



## THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 005 THE LIBERATION OF THE NETHERLANDS



### NEWSLETTER RCL Branch 005 Nr. 2020-09

#### In this edition:

Board column (Liaison Officer)  
Column Wim Poppenk  
Zone Europe meeting  
Mook, wreath laying  
Limmen, unveiling monument  
Steenderen, grave is given a name (Lt. Kavanagh)  
Groesbeek Airborne commemoration  
Driel commemoration  
General Meeting (brief summary)  
Driel commemoration  
Posterenk commemoration  
Column comrade Koos Suurhoff

#### Upcoming activities: (subject to COVID-19 measures)

Oct. 05: Veenendaal (Harold Wakeman) **(cancelled)**  
Oct. 24: Sloedam, Bergen op Zoom, Vlissingen  
Oct. 25: Bergen op Zoom, Can. War Cem. (Zone Europe)  
  
Nov. 4: Welberg commemoration ("De Klok")  
Nov. 7: Beaumont-Hamel (Zone Europe)  
Nov. 8: Vimy Ridge (Zone Europe)  
Nov. 8: The Hague, commemoration CWGC  
Nov. 8: Apeldoorn, Remembrance Sunday  
Nov. 11: Groesbeek, Remembrance Day, (Zone Europe)  
  
Dec. 24: Candle evening, Groesbeek, Holten, Bergen op Zoom

For upcoming events: check our [agenda](#) and for the latest news: [Facebook](#).

There are far more photos of previous events on our website. To have a look click: [album](#)

#### In this edition a column written by comrade Koos Suurhoff.

Read his musings, written in response to the column by Colonel Tim Young, then Canada's Defense Attaché in the Netherlands. We published his contribution in the 2020-04 edition.

Koos Suurhoff grew up in Groningen occupied by the Germans and as a schoolboy he experienced the misery during the occupation, but also the fierce fighting and the liberation.

The impressions he gained in those years are still (89 years old and "still going strong") etched in his memory.

Since then, Koos Suurhoff has been asking with great tenacity and perseverance for attention and appreciation for the Canadian liberators of Groningen, the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada and their families. He supports Canadian veterans. Like no other, he wants to keep alive the memory and appreciation of the Canadian liberators.

This has not gone unnoticed in Canadian circles, as the photo opposite shows.



## **Board Column by Yvonne Swarthoff-Klein Beekman.**

### **Grew up with Canadian veterans.**

As most of you know I was born in Dawson Creek, Canada and was introduced to the Royal Canadian Legion as a child. Uncle Loui, my father's youngest brother, had served in the Canadian Army and then joined RCL Branch 180 at Port Alice on Vancouver Island, BC.

We visited this Branch many times and of course we came into contact with Canadian veterans. Even when we lived in Dawson Creek, veterans came to our house, it was a coming and going. Whenever the memorial days arrived, we had to stay with grandma because the whole house was full of Canadian soldiers.



**Yvonne Swarthoff-Klein Beekman**  
**Liaison Officer**

Main reason: because my father and mother could talk about Holland and the liberation. What could be better that they could share this with their Canadian liberators. Albert Thornhill was our neighbor and with every chat there was a war story. He was good friends with Grandma. During the ceremonies he used to come in his „war-uniform“.

I remember Ed Kobashiuk, who was married to aunt Hetty, a war bride from the Netherlands.

I remember John McKenzie, he lived across the street. He had „liberated“ a Dutch flag and taken it to Canada. On special occasions he waved it from the window and shouted: “out of Groonigen”.

I remember Lester Stone, he preferred Dutch eggs. He often said to me: “want you chocolate etten, right nu?” In a funny mix of English and Dutch.

And so, there were many more veterans, but I have forgotten the name of them.

Back in the Netherlands it was no different. Many veterans who came back to the Netherlands always visited us and brought others there. My mom and dad received them back home and went to the many ceremonies with them and took us. Today it is no different, Canadian & British veterans have been coming for many years. Unfortunately, we only have a few veterans left, many of them have already passed away.

In January 2004 there was a letter from the board of RCL Branch 005 that they were looking for another location. We invited them to visit us. Ben Zonneberg, Piet Polderdijk and Hendrik Kuiper came to have a look.

Bob Veenstra stated the following in a letter to the members:

*“To give you an idea of how it could be; we found a very Canadian restaurant this time. As a board we have already met there once and now we would like to know what you think about it as members.*

*So it is a try and your opinion is appreciated. We do not want to say anything about the interior or the host and hostess; you have to experience and judge it yourself and at the end of the meeting we ask for your opinion”.*

As everyone was very enthusiastic, our location became the clubhouse of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 005, “the Liberation of the Netherlands” after the Annual Meeting at the end of 2004.

From that moment on I am the Liaison Officer, a beautiful and rewarding task in which I receive many Canadians, a task that suits me completely.

This year should have been a highlight, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands. But unfortunately, it turned out very differently because of COVID-19.

We don't know yet whether it will happen next year, but I was privileged to have grown up with many of our liberators and it was an honour to know them.

*Yvonne Swarthoff-Klein Beekman*

## Battlefield Tour.

### **Column by Wim Poppenk.**

At the invitation of the Canadian ambassador to the Netherlands, I am present at the Maple Leaf Soiree 2019 in the Canadian Residence. The lottery during the Soiree again provides great prizes this time. And surprise me: "I am awarded".

A battlefield tour, "The Battle of the Scheldt," hosted by Colonel Tim Young, Canada's Military Attaché.

A whole day long with Tim. The first appointment is canceled in connection with Covid-19. But on July 17 the time has come. At 10.00 am we start, Tim has four guests, at the Leopold canal in Belgium.



Via Eede and Aardenburg in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen we go to Dishoek on Walcheren, where we also have lunch. Then on to Westkapelle, the Sloedam, Woensdrecht and we end at Bergen op Zoom around 20:00 hrs.

At all the places mentioned, Tim explained in detail how the Canadians use their tactics and technic to liberate Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, Zuid-Beveland and Walcheren.

Main goal: free the access to the harbours of Antwerp.  
Sometimes quite simple, much more often with huge losses.



The method of defense by the Germans was also discussed in detail.

The strength of the Canadian units, from soldier to group, from platoons, companies, battalions, regiments, corps to armies, was meticulously shared. Strategy and tactics on both sides were frequently discussed.

A day that, with a lot of information, conveyed by a passionate storyteller, made a big impression. Certainly, even if you look through the booklet with sheets again in the following days and everything gets 'a place' even more.

A very special and enjoyable day.

*Wim Poppenk*



## RCL ZONE EUROPE EXECUTIVE MEETING, 05.09.2020.

On Saturday the 5th of September 2020 Branch 005 members gather at Branch 003, Geilenkirchen-Teveren, for the twice-yearly zone meeting. This time also the election of our Zone command.

Branch 001 was present with a group and their new executives; Branch 003 was the host of the meeting and only Branch 002 and 004 sent their regrets due to health problems.

After following the German COVID-19 regulations the meeting was called to order at 14:00hrs. A report of the items that were on the agenda will be forth coming to the members via the secretary. In short, the meeting was successful in three objectives:

1- We met with the new members and Executive from Branch 001.

2- We elected a new RCL Zone Europe executive Board consisting of:

Zone Commander - Martin Gillis Branch 001

Deputy Zone Commander - Martin Reelick Branch 005

Secretary - Peter Bongers Branch 005

Treasurer - Stein Gammelmo Branch 003

Sgt@Arms - Philip van Leeuwen Branch 005



3- We said goodbye to our Past Zone Commander Dan Saulnier and his wife Venah with a well-deserved present for their services to RCL Zone Europe.

The details of this gift are described in FB article of Philip van Leeuwen. Dan ensured it will have a nice place in the new home of theirs in Perry Sound, Ontario.

And with this, we wish them all the best.



Thanks to:

Martin Reelick

and

Philip van Leeuwen

for your report.

**Mook, 07.09.2020.**

Wreath-laying at the Antonio Barbaro memorial in Mook.

The man who gave his life jacket to a comrade when their boat broke because he was a good swimmer himself.

He had underestimated the flow of the river and was killed himself.



The photo left shows the final wreath-laying of Colonel Tim Young, Canadian Defense Attaché to the Netherlands, before leaving for his home country.

Accompanied here by Sgt. Jo-Anne Wiseman, Assistant to the Defense Attaché.



## Limmen, 08.09.2020.

The crash of an English bomber is commemorated in Limmen. On September 8, 1944, a Mosquito bomber of the British Air Force crashed into a meadow in Limmen, after being shot at by a German patrol boat off the coast of Castricum. The plane was on its way to Germany. The Canadian crew, pilot Warren Robert Zeller (25) and navigator Herbert Reginald Tribbeck (28) were killed. The crew is buried in the cemetery next to the Protestant church in Limmen.



Exactly 76 years later, Mayor Toon Mans unveiled a monument in the presence of relatives and representatives of the English and Canadian air forces on the Schoolweg, opposite the Oude School, near the place the bomber crashed.

Particularly impressive was the Flypast of 4 Fokker aircrafts in the "Missing Man" formation. Local broadcast Castricum has made a TV registration of this ceremony.

The Canadian Embassy was represented by Sgt. Jo-Anne Wiseman.



Click on photo above for a video impression. ↑



Credits: Cees Dekker – Local broadcast Castricum

## Steenderen, (Municipality Bronckhorst), 10.09.2020

Allied officer Lt. John Gordon Kavanagh of Toronto died somewhere in Europe on April 5, 1945, his family heard. Residents of Rha who survived the war knew where Kavanagh's remains were buried: in the grave of an unknown soldier at the general cemetery in Steenderen.

They stood up for his memory and wanted a grave with his name for him too. After years of research, the official conclusion was also reached that it is almost certain that Kavanagh died in Rha that day and was buried in Steenderen. That is why the tombstone now got its name.

The stone was to be unveiled on April 5, 2020 during an official ceremony attended by family members. Due to the COVID-19 regulations, the ceremony was postponed.

The stone has now been placed on September 8, 2020 by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September there was a small ceremony, in the presence of Mayor Besselink.

The intention is that there will be a larger commemoration on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April next year. Hopefully attended by the Kavanagh family members.

Comrade Gerrit Bruggink, member of RCL Branch 005, was present.



For video impression: click on photo (Dutch/English)



Source: Municipality Bronckhorst.

A few days later a message will arrive in the mailbox of comrade Gerrit Bruggink. Then you realize: that's why we do this and it's appreciated.

**Onderwerp:** Re: Lt. John Gordon Kavanagh

Hello Gerrit

Thank you so much for your participation on Sept 10 at Steenderen!

It was so wonderful to see the Canadian Legion Emblem on your jacket!

We had no idea that there was a branch in The Netherlands.

Just another reminder of the closeness of our two countries!

Also your QOR beret was comforting for us, a symbol of Uncle Jack's service.

Having this heartwarming video to add to our steadily growing family archive will ensure future generations will not forget!

We hope to return to Rha, when covid has been dealt with. Here's hoping our family will have the opportunity to meet you in person when that time comes.

Until then stay safe and healthy.

Warmest regards

The Young Family

Jack&Debbie

Jackie&Martie

Michele&Jenna

## Groesbeek, 17.09-2020.

The Groesbeek Airborne Foundation had organized the Airborne commemorations in Groesbeek and Klein Amerika, with due observance of the applicable COVID-19 restrictions. The commemorations are dedicated to the airborne landings that took place here on September 17, 1944 during Operation "Market Garden".

Also present was the new Canadian Defense Attaché Colonel Marc LaFortune. RCL Branch 005 was represented by the comrades Danny Murphy and Toon van Bussel.



**Wreath laying by: Toon van Bussel and Danny Murphy**



**Wreath laying by Col. LaFortune**



Photos: Marc van Aken

**Driel, 19.09.2020.**

### **Engineers Monument.**

Here, too, a small select group to honour and commemorate those who made unprecedented efforts.

The Canadian Embassy was represented with a complete delegation.

The Ambassador: Her Excellency Mrs. Lisa Helfand.

The Defense Attaché: Colonel LaFortune;

Sgt. Jo-Anne Wiseman, Assistant to the Defense Attaché.

RCL Branch 005 was not represented.



On the photo on the right a group of the men who made the retreat across the Rhine.

A nighttime trek through the Nazi lines after nine days "HELL," was the headline in The Daily Sketch of Thursday, September 28, 1944.



## **17<sup>th</sup> (EXTRA) GENERAL MEMBERS MEETING RCL005.**

On Sunday, September 20, 2020, an additional RCL005 members meeting was held in the Clubhouse at Restaurant Mondani in Lochem. Of course, the mandatory COVID-19 provisions were observed. Partly because of this there was a limited number of members present.



As a test, comrade Quint Wijnholts set up a live video stream so that comrades at home could also attend the meeting and were able to experience and react. This might be a solution for future meetings when members are not able to be present personally.

Thanks to Quint, who despite his (complicated) upper leg fracture was present at the meeting.

This extra meeting was set up to follow up on the topics raised in the previous meeting on March first this year and for the installation of new board members.

For the position of First Vice President there is still a vacancy, but the position of Secretary will be filled in by comrade Jan van Loo, who will also continue to hold the position of Legal Officer. Jan van Loo was sworn in during the meeting with approval of the members present.

During the GMM, the agenda of course leading and the board reported on the activities of the last period. The President also gave a brief summary of the Zone meeting on September 5<sup>th</sup> 2020.

In this Zone meeting it was also discussed and recorded which commemorations are under the responsibility of the Zone Europe. This is particularly important for commemorations in the Netherlands, where some discussion arose between RCL005 and the Zone.

At the moment, the following commemorations count as Zone matters. Responsibility for the organization and financing therefore also rests with the Zone Command or Zone Sgt-at-Arms:

**April 9: Vimy; May 4: at the Canadian cemetery in Holten; May 5: Wageningen; July 1: Beaumont-Hamel; The Sunday commemoration at the Canadian Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom and 11<sup>th</sup> November Remembrance Day on the Canadian Cemetery in Groesbeek.**

It is important to mention that it has been clearly stated that the responsibility for financing and organization is located at Zone Command.

If Zone Command would like RCL005 to support at any commemoration then RCL005 need to be contacted early in advance to the President and / or Sgt-at-Arms of RCL Branch 005. This shall be confirmed in writing by RCL005 to Zone Command.

Furthermore, with input from the members present, the meeting was structured and cheerful. The (concept) report will be send to the members of RCL005 soon. The confirmed minutes of the previous meeting will be published on the RCL005 member portal shortly.

Brief summary by:

*Ruud Janssen*

**Drielse Rijndijk, 25.09.2020.**

## **NEW HAMPSHIRE MONUMENT**

On Friday, September 25, 2020, “Stichting Never Forget Them” organized a memorial service at the New Hampshire Monument on the Drielse Rijndijk in the municipality of “Overbetuwe”.

The invited organizations were asked to send one delegate to the COVID-19 regulated ceremony. It was therefore on a smaller scale than the years before. The organizer Martin Veggelers had done a remarkable job to make everything run as smoothly as possible while still involving the children of the Queen Juliana School in poems, they also laid the wreaths.

City Councilor Brigitte Faber-de Lange certainly had a good message of the 75 years of freedom we enjoyed through the sacrifice of these members of the New Hampshire Regiment. Although this freedom was limited this year, by the COVID-19 rules. She expressed the hope that next year the commemoration and the liberation party could take place without regulations

After the ceremony, organizer Martin Veggelers thanked RCL Branch 005 for the cooperation and presented President Martin Reelick a 75-year Liberation Coin.



Photo's: A. Roelofs

**Anna Paulowna, 26.09.2020.**

Here a commemoration was held at one of the places set up by the "Hollands Kroon Memorial Posts Foundation".

Indeed: at one of the many posts, as the message below shows.

## Never forget

During World War II more than 40 aircrafts have crashed in Hollands Kroon and in parts of the Wadden Sea, Amstel lake and IJssel lake.

Crew members of these planes were killed, captured, went missing or found ways to escape from the enemy.

We want to remember all those crew members to make sure that they will never be forgotten.

They have fought for our freedom and as said many have given their lives. We should not ever forget this.



**The crew of the Halifax bomber LW343 was commemorated here.**

### Dutch Airwar Studygroup 1939-1945

### Loss Chart on: T3172

Day or Night of operation 3/4 Dec 43				Operation Bombing		Target Leipzig		
Factory Handley Page	Aircraft Halifax	Mk II	Serial/Wnr. LW343	Call Sign TL-U	Unit 35 Sqdn	Air Force RAF	TO/t 0001	Airfield Graveley



Time 0149	Cause of the Crash Shot down by NF Lt. H. Rolland of 12./NJG 1	Crash Location Crashed Kerkweg Anna Paulowna	Damage	Province Noord-Holland
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Source Prien J, Rodeike P,	Mag / Page 415	Additional sources 'Wespennest III' p.54/59 for details; www.ARG1940-1945.nl for location; Archive H. Welting for crew data. NJG claim time 0109, grave register claim time 0150
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Function	Mil Rank	Ini	Name	Hon	Mil reg	Air Force	Cemetery	Grave	Remark
Pilot	F/Lt.	D.J.H.	Cheal		133408	RAF	Survived		pow
Flight Engineer	Sgt.	K.	Holt		1279234	RAF	Bergen op Zoom	10 A 20-22	Initially buried at Huisduinen
Navigator	P/O.	J.C.	Bonet		J/20043	RCAF	Survived		pow
Bomb Aimer	P/O.	E.A.	Alliston		144047	RAF	Bergen op Zoom	10 A 20-22	Initially buried at Huisduinen
Wireless Operator	Sgt.	H.H.	Smith		1578044	RAF	Survived		pow
Mid Upper Gunner	W/O. II	J.A.W.	McKenzie		R/116753	RCAF	Bergen op Zoom	10 A 20-22	Initially buried at Huisduinen
Rear Gunner	Sgt.	F.J.	Dimond		1850638	RAF	Bergen op Zoom	31 A 1	Initially buried at Huisduinen

Data on those who were killed from: [www.CWGC.org](http://www.CWGC.org) [www.Volksbund.de](http://www.Volksbund.de) [www.abmc.gov](http://www.abmc.gov)

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**The Canadian Embassy was represented by Sgt. Jo-Anne Wiseman.**



For video impression:

Click on photo on the right. →

Made bij the local broadcast NH News.



## Posterenk, 27.09.2020.

RCL Branch 005 was present here with the Colour Party and a delegation on the occasion of the unveiling of a commemorative plaque in the wall of the Wilpermolen and the presentation of the booklet "75 years liberation Posterenk".

The unveiling of the plaque was done by Aard Bessels and his grandchildren. Together with his brother, he is the initiator to place a memorial stone in the mill wall in memory of the fallen near Posterenk. Unfortunately his brother passed away at the end of last year.



The plaque memorial stone shows the names of the six soldiers of the Carleton & York Regiment who fell near Posterenk.



The Last Post was played via a live connection to Canada, followed by two minutes of silence.

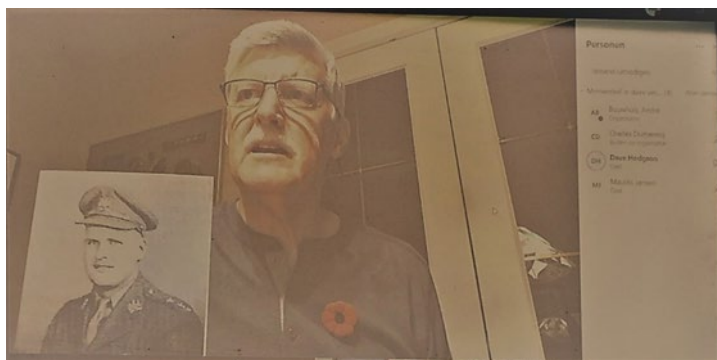


Then the Dutch and Canadian national anthem were played..

Aard Bessels laid a wreath with his grandchildren, followed by a delegation from Branch 005.

Again, via a live connection to Canada, a word of thanks from Dave Hodgson, nephew of the fallen Lt. Savage, followed.

After the ceremony ended, the booklet "75 Years of Liberation Posterenk" was presented.



The Pipes and Drums "City of Apeldoorn" accompanied the Colour Party and provided the musical accompaniment.

## Column by comrade Koos Suurhoff.

These reflections are dedicated to Colonel Tim R. Young, Canadian Defense Attaché to The Netherlands.

### Introduction.

The following is an expression of feelings about regained freedom, the awareness of great sacrifices, and the commitment and friendship which have all developed over the last 75 years between our people in The Netherlands and Canada who were our liberators. Especially liberating us of a dictatorship and from submission. The resulting, still surviving and the ever-growing contacts and experiences remain deeply rooted.

### Regained Freedom.

- The following is an expression of feelings about regained freedom, the awareness of great sacrifices, and the commitment and friendship which have all developed over the last 75 years between our people in The Netherlands and Canada who were our liberators. Especially liberating us of a dictatorship and from submission. The resulting, still surviving and the ever-growing contacts and experiences remain deeply rooted.

- I refer to Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces as Canadians in one breath. This is a concept! This is also reflected in the ever-recurring commemorations be it on a local, urban or national level at the Canadian cemeteries and monuments. If you do something for the benefit of the veterans or any other military generation the doors will open, you will be heard and direct cooperation to implement your plan will be received!

- Regained Freedom was known as the period that followed the Nazi occupation from the 10th of May 1940, until April 16th, 1945. Occupation by Nazi Germany was laden with dictatorship and submission. In those years I grew up as a boy from 10 to 14 years old. On the 10th of May 1945, my grandmother passed away and the Germans occupied the city of Groningen. I hardly noticed much during the first year of occupation. The following years however things started to change day by day as you'll read below. My father was forced to work in Germany and my mother had to work with what she had for us 3 children in terms of our upbringing, food, clothing and all. Eventually, such necessities could only be purchased by using distribution coupons. The total quantity of necessities such as fuel, gas, light, meat and milk started to slowly decline. Illegal trade, selling and buying clandestinely in these goods was rampant. Treason, raids, the arrest of resistance fighters and Jews in hiding increased due to resistance and refusal to work.



Coupons, these are for: butter, potatoes and fish



- I witnessed the arrests of Jewish people who have been hiding in fear of persecution. A Jewish family of four were very violently seized and brutally arrested. On my usual way to school through de Zwarteweg one early morning, I was stopped around the corner. There was a German truck in front of a house. At least four heavily armed SD Polizei soldiers were kicking in the door trying to get access to a house after nobody answered the doorbell. The father of the residence came out furiously and slapped a German soldier with a full fist to his face. As a consequence, for his actions, the father was forced into the truck and was brutally beaten by the German soldiers. The screaming of the mother and children indicated that they were also treated in the same manner as the father.

Finally, I arrived at school and attended my religious education lesson. My class was on the top floor, which had a clear view of the Noorderplantsoen and the main road that runs through it. Whilst, Pastor Kemper was telling us a story about Emperor Nero's cruel and rough soldiers, murders and looting's I saw a group of German soldiers marching past on their way to their training area. Having only my mother to share this impactful experience with she taught me as her eldest son: **Listen, Look and Remain Quiet.**

- On another occasion on a Sunday morning during a Mass led by Chaplain Loman at the Heilig Hart Kerk in de Moesstraat, he was interrupted abruptly and shockingly during his Sermon (always a highlight) by a bunch of armed German Polizei soldiers. The big church door was shoved opened with a lot of noise and they marched down to the pulpit with their iron-shod boots while the church was crowded with believers. Chaplain Loman ordered them to leave the church immediately. They did so, but after the mass, Chaplain Loman had disappeared.

He was not pro German which he made clear during his Sermons! This act of his was very brave, dangerous and frightening. It was overwhelming and I could not gauge the atmosphere in the church.

Was he perhaps betrayed? Another chaplain was shot at the Franciscuskerk at the Zaagmuldersweg. Back then I used to go to a Catholic school near there and on my way to school, I was confronted with his dead body covered under a black tarpaulin which was left at the square in front of the church. Widespread speculation had determined that this served as a deterrent to any resistance.

- The atmosphere didn't get any better during the occupation, my school was converted into a barracks, and as a result, I had very little to no education during the last one and half years of my primary schooling.

#### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1945 was the turning point of the occupation. Prelude of the Liberation!**

- Early that afternoon, the police drove through the streets announcing to everyone that they do their shopping as there would be a curfew order from 1600 hours set in place. Anyone found violating this order would be punished immediately. This was also seen as the final symbolic warning.

- There had been little to no light for some time in the streets and houses, but that evening the Canadian Army illuminated the entire city with spotlights. Strangely it was so bright that you could even read in your room. A lot of noise broke out from the raging projectiles and explosions. This went on all night and even into Saturday.

- On Sunday morning April 15<sup>th</sup> 1945, it was suddenly very quiet and that made us curious, just like other neighbours we opened the door very carefully. And we saw unknown armed soldiers one after the other from Koninginnelaan walking down our street. It turned out that these were Canadians from the regiments The Black Watch and The Calgary Highlanders and the whole neighbourhood came out now. Everyone was over the moon and the Canadians were loudly applauded and greeted. The soldiers were handing out chocolate bars and cigarettes.

#### **We were free! The feeling of that cannot be put into words! It was intense and everyone was relieved!**

- However, as soon as the Canadians liberated the Oranjewijk and our street, they left soon after for the Noorderplantsoen. They were working very tactical: using firebreaks, diving over fences and through backyards, as they headed towards Oranjesingel. The neighbourhood did not trust the situation and went back inside. This turned out to be a wise choice as all hell broke loose in the Noorderplantsoen. This was again unimaginable. At the end of the afternoon, it was suddenly silent which meant the battle had ended. Again, we were all curious, I escaped my mother's attention and went outside against her will. Outside there was a Red Cross jeep in front of the house. In the jeep aside from the driver, were two Red Cross medics and a seriously injured soldier who was groaning from pain. I watched transfixed as the medics were busy attending their injured comrade. Suddenly the injured soldier was silent and both medics silently and saddened sat down and drove off towards Koninginnelaan.

- The liberation and witnessing the above have left a very big impression on me as a 14-year-old boy, consciously and unconsciously it has played an important role in my life and still does to this day.

- Much later I discovered that this 38-year-old Canadian soldier, Pvt Emerson Garfield Riddell, belonged to The Black Watch Regiment and was buried in Hoogkerk. He was killed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945, which matches the timings of my experience. He is buried next to his fellow soldier who also lost his life on the same day: Regan Raymond Dallaire, age unknown and was from The Calgary Highlanders Regiment.

- Each year on the second Saturday of April in a small capacity a commemoration is held by the Platoon Commander Sergeant-Major Richard of our National Reserve.



During this commemoration, they march with the regimental flags and are accompanied by a bagpipe player to the graves of the two Canadian soldiers, five aircrew members of a Lancaster bomber and the Dutch Mortarman who was killed in action on a peacekeeping mission.

I have the honour to have played and continue to play a small part in these commemorations.

### **Reflections on the creation and development of my experiences and activities with Canadians.**

- During my junior high school education, I learned a lot about the preparations of the Normandy invasion and the advance to Groningen. This knowledge was partially acquired from the books I received from my mother about the liberation of Groningen, which resulted in me having a clearer awareness of liberation and freedom.

- I also learnt The German commander refused to surrender before the fighting started. And in response to that General Matthews decided to take the city of Groningen with the support of infantry and tanks instead of artillery. This was partly done to save the civilian population as much as possible, and because of that, the city of Groningen was spared from a disaster. I sometimes wonder if anyone reflects on this?

- The older I became the more I realised how much Canadian blood has been sacrificed for our freedom from Sicily, Normandy to Groningen: around 40,000 soldiers. I've participated in memorials and visited war cemeteries of Canadians in Holten, Groesbeek and Bergen op Zoom; British in Oosterbeek, Poles in Breda, Americans in Margraten, Russians in Leusden and Germans in Ysselsteyn.

- Wanting to do something meaningful for Canadians started very late in my life. Getting in touch and maintaining contact with visiting Canadian Veterans and later with the younger generations coming to Groningen. This all meant it had to happen on my initiative and I do not represent any organisation or municipality. Everything I wanted to undertake was done by asking around. Without getting in the way of anyone, I was always helped.

- I have visited the following Regiments in Canada: The Black Watch (R.H.R.) of Canada in Montreal, The Calgary Highlanders in Calgary and The Canadian Scottish Regiment in Victoria, Vancouver Island.

- During my dinner with the regiment as a guest of honour, I made the following impressions, firstly, in having met John Calderwood from The Black Watch after a big parade in Apeldoorn, I met him and his brother, an old Korean veteran, again in Montreal. In our conversations, I found out that John and his buddy Cal Wilson were working as snipers and were ordered to eliminate a machine gun nest at the top of a water tower called Herman Colleniusbrug.

They could not advance to the city centre because the adjacent bridge was turned upwards and it was also in the line of fire of the machine gun nest. And because of that, it could not be lowered. They successfully succeeded in their task and reported back to their commander.

The commander did not take a risk and decided to still shoot the tower with a cannon, resulting in a large section of the facade being blown away the shell slicing a large hole in the tower, resulting in a lot of water rushing out.



**Bulletholes at the entrance of the water tower**

- Before the dinner, the Commanding Officer Mackay allowed me to address veterans such as John Calderwood, Cal Wilson, as well as returning servicemen from Afghanistan mission and all those present. I handed him a letter with some attributes from the Mayor of Groningen, Mr. Wallage. The veterans with the encouragement of the room were put in the limelight. I also took this opportunity to tell the Commanding Officer and the entire audience that I was now happy to know who had fired at the water tower and will report this to the mayor of Groningen so he can claim the repair costs back from the perpetrators. The whole room started to laugh and John Calderwood stood up exclaiming: *"Don't send me the bill, I don't pay it!"* Again, laughter broke out which was great to see.

- The coming home of soldiers from Afghanistan- Mission received a big ovation! As a civilian to experience something like that you realize and feel the mutual solidarity and connection between them. In Canada, people truly support their Armed Forces.

- During a dinner with The Regiment of Calgary Highlanders, I was able to meet with a veteran who was the driver of one of the two WASPS who fought at the Noorderplantsoen at the town of Groningen.

Without hesitation, the driver admitted to being scared when they were operating with their WASPS. He became emotional and everyone who was part of the conversation was deeply moved and impacted. It had been confirmed by the Dutch Consul Irene Bakker that he indeed was the driver of the one of the WASPS. I was introduced to Irene Bakker by the Commanding Officer Lee Villiger.

- Next to me sat Lt Col. (Ret) Lynn Moffat who told me that his brother was buried in Bergen op Zoom. This made me realize that visiting a grave of loved ones is barely possible for many be it financially and or practicality and the price they have paid dearly for our liberation. Back in The Netherlands, I went to Bergen op Zoom to visit the grave where I took a picture and sent it to him.

- Having had the chance to organise and guiding small and big Canadian delegations visiting the city of Groningen and Hoogkerk. Once I even assembled a very detailed day programme for the extra big group of Calgary Highlanders. The highlights of these visits were always being welcomed by the board of the Liberation Wood Groningen. Symbolic present of 34000 Maple Leaf Trees from Groningen to our Canadian Liberators.



Hooghoudt „liberated“

- I was requested to keep two Warrant Officers (Ret.) Vice President Gordon Ritchie and Liaison Officer Mike Chere from The Black Watch Association company for a few days. They were invited for an event in Zeeland but had a gap of some days that needed to be filled. This was being discussed in details when at some point Gordon asked me the following question: *“Koos, you know how our men fought. They combed through everything from homes, buildings, sheds, warehouses and so on. Was there a liquor store in your neighbourhood?”*

My reply was: *“Yes, Firm Hooghoudt”.*

On which he replied that the battle at the end of Sunday midday was almost over. They found a shed full of drinks and you can imagine what happened next after the big battles in Groningen, it was almost a big festive (Holy Moses)!



Hero Jan Hooghoudt

I understood this and kept it quiet. I contacted the current management of the store and asked if they are willing to receive the men from The Black Watch to hand them the bill for the consumed drinks. The director who was very surprised and eager to receive them immediately agreed with this idea and so we scheduled a “Mystery Place” visit.

The old owner Mr. Hooghoudt, who was still alive at that time also liked the idea as he experienced the liberation and has very fond memories of Canadians visiting his store. The return visit was a complete surprise and The Black Watch received the bill for the consumed drinks from the former owner Mr. Hooghoudt. It was a very symbolic and a hilarious moment. Mr. Hooghoudt was very delighted with the visit and thanked The Canadians for restoring our freedom.

- Now that I am writing all of this, the content text and memories keep changing constantly. Together with the Canadian Defense Attaché Col. Tim Young, the municipality of Groningen, Ina Bakker, Betty Kruizinga en Niko Beets we have worked towards inviting the Ten Commanding Officers for the 16th of April 2020, to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Liberation year. But unfortunately, this could not take place because of the Coronavirus. All those planned activities have been postponed by the municipality of Groningen until 2021 (75+1). And we hope to welcome the Ten CO's of the Regiments who liberated as well next year on April 16.

- Reflecting on our time, I can comfortably say we have been able to develop our selves with all the freedom. This has also led me to receive the following awards:

- Gordon Ritchie, the President of the Montreal Black Watch Association named me an Honorary Member of The Black Watch (R.H.R.) Association since November 16th, 2008.

- The Canadian Defense Attaché, Colonel Timothy Young accredited to The Netherlands nominated me for The Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers. This was awarded by the Governor-General of Canada, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette and presented to me at the Canadian Residence by the Canadian Ambassador, Ms. Lisa Helfand, on Nov. 19, 2019.



#### **Personal final words to Tim from Koos:**

First time we met was at the Embassy of Canada in 2017 on August 24<sup>th</sup>. I happened to be your first official visitor. This visit then and still today left an impression on me as it was not a routine visit because we had a very in-depth conversation about "The Canadian Business". Looking back, I realise how we have continually worked together on an open and reliable basis, and on occasions, such as the commemoration in Groningen, we succeeded in having Ten Commanding Officers invited by the Municipality of Groningen. A lot of work went into that and without your guidance, it would not have been possible.

During our meetings, we exchanged our experiences in a very pleasant way. What appealed to me, in particular, is how you have helped and assisted me in all of your functional years here in The Netherlands. Your research into the regiments that liberated Groningen was both thorough and helpful. And of course, the saying 'keeping your stick on the ice' is a regular motto to me now.

Being awarded 'The Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers' (of Canada) by you, not only was I amazingly surprised but above all, you bestowed upon me a fantastic experience that I will never forget. We could not celebrate this in Vlissingen at the time because I was away on holiday in Crete. By changing the dates around we finally agreed on the 19th of November 2019, which also happened to be Femmy's and my 64th wedding anniversary. And because of that my children and grandchildren were also present during the ceremony.

I am not entitled to talk or write about how you function, but I still dare to say the following as a civilian: I have felt immensely comfortable around you and during our interactions you were always a solid and an accessible person of note. You were not only the head of your company but also in between them. You are an Artillery Man who climbed up to the Commanding level of an Artillery Regiment, the same regiment you have reorganized. Your deployment abroad and overall experience as a Commanding Officer has made you aware of what people in that field go through. And now you are a military diplomat, which I think is a commendable way to conclude your military career.

As you know Tim, I'm 89 years old and you have seen from my 3 CV's, that have been translated by Farhat, I am also a typical self-made man. And it was all possible just because of the liberation of Groningen by the Canadians, which allowed me to develop myself with all of the freedom afforded and without any fear. I dearly wish to express my gratitude; you have been an enrichment to my life and I'll forever 'keep my stick on the ice'.

I hope to see you before you move back to Canada and also hope to see you next year in Groningen.

All the best to you and your wife Michelle for the future.

*Femmy and Koos*  
Spring 2020.

