

# ICOMOS Netherlands

## Announcement

**Date:** Wednesday 11 march 2020  
**Time:** 19h30-21h30 (drinks and meal from 18h30)  
**Place:** DutchCulture, Herengracht 474, Amsterdam  
**Subject:** WOII Plane wrecks in Indonesia and the Netherlands  
**Speakers:** Bas Kreuger and Ruurd Kok  
**Language:** English



Wreck of an American P-38 Lightning fighter plane located in 2007 in New Britain (Foto: Max Ammer), Historical picture of a A-20G bomber plane of the US 5th Air Force attacking the Japanese airfield at Nabire, Nieuw Guinea 1944 (Foto Jack Heyn US Air).

### **Bombers in the bush. Remote and invisible war heritage** *by Bas Kreuger*

2020 is the year we remember 75 years of Liberation. In the Netherlands there will be a lot of events, but how about the war in the Far East? In New Guinea (both PNG and DNG) victory over Japan began. That 1943-1945 struggle has largely been forgotten by the subsequent decolonisation war of 1945-1949, but is worth our attention. In New Guinea air power was crucial in fighting Japan. There are hardly any monuments, sites or museums giving attention to this gruesome campaign, neither in Indonesia (Papua) nor in the Netherlands.

The silent witnesses, aircraft wrecks, in the jungle and under water slowly disappear and with them the story of this forgotten battlefield. Bas will address the beginning of the liberation of Dutch East Indies in New Guinea. Research into a story of a crash landing of an US bomber and the actual search for this wreck symbolises that struggle for liberation.

## Traces of the air war: aircraft crash sites as archaeological heritage? by Ruurd Kok

During the Second World War the Netherlands played a key role in the air war. Immediately after the occupation of the country German forces started enlarging existing airfields and building new ones. In reaction to the allied air offensive against Nazi Germany a network of radar stations and anti-aircraft defences were constructed. Built remains of some airfields are legally protected as heritage of war. Archaeological traces of the air war are not yet protected.

This applies especially to the remains of aircraft that crashed in the Netherlands. The recovery of aircraft is done by a special recovery unit of the Royal Dutch Airforce. In 2010 archaeologists were invited for the first time by local authorities to document finds and traces during an aircraft recovery. In the years that followed several recoveries were done under archaeological observation. Unfortunately, this is not standard procedure, not even in the special recovery programme funded by the State.

The paper presents an overview of archaeological traces of the air war in the Netherlands. It also shows the results of some recoveries carried out under archaeological observation, including the spectacular recovery of a Vickers Wellington-bomber from the IJsselmeer-lake. Finally the question is raised whether aircraft crash sites should be treated as heritage of war.



An archaeologist (left) observing an aircraft recovery in Apeldoorn (2010).

**Bas Kreuger** is an historian and heritage specialist with a focus on military and aviation heritage. Since 1993 air war in the Far East has his attention. In 1999 and 2019 field trips to New Guinea and Australia were done.

**Ruurd Kok** studied Prehistory and Archaeology at Leiden University. He worked as a municipal archaeologist in the town of Gouda and as a provincial archaeologist for the province of Utrecht. In 2010 he moved to RAAP, an archaeological contracting firm. At his company he focussed on the research of WWII-sites. He was co-author of the publication on the spectacular recovery of a Vickers Wellington-bomber from the IJsselmeer-lake in 2016.

Since 2019 Kok is a lecturer in archaeology at Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Deventer. He is also working as a freelance journalist. His book about traces of war in and around his hometown Leiden will be published this April.

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*The ICOMOS lectures take place from 19h30 till 21h30.  
Drinks and informal meal are served from 18h30.  
ICOMOS members pay no entrance fee.  
Non-members pay a € 5,00 entrance fee.*

*Meal and drinks are € 10,00 per person (members and non-members alike).*

*Attendance of lecture and meal/drinks is only possible by registering at  
[lezingen@icomos.nl](mailto:lezingen@icomos.nl)*