18 June 1941. FO Marshall was lost on operations with 15 Squadron, RAF over the English Channel on 18 July 1941, while FO Wells was killed on operations over Holland with 99 Squadron RAF on 17 August 1941. FO Anderson and Marshall have no known grave and are commemorated on the Runnymede memorial in Surrey, UK. FO Wells is buried in the Jonkerbos cemetery near Nymegen in the Netherlands.

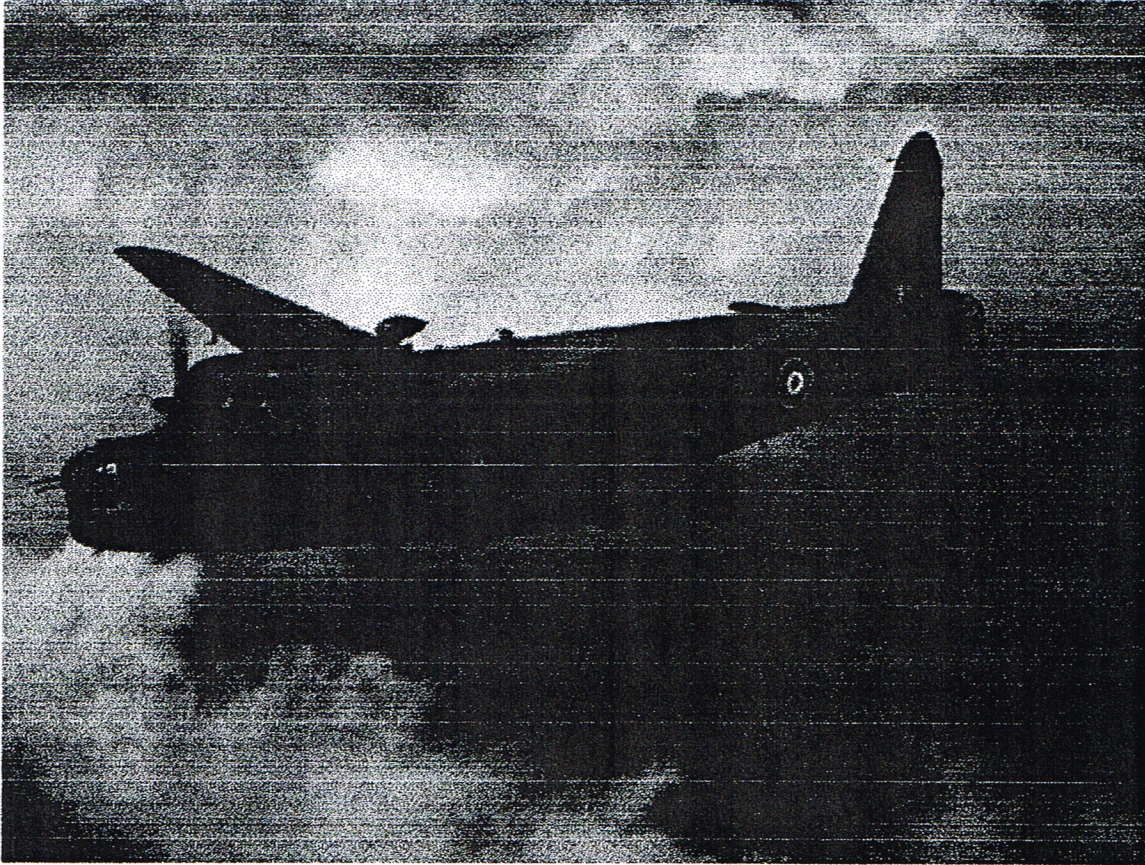
According to information in "RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War 1941" by WR Chorley, Wellington X9700 was shot down by Lt. Hans-Dieter Frank (I/NJG1). This is corroborated in "Luftwaffe Night Fighter Combat Claims" by Foreman, Matthews and Parry.

Frank was stationed at Venlo with Stab I/NJG1, and claimed an eastbound Wellington shot down at 02:15 on August 17th, 10 kms northwest of Roermund. This was the only Wellington bomber claimed that night in that area and was most likely Wellington X9700. Frank was KIA on Sept. 27, 1943 in a mid-air collision. He had 55 kills claimed and was one of the top-scoring German nightfighter aces in WWII. He flew a MESSERSCHMIDT Me110 twin-engined fighter



There is a 99 Squadron web page with a lot of info and some pictures here....[RAF 99 Squadron- Waterbeach](#)

This is a photo of a typical Vickers Wellington bomber.



The Vickers Wellington, affectionately known as the "Wimpy," was armed with twin .303 machine guns in the nose and tail turrets. It also had 2 manually-operated .303 guns in the beam positions and could carry a 4,500 lb bomb load. Slow speed, limited ceiling, and a small bomb load soon made the Wellington obsolete, although one significant design advantage was Barnes-Wallace's geodetic lattice-work fuselage construction. This made the Wimpy extremely tough, and it often survived battle damage which would have destroyed other Aircraft

Report by local residents near the crash-site of Wellington X9700 published by Michel Beckers on his website...

<http://www.ww2crashsiteresearch.com/engels/pagina143.html>

Only one man has survived.



That same night at 02.15 AM, a Wellington belonging to 99 Squadron nicknamed Celon, was hit by Lt. Frank from Venlo airbase, after it was caught in the searchlights. The English aircraft started burning and came down with roaring engines. Since it was on its way to Germany, all the bombs were still on board. The bombs were dropped while the plane was descending towards the ground which caused the engine sounds to mingle in between with the sounds of the exploding projectiles. The plane hit the ground at the "Ophovenerveld" in Neer, where the debris was spread over a large area. A part of a wing fell on top of a farmhouse belonging to the Pijls family, right at the location where Mother Pijls used to sleep. She had just been buried the day before and the room had not been back in use yet. The whole roof was destroyed and the family was very moved by all that had happened.

In the vicinity of the wreckage lay the bodies of 5 dead crew members: Sgt. G. Crane, Sgt. F. York, P/O. G. Wells, P/O. N. Dotchin and P/O W. Casey. They were buried at the military cemetery in Venlo, on August 19th, and were

reburied in Nijmegen after the war. The sole survivor was Sgt. Bob Williams. He was able to leave the burning airplane just in time and landed his parachute on top of the roof of the farm belonging to the van Beeren family at "aan het Ophoven" in Roggel.

"One of the people of the Fire Department was able to free him from his uncomfortable position", according to a statement in a report of the Community Field Watch G. Reinders from Roggel. He was then transferred to café (bar) Mennen by stretcher. The emergency post of the local air defense was located there.

One of the daughters – Mrs Trui Timmermans-Mennen- still remembers the event very well:

"That night the air alarm signal had been given and the German Flak positions in the area were firing all night long. The whole family was sitting together when suddenly people from the air defense service came in to pick up the stretcher. They came back a little while later. There was an airman lying on top of the stretcher. After arrival he carefully got up and positioned himself on top of the couch which was located underneath the window. He was still wearing his flying helmet, goggles and thick gray coveralls. Apparently he had a pain in his back because he kept constantly pointing at it. Piet Kooimans of the air defense service was the only person who could speak a couple words of English. My father gave the Englishman a drink to help him come to his senses again. Doctor De Maat, who had been warned by the air defense service, performed first aid on him. Shortly afterwards the Germans entered the bar. They wanted us to go to the back of the building, but my father refused. An officer briefly talked to the injured airman but he barely replied. A short while later he was transferred away by ambulance, probably towards the hospital in Venlo. In 1955 we were able to get back in contact with Sgt. Bob Williams with help of a newspaper article. Our contact has been maintained till this day, and we still visit each other regularly, from father Mennen's point of view, already the 4th generation.

In an interview with Radio Kent a couple of years ago, Sgt. Bob Williams told the following about his last flight:

"I was shot down on my seventeenth mission. Our target was Duisburg, but unfortunately it was one of those nights that we had to fly in any case. Our pilot was pretty seriously ill. He had the flu. The crew had problems with that but Flight Command told us to go anyway. When we had left the Belgian coastline behind us, we noticed the searchlights all over the place. There was

no flak to be seen, so there had to be night fighters around. Suddenly we ended up in the middle of the searchlights. Under normal conditions the pilot would most probably have been able to shake them off, but as I mentioned before, he wasn't top fit that night. We were then attacked by a night fighter and that became the beginning of the end. What I clearly remember is that I opened the door of the nose turret so that the gunner could come out. I saw the navigator standing up from his chair and the next moment I noticed that the plane was spinning over on its wing and that we were on fire. I received the assignment to head back to the observer turret to keep an eye on our attacker, but since they were black I couldn't see them immediately. Suddenly I saw tracers hitting us. Our wing caught fire and I went back immediately. I thought this was the end. The next thing I remembered was that we dove down and that I fell down like a bullet from an altitude of 5,500 metres. At around 1,000 m. above the ground I almost automatically pulled the parachute handle and I heard how the little parachute opened. A little later I ended up on top of a roof with a big bang. I didn't know where I was. I was laying upside down for a couple of minutes when I started to feel that I was slipping down. I remember thinking that I had fallen down all the way towards the ground, to be laying there with my head pointing upside down on top of a roof. I was able to straighten up a little bit with help of my parachute cords. Suddenly I saw some light beams and I heard voices. I didn't know what language it was, perhaps German, but one way or another they got up on the roof from the side and someone from the fire department picked me up and carried me down. It hurt quite a lot because I had broken a couple of ribs and my sternum. They carried me to a small bar. I was in the Netherlands, to be exact, in Ophoven near the village of Roggel not far from Venlo and Eindhoven. I was put on a couch inside of the bar and after half an hour a man in completely black clothing appeared. He took off his hat and came up to me, opened his suitcase and took something out and gave me a shot of morphine. Afterwards he put everything back in his suitcase and left. Years later I sought contact with these people. The man in black was Doctor de Maat. We have talked to each other many times since that point. I always carried some kind of lucky charm with me. It was a golden bird that I gave to the daughter (of the bar owner?). I also gave my cigarette case with lighter away, to prevent the Germans from taking it. A little while later a couple of German soldiers arrived to guard me. They took my cigarettes away from me and asked me something. I didn't give them a reply, though. Afterwards a German Hauptman entered. As long as I will live I will never forget that moment. He spoke better English than I did. He told me that he had been educated at King's College in London. He asked me if I wanted to smoke and handed me a cigarette. "Haven't you got any cigarettes of your own?" he asked and then I told him that the two German guards had taken them from me. A bit of typical German discipline followed right afterwards. He made a small sign with his gloves, which he was holding in his hand, towards the

guards, and I immediately received my cigarettes back. Since I was injured, I didn't have an opportunity to get out of there with help of the resistance. A Luftwaffe ambulance arrived and took me to a hospital in Krefeld. I stayed there for about 8 weeks. After that I ended up in one of the Stalag Luft camps where I was eventually liberated by the Russians. In 1955 I wrote a letter to the mayor of Venlo in which I requested to get in contact with the people who had helped me back then. The newspapers published an ad and a lot of responses came in. Eventually it turned out that I had ended up with the Mennen family in Roggel. I had a lot to thank to those people for. We became friends from that point on and still visit each other regularly."

Following are copies of the service records and operational records of the crew, obtained by Sharon Beaman (niece of Frederick York) from the Royal Air Forces Association:

16 April '41

Crew: P/O Dixon, Sgt. Chilvers, Sgt. Andrews, Sgt. Wheble, Sgt. York, Sgt. Russell

Aircraft- Wellington T2554

Target: shipbuilding yards at BREMEN

Up: 23.50 Down: 05.00

5 May '41

Crew: Sgt. Hannah, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington R1293

Target: Docks at Cherbourg

Up: 22.35 Down: 03.10

7 May '41

Crew: Sgt. Hannah, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington N2768

Target: German battle cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, Brest

Up: 22.00 Down: 03.25

10 May '41

Crew: Sgt. Hannah, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington R1472

Target: Hamburg, Germany

Up: 22.40 Down: 04.00

17 May '41

Crew: Sgt. Hannah, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington R1472

Target: Cologne

Up: 22.30 Down: 02.30

27 May '41

Crew: Sgt. Hannah, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington 2768

Target: Hipper Class Cruiser

Up: 06.40 Down: 11.25

11 Jun '41

Crew: Sgt. Hannah, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington T2611

Target: Dusseldorf, Germany

Up: 23.35 Down: 02.50

13 Jun '41

Crew: Sgt. Hannah, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington T2611

Target: German battle cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, Brest

Up: 23.35 Down: 04.00

17 Jun '41

Crew: P/O Wells, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington T2611

Target: Boulogne docks

Up: 00.04 Down: 03:13

25 Jun '41

Crew: P/O Wells, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington T2611

Target: Bremen

Up: 23.32 Down: 03.45

1 July '41

Crew: P/O Wells, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington T2611

Target: German battle cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, Brest

Up: 22.24 Down: 04.03

3 July '41

Crew: P/O Wells, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington T2957

Target: Krupp Works, Essen

Up: 23.31 Down: 05.06

22 July '41

Crew: P/O Wells, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington X9700

Target: Mannheim, Germany

Up: 22.37 Down: 04.59

24 July '41

Crew: P/O Wells, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington X9700

Target: Brest (the Gneisenau)

Up: 11.18 Down: 17.00

30 July '41

Crew: P/O Wells, Sgt. Coleman, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington X9700

Target: Cologne

Up: 00.21 Down: 05.12

16 Aug '41

Crew: P/O Wells, P/O Dotchin, P/O Casey, Sgt. York, Sgt. Williams, Sgt. Crane

Aircraft- Wellington X9700

Target: Duisburg, Germany

Up: 23.34 Down:

-Aircraft failed to return, no communication being received from time of take-off