

Institute of National Remembrance

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Commemoration of the Crew of Wellington Z8339 in the Netherlands - 20 June 2026

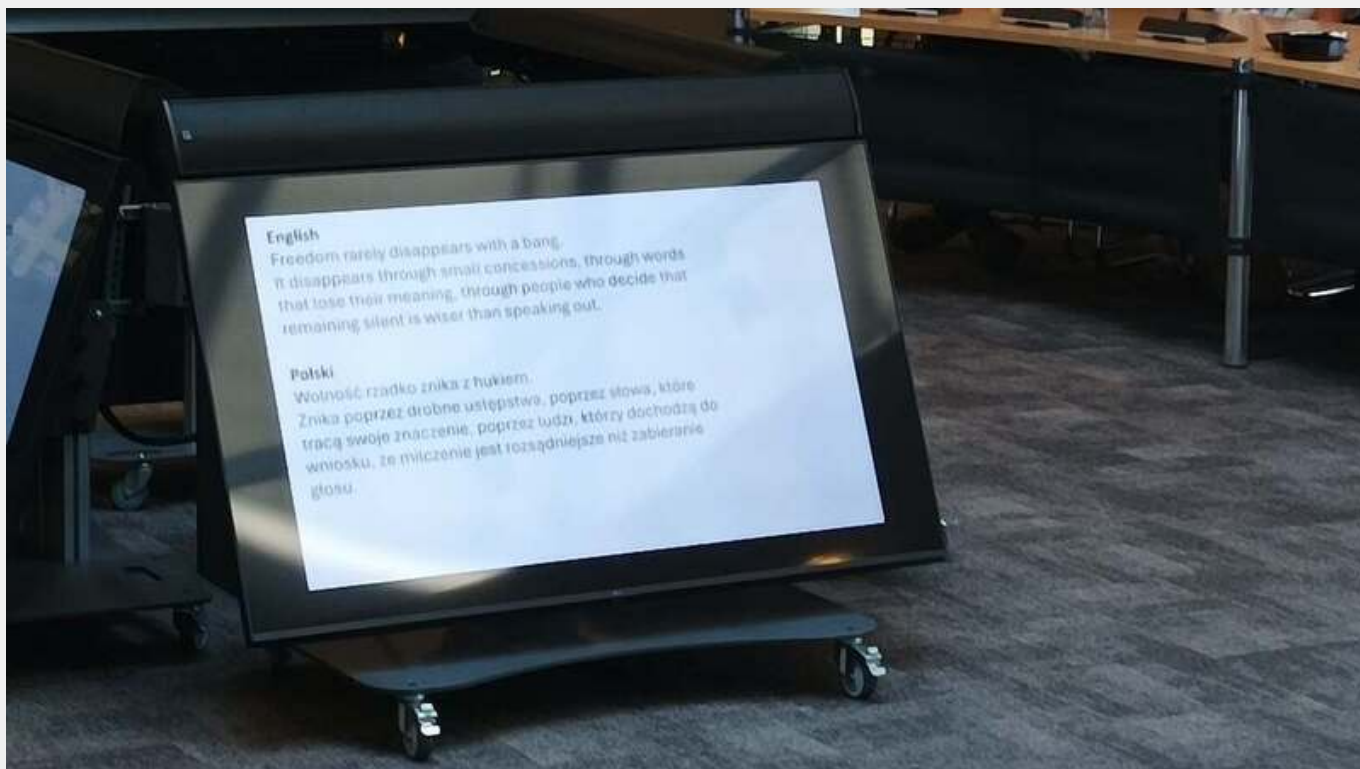












On 20 June 2026, commemorative ceremonies were held in Raalte and Schoonheten in the Kingdom of the Netherlands to honour the crew of Wellington Mk II Z8339 of No. 305 "Greater Poland" Bomber Squadron, lost during a combat mission in the Second World War.

A delegation of the IPN participated in the events organised by

Stichting Raalte voor Vrijheid, the Municipality of Raalte and local community groups that have preserved the memory of Polish airmen for many years.

During the night of 19–20 June 1942, the crew of Wellington Z8339 was returning to Britain after carrying out a bombing mission against targets in Osnabrück. During the return flight, the aircraft was intercepted by a German night fighter and crashed near Schoonheten, close to Raalte. Of the five crew members, only Stefan Bolesław Madejczyk survived and became a prisoner of war.

The following crew members lost their lives: Pilot Alojzy Paweł Gusowski, Navigator Henryk Aleksander Jankiewicz, Wireless Operator Kazimierz Jan Ardelli,, Air Gunner Marian Jan Świdorski.

The commemorations began at the cemetery in Raalte, where the Polish airmen are buried. The programme continued at Raalte Town Hall with a presentation devoted to the crew's history and a launch of historian Krzysztof Kowalkowski's book. A commemorative service was then held at the Basilica of the Holy Cross Exaltation.

The central ceremony took place at the crash site in Schoonheten, where a new memorial plaque dedicated to the crew was unveiled. Participants included representatives of Polish and Dutch authorities, relatives of the airmen, local residents and civic organisations committed to preserving the memory of those who fought for Europe's freedom.

During the ceremony, a letter from IPN Deputy President Karol Polejowski was read. In his message he stated: *Let me express my warm gratitude to the Municipality of Raalte for cultivating the memory of Polish airmen during annual celebrations and caring for their eternal resting place.*

Polejowski also thanked Mayor of Raalte Rob Zuidema and Dutch community activists, describing them as ambassadors of Polish-Dutch history and remembrance.

The ceremonies in Raalte and Schoonheten carried a significance extending beyond a local anniversary commemoration. They served as a reminder of the contribution made by Polish airmen serving in the Royal Air Force to the defeat of Germany and of the price paid by Poland for the freedom of Europe. At the same time, they demonstrated the enduring Polish-Dutch community of remembrance. Thanks to the commitment of local authorities, civic organisations and residents, the story of the crew of Wellington Z8339 remains alive beyond Poland's borders and forms part of Europe's shared memory of the Second World War.

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