

Friends of the **AIRBORNE** MUSEUM

Editors:

Drs. R.P.G.A. Voskuil
C. van Roekel
G.H. Maassen jr.

Newsletter No. 79, August 2000

Translated by Cathrien and Peter Clark

Representative in Great Britain:

Niall Cherry, 3 Church Road,
Warton, Lancs, PR4 1BD
Tel. home 0177-2632764

'Corridor' excursion

On Saturday October 7 next our society is organising a coach excursion along part of the 'Corridor', the advance route of British Army 30 Corps through Brabant that would become known as Hell's Highway, and along which the objectives scheduled to be secured by the American 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions lay. The trip will be led by society member Jacques Haegens, who will arrange to stop at selected spots on the way in order to provide explanations.

The programme is as follows:

09.00 hours: Bus leaves for Neerpelt in Belgium from the car park at the 'Goede Herderkerk' in Oosterbeek, east of the Airborne Museum. On the way a short stop will be made at Grave to pick up any possible excursionists from the south of the Netherlands. This pick-up point is the car park at the bus station before 'Het Wapen van Grave' on the N324, south of the Maasbrug.

11.00 hours: Arrival in Neerpelt and start of the journey along Hell's Highway. Excursion points include the Schelde-Maaskanaal bridge, the market place in Valkenswaard (where coffee can also be taken), the bridge over the Wilhelminakanaal in Son and the Joe E. Mann monument in Best.

13.00 - 14.00 hours (approx.): Lunch in Best.

14.00 hours: Departure for the second part of the excursion. Locations visited will include the landing zones north-west of Son, the monument to the 501st Parachute Infantry in Eerde, the bridge over the Zuid-Willemsvaart in Veghel and the Maasbrug in Grave.

If time permits a visit will also be made to the (former) sluice bridge in Heumen.

The excursion costs 70 guilders per person, which covers the bus trip, lunch and excursion guide. This amount must be received by 20 September at the latest and bookings will be dealt with on a first come first served basis. There is a maximum of 48 seats available and you will be notified if you 'make the cut'. If you wish to be picked up in Grave will you kindly indicate this when booking.



The monument to the American 501st Parachute Infantry in Eerde is one of the sites that will be visited during the 'Corridor' excursion on 7 October 2000.

(photo: Eugène Wijnhoud)

Call to members in the UK

Plans are afoot to organise a theme weekend about the Battle of Arnhem in June 2001 in Oosterbeek, especially for our members in the United Kingdom. The programme, spread over two days (e.g. a Friday and Saturday), will probably consist of a coach and walking excursion, a lecture, a visit to the Airborne Museum accompanied by an English-speaking guide, and a dinner. Everything will be arranged by our representative in England Niall Cherry, in conjunction with the Friends' Society excursion committee. Travel to the Netherlands and overnight accommodation in Oosterbeek or surroundings will need to be organised by the participants themselves, although help can be provided from the Netherlands if necessary. Of course, whether or not the plans go ahead depends on there being sufficient people wishing to take part. Therefore, we ask any of our UK members who may be interested in such a theme weekend in Oosterbeek to get in touch with Niall Cherry, 3 Church Road, Warton, Lancs, PR4 1BD, UK: telephone numbers; home 0177 2632764, work 0177 2854593; e-mail, Niall.Cherry@bae.co.uk.

We'll keep you informed.

Commemorative envelope 2000

This year's traditional Airborne Museum commemorative envelope has the Air Despatchers monument as its theme. This envelope is the fifth in the series 'Monuments of the Battle of Arnhem' and will be on sale in 'Hartenstein' from 17 September onwards, price 7 guilders. It can also be obtained by post. A limited number of envelopes from previous years is still obtainable at the museum.

See also our website, www.airbornemuseum.com.

Gift of rare book of photographs

Via Wybo Boersma, the Airborne Museum has obtained a virtually perfect copy of photographs of the Battle of Arnhem, compiled in the autumn of 1944. Only ten copies were ever produced on photographic paper, the compilers being the Photography Department of the 1st British Airborne Division. The book mainly contains pictures taken by the photographers of the Army Film and Photographic Unit in the September month of 1944.

Wallet back in museum

Many years ago the museum was given a wallet originally belonging to Private Edward Emmanuel Hird, who served with the 1st Battalion The Border Regiment. Private Hird died on 23 September 1944, but his body has never been found. When, some time later, it came to light that his mother was still alive, the wallet was handed over to her through the good offices of the British Embassy. Following her recent death the family decided that this personal souvenir should be returned to the museum. And this has happened.

(W. Boersma)

Engraved fighting knife

A recent exchange deal has enabled the Airborne Museum to add a fine example of the Fairbairn-Sykes Commando dagger to its collection. This brass-handled dagger originally belonged to Captain C.C. Chidgey, second-in-command of the 1st Airborne Ordnance Field Company, Royal Army Ordnance Corps. While in England he had the REME engrave his name on the dagger.

Captain Chidgey was severely wounded during the Battle of Arnhem and taken prisoner. He cannot remember if he lost the knife in England or during the Battle of Arnhem.

'Witnesses to the Battle'

A small exhibition entitled 'Getuigen van de Slag' (Witnesses to the Battle) is to be held in the Airborne Museum from 25 November 2000 to 18 February 2001. Following the success of the 1999 exhibition 'Graven in het Verleden', the museum wishes to

stage a winter exhibition again this year in conjunction with members of the Friends' Society. Many of these members have objects, documents and photos, often with their own background story, that other people hardly ever get the chance to see.

'Hartenstein' would therefore like to give these members the opportunity to exhibit these items. In 1999 there was a lot of interest in helping to realise the exhibition, and the Airborne Museum Foundation management assumes that this will also be the case this time. Those willing to assist with the forthcoming exhibition, and who are prepared to make material available, should contact W. Boersma, tel. (home) 0318 639633, e-mail w.boersma@wx.nl, or during the day at the museum (026 3337710). (W. Boersma)

Exhibition 2001

Next year it is intended to devote the traditional exhibition in the Airborne Museum to 'The Royal Engineers of the 1st Airborne Division'. Society member Patrick Pronk has pointed out to us that this unit will be celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2001. At the moment Patrick is working on a book about the Airborne Engineers which will probably be published in September next year, and he has already offered to help with the exhibition. Other members who would like to assist with the make-up and building of this exhibition, or can make available material, photos and/or documents, should contact the undersigned.

(W. Boersma)

Error

Due to a regrettable misunderstanding between the printer and the publisher, the quality of the previous edition of our Newsletter was not quite what you have come to expect from us. The pages were not printed in the correct order, or cut and folded in the accustomed manner. The editors would like to offer their apologies for this error.

Registration of museum items

Museum staff employee Roland Boekhorst, together with volunteers Theo Diepenbroek and Jaap Jansen, have recorded all the items in the Airborne Museum storage depot. It would seem that a total of some 2,700 articles require storing.

At the moment they are busy with the registration of all items that are to be exhibited in the museum. It is expected that the project can be completed this year.

'Red Berets and Red Crosses' (II)

Perhaps one of the pleasures of being an 'amateur' author is the fact that, when undertaking the research and the writing of the story, you can spend the time trying to get the facts right! Having spoken

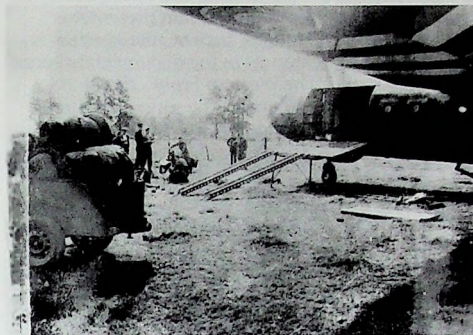
to other enthusiasts, it seems to annoy a lot of us when we look at a book and find photographs incorrectly captioned or basic facts wrong! It is even more annoying when you write to the authors and they either don't respond or say they will change things but don't. We decided to put my home address inside the book in the hope that new information would come to light and so that people could easily contact me. I also hope that my book 'Red Berets and Red Crosses' has got the story just about right.

The book was launched on an unsuspecting public in September 1999, and just over seven months later the first edition has been sold out. A second edition is now on sale and is going fast. One of the nicest letters I have received was from an Arnhem veteran by the name of Roland MacFarlane. We have corresponded and spoken to one another over a number of months and an interesting story has come to light. Roland was a member of the RAMC attached to GHQ 1st Airborne Corps and flew from Harwell on 17 September 1944, intending to go to the Groesbeek Heights with General Browning. However, he did not arrive in Holland that day, the glider crash-landing near Melksham in Wiltshire. It was reported the following day in a local newspaper as follows: 'There was one glider that never made the crossing. It broke adrift near a Home County town but made a perfect landing in a field by a village. From the glider emerged a number of fully equipped sky troops, who stood around smoking cigarettes while a cordon of police kept the sightseers away.' Roland kindly lent me a scrapbook he put together soon after the war in which he says the Horsa's load consisted of one jeep, one trailer, two motor-cycles, two bicycles, nine men complete with full kit, kit bags, sleeping bags and loads of food and medical supplies. A picture was taken at the time, which is reproduced here. It seems the cordon of police was, in Roland's words, the village's special constable and there was only one local present. Both can clearly be seen in this photograph. Roland also says that after unloading the jeep and trailer, the sleeping bags were placed on top of the trailer and roped off. The trailer in the photograph is certainly well laden. Roland managed to get to Holland on the 18th, but landed at Renkum rather than Nijmegen, didn't know what he was doing there and ended up working in the Tafelberg, but that's another story.

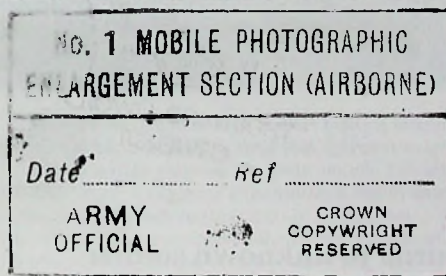
I would be interested in hearing from any member who has more information on this crash - who were the glider pilots and the other passengers? Also, on the back of the photograph is a stamp saying 'No 1 Mobile Photographic Enlargement Section (Airborne)'. Has anybody any information on this unit?

Other new information has been forthcoming on the piano playing at the Schoonoord on 26 September 1944 and, perhaps more importantly, on the murder of Brian Brownscombe, the Medical Officer of the South Staffordshire Regiment. Indeed, Dutch Society member Bob Gerritsen is hoping to produce a booklet on the subject soon.

If any member of the Society would like a copy of 'Red Berets and Red Crosses' before it becomes a collector's item and virtually unobtainable, the Museum shop has some copies left and I also have some. Price in the shop is 49.50 guilders, or direct from Niall Cherry, 3 Church Road, Warton, Lincs, PR4 1BD, at 17 pounds 95p plus 4 pounds postage. I also sell 'Off at Last' by Robert Sigmond, the story of the 7th Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers in the Second World War, including their time in the 1st Airlanding Brigade. This costs 20 pounds plus 4 pounds postage.
(Niall Cherry)



*The Horsa glider which made a premature landing near Melksham in Wiltshire, England on 17 September 1944.
(photo: via Niall Cherry)*



*The stamp on the back of the photo of the Horsa. Does anyone have any information about this unit?
(photo: via Niall Cherry)*

Pegasus Walk

Contrary to the date given in the enclosed Airborne Commemorations Foundation folder, the 17th Pegasus Walk in the Bennekom area will be held on 28 October next, not the 21st. This walk follows the major part of the route taken during operation Pegasus I on the night of 22/23 October 1944, when a large number of allied servicemen managed to escape across the Rhine with the help of the Dutch Resistance.

For information and booking ring the VVV (Tourist Office): 0318 614444.

Battlefield Tour

Next Saturday 9 September the Airborne Museum is again organising a general battlefield tour over the former battlefields. Anyone may take part, the costs being 55 guilders per person, 47.50 guilders for Friends' Society members.
(W. Boersma)

Filming for BBC documentary

At the end of last July a BBC television team was in the Netherlands for the making of a documentary on Operation Market Garden. The film presenter is Professor Richard Holmes, known among other things for his appearances in the documentary series 'War Walks' and 'The Western Front', shown on British TV over recent years. The series now under production will be broadcast next year.



*Professor Richard Holmes in front of the camera in the meadow near the Oude Kerk in Oosterbeek during filming of the BBC documentary on Operation Market Garden.
(photo: Robert Voskuil)*

Burial of unknown soldier

On Tuesday 11 July 2000, the simple burial service of an unknown British soldier took place at the Airborne Cemetery in Oosterbeek. His remains were discovered in late 1995 during excavation work near Westerbouwing, Oosterbeek. The Recovery and Identification Service of the Royal Netherlands Army together with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission did everything in their power to identify the remains, but the sad lack of any items of reference made this impossible. It was therefore decided that he should be laid to rest as an unknown soldier.

'A Hell of an Education'

Mr Doug F. Willies from England has recently written a book about the military career of Private Jack Hewitt entitled 'A Hell of an Education. The

Story of a British paratrooper signaller 1942-1947.' The author describes Hewitt's training, the actions in North Africa, Italy and Arnhem, deployment in Denmark Malaya, Java and Palestine, and his eventual demobilisation in 1947.

The two chapters on the Battle of Arnhem tell of Hewitt's experiences during the fighting around Hartenstein and the escape across the Rhine. The book also contains an overview of the radios used at Arnhem, complete with technical details. This publication can be ordered from the Airborne Museum (contact person, W. Boersma), and because the books have to be imported from England one should take into account a fairly lengthy delivery time.

'A Hell of an Education' is published by Interprint, Norwich in a simple, ring-bound format, comprises 140 pages, is illustrated, and costs 27.50 guilders plus p & p.

One pound sterling from each copy sold will go to the Airborne Forces Security Fund.
(W. Boersma)

'Arnhem Ghost Town' on Internet

In 1995, Arnhemse Courant journalist André Horlings wrote the book 'Arnhem Spookstad, Herinneringen en foto's van evacués, gastgezinnen en achterblijvers na de Slag om Arnhem, 1944-'45' (Arnhem Ghost Town, Recollections and photos of evacuees, host families and those who remained behind after the Battle of Arnhem, 1944-'45). A 'monument to the evacuation' in the form of a plaque placed at the beginning of Apeldoornseweg in Arnhem was paid for out of the profits.

The book has been out print for some years, but the author has put the entire publication on the Internet. The address is: <http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/1557/arnhem0.html>.

Second-hand books sought

Visitors to the Airborne Museum often ask the cash desk staff about books on the Battle of Arnhem. It is well known that there are very few Dutch-language books on this subject, so one has to fall back on the second-hand book market. Friends' Society members have the book service at their disposal, which is always well stocked.

Now, in order to help non-members in their quest as well, the museum is building up a stock of the most popular books on the Battle. If any members have spare books, or have managed to get hold of such at flea markets, car-boot sales etc, the museum would be pleased to have them. However, it is certainly not the intention to introduce a competitor to Okko Luursema's outstanding book service. Contact A. Groeneweg at the museum for further information.
(W. Boersma)