

The escape of Justus Heymans from Holland with the Koolhoven FK 43 '965'.

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As everyone may know, during the Second World War several escapes with aeroplanes from Holland succeeded. The best-known success story is without any doubt the Fokker G.1 which took off on 5 May 1941 from the Fokker premises at Schiphol airport and which landed safely in England. And a day after that a Fokker T.VIIIw left from the Minerva-harbor in Amsterdam also to land in England [1].

A less well known story happened much earlier, on 15 May 1940 just after the Dutch surrender. Another Dutchman left from Schiphol airport and he also succeeded in flying to England. This was Justus Heymans who had possessed a flying license since March 1935 and who was a famous sport pilot. He was also qualified in night flying. Thanks to the instructions of the Dutch Airforce personnel, Heymans managed to escape with the military Koolhoven FK 43 '965' he hijacked from Schiphol airport [2].

During my research into the history of the airfield at Hilversum – my contribution to the book 'Vliegvelden in Oorlogstijd' (Dutch Airfields during the War) – I already bumped into this famous pilot. An interesting gentleman who I will give more attention in this article.



Justus Heymans around 1938.

Heymans was born on 30 April 1901 in Apeldoorn. His family was already active for a couple of generations in textile goods and had been financially successful. After his education at the HBS in Apeldoorn, he worked in several foreign textile companies and factories. In 1924 he - together with his brother Harry Siegbert – took over the management of the *NV Internationale Handelsvereniging* and under their leadership the company would flourish greatly. The main hobby of the brothers Heymans was flying. The company possessed its own airplane and both brothers used it during their international travels. This way they were able to maintain very fast and good contacts with their customers and suppliers [3]. Heymans was also member of the *Vrijwillige Organisatie Sportvliegers* (V.O.S.) (Volunteering Organisation of Sport pilots) who were available with their planes in case of emergencies like transporting sick patients from the Frisian islands.

The airplane Heymans owned was the de Havilland DH.85 Leopard Moth with the telling registration PH-JUH (Justus Heymans). The construction number of the plane was 7098 and it was signed in the aircraft registry on 2 May 1935 (CoR 222). Heymans collected this plane himself in England and at that time the Leopard Moth cost approximately £1364,10 what in today's currency is approximately £88.100 [4]. The plane was confiscated during the Mobilization on 17 October 1939 by the Dutch Airforce and was given the military registration '968'. According to the notification of the Depot Luchtstrijdkrachten (Depot Airforce), a compensation of 25 guilders per flying hour would be paid [5]. It is not clear if or for what purpose the plane was used. On 2 May 1941 the registration was revoked because the airworthiness certificate had expired [6].

Between October and December 1936, Justus Heymans travelled together with the well-known Nicolaas Wilhelm Sluyter – instructor at the National Aviation School - to the Dutch East Indies and used for this his Leopard Moth. Afterwards he published a 200 page book with the title *Als sportvlieger naar Indië heen en weer terug* [7]. He describes the whole journey and all the stops that they made on their way to what is now called Indonesia.



Sluyter and Heymans in front of the DH.85 Leopard Moth PH-JUH. This image was taken at Schiphol airport on 23 October 1936 just before they left for the Dutch East Indies [7].....



...and after arriving at the airfield Tsjillitan in Batavia on 8 November 1936. After a flight of more than 13.500 kilometres the plane and pilots were honoured [8].

This would not be his last journey so soon before the start of the war. On 16 February 1939, the Dutch East Indies were again the destination. This time Heymans travelled together with Mr. Willem D. Rous in a de Havilland D.H.87 Hornet Moth with the registration PK-WDR. The trip would not be easy. After starting from the airfield in Vlissingen, they encountered bad weather over Antwerp and the trip had to be abandoned and they returned to Vlissingen. A day later they started again from Vlissingen and they now ended up in thick fog over France. This forced an emergency landing near the village of Gratay in the neighborhood of Maçon. The next day the flight could be continued to Nice. On 2 March both pilots arrived in Batavia and they came back to Holland on 30 May 1939 after conducting their business in Asia.

The return flight of Heymans was also a great achievement which caught the attention of the press [9]. It is without any doubt that the brothers Heymans were doing well in business and had sufficient available funds. Few people in Holland owned an airplane let alone were able to take flying lessons or were able to be away from home flying in a plane to the Dutch East Indies.



Memorial plaque which Justus Heymans received from his mother after his successful return from the Dutch East Indies in 1936 [10].

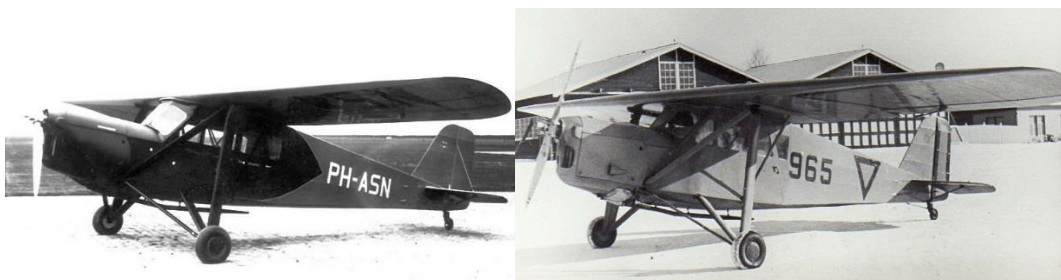
Justus Heymans was also a board member of the *Amsterdamsche Aeroclub* and together with Klaas Geus van den Heuvel promoted the construction of the airfield at Hilversum. The traffic at the Amsterdam-Schiphol airfield was considered to be too congested and they hoped to avoid this problem with the construction of a new airfield. A suitable terrain was found to the south of Hilversum. By using the Employment Program and a lot of civilians in a job rotation pool, the desired airfield named 'Vliegveld het Gooi' was constructed. Though Justus Heymans was member of the board of the Foundation 'Vliegveld het Gooi', it has not become clear if he had an active role.

However, no civilian plane would land on the newly constructed airfield. Just before the opening, the airfield was confiscated by the Dutch authorities on the 28 August 1939 when the Mobilization was proclaimed.

With a small leap forward in time, we move to 15 May 1940: the Dutch Army was defeated and the capitulation had just been signed. In a report from Justus Heymans to Dr. Loe de Jong in 1971, he recalled what happened that day. Here is the text from his original English letter [11]:

When the war broke out on May 10, I was not in actual aviation service but had been assisting in communications for the aviation which had then moved their headquarters to Slooten and Badhoevendorp. I also boarded a family whose house was ruined at Schiphol. During the evenings, I was usually at service to the army in order to fight or stop the Fifth Colonne Action.

On the evening of the 14th of May, things grew very dark and being Jewish, I tried to get out via the IJmuiden route like so many others, however, without any success. We surrendered at 7:00 p.m. and afterwards I went to the airport headquarters base at Badhoevendorp. We were with about 20 officers including Mr. Hein Schmidt-Crans, an old friend of mine who was Chief Instructor of the N.L.S. and one of the commanders of the bombing squadron. All our planes had been destroyed that afternoon and evening except for one which somebody wanted to fly out but had changed his mind about. Mr. Hein Schmidt-Crans then told me that because of the fact that I was Jewish, my future outlook was rather dark and that I should try to escape with this plane. My chances were very limited but I had nothing to lose, The plane was a military one 963 or 64 and it was as they called it formerly a "juffertje" of the K.L.M. and could seat 6 people. It was a "Koolhoven" with a reversible prop etc, and I had to be instructed how to fly it but since I had quite some experience in flying, I decided to take my chance, Nobody wanted to come with me because they were all afraid of possible action that might be taken against their families which would have to stay behind.

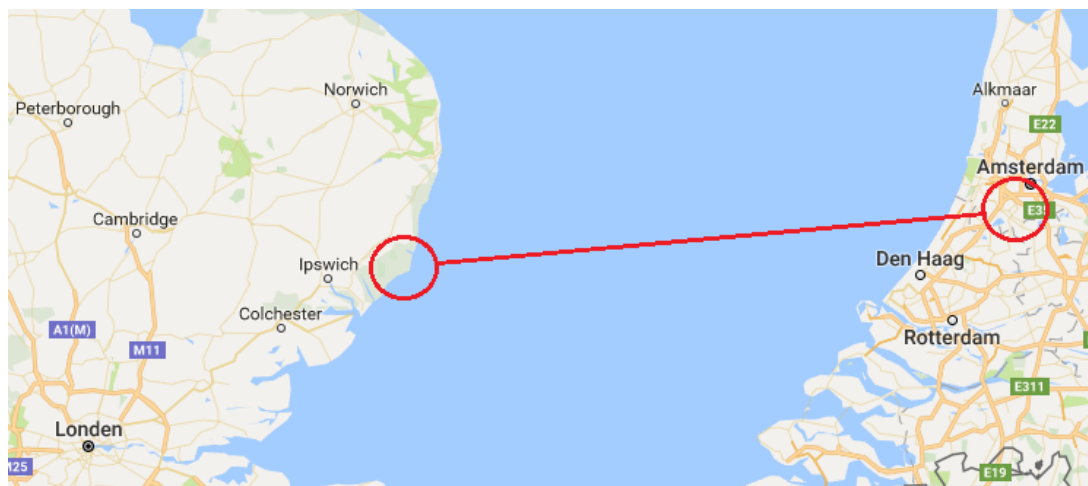


Left: The PH-ASN in better times.... (www.1000aircraftphotos.com)

Right: ...as the '965' in the snow at Soesterberg airfield, the plane Heymans used to make his escape (collection Peter Grimm).

I went to the Commander of Schiphol, Colonel Luitwieler, and asked him for permission to fly the plane out. Mr. Luitwieler's answer was: "I cannot give you permission but hope you will have a good flight". Mr. Jan Plesman was very helpful. We checked the gasoline in the plane and all the other equipment and the departure time had been set for 3:00 a.m. the following morning, May 15th, so that I would arrive in England at daybreak, I had no map but had to take the route West, I left alone and Mr. Plesman assisted me. I had about a 400 meter run at the damaged airport and due to certain obstructions and damages, I was unable to lift the plane immediately but had to keep it down at full speed while Mr. Plesman gave me flashlight signals. To my surprise, all went well, I was up in the air, taking the route west and I could finally take altitude, The Germans had not yet arrived at Schiphol but at the coast there was some shooting but they did not hit me, I took an altitude of about 1200 meter in order to be in a haze and after a one and a half hour flight, the English coast came in sight, I was wearing a parachute and my instructions were to jump when I would reach the English coast because the English would shoot me down since I flew a plane out of a surrendered country. I decided not to jump as long as they would not shoot, I circled over England for about 20 minutes, nobody saw me. I did see a golf course in which I could pancake because the beach would have been too sandy. Finally, I saw an airport and I landed unseen by the guards who finally came over and asked me who I was and I asked them to be led to their commander. I had landed between Ipswich and Harwich. I was put under arrest and they brought me to their headquarters at Ipswich where I was questioned and investigated and released after three hours. The next day I went to the Netherlands Embassy in London which then took over the plane. The plane was returned to Holland in undamaged conditions after the war.

His experience with night-flying turned out to be of valuable use.....Heymans would land at the small airfield of Orfordness which is situated approximately 25 kilometers east of Ipswich. This airfield is situated close to the North Sea and is approximately 220 kilometers from the Amsterdam-Schiphol airport.



The location of the Orfordness airfield east of Ipswich (Google Maps)



Airfield Orfordness before the Second World War (www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

From 1924, this airfield was a satellite station for the *Airplane and Armament Experimental Establishment* which was based at Martlesham Heath. Because of its remoteness, the area was very suitable for ballistic tests with bombs. From 1935, a small experimental radar unit was active on the airfield [12]

From Heymans arrival at the airfield of Orfordness, the following English report survived:

<p>SUMMARY NO. 301. 16th.MAY.1940. <u>Page 8.</u></p>
<p>390. <u>DUTCH AIRCRAFT.</u> <u>May 15th.1940.</u></p> <p>At 0530 hours, DUTCH Aircraft landed at ORFORDNESS the sole occupant being JUSTUS HEYMANS, who stated that his was the last machine to leave SCHIPHOL and at 0330 hours the centre of the SCHIPHOL Aerodrome was still serviceable. He also stated that there was a small secret Aerodrome in existence next to the FOKKA Factory North of AMSTERDAM, which was undamaged. All aircraft has been destroyed by the DUTCH with the exception of some DOUGLAS Machines belonging to K.L.M.</p> <p>Coast landings are only possible immediately after high tide as the sand dries and softens rapidly.</p> <p>Both main petrol stores at AMSTERDAM were destroyed and orders were issued at 1900 hours on the 14th.May to destroy all arms and equipment.</p> <p>The pilot went on to state that the parachutists were very young, being between 17 and 23 years of age and at ROTTERDAM they carried inflatable boats.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(F.C.).</p>

Heymans escaped with the Koolhoven FK 43 with registration '965'. At that time, this plane was flying for KLM, was nicknamed '*Nonvlinder*' (Black Arches or Nun Moth) and had the registration PH-ASN (c/n 4311). On the 17 October 1939, the military authorities confiscated the plane and

gave it the military registration '965'. Until the beginning of the war, the plane was used as a trainer for the Detachment II-1 LvR at Soesterberg and Schiphol. Among others, the '965' was used for instruction for instrument flying. After the Detachment was dissolved, the plane went to the Fighter Group (Jachtgroep) where it was occasionally lent to one of the other Fighter Squadrons (JaVA). The English used the FK 43 for liaison duties and the registration was MX459 [13].

The 39-year old Justus Heymans left Liverpool with the *M.V. Britannic* and headed for the United States of America, he arrived in New York on the 21 June 1940. His brother Harry arrived on the 23 July 1940 in New York with his wife Sarah. They came by boat from Java, via Hawaii, to San Francisco and travelled on to New York. Both brothers would settle there. During the war, Justus Heymans travelled a lot, his papers mentioned as profession 'Importer', probably again in textile goods.

In April 1946, Heymans finally received his American citizenship. His company, the *NV Internationale Handelsvereniging*, was dissolved in the middle of the 1950's, probably because it was too difficult to manage the company from a long distance

From 1956 until his retirement in 1971, Justus Heymans had a very high position within the tobacco company Philip Morris. For his work, he travelled a lot and moved from hotel to hotel without having a permanent residence. He had a close relationship with the Cullman family, who owned and managed Philip Morris.

Justus Heymans regularly returned to Holland. In the newspapers, it was mentioned that in 1946 he donated a two seater airplane to the *Nationale Luchtvaartschool* (NLS, National Aviation School) as gratitude for his escape from Holland in May 1940 [14].



Justus Heymans in front of the Piper Cub PH-UCE which he donated to the NLS [15]

After his retirement, he lived in Lausanne, Switzerland and New York where he would spend the last years of his life. The unmarried and childless Justus Heymans would suffer a heart attack after a long illness at the age of 79 and on the 23rd of May 1980 he passed away in the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York [16]. His last request was to have his ashes scattered over the North Sea and that request was carried out.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

[1] This was the Fokker G-1 '362' piloted by T. Hidde Leegstra and Ir. Piet J.C. Vos. A day later the Fokker T.VIIIw, KD+GQ (serial 5657) left from the Minerva-harbor in Amsterdam. On board of this plane were Lt.-v.l. Govert Steen, Corporal Willem Boomsma, Fokker technician Wijbert Lindeman and Lt. Jan Beelaerts van Blokland.

[2] In all the papers I found the departure date was mentioned as being 14 May 1940. This seems also incorrect. It should be remarked that Dr. Loe de Jong in his books mentions that a second plane left as well at this date:

.....ESCAPE WITH PLANES ON THE EVENING OF 14 May (Part 3, p. 411). After the surrender two small planes flew from Schiphol to England: a so called air-taxi of the KLM and an in October 1939 confiscated civilian plane de Havilland-Moth. Who flew this second plane is unclear, with the first plane the petty officer of the Military Aviation, Justus Heymans escaped and he was of Jewish origin. Dr. Loe de Jong, Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereld oorlog, deel 13 (bijlagen), pagina 99. Via www.niod.nl. This information was probably taken from the mail exchange dated 15th of February 1971 between the Head of the Section Military History of the Ministry of Defense Maj. J.E. van Zwieten and Dr. Loe de Jong (NIMH, Inv.nr. 1974). Van Zwieten mentions a de Havilland Leopard Moth, PH-HJP with military registration '964' which flew to England. In England this plane got the registration AP598 and it would in the end crash on 16 April 1941 in the sea near Seaton (Devon). However, this statement is not correct. The aforementioned registration belongs to a Hurricane and the plane that crashed in sea that day was a La Cierva Autogiro C-30 with the English registration AP508 (just one number difference in the registration). The original registration of this La Cierva Autogiro was PH-HHH and at the start of the war this plane was in England for repair. The PH-HJP was completely destroyed during the German attack on Ypenburg airfield according to the owner H.J.P. van Heek from Enschede in a letter dated 5 June 1940. Info via Herman Dekker.

[3] Persoonlijkheden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in woord en beeld, Nederlanders en hun werk, H.P. van den Aardweg and J.P.J.C. Hüllstrung, Uitgeverij Van Holkema en Warendorf, N.V., 1938, p. 655. Via www.biografischportaal.nl. With his departure to England the single Heymans left behind his mother and sister, both would survive the war. Heymans would be flying until 1961 (De Telegraaf of 19 September 1961). It should be noted that in all the archive papers I found both the name Heymans as Heijmans were used for the two brothers.

[4] <http://forum.12oclockhigh.net/showthread.php?t=45561>

[5] Luchtvaart-Themapark Aviodrome, Lelystand, archive 201/394.1. Notification by Lt.Kol L.A.M. Koppert, acting Commander of the Depot Luchtstrijdkrachten to J. Heijmans, Amstelveen, dated 2 October 1939.

[6] Brother Harry Siegbert Heijmans (1899-1971) lived on the Keizersgracht 431 in Amsterdam and he was the owner of a Taylor J-2 Cub with the registration PH-ARI. The construction number of the plane was 976 and the registration took place on 26 July 1937 (CoR 279). This plane was ordered with EDO floaters to land and take off from water. One of the possibilities the brothers Heymans were considering was to start with a water airfield on the Westeinder Plassen just south of Aalsmeer (De Telegraaf of 15 May 1937). It seems they actually tried to land and take off there. One day, early September 1937, the plane would roll over on the Buiten IJ near Amsterdam. The registration of the plane would expire on the 26 July 1940 and after that the registration was revoked. The plane would be confiscated and was later destroyed in the Zerlegebetrieb in Utrecht. In 1953 Harry S. Heijmans was married, had two children and lived in America. He regularly travelled between Amsterdam and New York.

[7] 'Als sportvlieger naar Indië en terug, gevlogen en verteld door Justus Heymans', Uitgeverij Van Holkema en Warendorf, N.V.. The trip lasted from 23 October 1936 until 10 December 1936. For Harry Siegbert Heijmans travels see: <http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gl=40&rank=1&new=1&so=3&MSAV=0&msT=1&gss=genfact&gsln=Heymans&uidh=000> The trip to the Dutch East Indies of J. Heymans and W.D. Rous in 1939 may be seen from that point of view. Once he arrived in the East Heymans rather quickly travelled further to do business in China and Japan. The Hornet Moth had a Dutch West Indies registration which may be an indication that the plane would be left there.

In any case both Heymans and Rous flew back with it to Holland. See a.o. *Middelburgse Courant* of 31 May 1939 at <https://krantenbankzeeland.nl/issue/mco/1939-05-31/edition/0/page/2?query=D-e%20Minister&sort=relevance> . The plane would in the end not return to the Dutch East Indies as it was not wise anymore considering the international situation.

[8] Luchtvaart-Themapark Aviodrome, Lelystad, archive 201/394.1.

[9] More details on this journey is presented in the article 'Een Hornet Moth vloog twee keer van Indië naar Nederland' written by Harm J. Hazewinkel in *Luchtvaartkennis*, Volume 57, 2/2008.

[10] Via Renny de Vries.

[11] Mail exchange between Dr. Loe de Jong and Justus Heymans dated 4 February 1971. Via NIMH. Heymans seemed to have been present as a civilian at the airfield though Dr. De Jong describes him as a petty officer. It should be noted that the *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* of 14 September 1940 refers to a Fokker D.21 in which Heymans escaped, this is however wrong. The memory of Heymans in 1971 much have left him for certain details. Res.kap.-vl. H.M. Schmidt Crans was on 10 May 1940 not a commander of a 'bomber squadron' but of the 1^e JaVA. Kap.-wrn. (not Colonel) H.A. Luitwieler was not the commander of Schiphol but was added to the staff of 1 LvR. Maj.-vl. G.P. van Hecking Colenbrander was the Commander of the Schiphol Aerodrome, assisted by Res.kap.-vl. U.F.M. Dellaert as his deputy. It remains unclear also who gave silent permission: Luitwieler or one of aforementioned officers. Res.tlt.-vl. J.L. Plesman ('son of') flew a Fokker D.21 with the 2^e JaVA left for England in September 1940. He died on 1 September 1944 while serving with 322 (Dutch) Squadron.

[12] <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1416933>

[13] Th. Wesselink, *Koolhoven vliegtuigen*, zr.pl., 2012, pag. 211 e.v. The plane survived the Second World War and returned to The Netherlands as PH-TCN in May 1945. In September 1952 the registration PH-NAU was cancelled. Info via Herman Dekker.

[14] *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 16 Augustus 1946. This trainer - a Piper J3C-65 Cub – was shipped to Holland in July 1946 with the freightship s.s. *Deftdijk* of the Holland-Amerika Line (HAL). On 7 October 1946 the plane received the registration PH-UCF and was named 'Justus Heijmans' on the planes nose. Info via Herman Dekker.

[15] Magazine *Avia*, 15 April 1947, page 182, via Luchtvaart-Themapark Aviodrome, Lelystad.

[16] Report of the State of New York, State Tax Commission, 29 September 1977; Minutes of the Board of Directors of Philip Morris Incorporated, 25 June 1980. Via www.pmdocs.com and www.ancestry.com.