



The GROUNDSHEET

The Publication of
The Royal Westminster Regiment Association

*'Dedicated to the ideals and comradeship
we knew in wars and peace, in our
service, both home and abroad.'*

'Pro Rege et Patria'

**Special Edition – Part II of II
Trip to Europe
24 April - 07 May 2025**

**The Armoury, 530 Queens Avenue
New Westminster, B.C., V3L 1K3**

www.royal-westies-assn.ca



Past President's Introduction

Hello all, this is the second part to our special edition of the Groundsheet, edition covers the commemorations held by us and two official commemorations in the Netherlands as part of the remembrance of the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands on 05 May 1945.

We also covered a lot of the ground where the Westminster Regiment (Motor) had fought.

I would especially like to give special thanks to our hosts at the Commemorations in the Netherlands. These folks are;

- Joël Stoppels – battlefield tour and Commemoration at Farmsum
- Henk Huttinga – Commemoration at Norg
- Williem Gielen – Commemoration at Voorthuizen
- Jorieke Van Desselaar – Commemoration at Putten
- Danny Prangma – Commemoration at Otterlo
- Linda van Beek – Ceremony at Holten
- Gerard Hendriks – Ceremony at Groesbeek and Liberation Parade Wageningen

Also, a special mention for Sjoerd Roozenbeek, who (along with other family members) was with us for commemorations at Voorthuizen, Putten, Otterlo and Wageningen. During those events Sjoerd wore a Westminster Regiment uniform and drove a jeep with Westie markings.

Bill White
Past President

Photo Front Cover – The Great Cross at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery

Oostwold, Woldendorp and Commemoration at Farmsum

On Friday 02 May we travelled north from Arnhem and meet with our tour guide and host, Joël Stoppels at Oostwold. We then followed the track of the Westminster Regiment (Motor) to Woldendorp. Unfortunately, we were not able to get the German Naval Gun Battery at Fiemel due to road works.



Briefing by Joël Stoppels at Oostwold



Map of the area

As part of the Commemorations for the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation, the Municipality of Emmsdelta (which is a merger of Appingedam, Delfzijl and Loppersum) had banners made of the soldiers who had died during the fight to Liberate Delfzijl as part of Operation Canada. The banners were located where the soldiers fell in Battle.



Banner to Private Donald Robert Sawyer



Banner to Private Joseph Petrak

In Woldendorp we witnessed the banners on A.E. Gorterweg that were mounted to commemorate the sacrifice of Privates Sawyer and Petrak, Westminster Regiment (Motor).

Following our visit to Woldendorp, we then went to the Canadian Club, 129 Borgweg, Farmsum where we were kindly provided with a lunch. There was another tour group there that included Jim Parks a member of the Winnipeg Rifles, now 100 years old. On arrival there was a welcome from Joël and Elex Kappen. When lunch was finished there was a welcome from the Mayor of Eemsdelta, Ben Visser. The Mayor presented the first coin commemorating 80 years of freedom to Jim Parks. Coins were also presented to the Canadian guests.

Bill White made a speech and presented a plaque (shown below) and a Canadian Flag to the Mayor.



Jim Parks and Mayor Ben Visser outside the Canadian Club



Our guide and host Joël Stoppels



The tour party sitting down for lunch



Plaque presented to the Mayor



Commemorative Coin

Thanks to Rhonda Hall, who received the kind permission of Remco van Veluwen, a reporter for Dagblad van het Noorden, here is his article.

Martijn (44) gets to play bagpipes in Farmsum for war hero Jim Parks (100): ‘The pipes play in every war film’



On Friday, 100-year-old Canadian war veteran Jim Parks unveiled a memorial in Farmsum. Martijn Bakker (44) was there, playing the bagpipes in Parks’ honor. “I really wanted to do this,” he said.

Canadian soldiers in uniform march across the Borgshof in Farmsum, some wearing more medals than others. Locals watch attentively, holding up their phones en masse to capture the ceremony. It’s all in honor of war veteran Jim Parks, who turned 100 this

year. This Friday marks exactly eighty years since he and his comrades helped liberate Delfzijl from the occupiers. Parks is here to unveil a war memorial.

Learning especially for this moment

A bagpiper walks ahead of the troops, expressionless as he plays his instrument. It's Martijn Bakker (44) from Haren, a member of the Clan MacBeth Pipe Band in Groningen. He volunteered to play the bagpipes for the event and was thrilled when chosen. He plays Nearer, My God, to Thee on his pipes. "I really wanted to do this", Bakker says proudly. He also played during Parks' visit to Appingedam two years ago. Bakker began learning the bagpipes 15 years ago, inspired by his interest in World War II. "You hear the pipes in every war film – take The Longest Day, for example. I wanted to be able to do that too. It feels very special to contribute here today."

The last one left

Researcher Joël Stoppels from Appingedam gives a speech about the intense battle for Delfzijl. The Germans had entrenched themselves in the church of Farmsum. Hundreds of soldiers and dozens of civilians died during the ten-day battle. On May 2, 1945, the Germans surrendered. The Canadians played a vital role in the victory. Eighteen of them attended the commemoration in 2015.



Ten years later, only one is still alive. Jim Parks (100) walks stoically to the front, leaning on his cane. He lost part of his hearing in an explosion in Delfzijl, yet he looks remarkably spry for his age. Parks unveils the monument and lays a wreath.

'We have not forgotten them'

Mayor Ben Visser praises the veteran: "A true friend of Eemsdelta. I can only express my gratitude to our liberators. We have not forgotten them", he says. The crowd responds with respectful applause. "And to live to be 100 as well – you must be made of extraordinary stuff."



Parks takes it all in quietly. For him, being here matters deeply. “The Dutch have always been very grateful to me. I think that’s wonderful. It’s a shame more of the boys couldn’t be here with me. I wish they could be honored too – not just me.”

Searching for the story

Parks unveiled the monument alongside Rhonda Hall (68). Her father Wilson also fought in the battle for Delfzijl and passed away in 1978. “He never spoke about the war. About twenty years ago, I started searching for his story. In one of the letters to my mother, he mentioned Delfzijl”, Hall says. She pauses, holding back tears. “I flew to the Netherlands on April 24 – exactly the day he would have turned 105. I’m here to honor him. It feels like I’ve found him here.”

During the ceremonies, bagpiper Martijn Bakker steps aside, but he is not forgotten. A young cadet walks up to him and presents him with a black badge in appreciation of his beautiful playing. Embroidered in gold letters are the words ‘Royal Canadian Army Cadets’. Smiling, Bakker tucks the keepsake into his bag.

The commemoration at the Vector of Memory, consisted of the unveiling and laying of wreaths.

The Vector memorial is part of the Liberation Route Europe, an international network that visualizes the route of the Allied advance in 1944-1945. The Crossroad Vectors were designed by the world-famous architect Daniel Libeskind, known for, among other things, the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the One World Trade Center in New York. The Crossroad Vector, at Farmsum is placed near the Aeolus mill and forms a lasting reminder of the sacrifices that were made for freedom. It was unveiled by Mayor Visser with Jim Parks and Rhonda Hall.



The Canadian Trail



Unveiling of the Vector of Memory



Jim Parks, Rhonda Hall, Joël Stoppels, Mayor Visser, Mr Bruggers



Col Haussmann, Col (Ret'd) White, RSM Baron



Wreath – Westminster Regt (M)



Serving Members & Cadets, Mayor Visser & Jim Parks



Mayor Visser, Mr Bruggers, Jim Parks, Rhonda Hall

Mr Bruggers, who also attended the lunch and ceremony, was a child during the war and lived with his parents in Geefsweer during his youth. He reflected on the death of 21-year-old Canadian soldier John Gerard Spicer, who was fatally hit by German anti-aircraft fire on 2 May 1945 near Geefsweer and is considered the last Canadian soldier to die on Dutch soil.

Jim Parks landed in Europe in 1944 in Normandy, at Juno Beach. He fought in the Battle of the Scheldt and ended up in Friesland and Groningen via the east of the country. He had already visited the municipality of Eemsdelta in 2023 to 'return the appreciation' to the residents. He was in Appingedam at the time and said that he mainly remembers the battles in Delfzijl: "I still remember being blown through a window during an explosion. That's where I went deaf."

The wreath for the Westminster Regiment (Motor) was kindly arranged for us by Joël Stoppels.

Commemoration at Norg – 02 May 2025

Following the visit to Farmsum, we travelled to Norg, which is south south west of Groningen. At the end of the war in May 1945, the Battalion Headquarters was located in Norg and stayed there until November of 1945. The Headquarters was housed in the Hotel Karsten.

When we arrived, we went with our hosts and laid flowers at the grave of Flight Sergeant, Chris Z.R. Christianson, RCAF. He was an airgunner in a Lancaster that crashed at Westervelde near Norg on 09 October 1943. He is buried in the Norg General Cemetery, Plot 6 South, Row 2 Grave 3.



Headstone of Flt Sgt Christianson



Col (Ret'd) White & Cadet WO Payumo



Henk Huttinga & Mayor Smid

Then we had our commemoration service in front of the old Saint Margareta Church (Sint-Margareta). Our programme consisted of ;

- Prayer of the Padre (Capt Savage)
- Playing of the Last Post
- 2 minutes of silence
- Playing of the Reveille
- Wreath laying at the monument in front of the church
- Playing of the national anthem of the Netherlands
- Playing of the Canadian national anthem



The Contingent formed up



Capt Savage (Padre)

The wreath to the Westminster Regiment (Motor) was laid by Col (Retired) Bill White accompanied by Col Matthew Haussmann and RSM Dean Baron. The monument at the front of the Church is a memorial to all the residents (listed by name) who died during the occupation in the Second World War.



Col Haussmann, Col (Ret'd) White, RSM Baron



The names on the memorial



Wreath – Westminster Regt (M)

Both wreaths were kindly arranged by Henk Huttinga.

Following the ceremony the hosts and tour part entered the Church. There was a speech from the Mayor, Klaas Smid. He is the Mayor of Noordenveld which administers the village of Norg. Bill White made a short speech and presented a plaque and Canadian Flag to the Mayor. Col Hassmann and RSM Baron presented him with a Commanding Officer's coin.

Bill also presented Certificates of Appreciation to;

- Mr. Henk Huttinga – host and co-ordinator of our visit
- Mr. Bert Venema – President of the Historical Society
- Mr. Halbe Hageman – worked on the exhibition
- Mrs. Geertje Brink – worked on the exhibition
- Mr. Germ Geersing – worked on the exhibition

He also presented Association ties to;

- Mr. Henk Huttinga, Mr. Bert Venema, Mr. Halbe Hageman, Mr. Germ Geersing, and
- André Corbould, grandson of our Commanding Officer, Lt Col Gordon Corbould.



Ceremony inside the Church



Mayor Klaas Smid



Presentation of Plaque to the Mayor



Presentation of CO's Coin to the Mayor



Chuck MacKinnon, Bert Venema, Henk Huttinga



Padre Savage & Mayor Smid



Some of the items on display



Cpl Szeto, Halbe Hageman, Pte Sattler



The Mayor and Cadets

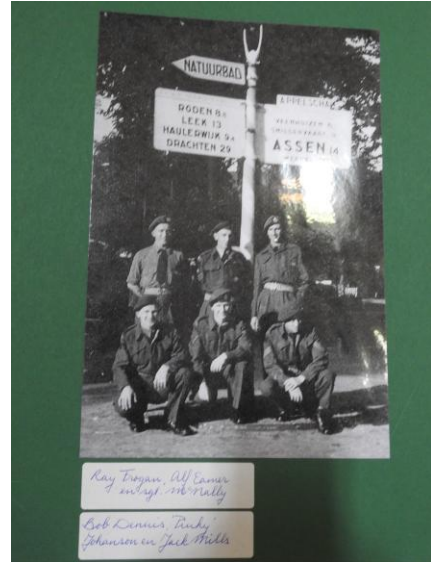


Photo of Westminsterers on exhibit

Following a viewing of the exhibition the tour party went to the Hotel Karsten for refreshments.



Sint-Margareta



Hotel Karsten



André Corbould & Bill White



The Mayor with Kaetlyn & André Corbould

Commemoration at Voorthuizen – 03 May 2025

On Saturday 03 May we visited a number of the places that the Westminster Regiment (Motor) help liberate as part of Operation Cleanser.

We travelled to a location called “PAN” at Terlet, north of Arnhem and viewed the airfield and area that had been cleared by the British Columbia Dragoons (BCDs) supported by C Company. Then we went through Barneveld, (TINKER) which had been liberated by C Company in support of the Lord Strathcona’s Horse (LdSH) then supported by C Company, and then on to Voorthuizen (RECORD), which had been liberated by the 8th Princess Louise’s (New Brunswick) Hussars (8NBH) with A and B Company in support.

At Voorthuizen we went to grounds of Oranjevereniging (Orange Association) to meet our host, William Gielen. We then participated in a commemoration ceremony at the memorial on Rubenstraat near Kerkstraat.

The ceremony consisted of the following;

- Regimental Chaplain (Capt Savage)
- Playing of the Last Post
- 2 minutes of silence
- Playing of the Reveille
- Piper played the Lament
- Wreath laid at the monument
- Flowers laid by Kris Kloot, Councillor of the City of Chilliwack
- Playing of Wilhelmus, the national anthem of the Netherlands
- Playing of O’Canada, the Canadian national anthem

The wreath to the Westminster Regiment (Motor) was laid by Col (Retired) Bill White accompanied by Col Matthew Haussmann and RSM Dean Baron.

Following the ceremony we walked back to grounds of the Oranjevereniging and were kindly provided with lunch by our hosts.

There was a speech from the Mayor Jacco van der Tak. He is the Mayor of Barneveld which administers the village of Voorthuizen.

Bill White made a short speech and presented a plaque and Canadian Flag to the Mayor. Col Hassmann and RSM Baron presented him with a Commanding Officer’s coin.

Bill also presented Certificates of Appreciation and an Association tie to our host, William Gielen, who is the secretary of Oranjevereniging.;

There was also a speech of welcome from Jan van Donkersgoed, President of Oranjevereniging.

The following photographs are courtesy of Rhonda Hall and Judith Roozenbeek.



Marching to the Memorial



Padre, Captain Savage says a prayer



Saluting after laying the wreath to the Westminster Regiment (Motor)



Wreath – Westminster Regiment (Motor) – Flowers – “On behalf of Dutch Canadians who now call Chilliwack Home”



Mayor Jacco van der Tak



Col Haussmann, RSM Baron, Mayor, and Bill White



Presentation of plaque to the Mayor



Presentations to our host William Gielen & Kris Kloot



William Gielen, Secretaris, Oranje Vereniging



Presentation of Cadet Uniform to Officer Cadet Pabla



© Judith Roozenbeek

Capt Corbin Lock and Arnel Dorion being driven in the “Westie” jeep by Leo Roozenbeek



© Judith Roozenbeek

World War II vehicles owned and operated by the Roozenbeek family

The wreath for Westminster Regiment (Motor) was kindly arranged by our host, William Gielen. He also arranged for us to get the wreaths for the commemorations at Putten and Otterlo.

Commemorations at Putten – 03 May 2025

Following our commemoration at Voorthuizen we travelled north to Putten (BOWL). There is a memorial to four Canadian Soldiers that were killed during the attack to liberate Putten. It is located at Voorthuizerstraat 71, Putten

The wording on the memorial translated from the Dutch into English is;



“In the night of
17 April 1945
Fell in this area
For the Liberation of Putten
C. L. PEWTRESS
J. WAKULA
J.B. WALLACE and
F.L. WATERS
Of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division”

“Their sacrifice obliges us
to handle freedom
with care”

Corporal Charles Leonard Pewtress, Private John Wakula and Private Frederick Lenard Waters were members of the Westminster Regiment (Motor), and Trooper John Burpe Wallace was a member of the 8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars.

The installation of this memorial was done in large part by Jan Beenemeer, who at age 13 and living across the street, remember the night the four soldiers died nearby. Jan now 94 was present at the commemoration.

With the kind permission of the Municipality we held a Commemoration at the memorial. Graeme Clark, the grand nephew of Corporal Charlie Pewtress, was on the tour along with his wife Barb Neil. Graeme was asked to lay the wreath of the Westminster Regiment (Motor) at the memorial.

The programme was as follows;

- Opening and Welcome by Jorieke Van Desselaar, of the Municipality of Putten (assisted with English translation by Jacob Kos)
- Prayer – Captain Craig Savage
- Ode of Remembrance – Sjoerd Roozenbeek
- Wreaths laid by;
 - Mayor of Putten – Henk Lambooij
 - Councillor Chris Kloot – City of Chilliwack, BC
 - Westminster Regiment (Motor) – Col (Ret'd) Bill White, Graeme Clark, RSM Dean Baron
 - October 44 Foundation
- The Last Post – Bugler from the Excelsior Band
- 2 minutes of Silence
- The Rouse - Bugler from the Excelsior Band
- Dutch National Anthem - Excelsior Band
- Canadian National Anthem - Excelsior Band



Excelsior Band



Jorieke Van Dasselaar, our host & MC



Wreath laid by Mayor H.A. Lambooy



Westminster Regt (M) wreath laid by Graeme Clark



The salute following laying of the wreath by Graeme Clark



Jan Bennemeer and Bill White



Chris Koot, Councillor City of Chilliwack



Sjoerd Roozenbeek – Ode of Remembrance



Wreaths at the Memorial



Pictures of Cpl Pewtress, Tpr Wallace and Pte Wakula

Following the commemoration at the memorial there was a reception at City Hall, which gave us the opportunity to make presentations. Bill White presented the Mayor with a plaque commemorating our visit and a Canadian Flag. Col Haussman and RSM Baron gave the Mayor a Commanding Officer's Coin. Bill thanked Jorieke Van Dasselaar for her efforts in co-ordinating the commemoration and presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation, flowers and a bottle of wine.



Presentation of Plaque to the Mayor



Jorieke with some items of gratitude



Presentations to the Roozenbeek family



Cake with "80 years of Freedom"

Certificates of Appreciation and Association ties were also presented to Jan Beenemeer, Kris Kloot and the Roozenbeek family.

The tour group were presented with commemorative Liberation pins.



Our Cadets and OCdt Pabla at City Hall

After the reception we were invited to attend an unveiling of a plaque at the Holy Mary of Purification Roman Catholic Church, at Brinkstraat 87, Putten.

On April 18, 1945, Putten was liberated by the Canadian army. The Canadian army leadership wanted to report the liberation to the local authorities. The army leadership wanted nothing to do with the then collaborative municipal council and the police. The only authority acceptable to them was the church.

At the initiative of the De Samenloop Foundation and with financial support from the municipal council of Putten and the H. Maria Zuivering Putten location council, a plaque has been designed that commemorates this event.



The plaque at the Church, Mary of Purification



Gerda van Meerveld speaking about the plaque



© Judith Roozenbeek

The unveiling of the plaque



Evert de Graaf speaking about the liberation of Putten



“History was made here!”

18th April 1945, Putten (Veluwe)

The day of liberation by the Canadian Army. The tanks entered Putten at 9 o'clock.

Lieut. Leslie Hamilton, Ontario, 5 C.A.R. (8 N.B.H.)

Lieut. H. John MacConnachie, Nova Scotia, 5 C.A.R. (8 N.B.H.)

Lieut. Laurence K. Walker, New Brunswick, 5 C.A.R. (8 N.B.H.)

*Casper M. Bollinger, acting pastor
missionary in Africa from 27-3-1944 to 18-4-1945*

Canadian troops liberated our village on April 18, 1945.

In this Catholic church, three Canadian officers of the 8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars signed the parish register, in the presence of the acting pastor, C.M. Bollinger.

Putten was liberated!



Barabara Neil, Jan Bennemeer, Graeme Clark

Following the unveiling of the plaque we went to a location on the south east side of Putten which had be a tank harbour area at which one can still see the tank tracks. Here is a photograph of sign posted on site.



The wording on the left side of the sign is as follows.
The night of April 17-18, 1945
Krachtighuizen Heath, Putten

“This part of the Krachtighuizen Heath is closely linked to the liberation of Putten on April 18, 1945. Canadian soldiers approaching Putten via Voorthuizerstraat were so heavily shelled by the Germans on the evening of April 17, 1945, that they were forced to withdraw. The Canadian tank squadron (A Squadron of the Hussars) entrenched itself here on the heath and spent the night of Tuesday, April 17, 1945, under enemy fire. The following day, they continued their advance to liberate Putten and the rest of the Netherlands. During recent excavations in 2025, the tracks of the Canadian tanks were discovered. Because the tracks retain water longer, unusual vegetation can be observed.”



Michel Kooij providing information about the tracks at Krachtighuizerheide – to his right is Co Grift



The flag that was presented to us. – Putten Liberated – 18 April 1945

Here is the story that was told to us.

“The story of the liberation of Putten, 17th and 18th of April, 1945.

My name is Co Grift and I was born just after the war in 1951.

In the late sixties I met my wife, and she has always lived in that street, and together we live there since 1975...

The war was a regular topic of conversation in her family. Among other things, what they experienced during the raid in October 1944, when my father in law was hiding in the woods. And stories of the people in hiding, they were given shelter in a chicken coop. One of them, Tante (Aunt) Sjaan, even came to our wedding in 1972.

And there's the story of what happened the day before the liberation of Putten....

On the 17th of April 1945, my mother-in-law and Jan, my wife's older brother, were fetching a jug of milk around the time of the first try of the Allies to liberate Putten. That must have been around 17.00 hours.

When they were in the middle of the heathland, on their way back home, they suddenly found themselves in a barrage. The Germans tried to stop the advance of the liberators here. The bullets flew around both of them. They had to run for their lives....

Once at home, my mother-in-law found herself alone..., with his wooden shoes on his feet Jan could not run so fast and had fallen down. He remained lying there until the hail of bullets had passed. When the shooting was over he stood up and ran home. Happily they both survived...

Around 21:00 on that same day of the 17th, the Sherman-tanks tried to get to the center of Putten again, but they were ambushed by the Germans. The Germans let four tanks pass on the Voorthuizerstraat and then opened fire. In the chaos the other tanks turned and drew back.

My father-in-law told me that that tanks had been on this heathland during the night of 17 to 18 April and that traces of them still could be seen. And he showed me where I could find them.

I think the tracks were (and still are...) recognizable because water stays in there, so the grass in the tracks stays green for a longer time

The story has always stayed with me. It is a physical reminder of the liberation of my hometown.

At the moment when the heath land was turned upside down in the nineties, just like now, the tracks of the tanks came to light and all doubts were removed from me: In the middle of one of the tracks stood, before it was cut down, a large tree. I counted the annual-rings and could conclude that that tree must have been a very small one when that tracks were made. It really were the tracks of the tanks that stayed here in the night of the 17th to the 18th of April 1945.

And here, where we stand right now, you still can see one of the tracks, made by your tanks.

Thanks to the soldiers of your regiment we are able to live in freedom.

We thank you all

Photographs from the ceremony and reception at City Hall and unveiling of the plaque are courtesy of Joreike Van Dasselaar, Rhonda Hall and Judith Roozenbeek.

Commemoration at Otterlo – 03 May 2025

Following our visit to Putten (BOWL), the tour travelled to Otterlo (WELDER). There we participated in a commemoration at the Memorial to the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. The programme was as follows;

- Welcome and introduction of the Mayor - Danny Prangmsma.
- Mayor's Speech – René Verhulst
- Prayer by the Regimental Padre Savage
- Last Post performed by OBK (village musicians)
- Two minutes of silence.
- Reveille performed by OBK
- Wreath laid by the regiment.
- National Anthem of the Netherlands.
- National Anthem of Canada.
- Remarks and presentations - Bill White
- March to Dinner

The wreath to Westminster Regiment (Motor) was laid by Lt Col (Retired) Chuck MacKinnon who's uncle, Lieutenant Angus Moring MacKinnon, of the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) who died on 17 April 1945 of wounds received during the fight to liberate Otterlo. Lt Col MacKinnon was accompanied by Col (Retired) Bill White and RSM Dean Baron.

A banner commemorating Lt Angus MacKinnon (see photograph below) was located just behind the parade contingent.

Bill White made presentations of a plaque and Canadian Flag to the Mayor René Verhulst. He is the Mayor of Ede, as Otterlo is administered by the City of Ede. Col Haussmann and RSM Baron presented him with the Commanding Officer's coin.

The Mayor presented us with a photograph of the memorial to 5th Canadian Armoured Division following the ceremony there last year on 04 May 2024 (shown below).

Following the ceremony at the 5th CAD Memorial, the Westie Contingent, led by the Seaforth Highlanders of Holland Memorial Pipes and Drums of Voorthuizen, marched to "Otterlo Events" for dinner.

During the dinner, presentations of Certificates of Appreciation and Associations ties were given to;

- Danny Prangmsma – who was the MC and our contact for arrangements that day
- Laurens Proffitius - who assisted Danny
- Jan Vos – Author of "The Fight for Freedom – Liberation, Veluwe, April 1945"

In Jan's book, there are details of the members of the Westminster Regiment who were killed in action during Operation Cleanser.

Lt Col (Ret'd) Chuck MacKinnon presented Jan Vos with a copy of "For King and Country – 150 Years of The Royal Westminster Regiment."



Mayor René Verhulst, Danny Prangma at the Memorial to 5th CAD



Westie Contingent on parade



René Verhulst, Mayor of Ede



Danny Prangma, the MC and our host



Memorial to 5 Cdn Armd Division



Our Divisional Commander, MGen Bert Hoffmeister



Banner – Lt Angus Moring MacKinnon



Wreath laid by nephew – Lt Col (Ret'd) Chuck MacKinnon



Band of the Seaforth Highlanders of Holland, Voorthuizen



Westie Contingent marching to dinner



Military Vehicles – courtesy the Roozenbeek family



Photograph presented to us by the Mayor



Marching through Otterlo



Danny Prangmsma following our contingent



Bill presenting an Association tie to Danny Prangmsma



Bill Presenting Certificate of Appreciation to Laurens Propitius



Bill presenting a Certificate of Appreciation to Jan Vos



Chuck MacKinnon presenting our "150 Book" to Jan Vos

(Photos courtesy – Ernie Bodrogi, Rhonda Hall and Judith Roozenbeek)

Canada Remembers the Liberation of the Netherlands
Commemorative Ceremony
Holten Canadian War Cemetery - Sunday 04 May 2025

We had the honour of participating in the Commemorative Ceremony at the Canadian War Cemetery, Holten. Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet of the Netherlands attended the Ceremony and our Right Honourable Governor General, Mary May Simon, who also the guest speaker.

The following was the programme.

Music—Abide with me
Welcome
Remarks
Poem by school children - *The Train Whistle*
Music - *Remembrance*
Act of Remembrance
Last Post
Minute of silence
Rouse
Lament
Flypast
Commitment to Remember
Laying of Wreaths - by invitation
Remarks
Music - *Don't close your eyes*
Laying of flowers by school children
Spreading of Poppies
Poem: *In Flanders Fields*
Blessings
National Anthems

End of the official program Opportunity for others to lay wreaths or flowers.
A helicopter dropped red poppies from the air.

As the Governor General left the Cemetery, our Cadets who were nearby, made sure that Her Honour was saluted.



The wreath to Westminster Regiment (Motor)



In the centre – Col Matthew Haussmann, Col (Ret'd) Bill White, RSM Dean Baron laying the wreath



Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet



Right Honourable Governor General, Mary May Simon



There were many in attendance



Helicopter dropping red poppies

**National Remembrance - 80 years of Freedom
4 May 2025 - Groesbeek**

We had the honour of participating in the day of National Remembrance in the Netherlands at the Groesbeek, Canadian War Cemetery. The following was the programme for the evening;

- 5:45-6:15 pm Performance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
Gathering of invited guests of the silent procession in the Groesbeek town hall
Gathering of other participants outside the town hall
- 6:30 pm Departure of the silent march from the town hall to the Canadian War Cemetery.
- 7:10-7:40 pm Arrival of the silent march at the cemetery. A piper from the RCMP leads the processions to the front.

Word of welcome

'O Canada'

The Canadian national Anthem sung by Majorie Scholtz

Speech by Mayor Mark Slinkman

Wreath laying

RCMP will play during the wreath-laying ceremony

- 8:00 pm **'Last Post'** by a bugler of the RCMP
Followed by 2 minutes of silence

- 8:02 pm **'The awakening'** by a bugler of the RCMP

- 8:04 pm **'Act of Remembrance'**

'Commitment to Remember'

Continued wreath laying

Opportunity to lay wreaths or flowers at the Cross of Honor by other attendees

'White Cliffs of Dover' Sung by Majorie Scholtz

Story

Story written and told by Ivan Pryimenko

Children light candles at the Cross of Honor

During which a piper of the RCMP plays

Poem

Poem written and told by the Groesbeek children's mayor Jeslynn Willemsen

'Imagine'

Sung by Majorie Scholtz

Release of pigeons by Mr. Weijers and students of De Sieppe primary school

'Wilhelmus'

The Dutch national Anthem sung by Majorie Scholtz

End of the commemoration ceremony

After the commemoration ceremony we invite you all to the Liberation Museum for coffee or tea. The museum is open until 10p.m.



The silent walk up the hill from the town of Groesbeek (photo courtesy Tamara O'Dea)



Bugler – RCMP Band



Wreath - Royal Westminster Regiment

The wreath (kindly arranged for by our host Gerard Hendriks) was laid by Col (Retired) Bill White accompanied by Col Matthew Haussmann and RSM Dean Baron.



Col Haussmann, Col (Ret'd) Bill White, RSM Baron



The Grand Cross following the ceremony

Speech by Mayor Mark Slinkman

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to give a warm welcome to our Canadian guests who have come from all over Canada. Especially to both Her Excellency the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Deputy Minister, as well as to the many schoolchildren who are with us today. We are pleased and grateful that so many of you are here to commemorate 80 years of freedom.



I will now continue in Dutch, our guests have a translation. Ladies and gentlemen, Like every year, we left together from the town hall. Where normally the cars race, now the singing of the birds has accompanied us on our walk here. We literally walked away from the delusion of the day for a while.

It is good that we do. We are all so busy with our daily as well as our digital lives that it is all too rare to take a moment to reflect on the really essential things.

Like freedom, which we seem to take for granted despite everything that is happening in the world. And why not? After all, three generations have been born and raised in freedom since 1945.

For us Dutch, that may not even be that exceptional. I heard from my grandmother that in her childhood, 18 June was a big holiday. Waterloo Day It was, in memory of our last great war. Our neighbours were not so lucky. The first and immediately the last time the whole of Europe had three consecutive generations of peace was in the second century AD, the Roman Empire. It is so extraordinary that grandparents cannot tell their grandchildren what war is from their own experience.

For years, we have believed that war is the exception and peace the rule. Since 2022, we have recovered from our naivety; war is back in Europe. And Ukrainian grandchildren can unfortunately share their war experiences with their grandparents themselves.

We see them daily, the images of the bombing of Kharkov, Zaporizhzhya, the horror unfolding in Gaza. They are almost identical images to those of burning Rotterdam. But in colour. Who will come to free them and rescue them from the nightmare?

Because that is what we have been allowed to experience. After five years of oppression, we have been liberated. Those who see today's images understand even better how miraculous it was that that occupation came to an end. Because on another continent, an ocean away from us, thousands of young men and boys turned out to be willing to risk their lives. To save ours. Actually unimaginable.

The day before yesterday, I had the privilege of greeting 21 of those boys of the time here. The youngest was 15 at the time. Now they are between 96 and 105 years old. One of them travelled here in the company of his son, grandson and great-granddaughter. Their lives have moved on, just like ours.

And yet this place continues to draw them, even after eighty years. Here lie their friends, the boys with whom they embarked on the great adventure back then. From school, from the factory or from under the cows; young and full of ideals. Together they were going to fight against evil and for a better world.

They did, and thanks to them, freedom has returned. But not all of them got to experience it for themselves. Eighty years have passed. Freedom has remained, but for these 21 men, even after 80 years, there is still pain. The sorrow for all those friends who rest here, all those young lives that were cut short.

The stories of these veterans underline the importance of the work of Faces to Graves. This cemetery of honour is more than 2,600-some names. They are as many sons, brothers, fathers, comrades. Young men with their own backgrounds, dreams and ideals. They deserve to be known better than just their names and years.

The Freedom Museum has just opened an exhibition on a special group of liberators: the native soldiers from Canada and America. Native American, First Nation, Inuit, Métis. Some 60 of them are buried here. Their story, too, deserves to be told.

The exhibition, try to go and see it if you can, shows how much these original inhabitants of North America were oppressed and discriminated against in their own country. Children were often forcibly taken away from their parents, and subjected to a civilising offensive in state schools, with no room for their own language or culture.

And from that background, themselves disadvantaged and victims of structural racism, thousands of those boys signed up to come and liberate us. That is almost unbelievable. Perhaps you need to know what unfreedom is to appreciate freedom for its proper value. I am glad that we now know their stories, and that the contacts made with their communities deepen and strengthen our friendship with Canada and Canadians.

They are stories that inspire and fill us with hope. After all, from remembering and recalling what was, we may also look forward.

In the hope and expectation that our time too will produce its good people. People who stand up against evil in a darkening world, who speak out against persecution and oppression and exclusion. Let us ourselves be those people.

Thank you.

Story written and read by Ivan Pryimenko

My name is Ivan Pryimenko.

I have lived in the Municipality of Berg and Dal since 2022. I am a pupil of primary school De Sieppe. Like many other children from Ukraine, I fled.



On 24 February 2022, I woke up as usual and started getting ready for school, but my mother said that the war had started and that I could not go to school today.

At first I was happy that I had a day off today, but a little later I realised that it was not just a day off. I felt that my parents were scared. At that moment, I didn't understand what was happening and what it would mean for us.

The whole family slept in the corridor. The windows were blocked with cupboards and we lived without light or water. I wanted pizza or sweets, but there was nothing on the shelves of the shops.

One day we woke up because the chandelier in the room was swinging back and forth because of all the violence that could be heard outside. It was very scary.

I felt like everything I loved could disappear in a second. We decided to move out of the city and leave everything behind.

I had to leave my favourite room, my soft pillow, my toys and the books I liked to read with my mother at bedtime.

I also didn't know when I would see my grandparents again. We had to leave, it was getting too dangerous. On the way, we were welcomed by complete strangers who shared their beds and delicious food with us.

The Netherlands welcomed us. Warm, open and friendly people.

I went back to school. It was difficult at first to learn the Dutch language, but now, fortunately, I can talk easily with my Dutch friends.

When I sleep, I often dream.

I dream that there is no war in the world. Nowhere, never again! I dream about my toys, my cuddly toys, the smell of my house. I dream of me jumping up and down on my bed, of me running around the flat with my brother, of our family taking a ride in the car with the windows open and feeling the wind. I dream that we the go to stay with my grandparents in their dacha. I want to go to bed in my own bed, and for my mother to read to me from my favourite book before I fall asleep peacefully.

Today we remember the wars that have been. Not just the war 80 years ago but the many wars till now. I remember my war.

We remember to honour but also to learn.

Let us ensure that children and adults do not have to flee. No fear, no senseless destruction. Let us live together.

Let us ensure peace.

Poem written and read by children's mayor Jeslynn Willemsen

I hear the silence, everyone stands still, I don't know everything, but I know I want this:

To think of people who fought back then, Who died because they wanted to do something good.

You fought for a country you didn't even know, For peace for hope until the bitter end.

You gave your life, your name on a stone, But in my heart you are never alone.

Eighty years now we live in a free country, I get to play, laugh and take your hand.

But sometimes I think, and feel small, Because what if there were war again?

That feels quite scary such a thought in my head, Then I hope someone believes in freedom.

Like the soldiers who gave everything, So that we can live in peace.

They didn't know me, but fought for me, For a world without fear, For you and for me.

That's why we are silent, just two minutes. But I feel it in my heart, very real, very true.

So I look up at the flag moving softly, And promise, that I never forget what has lived here for 80 years.



80th Liberation Celebration Parade –Wageningen 05 May 2025

Thanks to contact via the Canadian Military Attache in the Hague and Gerard Hendricks the Liaison Officer, we were invited to participate in the Liberation Parade in the town of Wageningen. This is where on 05 May 1945 the Germany Army surrendered to the Allies which meant that the Second World War was over. Since then a parade has been held on the 5th May every year to commemorate the Liberation of the Netherlands. The saluting dais is located at the Hotel De Wereld where the surrender was signed. The Governor General, Mary Simon was one of the guests seated by the dais.

Thanks to Sjoerd Roozenbeek we were led by a “Westie” jeep with number 54 which was our number during the World War II.



Ernie Bodrogi, standing - Sjoerd Roozenbeek, Bill White



This time all standing!



The Westie Contingent prior to marching in the Parade