Sgt Willem van der Wilden Dutch Army
Bronzen Kruis
Training Name - Willem van der Westen
Field Name - Willem Winter
Code Name - Kris; Dolf



Willem was born on 1 June 1910 in Hillegom, South Holland, Netherlands, the son of Cornelis van der Wilden and Alida Catharina van der Wilden nee van Cuijlenburg. In July 1938 he married Martina Hak in Pretoria, South Africa.

Educated in Hillegom, on leaving school Willem joined the family building firm where he worked across the Netherlands. In 1937 Willem emigrated to South Africa and settled in Pretoria.

In January 1942 Willem was called up for Military service and immediately sailed to London from Cape town in SS Windsor Castle. Willem enlisted in the Princess Irene Regiment of the Dutch Army in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire.

In June 1942 Willem joined the SOE (Dutch Section) and was trained at STS 6 West Court, Berkshire, STS 24 Knoydart, Scotland, STS 31 Beaulieu, Hampshire, STS 51 Ringway, Manchester for parachute training and STS 52 Thame Park, Oxfordshire for Radio Security Training before he was allocated to his operation "Golf", as WT operator to "Broadbean" the code name of Lt Gerrit van Os.

At 23:53 on 18 February 1943, Willem, together with his leader, departed RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire in a 138 Sqn Halifax.

Successfully dropped at the drop zone near Loenen, Gelderland, Netherlands, the Gestapo were waiting. Unbeknown to SOE, the Germans had infiltrated the Dutch Section and were operating a very successful counterintelligence operation, known as "Englandspiel". Immediately arrested, Willem was interrogated by the SS and transferred to the SD prison Haaren in North Brabant.

Following the escape of prisoners from Haaren on 29 November 1943 the remaining agents, including Willem, were first transported to the prison in Assen, then in 1944 to Rawicz. Most agents were then transferred to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Willem was executed, along with 22 other SOE agents, on 6 September 1944.

Also Killed: Lt Gerrit van Os BK

Willem has no known grave and is commemorated on a Memorial Plate at Mauthausen that covers the area where the ashes of all agents killed with Willem are believed to be buried.

Willem is commemorated on Wall Panel - Not Yet Erected

Willem's cousin, Sgt Pieter van der Wilden, was also murdered in Mauthausen on 6 September 1944, another victim of "Englandspiel"

Photo Source: dirkdeklein.net