

We will not forget.

Column by comrade Philip Van Leeuwen.

Corporal Reginald Alastair Shepherd of The North Shore New Brunswick Regiment.

Just one of the many who did not see their homeland again.

INTRODUCTION.

It was while participating in a fourteen-day training course in the town of Zutphen, The Netherlands, some twenty years ago, that I decided to make more out of my leisure time.

No more hanging out in the local bar with my newly found class mates. Once lessons were over, I went out to explore my surroundings. At that time of year daylight hours were still long.

The city and the surrounding area were very unknown to me, so I decided to set out on a mission, to find and locate the exact spot of any given Canadian WW II military incident of major or minor significance, which had occurred the nearest to my school.

I was aware of the fact that Zutphen had been the scene of heavy fighting during WW II. The efforts and sacrifices of the men of the Canadian army during their liberation of Holland have always had my warmest interest.

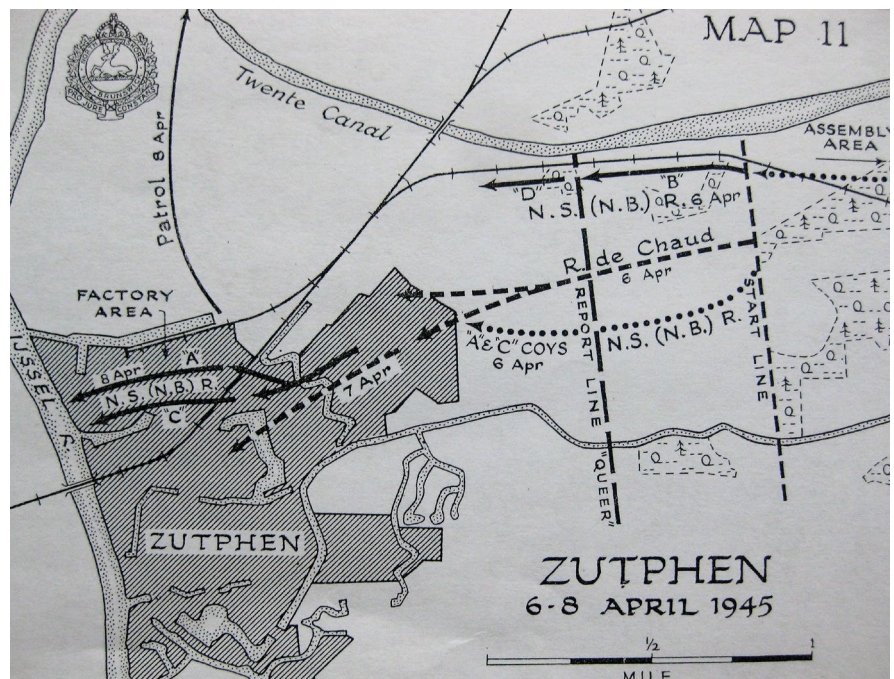
FINDING AN INCIDENT.

That weekend once back at home, I went through a number of my books to read up on the matters of those days. In one of my favourites, "Canadezen in actie", I found what I was looking for. The book sums up the complete Canadian military campaign in Holland and I read the following account of an incident which had occurred during the battle for Zutphen.

It was written up in Dutch and the following is my rough translation:

"At 04.30 hours we walked next to a railway line on some kind of path. At 06.00 the major gave the order to fix bayonets. An order that always gave me the shivers. Most of the

Germans were still asleep when we attacked. Too bad they woke up so quickly and fought so hard. We reached a house near the railroad track on the southside of the Twente canal near the town of Eefde. My friend corporal Shepherd, walked towards the house and received the broadside of enemy machine gun fire. He was killed instantly. It made me cry dearly. He was a good friend of mine. I had served under him for quite a while. Near a small viaduct in the railway line a German suddenly stood in front of me. He ordered me to surrender, but I cursed and shot him. I still wonder why he didn't shoot me first."



This incident could not have occurred more than a mere stone's throw away from my school. This fact and being a Canadian myself, this military event from the past touched me personally. I therefore set out on my mission to relocate the exact spot where Reginald Shepherd had met his ill fate that morning. I would try and find his relatives. I would regularly visit his grave to pay my respect. Furthermore, I would make an attempt to have a small monument placed in his honour.

TEXT IN THE BOOK.

The text above, in the translated passage had been written in a letter by Martin Haley, a subordinate of Reginald Shepherd.

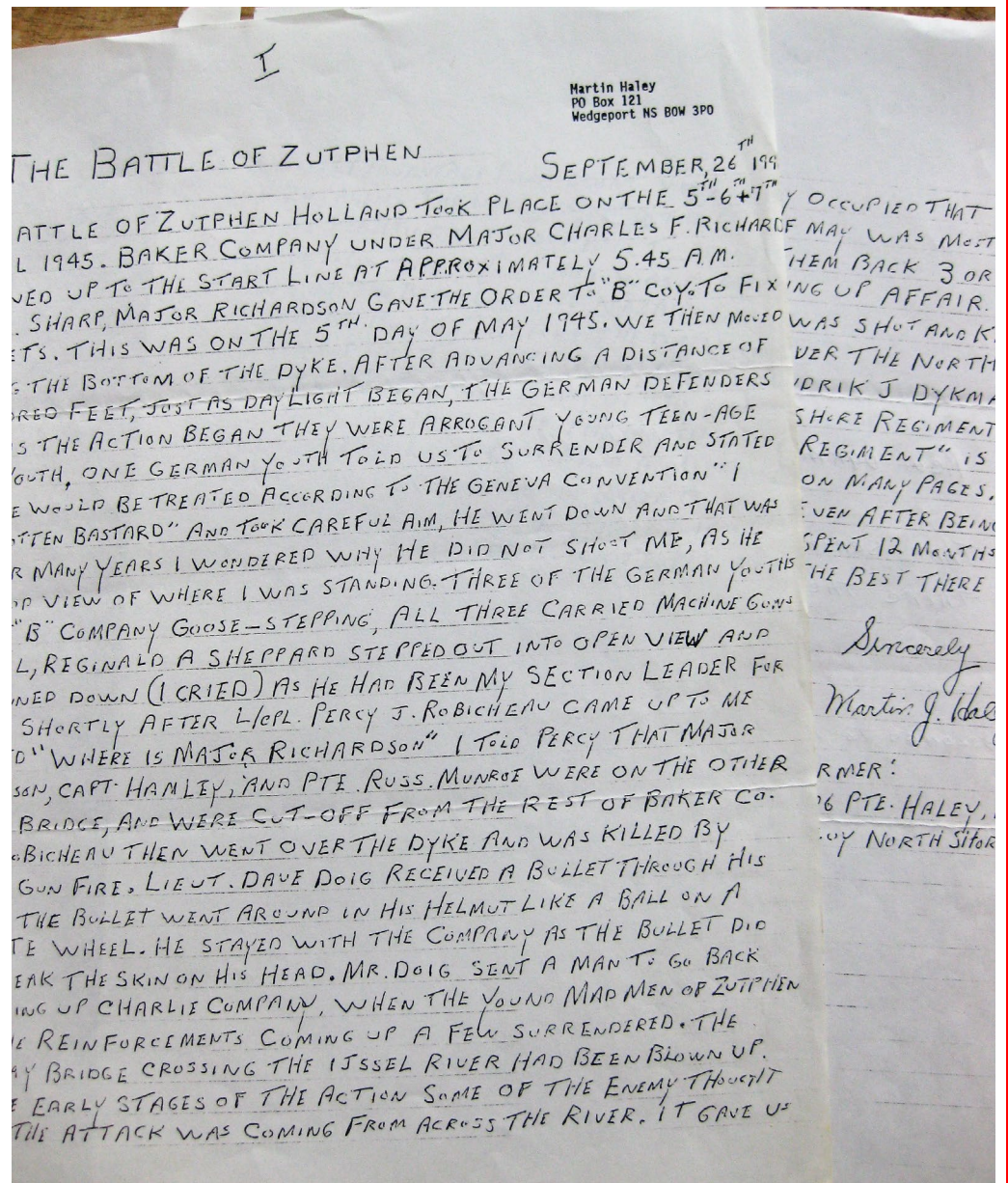


Martin J. Haley

Haley was the one to pass this on to Reverend Henk Dijkman in letters he sent to him in 1990. Rev. Dijkman in turn later relayed this part of the battle to the authors who published it in their book.

The year 2000 was the first time I contacted Rev. Dijkman. In the course of the following months he sent me a copy of one of the letters written to him by Haley. Henk Dijkman himself at the time of the battle, was still a young boy who lived with his parents in the town of Zutphen.

He later moved to Guelph in Canada and became a respected local church minister.



VERIFYING THE SURROUNDINGS.

It was easy to verify that the location as described in Haley's letter still existed 20 years ago when I set out on my quest. The Twente Canal of course, was still there, the railway line was there, but a small viaduct could not be found. In a densely wooded area south of the railway line, I did discover four large detached houses or rather villa's located at irregular distances from each other. All were located in more or less a straight line running parallel with the railway line. This was approximately at a distance of about 100 meters due south of the line.

SPEAKING WITH MR. SCHEPERS.

In the following days I spoke with a few local inhabitants, but that did not help me much. However, one of them made me aware that an inhabitant of the nearby town of Eefde, kept and ran a small military museum. A day later I indeed spoke to the owner of that museum, Mr. Schepers. He claimed that he had lived in Eefde his whole life, but also admitted that he did not know anything about the given incident. He did however mention that in one of the gardens of the earlier described villa's, a German machine gun magazine had been found after the war.

Schepers furthermore explained to me that about ten years ago, a tiny Bailey Bridge had been removed out from the railway line. The Bailey Bridge at the time, was apparently used to over span a tiny water outlet, running from a pond of water located in the woods and which ran towards and perhaps emptied its water in the Twente Canal. After the removal of the Bailey bridge the outlet itself and the water pond were also dried out, removed and filled in.

CONTEMPLATING THE BAILEY BRIDGE.

It struck me that the Bailey Bridge might have been installed shortly after the battle, to perhaps temporarily replace a viaduct which might have then been destroyed or damaged during the fight. This was perhaps the viaduct which is referred to in the book. In his letter Martin Haley does not mention the viaduct. In the book, the sequence of accounts indicate that Corp. Shepherd was killed near a house prior to reaching a small viaduct. Furthermore Rev. Dijkman explained to me that in later years, Haley had grown to confuse certain events with how he had told them previously.

RESEARCHING THE AREA.

Directly south and in view of the railway line, in a densely wooded area, I found a parcel of land which stood out from its surroundings. As I wrote previously, the total area was one large heavily wooded forest, but this particular piece terrain was different. It was a circular shaped piece of land about 75 meters in diameter. It was overgrown with much thinner trees than the older ones standing around them.

My guess was that these trees were about fifteen years old. The terrain lay slightly lower than the surrounding forest floor and it was evident that in the past this had most likely been the former dried out water pool. As I wrote, in this wooded area four houses were situated. After discovering the former water pool, two of these houses immediately could be struck from the list as being the possible location where R. Shepherd had been killed. This simply due to the distance.

VISITING THE HOUSES.

The first house I visited turned out to be inhabited by an older gentleman named Dr. Vos, a former, well respected surgeon of a local hospital.

He was not aware of any story concerning a Canadian soldier who may have been killed on his property during the war. He did however inform me that shortly before the battle the house had been requisitioned by the German military. Therefore, during a brief period of time he and his family had left the home to seek shelter elsewhere.

Dr. Vos furthermore explained that in those days a path had existed, running from the house all the way to the canal. Dr Vos's home was addressed as Damlaan 12 in Eefde.

The second house I visited was located Damlaan 6 in Eefde. For many years, this house had been, and still was, the family possession of the well-respected family of Bosch Ridder van Rosenthal. Although this building was also in the described vicinity, it did not meet the requirements needed to be the exact spot in connection with a viaduct. The location, however, may well then have been suitable from a German military standpoint. Very interesting and sad at the same time, was that I learned that a family member of Bosch Ridder van Rosenthal, had accidentally been shot at the end of the war. He was the head of the local resistance group. A plaque to this affect has been erected at the house.



CONCLUSION.

Considering all the above, I believe that it is very probable that Corp. Reginald Shepherd was killed, on the pathway leading to the home located Damlaan 12 in Eefde. This can be based on the location of the former mentioned viaduct, the two only possible buildings, the pathway, all mutual locations and the stories told to me. I believe that I know where Reg. Shepherd was killed although one can not be certain.



FINDING RELATIVES.

In an attempt to find family members of Reginald Shepherd, I contacted a significant number of museums and other military institutions in Great Britain and Canada.

This to no avail. I also contacted a number of branches of The Royal Canadian Legion in Canada and Europe, without any positive outcome. Contact with Mr. Reg Bonnar, Zone Commander of the Legion in Europe, was however the direct reason for me to shortly afterwards join a local branch of the RC Legion. (*Branch 005 The Liberation of the Netherlands*)

LATER CONTACT WITH REV. DIJKMAN.

In the following months Rev. Dijkman and I frequently exchanged letters. We discussed my findings and he agreed that I had most likely found the exact spot. In the following year I met Rev Dijkman personally. This was when he paid a visit too Holland to inaugurate a monument in the hamlet of Rha, for which opening I was also invited.

LATER CONTACT WITH JOHN RAYCROFT.

As I wrote, during my search I visited a Mr. Schepers. While I was there, he supplied me with information, but he also handed me a piece of manuscript taken from the diary of a Canadian soldier named John Raycroft. According to this manuscript, from his own position, Raycroft had apparently witnessed a skirmish between the men of The North Shore NB regiment and Germans.

Therefore, I contacted and exchanged a number of letters with John Raycroft. He explained that during the war, he had done his service in the Canadian Artillery. His unit had always been in constant close support of the North Shore NB Reg. He therefore was familiar with a number of the men personally, but not with Reginald Shepherd. Raycroft also agreed that I had most likely discovered the 'exact spot'. Both John Raycroft and Rev. Dijkman make note of their idea that the date of Shepherd's death of 5th April 1945 is not correct. They believe that it should be April the 6th, even though all official documents state otherwise.

MEMOIRS JOHN RAYCROFT.

Raycroft furthermore sent me his WW II memoirs of his exploits during the war, published in his book "A Final Muster". I feel that one small passage in particular deserves to be shared to indicate what these men were made of and to show their modesty.

"My story is not one that would make you delay your bed-time. It has no captures or escapes or TV material. My rank was bottom, no medals bravery 'above and beyond the call of duty' but rather, just the standard medals we all got for not running away. As well, I am sticking to my experiences in 'Nederland' only, where I spent more time than in any other country in the theatre of war".

RESULT.

I do not feel that my quest has led to any historical breakthrough. I merely spent valuable time on a valuable subject. That subject is that we never forget the sacrifices made by these men to insure freedom for others. There is always the possibility that I did not find the correct spot, but I believe I have. I never succeeded in finding relatives of Reginald Shepherd, at least not yet.

I would simply wish to tell them that over here in The Netherlands, their family member has and will never be forgotten. I do visit the grave of Corp Shepherd quite frequently, certainly whenever I am in the Holten cemetery.



My initiative to erect a small monument never came to affect. In 2001 I contacted the city hall of Zutphen and wrote of my hope for a monument. I received a letter stating that there were already sufficient similar monuments in the area.

Meanwhile, much to my delight I discovered that near Almen such a monument has been placed.

All the men of that fateful day are here honoured and it looks just perfect.

HONOURS.

Reginald Alastair Shepherd (K46430) was one of three sons in the Shepherd family. One of his other brothers was also killed during the war. His father had already passed away, so his mother saw only one of her sons, although wounded, return. Next to his regular campaign medals Reginald Shepherd was awarded the Military Medal for 'individual acts bravery'.

(M.M.)

NOK. 46340 Rank Corporal Name SHEPHERD, Reginald Alastair
 Unit No. (NE) Regt. Date of death 5th April, 1945
 Died at Holland
 Cause Killed in action
 Death occurred on strength of Forces H.Q. 405-3-22,224
 N/K Mrs. May Allen H. Corbett Relationship Mother
 Address 767 Fairland Road,
 231 Lindeas Ave., Victoria, B.C.
 Remains buried in Outskirts of East end 0220/9656 Cemetery
 Zutphen 1/25,000
 Grave location

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in an assault against the strongly defended house. After a fierce fight he and his section captured four enemy machine guns and twenty-three prisoners. K/46340 Acting Corporal Reginald Alastair SHEPHERD by quick thinking and determination took out the last machine gun position single handed. Once the house had been cleared, "B" Company was able to continue to advance and to clear out the rest of the enemy positions, which were delaying the main advance of the battalion.

The initiative, skill and courage of this Non Commissioned Officer provided inspired leadership to his men. His undaunted efforts destroyed the enemy stronghold thus permitting the advance of his company and in turn allowed the battalion to advance on its objective.

B. H. Montgomery
 FIELD MARSHAL
 COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
 ARMY GROUP

If a casualty as under, fill in date

Nature of Casualty	Date
Killed in action	
Died of Wounds	
Died	
Missing	
Prisoner of War	

North Shore New Brunswick Regiment is one of the oldest regiments in Canada. During WW II it was part of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and landed at Normandy during D-day on June 6th 1944. The regiment took part in all major battles, including Carpiquet, Falaise, Moerkerke, Breskens Pocket and Zutphen.

Lest we Forget.

Philip van Leeuwen

