



SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM

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The arrival of the 75mm Pack Howitzer.

In our last Newsletter we told you that at last the Airborne Museum has managed to obtain a 75mm Pack Howitzer, the gun that was used in September 1944 by the 1st Airlanding Light Regiment, Royal Artillery, commanded by lieutenant-colonel W.F.K. Thompson. During the greater part of the Battle of Arnhem the guns of this unit stood around the area of the Old Church at Oosterbeek. Only two of these guns did survive and these are in England. One of them is in the Airborne Forces Museum at Aldershot, the other in the Royal Artillery Museum



Mayor Dr.Verlinden thanks Commander Moore for the gift of the 75 mm Pack Howitzer. To the left: Sgt-Major Meijers of the Royal Neth.Army, to the left: Sgt.1st Class Stauber.
(photo:B.de Reus.)

at Woolwich. Some years after the war, these guns were transported from Oosterbeek back to England. The Museum has been trying to find such a gun for many long years. Some years ago, the Museum's curator, Mr. B. de Reus, met with Sergeant-Major Antoon Meijers of the Explosives Clearance Squad of the Netherlands Royal Army and Sergeant Rick Stauber of the American Navy. Among other things, they talked about the Museum's search for a 75mm Pack Howitzer.

Then it appeared that there was a gun of this type at the US Navy base at Indian-head, Maryland, USA. The gun was a very much neglected piece, but it was hoped that it could be restored into its original state. Then there came a period of intensive contact by letters and phonecalls and in March of this year the gun arrived in a US Navy ship at Antwerp harbour. Mr. Maurits Vogelpoel, director of the Arnhem firm of Raket Nederland bv, did generously offer the use of one of his large vans, and in this van, Mr. Jan van Steen went to Antwerp on March 30th to fetch the gun and to take it to Oosterbeek. The gun weighed 700 kilogrammes and was packed in wooden crate.

With the help of a crane, kindly lent for the occasion by Mr. Eric Bouwman of the Doorwerth firm of Bouwman Transport Service, the gun was lifted from the van. Some members of the Society then dismantled the gun, took the parts into the Museum and put it together again.

There are plans to use the gun in a diorama which will show the gun positions near the Old Church at Oosterbeek during the Battle of Arnhem.

British representative.: change of address.

Please note that Mr. E. E. Shaw has a new address: 298 Totnes Road, Paignton.
Devon TQ4 7HD tel. 0803-553616.

Hendrika van der Vlist's diary now also in English.

Hendrika van der Vlist's diary "Die dag in September" (That day in September), was published in 1975. A large part of the book describes the events in and around the Schoonoord Hotel, which was used as an emergency hospital during the Battle of Arnhem. Hendrika helped to care for the wounded and, later, accompanied them to Apeldoorn, where the British wounded were taken to the Willem III Barracks, the "Airborne Military Hospital".

There have been many requests for an English version of this impressive and moving diary and it will now be published in English with the title "Oosterbeek 1944". It is published by the Society and will appear at the end of August or the beginning of September. This English edition is illustrated by twenty, mostly hitherto unknown, photographs of Oosterbeek before, during and after the Battle. The price of the book is f 25,- .

Death of "Jock" Walker.

Gordon Johnston Walker sadly died on July 13th of this year. During the Battle of Arnhem he was a cameraman with the Army Film and Photographic Unit.

Together with his colleagues Mike Lewis and Dennis Smith he belonged to the British Public Relations Team, which had to record the Battle on photo, film, paper and gramophone records.

"Jock" Walker returned to Arnhem and Oosterbeek in 1988 for the recording of the video documentary "Forever in our Memory." He reached the age of 76.

Martin Middlebrook writes book about the Battle of Arnhem.

The British author Martin Middlebrook has for the last three years been collecting information for a new book about the Battle of Arnhem. Martin Middlebrook has already written some ten books about the First and Second World Wars and will write his new book on the basis of stories of soldiers and civilians who lived through the Battle. He has already interviewed hundreds of veterans in Britain and has stayed in Holland for a week to record the stories of a number of civilians.

The book is planned to appear in 1994, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem.



After its arrival, the Howitzer is unpacked. (photo:B.de Reus.)

New book about the Glider Pilot Regiment.

A new book about the history of the Glider Pilot Regiment has appeared as a tribute to this Regiment on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its foundation. It is called "The History of the Glider Pilot Regiment" and written by Claude Smith, an ex glider-pilot who took part in air-landing operations in Normandy and at Arnhem.

The Glider Pilot Regiment, which was founded in 1942 and dissolved in 1957, is probably the smallest regiment with the shortest history of the British Army. During the short period of its existence, the regiment has, however, taken part in a number of very important military operations.

Mr. Smith begins his book with two chapters about the previous history and the establishing of the regiment. Then he deals with all operations in which the regiment took part, like Operation Freshman (Norway), the landings on Sicily and in the South of France, and the airlanding operations in Normandy, at Arnhem and during the Rhine Crossing. In his chapter about Arnhem he writes extensively about the experiences of Lieutenant "Mike" Dauncy (now Brigadier M.D.K. Dauncy DSO Retd.) who was the only glider pilot to receive the Distinguished Service Order for his courage and initiative during the actions at Oosterbeek.

There is also a chapter about a lesser known part of the regiment's history: the training of glider pilots in India. In the last chapter he writes about the post-war period in which the role of the glider was gradually taken over by other means of warfare. The book ends with a Roll of Honour, a list of glider pilots who were awarded a medal, and a list of all the officers.

The book has been written in a clear and business-like way. It has been illustrated with maps, with about thirty, partly unknown, photographs, and with a number of drawings by Alan Richards, another ex glider pilot. The book can be bought at the Museum and costs f 66,50. Price in England: £ 18.95 .

Exhibition about Airborne Commemorations.

As has already been mentioned in the Ministry with our last Newsletter, an exhibition will be held at Oosterbeek with regard to the first 25 commemorations of the Battle of Arnhem.

The exhibition will be held in the Municipal building at Oosterbeek, from August 27th till October 2nd included. Opening times are from 9 till 5 on working days (Monday-Friday). The exhibition is based on the pictures by the Arnhem photographer Herman Truin. There will also be other material concerning the commemorations: programmes, souvenirs, etc. A videofilm will be shown continuously on September 16th, 17th, 18th, 21st and 22nd, showing pictures of the commemorations in 1945, 1946, 1947, 1954 and 1955. The film showing pictures of the 1945 commemoration comes from the Imperial War Museum in London.

Apart from the exhibition, a book will also be published with pictures by Herman Truin from the years 1945-1969, called "We Will Remember Them." The text with the photographs is in both English and Dutch.

As copies of the pictures by Herman Truin can no longer be ordered, the most important of them have been collected in this book.

Further information about the exhibition and the book can be obtained from Mr. G.H. Maassen, archivist of Renkum Municipality. Tel.: 085-348303.

Cleaning up operation.

In April of this year, an activity took place around the Museum during which the SHERMAN tank and the 17 pounder guns were thoroughly cleaned up. The tank and the guns were made clean of rust and re-painted. Two firms, from Valburg and Arnhem, offered to do this work free of charge and thanks to this spontaneous action, the tank and the guns look again as new!

New "member for life".

Mr. George F. Cholewczynski, one of our American members, has become "member for life" of our Society. Mr. Cholewczynski is the author of the book "The Poles of Driel" which was published in 1990.

Texts in two languages on memorial pillars.

There are five stone memorial pillars in Oosterbeek marking places which played an important part during the Battle of Arnhem. Till now the texts on these pillars were

only in English. As a result of requests by the Society and by Mr. Kardol from Oosterbeek to the Municipality of Renkum, this authority now has placed new texts on these pillars, both in Dutch and in English.

In its letter, the Society did point out that not all Dutch people can read English and that especially the youngest generation must be enabled to read for themselves about what happened in their village in 1944.

Rectification.

Some time ago, the editor received a letter from Mr. R.W. Peatling, Public Relations Officer of "Parachute 2 Club, 1941-1945". This letter proves that even old Ministories are still read with a critical eye.

In his letter, Mr. Peatling refers to Ministry IV "The Artillery support by the 2nd Army to the 1st British Airborne Division during the Battle of Arnhem" by Mr. J. ter Horst. In this Ministry, Mr. ter Horst also writes about the radio - communication between the Light Regiment Royal Artillery near the Old Church at Oosterbeek and the British troops near the Rhine Bridge at Arnhem.

Mr. ter Horst says, "By means of this radio-communication, Frost was able to tell how matters stood at the bridge. However, the last message, about his surrender, did not reach Oosterbeek and only became known later."

Mr. Peatling states that there has never been talk of "surrender". The last order to the troops near the bridge was "Every man for himself".