



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's involvement in the liberation of the Netherlands at the end of the Second World War was of major importance. In total, Canada committed 1,081,865 military personnel to World War II. More than 7,000 Canadians died during the battles to end the German occupation of the Netherlands.

The largest Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands is situated on a hill near Groesbeek. In this cemetery, 2,618 soldiers are buried, whose nationalities are as follows: 2,331 Canadian, 255 British, 3 Belgian, 2 Australian, 2 Polish, 1 New Zealand, 1 Russian, 1 Yugoslavian and 1 Dutch. Additionally, there are 21 soldiers of unknown identity and nationality buried here.

On the 'Groesbeek Memorial', 1,015 names have been registered of soldiers who are still missing.

Most of the soldiers buried at the Groesbeek cemetery were killed during the Rhineland offensive between 8th February and 10th March 1945. Besides, a large number of Air Force crew members are buried here.

On 19th May 2015 the non-profit organisation (Dutch Foundation) Stichting Faces to Canadian War Graves Groesbeek ('Faces to Graves') was founded and included in the Chamber of Commerce register.

There is a Committee of Recommendation.

Board members, advisors, members of the Committee of Recommendation and all staff are volunteers and do not receive any compensation for their activities or for costs incurred.

OBJECTIVE

The Foundation aims at writing life stories of soldiers buried and commemorated in Groesbeek. In order to do so, historic and necrological research is being done. The life stories are not only meant for the relatives and loved ones, but also for visitors of the cemetery and researchers. These life stories and photographs along with military documents, letters etc. are publicly accessible through the website (<https://www.facestograves.nl/>).

HOW DO WE WANT TO REACH THIS?

We have our own research team, which consists of volunteers who are actively involved in carrying out research and writing life stories.

Basic information and limited military information can usually be found quite readily, but extensive and active research is necessary for writing life stories with accompanying photographs.

We also aim at informing visitors of the liberation history of the Netherlands and Europe and Canada's role in liberating the Netherlands in the perspective of life stories.

Expanding and professionalising our research capacity is an ongoing process.

Besides writing life stories, Faces to Graves also executes supporting projects, such as:

- 'The Faces of Groesbeek', takes place every two years, an event at which photographs of the deceased are placed near the headstones and volunteers are available to tell visitors more about the accompanying life stories;
- school projects, which actively involve secondary school pupils in writing life stories.

By doing these projects as well as taking part in commemorations, Faces to Graves aims at becoming known to a wider audience. An important side goal is to involve young people in our activities.

CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

We maintain excellent contacts with the Information Centre Begraafplaats (ICB) of the Holten Canadian War Cemetery and with the 'Brabantse Wal' Liberation Foundation (SBBW) in Bergen op Zoom, who are doing research on the soldiers buried at the Canadian War Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom.

In joint consultation, the organisation (Dutch Foundation) Canadian War Graves Nederland (CWG NL) was established in 2018.

This Foundation intends to set up a website containing the life stories of all Canadian soldiers buried in the Netherlands, not only the soldiers buried in Holten, Groesbeek and Bergen op Zoom, but also those who have found their final resting place at other cemeteries in the Netherlands. This also applies to the life stories of soldiers who do not have a grave, but whose names can be read on the Groesbeek Memorial.

We also cooperate with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), the Dutch War Graves Commission (OGS) and the Ministry of Veteran Affairs of Canada.

In addition, we are also seeking co-operation with universities, military history institutions and other educational organisations willing to assist us with our research activities.

It goes without saying that the Foundation takes due care that privacy and the wishes of the family members of the deceased are at all times observed and respected.

FINANCING AND COSTS

Our financing comes from individual donations, corporate contributions and government subsidies.

Our limited financial means are only just sufficient to cover the costs of research, commemorations and administration.

Projects like 'The Faces of Groesbeek' are financed separately by targeted fundraising.

The national database is the responsibility of the Canadian War Graves Nederland Foundation (CWG NL). A contract has been concluded with OGS, in which it has been agreed that OGS will not charge any costs for creating a database for Canadian War Graves Nederland. This also goes for the updates, the maintenance and the hosting of the <https://oorlogsgravenstichting.nl/partner/> website. The database can be accessed through Canadian War Graves NL's own website and through the websites of the participating foundations.

Faces to Canadian War Graves Groesbeek Foundation

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