In our first newsletter you read about the start of our project Faces To Graves. Since then, much has happened and been put into motion. Like building a house, although the exterior walls are built quickly, it is the finishing touches that require the most time and effort. And it is not always easy to remain patient and positive, but we remain committed to a good result.

At the end of 2015, Marko Kuipers and his partner Thalia Weideman visited the grave of Captain John Jewell of the Algonquin Regiment. Marko found our brochure at the cemetery and contacted us, he and his partner Thalia became active members of our Research Team. They began to research all of the fallen soldiers of the Algonquin Regiment, which includes: 91 graves and 12 missing. Marko has also set up a LinkedIn Group for Faces To Graves, which he will manage for us. We are very pleased with this active couple!

Marko and Thalia.

On April 8th, we met the new Mayor of Berg en Dal, Mr. Mark Slinkman, who is supportive of our initiative. Groesbeek, Millingen and Ubbergen merged together on January 1, 2015 forming to what is now called Berg en Dal.

Mayor Slinkman, Jan van Loo and Alice van Bekkum.
That same week mail arrived from Amherst, Nova Scotia. Ray Coulson, curator of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders Regimental Museum, sent us copies of the Roll of Honour Book of the museum which we scanned and processed into our database. We then sent Ray a DVD showing all of the digital files.

Mail Ray Coulson.

Edison Smith, a cousin of Sergeant E.A. Smith of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders Regiment brought me into contact with Ray. We are very grateful to Ray for all of his efforts.

Grave Sergeant E.A. Smith.

And yet another surprise arrived for us by mail. Wigger van der Horst from Apeldoorn sent us a beautiful DVD featuring the 'Glen Memorials' by Greg Pollard for the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders Regiment amongst others.

Example of a Glen Memorial for John Leo MacDonell.

Greg has since given us permission to use the ‘Glen Memorials’ for our database. Many Thanks to Greg and Wigger for this great addition about the ‘Glens’!

On July 14, we hosted delegates visiting from the foundations of the Canadian cemeteries in Holten and Bergen op Zoom. The meeting was held at the Liberation Museum with a discussion about how we could work together. A follow-up appointment was set for September 29th in Holten to talk about our cooperation.
On July 21st during the third day of the 100th Nijmegen Marches, RCL Branch 005 had their promotion tent situated in a beautiful location along the route. Inside the tent, the Faces To Graves’s brochures were available on the table.

The Canadian soldiers, who took part in the Nijmegen Marches, were also involved in an impressive commemoration ceremony.
We regularly read the visitors’ book at the cemetery, sometimes with surprising results. Michelle Howden-Strang left a message in February and in April where she wrote: “Now that we are posted back here we can visit my grandfather’s grave regularly.” The address was mentioned only as ‘Goch’ until she left a third message. This time she gave us her full address in the German town of Goch where we were able to send her a letter and in return we received a quick response from her.

Michelle wrote that her parents would be coming to visit within a few days and that they plan to attend the memorial during the Marches. We agreed to meet with each other and that was very special.

I was able to take a picture of the son and granddaughter at the grave of British Sergeant James Strang, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who was killed on June 2, 1942.

It was nice to meet this RAF family, because Michelle’s father was in the RAF plus her husband John and son, Alastair are also in the Royal Air Force!

During the Nijmegen Marches I met with Janine Peeters, founder of Canada2Leaf. Although she has her own business called PA Dynamics now, she offered to advise our board, as needed. Janine placed a call for help for Faces To Graves on her Facebook page, to which, amongst others, Hana Bhuiyan responded. She recently had moved to Malden to live with her Dutch partner Jochem Boeke and offered to help us. Hana is now an active member of our Research Team.

Recently, I saw the film by Kasper Tijs, made with his drone of the monument for Ernest Harrison in Leuth. I was impressed. I was involved in accomplishing this
monument that was unveiled by Ernest’s sister Beatrice Messinger in June 2015. Although Ernest’s grave has never been found, the monument stands in the location of where he was killed. His name is found inscribed upon a wall in the Memorial alongside the names of other missing soldiers. Beatrice stayed with the parents of Kasper during her time in the Netherlands. Jose, Kasper’s mother, has done everything possible to help locate Ernest’s field grave.

I asked Kasper if he was willing to make a film of the cemetery in Groesbeek which he did with excellent results. Please see his film on our website: http://www.fcestogravens.nl/index_nl.html#film

Marian Leusink, a member of our Research Team from the very beginning, has had contact with Corina O’Hean, a relative of Private Edward John Munroe of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders Regiment. Corina, a marketing consultant by profession, offered to create a Facebook page for Faces To Graves.

With Hana joining our research team, I spoke with her about Corina’s offer. Hana had now taken on the additional role of administrator to our Facebook page which includes responding to the messages and archiving incoming information and photos. We hope that, with thanks to Corina, many people find their way to our Facebook page. https://www.facebook.com/FacesToGraves/

We would like to acknowledge Margaret Chase who sent us her complete archive with information regarding her uncle Pilot Officer Air Gunner Frederick William Campbell along with two other books containing information about him. After careful scanning and examination we will be returning everything back to Margaret with our thanks. Margaret’s niece, Kathleen MacMillan together with her brother John, have produced a wonderful video about their great-uncle Ted Campbell for a school project. https://youtu.be/2IZn5BwHHSs

On September 2, a letter arrived from Laurie Doxsee from Demorestville, ON. in response to a letter we had mailed after she left a message in the Visitors Book
including her full address. When I read the letter, tears filled my eyes, what a dramatic story! Laurie wrote to us that Pilot Officer Allen Weese, called Bob, was the first husband of her mother Marjorie. Only two weeks after their wedding he was embarked for Europe. One year later his plane was shot down. Laurie's mother remarried in 1946. Unfortunately she never spoke to Laurie about Bob, perhaps because it was too sensitive for her or out of respect for her 2nd husband Elliott Whiteman. Five years after the death of Elliot Marjorie decided, along with Bob's sister Ethel, to go to Holland for the 60th anniversary of Liberation Day. Sadly, on May 1, 2005 Marjorie fell down the stairs at the home of the family where they were staying and died in hospital shortly afterwards. She never was able to say goodbye to Bob at his grave.

I found a short movie based on the book "Letters from a Bomber Pilot". One of the airmen in the movie is Bob Weese.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7E8s4y73Ow

On September 19, there was a memorial service for Operation Veritable.

After the commemoration, I was able to ask Defense Attaché Colonel Michael Hogan to join me at the grave of Alan Gee. There he met with An Berben. Shortly after the war, as a young girl, An adopted the grave of Trooper Alan John Gee of the South Alberta Regiment along with the grave of Rifleman William Cuthbertson Calbert of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. And still caring for them after all these years. Isn't that special?
Earlier this year, Alan Gee’s brother Edward from Osoyoos, BC wrote us a letter. He had heard about our project and wanted to pass on information about his brother. He told us that there is a lake named after Alan called Gee Lake in Carlea, Saskatchewan. Edward and his wife visited with An Berben in 2005.

Recruiting volunteers for the Research Team and the management of the site, which is still under development, continues therefore, we will be recruiting in local newspapers and similar places. This whole project hinges on the efforts of motivated people who, like us, want to make the story of the soldier in the tomb visible.

So far it has been the founding contributions of the board members who have funded this project. With ready cash getting low, we have applied for funding with Vfonds and the province of Gelderland. We are hoping to hear shortly of a positive result.

We have good news to share! We are pleased that the boards of Holten and Bergen op Zoom have agreed to join forces with us. An organized group with members from all parties is being formed, who will focus on developing a joint Faces To Graves website containing the names and stories of all the fallen Canadian soldiers in the Netherlands found in the database. And that is great news! Together we are strong!