

# Newsletter

No 17 – spring 2024



*From President Alice van Bekkum*

We are pleased to report on the activities of Faces to Graves since autumn 2023.

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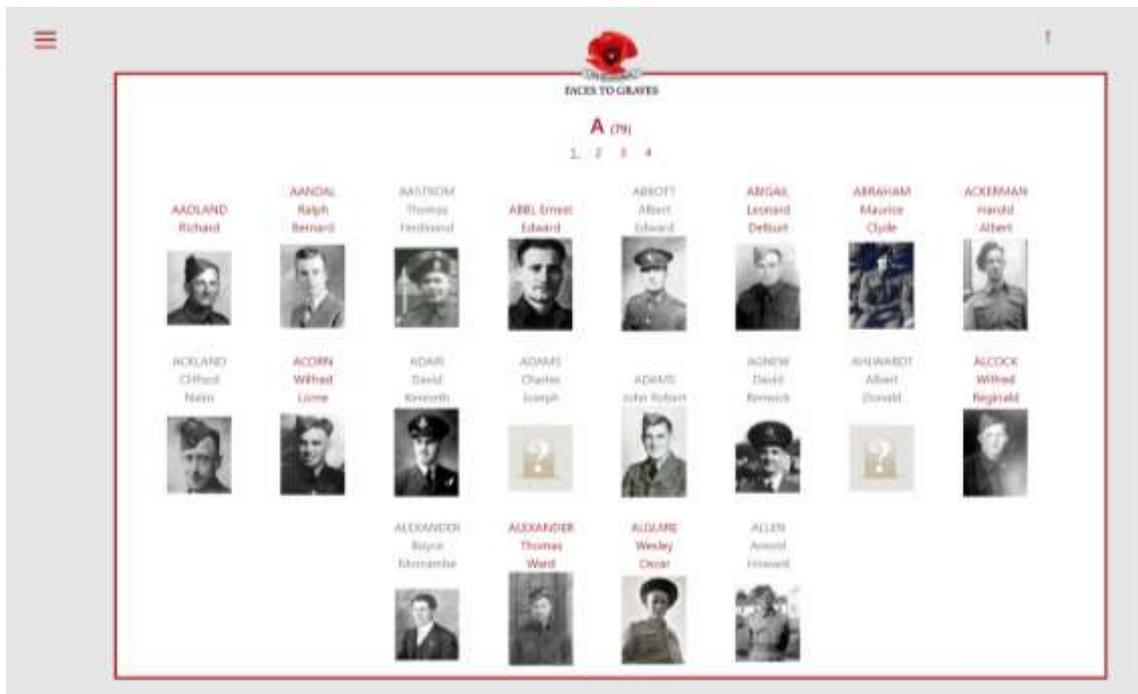
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## Renewed website with extended search capabilities

I am proud to announce that our [www.facestograves.nl](http://www.facestograves.nl) website has been redesigned; this is thanks to the unwavering commitment of our webmaster, Marcel van der Meer.

In the top right hand corner, by clicking on the globe, you can choose the language, next you go to the barcode menu on the left and click on [Digital Monument](#). There you can choose 'Cemetery' or 'Memorial'.

Thanks to Amanda Slotboom we now also have a database for the Groesbeek Memorial. You can see that as many as 30 life stories have been published. We consider the Groesbeek Memorial, on the panels of which you can find more than 1,000 names, equally important, if not even more important, as a means to tell these soldiers' stories as well.



When you open the [Digital Monument](#) at the page 'Cemetery', you will see that there is the option of searching by [regiment](#). The number mentioned there may surprise you, as there are 2,618 graves. However, behind each of the 163 regiments you will immediately see the number of soldiers killed. And, altogether, there are 2,598, as there are 20 graves of non-identified soldiers. Behind each regiment the number of soldiers killed are mentioned.

Another piece of news: all available photos are visible. So, not only can you now search by regiment or name, but you can also [scroll down](#) and choose one of the [letters](#) of the alphabet. What you see are the names, with and without photo.

You can click on the names in **red**, which are the soldiers whose life stories are already available. At the top you can open the subsequent pages. To sum up: there is now a wealth of search options on our website!

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### **Flowers and certificate for Liesbeth Huisman**

During the Research Team meeting on January, Liesbeth Huisman was put in the spotlight. On behalf of the board, she was presented with a certificate and a beautiful bunch of flowers for finishing her 100th life story and for her huge commitment, also in other areas, for Faces to Graves. This was done by Alice van Bekkum, president and Saskia Peters, member of the board. Liesbeth had already received the Faces to Graves coin for her 50<sup>e</sup> life story some time ago.



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### **Commemoration Operation Veritable | *Susanne Steegs***

Like each year, on February 8, the start of Operation Veritable was commemorated. I had been asked by Alice van Bekkum to be present at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, where we, together with invited guests and other interested parties, faced the cold and wet weather conditions. Now we sympathized even more with the boys that had had to brave so many hardships 79 years ago. Back then, the troops not only had to cope with the enemy but also with harsh winter conditions.

Jeanne Melchers, of the Foundation Groesbeek Airborne Vrienden, welcomed the guests to the cemetery and guided us through the ceremony. The commemoration was musically accompanied by Batavorum Pipes and Drums from Nijmegen who preceded the flag-bearers. That the men and women

carrying flags were having a tough time in this weather became clear when one of them, caught by the cold, could no longer stand on his feet. He was quickly taken care of. After warming up, he was able to continue doing his duty as a flag-bearer.

A number of international guests attended the commemoration. One of them was Hugh Adsett, the new Canadian Ambassador in the Netherlands, who delivered a speech. There were several other speakers who reflected on what had taken place in the Groesbeek area. This year special attention was paid to the part the Royal Canadian Engineers played. These men had a major, yet often underexposed, role and took care of keeping this huge offensive going. The engineers built emergency bridges and made sure that roads remained passable for tanks and vehicles. However, clearing mine fields, a dangerous job, was also part of their duties.

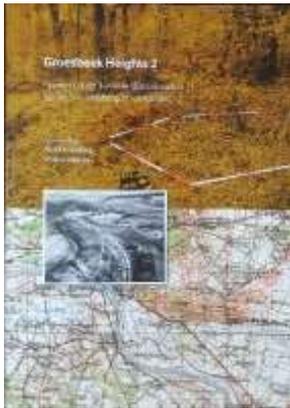
The speeches were followed by the laying of the wreaths. The Faces to Graves Foundation's wreath, which I had the honour of putting in place together with Alice, was one that had lovely red and white flowers. After all wreaths had been laid, there was a brief silence at the cemetery following the trumpet sounds of the Last Post, which is always a special moment. The commemoration ceremony came to an end after beautiful Canadian songs were sung by the choir Néj Hèys. The flag-bearers then walked off with their flags while being musically accompanied by Pipes and Drums.

It was a memorable experience on this cold morning, and I must say that it took me quite a while to completely warm up, which made me think of the boys back then and made me feel sorry for them.



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### Book presentation *Groesbeek Heights 2*



On February 8 the book presentation of *Groesbeek Heights 2 – Tracks from World War II on the St Jansberg and surrounding area* took place in the Vrijheidsmuseum.

This book has been composed by Leo ten Hag, Paul Klinkenberg and Willem Kuppens of the Dutch Archaeology Foundation, Department Nijmegen and surrounding areas. Bernhard Deeterink, also one of the Foundation’s work group members, later became a member of the Faces to Graves Research Team.



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### Introducing: Bernhard Deeterink



My name is Bernhard Deeterink, I am 59 years old and a military by profession. I live in Vilnius, Lithuania.

In 2006 my interest in military history was aroused. On May 31, 2006 the Polish General-Major Stanislaw Sosabowski was posthumously awarded the Bronze Lion. About time, was what I thought then. In the final days of Market Garden, Sosabowski had been reviled by the British. In their eyes, he was the scapegoat. After the war, the Dutch Government rejected this application various times. However, finally, on May 6, 2006, the man Stanislaw Sosabowski was honoured.

For me, the Poles keep playing a special role. In addition, things were accelerated as at that moment I moved house to Kranenburg (Germany), which is situated in the heart of Operation Veritable.

Together with an expert, in the meantime a friend, I gathered information on Operation Veritable by visiting locations by bike. We did this in order to be able to give a better Internet description of the actions.

As a military I have travelled and seen a lot, I have been on missions to Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Mali, I have conducted operations in Egypt, Greece, Albania and Moldova, held international positions in Germany and Lithuania. The

aim of all these operations was to safeguard peace and security in those countries, similar to what the soldiers in World War II did. However, as you know, unfortunately, the situation in the world is changing day by day.

These are also opportunities to meet colleagues with the same interests. In this way, as a group, we revived the 'Friends of the Airborne Museum' a number of years ago. So, Market Garden for me is definitely not uncharted territory either.

In addition, I have had the honour of organising a number of international Battlefield tours, which might mean that you have to drag a German colleague along to the Menenpoort in Ieper in order to commemorate ALL soldiers.

I must say, though, that Normandy is my highlight, as attending the lowering of the flag on Colleville-sur-Mer is very impressive.

Back to Groesbeek. My son's teacher lives at De Klos, where she has regularly organised a day for school children on the subject of the war in and around Groesbeek. To thank her I have given her a large-scale aerial photograph of De Klos from 1944. She had never seen this before and, when she received this present, she was very emotional. Aerial photographs are one of my interests too, as these sometimes show more than words can express.

I also joined the Nijmegen branch of the Archaeology Foundation. For years, we carried out research on the Duivelsberg and St Jansberg. My role in this was to focus on the military side of things. This research has resulted in the publication of two Groesbeek Heights books.



In 2020 COVID hit Europe. This was the moment that I got stationed in Vilnius, Lithuania and had time to dive into the country's history. It is a country that has an extensive military history, the Battle of Grunwald 1410, Napoleon in 1812, the Polish-Lithuanian Empire are just a few worth mentioning. Their soldiers are also commemorated, be it in a somewhat different way. This is done through various commemorations and by erecting monuments and mainly during the country's historical days.

Here too, they have large cemeteries full of Polish soldiers. What are they doing here? was my first thought. All the more reason to find out. And this is how the Poles came my way.

The icing on the cake .... must be the moments that we are on our way with Ian, Nick, Dennis and others. Family members of deceased soldiers, who

sometimes contact me either through the grapevine or directly with specific questions. And, ultimately, you see each other face to face and we find ourselves on the spot where their fathers or grandfathers fought. The reason is often the same, they are looking for answers, as these soldiers did not usually speak about the war. Life just went on after their return to their home country.

What we are trying to do is to supply them with answers and, in particular, to show them where it all took place and what happened, so the soldier is given a face.

While preparing these kind of often emotional trips, I regularly bumped into Alice and occasionally I had already put a life story on paper, as I know that a lot of these soldiers' children are looking for answers. This was the reason why I signed up as a researcher for Faces to Graves at the beginning of this year.

These soldiers do play a part in my life. There have been moments at cemeteries all over the world when I was thinking: what is the story behind this person? Something that comes to mind again is Kenneth L. Arnold's letter 'Lessons from Normandy', which again impresses me. Definitely worth reading.

In the meantime I am living in Lithuania and am soon allowed to stop working. However, this does not mean that my interest in military history and especially the people who have fought for this is going to stop.

One of my hobbies is cycling and in the future I hope to write a book about the lesser known stories of the soldiers during Operation Veritable.

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### **Visitors from Canada** | *Liesbeth Huisman-Arts*

On the cold and rainy Sunday March 24 Tracey and Gina Jeffreys-Carter visited their uncle's and great-uncle's grave in Groesbeek. Trooper Richard Henry Jeffreys, named Dick by family and friends, was from Toronto.

Due to his parents' early decease, Dick was partially raised by the neighbourhood where he lived and by his brothers and sisters. When his elder brother George bought their parental home, Dick was able to stay with his brother. Dick had an aptitude for technology, but was also looking for adventure, which is why he signed up for the army at the age of nineteen. He was a short guy, who only weighed 112 lbs.

Dick was assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars, the 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment. In the army too he found it difficult at times to obey the rules. He already left for Europe in November 1941. On D-Day he arrived in France, and, with the Hussars, he went from France, via Belgium to the Netherlands, where he took part in the last stage of the war. Like so many of his comrades, Dick died in the Hochwald in Germany. He was twenty-three years old when he died on February 26, 1945. Initially, Dick was buried in Bedburg. Later on, he was reburied in Groesbeek.

According to Tracey and Gina, the family frequently spoke about Dick and he was never forgotten by them. In September 2016 various family members already

visited his grave and both Tracey and Gina had this desire as well. They arrived in Amsterdam by train from Paris and on this particular Sunday they travelled by train from Amsterdam to Arnhem, where we picked them up at the station. When we arrived at the cemetery, it had stopped raining and in between showers the (watery) sun occasionally came out.

The two ladies were deeply impressed by this special place and they praised the people who keep the cemetery so shipshape. They also expressed great gratitude and respect for the Faces to Graves volunteers and all the work they do for these soldiers. At Dick's grave they placed flags, Canadian pins, several photos and pennies. They did the same with several soldiers next to him who belonged to the same regiment. We then paid a visit to the Vrijheidsmuseum, drove a route via Germany and back through the polder to Nijmegen, Lent. They were highly surprised that they could just drive into Germany from the Netherlands and visit a few countries on the same day.

These Canadian women had an impressive day, and Wim and I enjoyed showing them around. It is always special to meet 'your' soldier's family.



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**Visit scouts and Sea Cadets**



On Saturday April 6, 2024 Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery was visited by 72 scouts from Limburg and 14 Sea Cadets from the Netherlands. Faces to Graves volunteers told them stories about soldiers with scouting backgrounds. The tours were split into two groups. In the morning the first half and in the afternoon the second half of the group were shown around.

The scouts and Sea Cadets (aged 14 up to 17) visited the cemetery in order to prepare for their participation in the

National Commemoration on Dam Square in Amsterdam on May 4. They too were impressed by the stories of the deceased soldiers, who were just a little bit older than they are now. Thanks to all these stories, they now know what is commemorated on May 4 and how important it is to help out during the National Commemoration.



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**Annual general meeting Royal Canadian Legion**

The annual general meeting of Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 005 was held in Lochem on April 7. During this meeting, volunteers from Faces to Graves Henk Mostert and Maikel Slotboom were installed as members of RCL Branch 005.



A new board was then elected and Wim Poppenk, our former Research Team Chairman was elected President. Amanda Slotboom was elected Treasurer. President Alice van Bekkum received a pin for 10 years of membership in RCL.

We wish Wim much wisdom in carrying out the tasks ahead of him, especially in the busy run-up to the 80<sup>th</sup> commemoration. Also Amanda good luck with your new position.



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### **Lunch Canadian Ambassador**

Friday April 12 the Faces to Graves Board had been invited for lunch at the Residence of the Canadian Ambassador Hugh Adsett in order to make each other's acquaintance and to tell them about what we do. Unfortunately, Dick Akerboom was unable to attend due to health problems.



After his Excellence Hugh Adsett had welcomed us at the door, we were given background information on Groot Haesebroeck Estate. We were told that this is where Mr and Mrs Kröller-Müller used to live. Around 1930 they had a new house built, in the same style as the later Kröller-Müller museum on the Veluwe.

Next, we were treated to a delicious lunch together with Col. Marc LaFortune and Simon Collard-Wexler. This visit was a wonderful recognition of our work and we expressed our desire for a close co-operation with them. We also took the

opportunity to personally thank Col Marc LaFortune for his commitment to Faces to Graves and gave him some goodbye presents, as he was going to return to Canada shortly after our visit.

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### **Fascinating biographies** | *Jim Little*

I took a little break after completing The Regina Rifle Regiment and reflected upon the body of work. Kevin Lambie, webmaster for ReginaRifles.ca and WW2 scholar for that regiment took the time to review and comment on each one of the 47 biographies. He also provided several soldier photos that he identified



and cropped out of high-resolution Company pictures and occasionally threw in some 'bonus material' pertinent to one of the fallen. Corporal [J.A. Valliere](#), published on the Faces to Graves Digital Monument, is a good example.

*Corporal Joseph Alphonse Valliere, L/27818*

As a researcher, you know it will be an uphill battle when you're starting from scratch with no Faces to Graves file available on a fallen soldier that you are tasked with writing about. Three of what I consider to be among the best Regina Rifle stories I've written started out that way. What brought them to life was the huge contributions from their respective relatives who I was fortunate enough to contact through Ancestry after viewing some of their posted pictures on public profiles. The first was Rifleman [S.O. Halverson](#) through his niece Linda Viker Napier and great niece Linea Napier in a great collaboration.

The second was Rifleman [H.C. Knight](#) through his great niece Carol Rolof, published already



*Rifleman Harold Clinton Knight, L/15259*

Lastly was Rifleman [M.J. Nolan](#) through his niece Michelle Nolan Manning and her sister Sharon Stafford who located a rare photo of Joseph and Ernest Nolan, both serving during WW2. I hope to meet some of these dedicated family historians at the next Faces of Groesbeek event and thank them again for their permission to publish these photos. Now it's time to get going on my next mission, the remaining fallen from The Toronto Scottish Regiment (Machine Gun) who are buried at Groesbeek.

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## Interview RN7

In the run-up to May 4, Remembrance Day, Saskia Peters and Alice van Bekkum were interviewed on Faces to Graves' work at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery. An overview:



[Read the interview \(In Dutch\) >](#)

[Watch the broadcast \(In Dutch\) >](#)

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## Private Edward Beynon in poetry album



Marc Faassen contacted Faces to Graves after having found a letter from a.o. Private Edward Beynon in his mother's poetry album. During the war, this soldier had been billeted in his family's house in Nijmegen.

[To the report \(In Dutch\) >](#)

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## Commemoration Antonio Barbaro in Mook

On Friday May 3 a commemoration took place at the monument along the River Maas in Mook. This monument is situated on the spot opposite the current railway bridge. In February 1945 the Canadian Antonio Barbaro died here while carrying out repair works. His [life story](#) can be found in the Digital Monument.

This commemoration had especially been organised for his nephew and namesake Tony Barbaro, who, together with his daughter Karrie, was going to visit his uncle's grave for the first time. The municipality of Mook and Middelaar responded positively to Alice van Bekkum's and Maarten Dekker's initiative, and it proved to be a beautiful commemoration.



In the presence of the Canadian Military Attaché Col. Marc LaFortune, it was an impressive commemoration for this hero, who gave his life on this cold winter's day in 1945. Tony was deeply moved by this gesture and thanked everyone who had contributed to this event.

*Tony is lighting a candle at Antonio's grave.*

Impression of the commemoration:





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### Generous donation from Cynthia Spence



Cynthia Spence, the graphic artist who designed the Faces to Graves booklet, has made a generous donation to an English-language edition of this booklet. The fact that she has got a Canadian father makes her involvement even greater. Cynthia, thank you so much for this donation. In addition, you have transferred the English text without incurring any costs. Totally awesome!

Thanks to the translation by Monique Greub-Diesfeldt, Alice van Bekkum was able to present the first English-language booklet to Tony Barbaro during the commemoration in Mook on May 3. His uncle's story is told in detail in the booklet.



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### Schools project, Children's College & CWGC week | Liesbeth Huisman-Arts

As a Research Team volunteer, we are sometimes asked to help in other activities. That's how I ended up in the school project and that really attracted me. Its purpose is to work with English teachers and their students to write stories of soldiers in the Groesbeek Cemetery.



Together with Else, I went to Canisius College in Nijmegen to consult with Anita, English teacher who enthusiastically supports the project. Three VWO-4 classes participated this year, a total of 70 students, writing a total of 34 stories.

After an introductory lesson, the students started in groups of 2 or 3 students. Three times Else and I visited the classes afterwards to answer questions and give explanations. It must be said that there were students among them who worked diligently, but some were not very enthusiastic.

After counseling, they were given time to finish and turn in their life stories. On Thursday, April 25, they all came to the cemetery in Groesbeek with some teachers and tutors. After a welcome from Else and Anita, English teacher Fleur read a poem and we went in groups to the graves. Each facilitator had a group of students and each pair was allowed to read their story at the grave of the particular soldier. They placed a poppy and a flower at the grave and a minute of silence was held. Afterwards, we gathered at the Cross of Sacrifice to conclude the ceremony.

I found it a very special experience to involve young people in our project in this way and thus soon be able to complete another 34 life stories for our website.



### *Children's College*

Another activity in the school project is the Children's College. Wednesday, May 15, Else and I gave that, in cooperation with the Groesbeek library. The children were told about the cemetery and were allowed to ask questions. An important question was what "freedom" means to them. This ranged from "being in prison and getting out again" to "going to war and having peace." Even deciding what goes on TV is, according to one of them, a kind of freedom.



The children could cut out a poppy and place it at a grave of their choice. One of the children chose the only Dutchman buried here and another chose the grave where he was with his school at the 4th of May commemoration. That grave had caught his eye because of the Star of David on it and he was then reminded of all the Jews who were killed in the war. They were allowed to draw the grave of



this soldier and to finish there was a scavenger hunt. Of course there was something delicious for the children and we ended a fun afternoon, despite some rain.



### *Commonwealth War Graves week*

The next project we were asked to work on was Commonwealth War Graves week. This week draws extra attention to the cemeteries managed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). Else had made information folders and a schedule. The intention was to give people, who were interested, a tour, answer questions

and thus raise CWGC's profile.

By counting the number of visitors, you can see how many people know how to find their way to the cemetery. Coach buses, many cyclists and other interested people came to take a look. Thanks to all the info present, we were able to help many people and immediately promote our own Foundation Faces To Graves. We showed some stories written by us and only then did visitors see what we actually do as researchers. Both for CWGC and Faces To Graves the week was a great success.

I found it valuable experiences and I realize the importance of bringing attention to the cemetery and our research work. This is how we continue to remember the men who made the ultimate sacrifice for us.



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### **Remembrance Day 4 May**



Remembrance Day 4 May at the Canadian Cemetery was very special. Omroep Berg en Dal made beautiful recordings.

[To the recordings >](#)

*Webmaster Marcel van der Meer and President Alice van Bekkum lay the wreath for Faces to Graves.*

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### **In the spotlight: Richard and Hennie**

During the Research Team meeting Richard Russell gave a Power Point presentation on our shared use of Dropbox. He clearly explained to us the possibilities of Dropbox, which was enlightening to us all.



After the presentation both Richard and Hennie Koster, who have been part our Management Team for five years, were put in the spotlight. These two volunteers see to it that all data are available to all staff in a database. On behalf of the Board, both were presented with the Faces to Graves coin together with the framed certificate by Alice van Bekkum, President and Saskia Peters, member of the board. Alice told those present about the first time she met Richard during a charity evening in the Residence of the Canadian Ambassador, in those days Ms Sabine Nölke.

Richard Russell offered his help after having heard about Faces to Graves' activities and before we knew it, he, as a Canadian living in the Netherlands, came to Groesbeek to attend the Research Team meeting. He came, he saw and he conquered, so it seems, as Richard saw exactly what we needed: a good system, in which all information is accessible to all of us.

Hennie Koster has been a Research Team Member since 2017 and has been through all the buck jumps that we made before we had a Format that, as far as set-up is concerned, made each life story look identical. Hennie works with the Military Police, is now retired, but is still working there. In between his work he wrote life stories and he makes sure that each researcher is given access to the folder of the particular soldier that he/she is going to write a story about.



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### Cooperation Visitor Centre Groesbeek



Faces to Graves is collaborating with this new foundation: Visitor Centre Groesbeek, Canadian War Cemetery (VCG). The foundation wants to build a visitor center at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek. In this center, visitors can get information about the cemetery and about the soldiers buried there or still missing. It can be a place of rest for relatives visiting a grave. Visitors can also deepen their knowledge about the region and the how and why of the Canadian presence during 1944-1945. Scholars and students can also gain knowledge for papers/scripts and attend workshops.

In short, a visitor center offers many possibilities. Are you interested and would you like more information? Please send an email to: [vcgroesbeek@gmail.com](mailto:vcgroesbeek@gmail.com).

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### Book *Faces of Liberation*

Together with Prof. Dr Mehring of American Studies at Radboud University and Prof. Dr Jaap Verheul, Cultural Historian at Utrecht University, Faces to Graves are working on a book about Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery.

The idea is to simultaneously present a Dutch and English version in May 2025, with the provisional titles: *Gezichten van Vrijheid* and *Faces of Liberation*.

The book predominantly consists of life stories written by our researchers. A team of three students are working on this project and are making sure that the life stories can be included in the book in a predetermined format and that special stories are magnified.

All in all, an ambitious plan, which we are keen to contribute to. The essential agreements were signed on June 6.

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### 1000<sup>th</sup> life story on D-Day

On June 6, D-Day, our **1000<sup>th</sup>** life story was placed on the website in the Digital Monument. We have been able to reach this milestone thanks to the huge commitment of all Faces to Graves volunteers!



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### The Faces of Groesbeek 2025

The project group of the photo exhibition The Faces of Groesbeek has already begun preparations for the next edition, which will take place in the first two weeks of May 2025 at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek. Due to the school vacations in the Netherlands, the photos will be posted a week earlier, starting April 26. They will remain until May 18, 2025.

Since the May 2021 and 2023 photos were at the graves and names of the missing at the Memorial, many new photos have come in thanks to the help of various people.



*Photos: Erik de Gans*



The photos all need to be printed on durable Alupanel panels that can be used multiple times, and for this we need to have sufficient resources at our disposal. Can you help us by contributing, or sending a photo? Please do mention "May 2025" with your donation, then it will be used exclusively for that purpose. You will also find a donation button on our website.

Finally, we would like to ask all family members who would like to come to Groesbeek to sign up at [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl) for the official opening ceremony on Friday afternoon, May 2.

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### **Thank you so much for your donation!**

As a non-profit organization, we can only work on this project through your donation. The logos of our sponsors are on the website. Sometimes we would like to thank a donor personally, but unfortunately this is not possible if we do not have a contact address. Therefore, in this way we would like to thank EVERYONE for their contribution!

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### **Special thanks to...**

We thank Richard Meeussen of restaurant-hotel 't Zwaantje in Mook for his hospitality for the Research Team meetings. He has been providing us with a beautiful meeting room free of charge for many years where the coffee is already invitingly waiting for us.

For the various reports in this newsletter we thank: Alice van Bekkum, Else Schaberg and Saskia Peters. Sources of photos used: Kim Huvenaars, Gijs Krist, Simon Collard-Wexler, Ans Mostert, Alice van Bekkum, Paul ten Broeke and Peter Hendriks.

Gonny van Hal took care of the translation of the items in this newsletter and Tefke van Dijk, former ResearchTeam member, took care of the layout. Many thanks for that! Julie Allen has been handling the mailing of this newsletter since 2019 and it runs like clockwork, Julie thank you!

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### **Wanted: board members**

Would you like to help us or do you know someone who is interested, we are still looking for:

- board member from the Nijmegen region, to strengthen our board
- board member with knowledge of IT

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**Finally, we wish you all a beautiful summer.**



Questions or comments? Please contact us:

