



Volume 2 - number 2 - May / August 2015  
This magazine appears three times per year

no. 5

# AIRBORNE

MAGAZINE

SOCIETY OF  
FRIENDS OF  
THE AIRBORNE  
MUSEUM



On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the unveiling took place of the Airborne Monument in Arnhem. This memorial consists of part of a broken pillar from the Palace of Justice, which stood on the Market Square in Arnhem. This building was completely destroyed in September 1944. The badly damaged Walburgis Church is visible in the background.

(Photo: Imperial War Museum, London BU 10523)





## COLOPHON CONTENT

The Airborne Magazine is a publication of the Society of Friends of the Airborne Museum Oosterbeek (SFAM) and appears three times per year. The objective is to promote the Airborne Museum, the SFAM and the history of the Battle of Arnhem.

### Editors:

Drs. Robert P.G.A. Voskuil,  
Wybo Boersma MBE  
Marieke Martens,  
Curator of the Airborne Museum

### Archiving and distribution of back numbers of the magazine:

Wybo Boersma, Ede, w.boersma@dwxs.nl

### Translation:

Peter Burton, London, UK

### Design:

Michal Kuscielek  
Artefakt Design, Nuenen

### Print:

Wedding Proson, Harderwijk

### E-mail address SFAM:

info@vriendenairbornemuseum.nl  
Telephone: 0318 639633

### Postal address:

SFAM, Ivar Goedings,  
P.O. Box. 8047, 6710 AA, Ede,  
The Netherlands

### Representative in the UK:

Niall Cherry.  
Email address:  
Niall.Cherry@baesystems.com

### 3.

The Airborne Museum has a new Director  
– Robert Voskuil

### 4.

Exhibition regarding the Kuik brothers  
– Robert Voskuil

### 4.

'Afternoon tea' in the Airborne Museum  
– Annemarie Hartgers

### 5.

Members 'placed in the spotlight' during the AGM  
– Ben Kolster

### 6.-7.

2015 Friends Weekend, a Report by Brian Gibb  
– Brian Gibb

### 7.

From the UK representative  
– Niall Cherryl

### 7.-8.

Action to preserve the grave of Hendrika van der Vlist  
– Robert Voskuil

### 8.

The number of Eureka beacons used at 'Arnhem':  
a correction.  
– Peter Gijbels

### 9.

Declaration by the SFAM Management regarding  
the author's copyright of the 5th edition of the Roll of  
Honour (2011) 21.3.15  
– Eric Paap

### 9.

'De verschrikking van de nacht'  
(The terror of the night)  
– Wybo Boersma

### 10.

Ministry from veteran Laurie Weeden  
– Robert Voskuil

### 11.-14.

Ministry 122 – In the Perimeter  
– Laurie Weeden

### 15.

Program of the Society of Friends  
of the Airborne Museum, 2015.



## THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM HAS A NEW DIRECTOR

Since 1<sup>st</sup> May this year, the Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein' has a new Director. It is the 34 year old Sarah Thurlings-Heijse. Sarah Thurlings was born and bred in the town of Middelburg in Zeeland (SW part of the Netherlands). She studied Urban Design at the College of Art and Design in Utrecht, and Art History at Utrecht University. Until recently she was working as Director at a foundation in the province of North Holland. This Foundation stands for the promotion of cultural heritage for people in the Netherlands, who are seeking relaxation with a purpose.

Sarah was selected by the Airborne Museum because of her extensive knowledge and experience of cultural entrepreneurship, her relevant network and her experience on combining culture and tourism. Cees van den Vlekkert, Chairman of the Airborne Museum Foundation, spoke of the appointment of Sarah Thurlings - "The challenges that the Airborne Museum currently faces, also now suggest that, due to current pressures, a more unorthodox vision and approach is required. To ensure that the memories of the historical events of September 1944, remain alive in the future, a strong cultural and entrepreneurial attitude is essential. Through co-operation with other parties and repeated attention-seeking requests from the general public using attractive themes, and using modern marketing techniques, the number of visitors should grow even more. The Management of the Airborne Museum Foundation, is of the opinion that with the appointment of Sarah Thurlings, an excellent manner will be brought to fulfilling these objectives.

Sarah Thurlings is, herself, extremely enthusiastic and proud about her appointment as new Director of the Airborne Museum: "Alongside the impressive fact that the Museum, tells the story of the Battle of Arnhem and the consequences for Oosterbeek and Arnhem to more than 100,000 people annually, there is an increasing and inevitable awareness of how important it is to live in freedom and liberty. I hope that with my experience, to be able to achieve the delivery of this message to an, as large and wide as possible, public audience and as a result, to continue the remembrance of the 1944 mission by future generations".

Since her youth, Sarah has had much interest in museums, which was stimulated by her Father. Also, the War played a large role in her family's past. Her two grandmothers, were imprisoned in Japanese internment camps in the former Netherlands East Indies and one of her grandfathers was in the Resistance. Her currently somewhat limited knowledge of the



Sarah Thurlings-Heijse, the new Director of the Airborne Museum  
(Photo: berrydereusfotografie.nl)

Battle of Arnhem, she wishes to expand as rapidly as possible, by reading as much as possible about this subject. Meanwhile, Sarah has met with all staff and volunteers at the Museum and had conversations with them, as well as members of the management of the SFAM. She is very interested in the SFAM and the support that this organization gives to the Airborne Museum. She hopes that, when necessary, she may call upon the specialist knowledge about all aspects of the Battle of Arnhem, that many members have.

This Autumn, Sarah and her husband who is employed as a rheumatologist at the Radboud Hospital in Nijmegen, together with their two year old son, will be moving to Oosterbeek. She is very excited about this, also because she will then be drawn much closer to everything connected with the target of keeping the memory of the Battle of Arnhem very much alive.  
(Robert Voskuil)



## EXHIBITION REGARDING THE KUIK BROTHERS

On 1<sup>st</sup> October in the Netherlands, begins the 'Month of the History'. The Airborne Museum is taking part in this event, with the opening of a small display about the Kuik brothers. Bert and Hans Kuik were two Arnhem youngsters who, in September 1944, were closely affected by the Battle of Arnhem. During the fighting, they helped in the St Elizabeth's Hospital in Arnhem. During that period, they also smuggled some wounded British troops out of the hospital, who were then taken over and looked after by the Dutch Resistance.



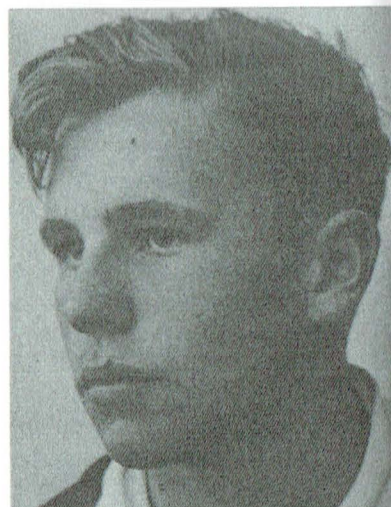
Bert Kuik (collection Airborne Museum)

On 31 October 1944, the order was issued to evacuate the St Elizabeth's Hospital. The hospital operation was moved to Nunspeet. Bert and Hans left on 3 November by bicycle. They had not long left Arnhem city before they came up against an SS raid near the Rosendaal Golf Club. As a result they were arrested and, after an unsuccessful attempt to escape, they were shot dead. Their parents initially were not aware this had hap-

pened, but on 9 November their father, Marten Kuik, was informed by Police Inspector Van Maris, the terrible news that both lads had been killed. During the last year of the War, the boys lay buried on the golf course. The Arnhem police later found them and reburied them.

Just recently, the Airborne Museum has received all documents, letters and photos from the estate of the Kuik family and a selection will be made from this collection to be shown during the exhibition. This exhibition will take place in the "Hall of Fame" and may be visited from 1<sup>st</sup> October and will last for three months. It is intended that a brochure about the fate of the Kuik brothers will appear, and it will be based upon the investigation made by the Arnhem amateur historian, Paul Vroemen during the first decades after the War (see also his book "De Zwarte Herfst", (The Black Autumn) published in 1984), but further filled with facts from the documents recently donated to the Airborne Museum.

(Robert Voskuil)



Hans Kuik (collection Airborne Museum)

## 'AFTERNOON TEA' IN THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM

It is with great pleasure that we draw your attention to a new activity at the Airborne Museum, the Afternoon Tea. The first Afternoon Tea will be organised on Sunday 27 September. A British tradition in the former British Headquarters! All sorts of tea will be offered, as well as home-made sandwiches, scones with jam and clotted cream and lots of other sweet and savoury snacks.

Initially, the Afternoon Tea will be offered on the last Sunday, each month. To achieve this, the Airborne Museum "Hartenstein" will be working together with the business "Ma Baker", which offers exclusive tea's at various locations. We intend to provide an informal setting; a couple of pleasant hours, with tasty food and drinks on a Sunday afternoon.

The price will be €29,95 per person. If you are interested to attend, we suggest you reserve a place, as the seating is limited.

You can make your reservation by e-mail to [aanmelding@airbornemuseum.nl](mailto:aanmelding@airbornemuseum.nl) with covering note "afternoon tea + the date you like to attend"

(Annemarie Hartgers)

## MEMBERS 'PLACED IN THE SPOTLIGHT', DURING THE AGM

During the Annual General Meeting of the SFAM that took place on 21 March at the Concert Hall in Oosterbeek, three members of the SFAM were "placed in the spotlight", because, for many years, in a variety of areas, they have served the Society.

Management member, Robert Voskuil, was appointed as 'Member of Merit'. For 35 uninterrupted years, Robert has been a member of the management team. During this period, he has kept himself very busy with the production of the Newsletter, now called the 'Airborne Magazine' and with the organizing of 'theme based afternoons', excursions, battlefield tours and the holding of lectures.

Okko Luursema and Henk van de Brand both received a case of wine. Okko is always present with his book-stall at the meetings of the SFAM. He always succeeds in tracing and offering special and rare publications about the Battle of Arnhem. By this service he has managed to give many members much pleasure from these items.

Henk van de Brand is someone who especially has worked behind the scenes, in organization and technical issues, as much for the SFAM as for the Airborne Museum. But he was also involved with projects, such as the building of the base (no longer existing) for the Sherman tank at the Airborne Museum and the building of the Royal Engineers Monument on the Rhine bank near Driel.

Only thanks to the long standing contribution made by people such as Robert, Okko and Henk, can a Society such as the SFAM, continue to offer such a wide scale of interesting activities. A word of thanks is thus most certainly very well earned.

(Ben Kolster - Chairman SFAM)



Management member Robert Voskuil, receives his deed from Chairman, Ben Kolster, that accompanies his appointment as "Member of Merit of the SFAM" (Photo: Frits Miedema)



Ben Kolster hands to Henk van de Brand, a case of wine as a token of gratitude for all the work he has done for the SFAM (Photo: Frits Miedema)



Okko Luursema is thanked by Ben Kolster for the fact that he is always present with his bookstall at events organised by the SFAM. Also Okko was presented with a case of wine. (Photo: Frits Miedema)



## 2015 FRIENDS WEEKEND, A REPORT BY BRIAN GIBB

Around 40 Friends of the Airborne Museum gathered once again in Oosterbeek on the last weekend of June for the 2015 'excursion'. Organised once more by Niall Cherry, the SFAM's tireless UK representative, his itinerary for this tour was a bit special.

The weekend kicked off with an 'advance party' gathering at noon on Friday in front of the Airborne Memorial whence a small fleet of eight cars took the motley crew to the perimeter of the Dutch Army base at Soesterberg. After some minor confusion on map references, we arrived at Gate 10 to be greeted by Lieutenant Geert Jonker, a very affable and informative officer in charge of the Dutch Army War Grave Recovery and Identification Unit. This specialist unit goes to amazing lengths to identify the remains of unknown soldiers, British, American, Canadian, other Allied, German, and civilians still being uncovered even now more than 70 years after the end of World War 2.

This unit is entirely funded by the Dutch Government at considerable cost and they are pledged to continue this support for years to come. The detailed scientific and forensic work undertaken by Geert and his compact team is matched only by their additional detective work as they piece together each clue in order to identify beyond doubt the remains, to return identity to that individual and then to re-connect that individual with their nearest surviving family for whom the memory of their loved one had previously been not only distant but uncertain. Tremendous, precise work and laborious in many ways – as Geert told us, immensely satisfying on completion and humbling with every successful outcome.

The Friends re-assembled in force on Saturday morning with about 50 Dutch and British members. Our tour began at the Leeren Doedel and our guide was Martin Peters, a Dutch expert on the 10<sup>th</sup> Parachute Battalion. Their action began in the early hours of 19<sup>th</sup> September, the third day, with an attack against the top end of the German blocking line near the Dreijenseweg in northern Oosterbeek, intended to prevent any reinforcements getting through to the bridge some three miles or so away. Martin led us across the Amsterdamseweg to the Pumping House where A Company led by Captain Lionel Queripel carried out an assault under continuous medium machine gun fire from the blocking line. This lasted five hours or so from 10.00 through to 15.00. At the same time, Sepp Krafft's SS Training Battalion approached through the woods to the north.

One of the great things about these walks is the presence of so many experts, in this case Niall had arranged for a further friend, Marcel Anker, who had

helped to reinstate a memorial to a water board official from 1944. In September 1944 and for a short time afterwards the site manager was a 'local hero' providing work permits for Dutch resistance, who would otherwise have been transported to Germany for factory work. He was of course found out in the weeks following the failure of Market Garden when the Germans realised that so many people could not possibly have been employed there. Marcel had saved a commemorative plaque that would otherwise have been lost and will feature by the main entrance to the new building and maintain this link to the battle for the liberation.

We moved south towards the railway embankment to the south side of Landing Zone L where the gliders of the Third Lift arrived as the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion withdrew, with Krafft's men in pursuit. Confusion reigned as the Polish paratroopers emerged into cross fire. Martin led us to the tunnel that runs under the embankment where many of the men from the 156 (who had been attacking the southern end of the blocking line) also joined the growing mass of men and jeeps and pointed out the likely area where Captain Queripel performed a rearguard action, which allowed for the maximum number of troops to get through the tunnel. Queripel had been badly wounded during the course of the day's actions, ultimately he remained behind with a pistol and some hand grenades. He was posthumously awarded the VC. A walk through the woods to the Hollow area and an explanation of the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion's men in the area of the Koude Herberg ended the day. To end Saturday on the Valkenburglaan, the UK representative was handed a spent German bullet as a souvenir from one of the expert scavengers in the group.

The Friends gathered on Sunday morning by restaurant Klein Hartenstein to be greeted by the awesome sight of two WW2 US troop carriers and a couple of jeeps warming up to act as our transport for the day. We were briefly introduced to our 'pathfinder' for the day, Peter Gijbels, an expert on the 21<sup>st</sup> Independent Parachute Company and one of the authors of the book 'Leading the Way to Arnhem'. We 'mounted up' and Peter led us quickly to our first stopping point on the road alongside Drop Zone X where he explained a little about the Eureka/Rebecca navigation systems that the Pathfinders employed to bring in the vast airborne armadas over the three landing days. Then on to Landing Zone S and onward to the initial (Ommershof) positions that the 21<sup>st</sup> took up within the developing "perimeter" around the Hartenstein from Wednesday onwards. Peter was able to offer us some interesting perspectives on the actions that took place in the 'killing ground' to the west of their position, which had resulted in some heavy casualties for the attacking Germans. As ever, it would seem that the haze of battle

→

field decisions has been further confused by partisan accounts given after the event.

The group then followed the movements of the 21<sup>st</sup> as they were re-positioned on the Friday to houses around and behind the Schoonoord crossroads with their HQ at the tip of the Pietersbergseweg and the Paasberg. This is where the real cat-and-mouse of close combat was fought to the final hours and Peter was able to vividly bring to account the actions of these men in those desperate few days, both the humour that allowed them to find a rare feast of stewed do-

mestic rabbit and the deep trauma that pushed some men to the limit of personal endurance. Both days were presented with the usual attention to detail and the stories delivered in an easily comprehensible way, underlining the ways in which the many disparate units of men worked together during those eight days to maintain the possibility of a successful operation despite the huge odds they were faced with. And, as usual, a very well-coordinated written guide for us to take home. Full credit to all involved.

(Brian Gibb)

## FROM THE UK REPRESENTATIVE

I would like to thank the 40 or so members who took part in the 8<sup>th</sup> UK and Worldwide Members weekend between 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and I hope everyone who came enjoyed themselves. I would like to thank also those who took time out to help – notably Lieutenant Geert Jonker who allowing me to book a group into the barracks at Soesterberg to see the unique work of the Dutch Army War Grave Recovery and Identification Unit – I've probably used all my favours up with him and will probably not be able to get another group in there for many years. Also for Saturday Marcel Anker, Martin Peters and Brian Gibb for speaking at various locations, which had the group spellbound with their passion and depth of knowledge.

On Sunday I was able to persuade Peter Gijbels to take us to various locations connected with the 21<sup>st</sup> Independent Company and again I feel we all found out something new. All in all an excellent tour and there was overwhelming agreement to run another in 2017 and 18 people have already expressed an interest in coming. If anyone wants to book a place for 2017 and the suggested itinerary they can contact me for more information.

Thanks again to everyone, especially the first timers, and I hope they enjoyed themselves!

(N Cherry)

## ACTION TO PRESERVE THE GRAVE OF HENDRIKA VAN DER VLIST



When, in April this year, Sophie Lambrechtsen-ter-Horst strolled over the South Cemetery in Oosterbeek, she saw that there were plans to remove the grave of Hendrika van der Vlist. Hendrika died on 5 May 1994 and had, as far as is known, no close family who could arrange and pay to extend the grave pitch lease for a further twenty years.

For many residents of Oosterbeek, the name Hendrika van der Vlist is not unknown. She was the daughter of the owner of the former Hotel Schoonoord. During the Battle of Arnhem in September 1944, this hotel was taken over and used by the British medical service as a field hospital for the hundreds of servicemen who got wounded during the fighting. Hendrika, then 29 years old, together with a number of other Oosterbeek

Hendrika van der Vlist, with her dog, photographed in the garden of her home on the Paul Krugerstraat in Oosterbeek. The photo was taken in 1970. (Photo: Airborne Museum collection)

→



women and girls, day and night served with the care and nursing of the wounded, often under most primitive and dangerous conditions. She wrote a diary about these days, that in 1975, was published under the title "Die dag in September – dagboek September 1944 – Mei 1945" (That day in September – diary September 1944 – May 1945). In this book she recorded in an impressive way, the situation in the emergency hospital, which literally lay on the front line.

In the years after the War, Hendrika devoted herself to help veterans and their relatives, but also for people in the village who, as a result of the War and/or its aftermath needed help and support.

After her visit to the cemetery, Sophie immediately sprang into action. She wrote a petition to the Renkum Council, Mayor and councillors, wherein she pleaded for Hendrika's grave to be preserved. The Council responded positively to her initiative and is prepared to make an order to pay for a portion of the grave retention fee.

The remainder of the renewal fee will have to be paid and an appeal has started to hopefully raise the remaining funds.

The plan also includes a proposal to place a simple plaque on the grave and/or at the current Schoonoord Restaurant with a short text about the role of Hendrika in September 1944 and thus to make it more well known.

The management of the SFAM heard about this initiative and agreed they would join in this proposed action plan. The SFAM has provided its bank details to enable gifts to be made and will itself make a contribution.

Anyone wishing to join the cost of maintaining the grave of Hendrika, can transfer a financial amount to our bank account:- NL80 INGB 0004 4036 41 – account title "Vereniging Vrienden van het Airborne Museum in Oosterbeek", with description "Hendrika van der Vlist". The action will be finalized at the end of September this year. At that time, we will announce the results of this appeal.

*(Robert Voskuil)*

## THE NUMBER OF EUREKA BEACONS USED AT "ARNHEM": - A CORRECTION.

In the previous edition of the Airborne Magazine (No.4), an article appeared about the use of the Eureka beacons by the 21<sup>st</sup> Independent Parachute Company (the 'Pathfinders'), during the Battle of Arnhem. Our member Peter Gijbels, joint author of the 2008 published book 'Leading the Way to Arnhem', advised the editors that an error appeared in the original article. Peter wrote "There is advised that were 48 Eureka's. This is not correct. Each stick of Pathfinders was equipped with two Eureka operators, and each had one Eureka set. The second served as a reserve set".

Each platoon was split into four sticks each with 12 men. There was also a platoon commander and one sergeant. Thus in total, a platoon consisted of 50 men. The 21<sup>st</sup> Independent Parachute Company consisted of three platoons and an HQ. Thus 12 sticks jumped, each one with two Eureka sets. In total, the 21<sup>st</sup> Independent Parachute Company was thus equipped with 24 Eureka sets and not 48.

It is known that a number of sets were blown up by the built-in explosive charge. But this 'self destruct' mechanism did not always work and then a salvo from a Sten Gun was necessary!

*(The Editors with thanks to Peter Gijbels)*

## DECLARATION BY THE SFAM MANAGEMENT REGARDING THE AUTHOR'S COPYRIGHT OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THE ROLL OF HONOUR (2011) 21.3.15

When, four years ago, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the "Roll of Honour-Battle of Arnhem September 1944" book was approaching completion, there arose a serious difference of opinion regarding the format in the book, describing the author's copyright legal entitlement and the description of those who also made a contribution to the production of the book. The Management strug-

gled under the pressure of going to print and, on reflection, perhaps did not deal with the issue meticulously.

On the basis of the investigation which took place at the time, during the AGM held on 21 March 2015, the SFAM Management made a statement. This statement served, on the one hand, the

opinion of the Management as to the manner in which the copyright at the time, should have appeared in the RoH, on the basis of the opinions today and, on the other hand, the opinion of the SFAM Management concerning the copyright of the RoH in general. A summary of the statement follows:-

### Correction to the publication:

"With the knowledge and understanding of today, the SFAM Management announces that in the printing of the 5th edition of the RoH, the following text relating to the copyright and the production and contributors should have appeared:-

1. The copyright ownership concerning the publication: SFAM and Mr Jan Hey
2. The copyright ownership concerning the investigation and collection: Mr Jan Hey
3. The copyright rewards various living persons text contributions: also those who, since the first issue of the RoH, have submitted additional contributions.
4. This book has been brought to fruition by the efforts of a team, led by Mr Geert Maassen and Mr Philip Reinders.

### Conclusion

The Management of the SFAM, hereby express their wish that, with this announcement, a resolution is achieved in settlement of the demand from Mr Jan Hey, that the SFAM should show respect for that element of the copyright law concerning the Roll of Honour that was his and which, as a result of a meeting on 26 April 2012, was transferred by him to Robert N. Sigmond.

If required, a print of the full announcement can be sent to you.

*(Eric Paap)*

## 'DE VERSCHRIKKING VAN DE NACHT' (THE TERROR OF THE NIGHT)

Our British member (but living in the Netherlands) Tony Sheldon has recently published his book "De verschrikking van de nacht – Ooggetuigen van de Slag om Arnhem" (The terror of the night – eyewitnesses to the Battle of Arnhem). During the past ten years, he has interviewed a large number of people, especially (former) citizens from Arnhem and Oosterbeek. In this way he collected more than 60 stories of people who, often as

teenagers, lived through the Battle of Arnhem. Tony also used a number of personal stories from previously published works. The result is a history of the Battle of Arnhem, seen through the eyes of Dutch citizens. The fact that the book is not written by a Dutchman, is more an advantage than disadvantage. The British author sometimes looks at the Occupation and War with a different view. 'De Verschrikking van de nacht' is a good addition to the

existing, mostly military, literature about the Battle of Arnhem and fits in well with the current trend to spend more attention on the experiences of citizens during WW2. At present only a Dutch edition (351 pages and illustrated with photographs) is available, but we hope that an English translation will be on the UK market in the not too distant future.

*(Wybo Boersma)*



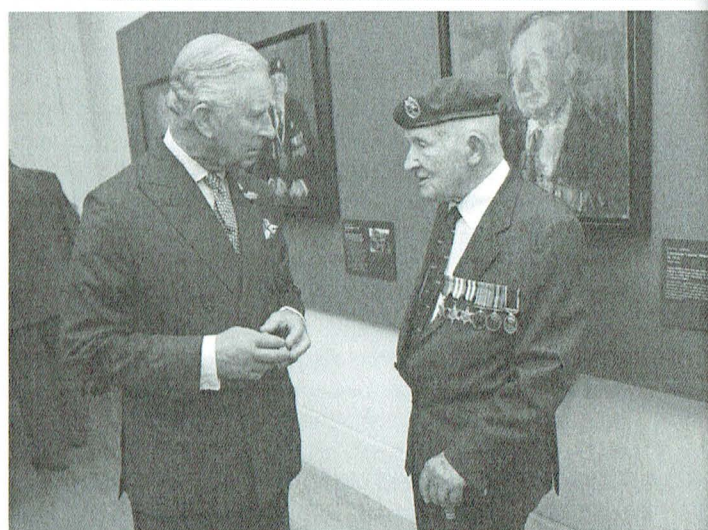
## MINISTORY FROM VETERAN LAURIE WEEDEN

The Ministory which we publish this time, was sent to us by Arnhem veteran 'Laurie' (Laurence) Weeden. In September 1944, Staff Sergeant Weeden was a member of 14 Flight, 'F' Squadron of the Glider Pilot Regiment. He landed his glider on 17 September 1944, at Wolfheze and fought during the following days in Oosterbeek. At the end of the battle, he managed to swim across the Rhine and thus escaped being made a prisoner-of-war by the Germans.

In 1948, he returned for the first time to Oosterbeek. In the area north west of Hartenstein where he had fought, he found a number of slit trenches, that, in September 1944, he had used with his colleagues. Also other locations where he had been positioned during the Battle of Arnhem, were rediscovered as a result of his searches.

Before Laurie Weeden was deployed at Arnhem, on 6 June 1944, he served as a glider pilot during the airborne landing of the 6th Airborne Division in Normandy.

This year, an exhibition was being held in London displaying portraits of a number of D-Day veterans. Laurie's portrait was painted for this, by the artist Martin Yeoman. On 12 June this year, Prince Charles and his wife Camilla visited this exhibition, entitled 'The Last of the Tide' in The Queen's Gallery in London. There they both spoke with Laurie Weeden (see photo). In spite of his advancing years (he is now in the 90's)



12 June 2015. During a visit to the exhibition "The Last of the Tide", in the Queen's Gallery in London, Prince Charles speaks to Laurie Weeden, who, as a glider pilot, took part in the landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944 and who fought in the Battle of Arnhem in September 1944.

Laurie Weeden is a regular and devoted visitor to the annual Airborne Commemoration in Arnhem and Oosterbeek.

(Robert Voskuil)



Laurie Weeden during an interview for BBC Television

## MINISTORY 122

In the Perimeter, September 1944  
By Laurie Weeden

### DAY 1, Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> September

The thirty or so gliders in 14 Flight took off from RAF Blakehill Farm (near Swindon) commencing at about ten o'clock. Whilst there was a good deal of cloud (I recorded one hour of flying in cloud) and also a great deal of turbulence from the slipstreams of the aircraft ahead of us, we had a virtually unopposed three hour flight with a strong fighter escort. We landed close to the trees at the west-end of landing zone S, north of the railway line at Wolfheze. I believe that the majority of 14 Flight landed at Wolfheze on the Sunday - those that had to abort because of broken towropes etc. all arrived in the second lift on the Monday. There were no German troops in our part of the landing zone, and 14 Flight ultimately moved off to Wolfheze Village, where, with Staff Sergeant Cliff Wedgbury, I was seconded to 2 Wing headquarters, Glider Pilot Regiment. We spent the night in a house on the south side of the railway line - our last undisturbed night for some time to come.

### DAY 2, Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September

Whilst there appeared to be no enemy activity in our immediate area there were already rumours of considerable opposition having been encountered between Wolfheze and the bridge at Arnhem. Our engineers had destroyed some German Field guns, which had been left behind in Wolfheze, and I was sent off on a bicycle to Division headquarters with a message confirming destruction of these guns. Division headquarters was believed to be in the Heelsum/Renkum area, and I rode out across the Doorwerthse Heide into the outskirts of Heelsum. No one was about in Heelsum, but about half a mile down the long straight road to Renkum I could see troops which I thought were probably Germans. A motor vehicle approached and I hurriedly hid in a hedge until it had passed, and I then cycled back towards Wolfheze. When about half way across the Doorwerthse Heide some fighter planes, which I had incorrectly assumed to be the RAF escort to the second lift, started spraying the area with machine gun fire. As I was under the distinct impression that one of them was aiming at me, I fell off my bicycle into the shelter of a deep ditch by the side of the track, which must have looked rather comical but was nevertheless very effective. On returning to the Wolfheze area I was informed that Division headquarters was at Kabeljauw, where I ultimately delivered the message. The second lift arrived during the afternoon, and towards dusk we departed from Wolfheze, making our way to a large mansion in the Valkenburg area, north west of the Hartenstein Hotel at Oosterbeek.



L.L. Weeden, Staff Sergeant, The Glider Pilot Regiment, 2080390  
(Photo: collection Luuk Buist)

### DAY 3, Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September

It had been a noisy night in the mansion, probably 4 Para Brigade north of the railway line. My friend Sergeant Peter Gammon, who was in the vicinity with 14 Flight, had his early morning shave rather rudely interrupted when German troops were noticed coming across from the north side of the railway line. That morning No. 2 Wing headquarters moved from the mansion to a house at Hartensteinlaan, close to the present site of the Airborne Monument. Whilst the immediate area was relatively peaceful there was obviously a lively battle in progress to the north of us - presumably 4 Brigade at the Johanna Hoeve/Lichtenbeek area.

During the afternoon some ME-109's sprayed the area with machine gun fire - ineffectively, so we thought, but it was probably in this parties raid that three members of 14 Flight were killed, i.e. Staff Sergeant Banks and McLaren, and Sergeant Hebblethwaite. That afternoon 3<sup>rd</sup> lift and re-supply aircraft arrived, to be met with a concentrated barrage of light anti-aircraft fire from the Germans.



#### DAY 4, Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September

During the morning I accompanied the No. 2 Wing Intelligence NCO, Staff Sergeant Waldron, to 1st Air Landing Brigade Headquarters in Hoofdlaan, near Hemelseberg. The entrance to the headquarters building was a grisly spectacle, as a cluster of mortars had recently found their target, killing a number of the occupants, including the Brigade Major. On our way back along Hoofdlaan it seemed that the western defence line of the perimeter was disintegrating, with a substantial number of our troops retreating in rather a disorderly manner towards the Hartenstein Hotel. An officer restored order with a revolver threatening to shoot anyone retreating further. In the event no German troops appeared, but this rather alarming episode occurred just about the time that elements of 4 Para Brigade were arriving in the perimeter, and I have often wondered whether they were mistaken for the enemy by some of our own troops. During this incident I met up with Staff Sergeant Sydney Wilkinson, an Australian who joined the regiment at the same time as me, in May 1942. He died of wounds on 25<sup>th</sup> September.

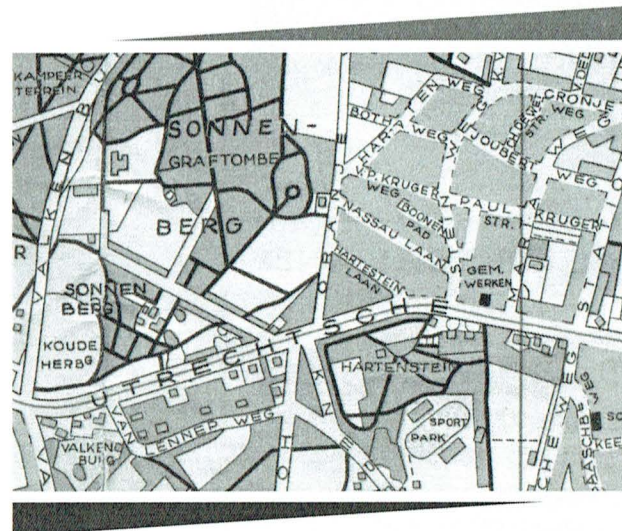
That evening I happened to meet Lieutenant Pickwood in Hartenstein Laan and he told me that I was to return to 14 Flight as he was getting short of men, due to casualties. I spent the night in the first floor room of a house in Nassaulaan and during the night I challenged some movement at the bottom of the garden. At daylight I realised that I had been challenging a tame rabbit in its hutch!

#### DAY 5 Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September

In the morning I moved with a number of other glider pilots from 'F' Squadron to trenches on the perimeter north west of the Hartenstein Hotel. We were on the edge of a wood looking out over a large field towards Manege and Sonnenberg. I was sharing a trench with Staff Sergeant Eric Stubley, from whom I acquired a Bren gun, with Staff Sergeants Tim Matthews and Rice in the next trench on our south side. A few metres away to the north were the body of Sergeant Laurie Howes and also, I believe the body of my co pilot Sergeant John Graham. Both had been killed the previous day - it was suggested that they may have given their position away when lighting a cigarette. During the morning, a number of Germans, some of whom were shouting in English "cease fire", advanced across the field in front of us, presenting rather an easy target and sustaining a number of casualties, including two dead immediately in front of us near a re-supply pannier. I spent much of the day cleaning the Bren gun, which seemed unsuited to the sandy soil at the top of the trench. So far as I recollect we had no food and little or no water. We could hear the German NCO shouting commands from across the field as they fired their mortar.

#### DAY 6 Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September

German mortar fire on the increase, some of it bursting high in the trees, to the consternation of the red squirrels. During the afternoon I was surprised to see through my field glasses, a well-camouflaged self-propelled gun or tank in front of a house in the direction of the Manege, about 250 metres from our position. As we had no weapons to deal with this threat, I went to divisional headquarters at the Hartenstein Hotel, where I saw the Commander Royal Artillery. He said that he was not prepared to bring the anti-tank



Part of Oosterbeek, where in September 1944 Staff Sergeant Laurie Weeden took part in the defence of the Perimeter (Map, dated 1943, collection Robert Voskuil)

guns to the tanks as he had already lost some guns that way. He arranged for a forward observation officer to come with me to our position with view to bringing XXX Corps artillery fire on to the German position. He also arranged for me to have a PIAT gun and six rounds of PIAT ammunition, and whilst still at the Hartenstein I managed to get bucketful of water from a trailer outside the hotel. The shoot by XXX Corps commenced with a shell, which exploded very close to our trenches and a second one, which exploded behind the German occupied house at the Manege. The forward observation officer then received a message to the effect that the XXX Corps battery had to move forward and that it could no longer give us supporting fire. He told us that he would arrange a further shoot and that night, after dark, XXX Corp shelled the area, catching houses alight and illuminating the German troops on to whom we were able to bring our own small arms fire to bear. The self-propelled gun or tank at the Manege had not, to our knowledge, fired at us, until we left that position on the Saturday afternoon.

#### DAY 7 Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September

Intermittent mortar fire culminated in one stick bursting on the sand at the top of our trenches, smashing one of our rifles to pieces. Some time after midday we were informed that we were to be taken out of the line for a rest. Our relief arrived, possibly observed by the Germans, as further mortars greeted their arrival and we left in some haste and made our way to a house, which was probably in Nassaulaan. Here we attempted to sleep- disconcertingly there was not only the noise of the artillery and mortars but also the clatter of German armour on the move.

#### DAY 8 Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September

We moved from the house into the trenches which, we were informed, were the second line of defence. A Bren gun was required urgently and as I ran forward round the corner of Paul Krugerstraat into Hartenweg I was somewhat surprised to be confronted by a German soldier, only about 15 metres away, and advancing towards me. I dropped to the ground, cocked the Bren gun, and squeezed the trigger. The Bren gun jammed..... Fortunately the German turned and ran back to his own lines, being hit in the process by British rifle fire.

During the morning I observed, through my field glasses, a German soldier at the top floor window of a house in Bothaweg and I emptied a magazine of my Bren gun in his direction. We were to have trouble from that quarter at dusk that day.

In the afternoon I occupied a trench at the west end of Paul Krugerstraat. At the eastern end of that long street the enemy was obviously attacking the perimeter, as we could see their mortar shells rising almost vertically and then falling on the British positions (probably 156 Para Battalion). Groups of German troops were also running across Paul Krugerstraat but, at that range, we had some difficulty in hitting them with any accuracy with our small arms fire. At one stage - I think it was on that Sunday afternoon - a German self-propelled gun was visible just to the north of us, but I believe it was either disabled or otherwise persuaded to leave by one of our 6-pounder anti-tank guns. Approximately 15 glider pilots were holding this position at the end of Paul Krugerstraat on the northern extremity of the perimeter.

At dusk we were ordered to withdraw about 50 metres into houses in Nassaulaan, which involved running across a patch of ground, believed to be covered by enemy machine gun fire. Sergeant Greenhill (of E Squadron) offered to help me with my Bren gun ammunition and we ran across this patch of ground together. When I reached the cover of a house I looked back and saw that Sergeant Greenhill had been hit, probably in the head, and that his steel helmet had been knocked off. We could not get out to him in daylight as an enemy machine gun in a house in Bothaweg was now firing tracer bullets directly across the green. Staff Sergeant Briggs of E Squadron, who was with us, told us that Sergeant Greenhill was his co-pilot. About ten minutes later I went to see the padre of 2 Wing Glider Pilot Regiment, who was supervising stretcher bearing, and informed him of the incident. About three months later I happened to see Staff Sergeant Anderson of E Squadron. He

told me that he went out after dark that night to fetch Sergeant Greenhill in, but by that time the enemy was only about 20 metres from where he lay, so nothing could be done. Sergeant Greenhill is buried in the Oosterbeek cemetery.

#### DAY 9 Monday 25<sup>th</sup> September

Apart from a brief visit to 2 Wing headquarters during the afternoon, I remained in the house in Nassaulaan throughout that day and despite the ever closer proximity of the enemy, it is my recollection that it seemed remarkably quiet in our sector. I had acquired a new No 2 on my Bren gun - Nobby Smith who, so far as I can remember was from the Kings Own Scottish Borderers. There was an unexploded 88mm shell just outside the front door of the house. During the afternoon one person from each house was summoned to 2 Wing headquarters and we were informed that we would be withdrawing across the Rhine that night. In the wood near the junction of Paul Krugerstraat and Hartenweg a German machine gun had been positioned, and as we were about to assemble for the withdrawal, Lieutenant Pickwood instructed me to occupy a trench nearby and to keep the machine gun covered with my Bren gun. At 21.00 hours, as the British troops assembled for the withdrawal on the green where the Airborne Monument now stands, the Germans started to mortar the area, and there were a number of casualties. Those who had not been killed or injured by the mortars

Day 6, "German mortar fire on the increase, some of it bursting high in the trees, to the consternation of the red squirrels."



made a hurried departure. I wonder whether Nobby and I, still in our trench covering the Spandau, were now the northernmost operational troops of the Allied armies in North West Europe. After about ten minutes we made our way southwards across the green and through the woods between Hoofdlaan and Borsellenweg meeting on the way a lone British soldier who then accompanied us.

When we arrived at the river there was no sign of any British troops, or of any boats, and although our new acquaintance had some doubts about his swimming capabilities, we nevertheless decided to swim across. As I thought that we

might land in enemy territory on the south side of the river, we swam with our boots looped around our necks and we either wore our airborne smocks or looped them around our waists. When we were about halfway across, our new acquaintance said that he could go no further, so we turned about and swam back to the north bank with him. He said that he would try to find a boat and Nobby and I then set out again for the south side, having

Of the 64 officers and NCO's who had started on the operation, there had been 31 casualties

discarded our boots and smocks. On the way across a mortar landed on the water close to us, sending out a phosphorescent-like wave. Having arrived on the south side of the river we climbed the steep bank and cautiously made our way along the road in a westerly direction. Down on the south side of the road was a small building occupied by Canadian medical troops who sent us on to Driel in their ambulance. After a short wait in the school at Driel we were driven in a DUKW to Nijmegen. The next day, whilst in Nijmegen, I met the lone soldier who had accompanied us on our first and abortive swim across the Rhine. He had, in fact, found a boat, and had crossed safely to the south side.

14 Flight ultimately arrived back at RAF Blakehill Farm on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September. Of the 64 officers and NCOs who had started on the operation, there had been 31 casualties, including 11 killed and 20 wounded and/or taken prisoner.



## PROGRAM 2015, SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM

Thursday 1 October until Sunday 4 October: Battlefield tour 'Battle of the Ardennes'. 4 Days bus tour to the Ardennes. Actions of the 101 and the 82 US Airborne divisions and the Kampfgruppe Peiper during the Battle of the Ardennes, December 1944.

Saturday 14 November: Lecture  
Location: Concert hall, Oosterbeek.  
Details will be announced on the website of the SFAM.



UK Weekend Oosterbeek 2015. Group picture taken during the battlefield tour on 27 June.  
(Photo: via Niall Cherry)

[www.vriendenairbornemuseum.nl](http://www.vriendenairbornemuseum.nl)

PROUDLY SUPPORTING THE  
GUILD OF BATTLEFIELD GUIDES