

Newsletter

No 20 – autumn 2025



We are pleased to report on the activities of Faces to Graves since spring 2025.

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Looking back | Alice van Bekkum

After the busy period leading up to and during the photo exhibition and the fantastic opening ceremony, everyone was tired but satisfied, including Veteran Affairs Canada.

The highlight was the presence of 21 Canadian veterans, broadcast live by CBC. You can still watch it here: [Netherlands liberation anniversary | CBC News special - YouTube](#)

I can still hear one of them saying: "My comrades are smiling in their graves." An even greater reward for our efforts is hard to imagine.

New photos and connections with soldiers' families arrived via email, and the CBC broadcast was widely viewed. Thanks to many visitors to The Faces of Groesbeek, meaningful connections were made between visitors and researchers who hosted the event. All incoming photos are immediately uploaded to the Digital Monument on our website, even if a life story is not yet available.

After some time, a letter of praise arrived from Deputy Minister Paul Ledwell of Veteran Affairs Canada, with some paragraphs included below.

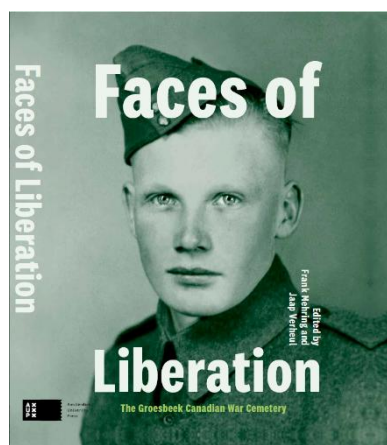
"Our Canadian delegation was deeply moved as we visited the various places where these brave individuals once stood and the cemeteries where so many from across our country now rest. It was profoundly touching for us all to witness the enduring gratitude and affection shown to our Second World War Veterans by Dutch citizens, even after 80 years. The bonds of friendship and remembrance between the Dutch and Canadian people remain strong."

"I am particularly grateful for your partnership with Veteran Affairs Canada for the ceremony in Groesbeek, which, through our combined efforts, was a truly meaningful and special event. Please accept my congratulations on the success of your Faces to Graves project and the personal connection that it created with our fallen heroes."

Alice van Bekkum, voorzitter Stichting Faces to Graves

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## Faces of liberation



Faces to Graves contributed to this beautiful book, which includes 102 abridged stories from our Digital Monument and 15 stories of the missing.

The face on the cover is Tom Morton from Innisfail, Alberta. In The Albertan, on May 5, his sister Mary (91) recounts his story during a meeting of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 104; the book contains a total of eight stories from soldiers from Alberta.

If you'd like to know which ones, request the list here: [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)

Leo Klaassen talks about the book in De Gelderlander:

### **Book about the Canadian Cemetery in Groesbeek: from a pack of cigarettes to an iconic memorial**

How do you choose a location for the largest cemetery for Canadian soldiers in the Netherlands? The Groesbeek mayor, Rudolf van Grotenhuis van Onstein, already pondered this question in May 1945, after a Canadian officer asked him to find a site for his fellow soldiers who died in Germany.

*Our goal is to emphasize the heritage importance of the cemetery.*

### **Jaap Verheul, Radboud University Nijmegen**

The mayor hesitated, but when he spotted a pack of cigarettes and a Canadian uniform button near foxholes along Zevenheuvelenweg, he knew for sure: this was the place to be.

The anecdote appears in a comprehensive new reference book about the famous cemetery: *Faces of Liberation*. The title highlights the 115 portraits and short biographies of soldiers who are buried in Groesbeek.

### **Faces on Paper**

These portraits, together with the list of the 2,618 buried and 1,011 missing persons on the memorial wall, make the book impressive on its own. They have been recorded and selected over the past few years by the Faces to Graves foundation, which has already provided more than a thousand soldiers in Groesbeek with an online face.

### **Liberation Days**



But compilers Frank Mehring and Jaap Verheul aimed to do more with their reference book. It also covers the Canadian military efforts in World War II, the war years in Groesbeek, the history of remembrance, and how liberation days are viewed in Dutch and Canadian cultures. A total of nine authors from the Netherlands, Germany, and Canada contributed to the project.

A reference work like this did not exist yet," says Jaap Verheul, emeritus professor of Transatlantic Relations at Radboud University Nijmegen. "By also describing the entire context of the war effort, the liberation, and the commemoration, we want to demonstrate the cemetery's value as heritage."

Mehring, a professor of American Studies in Nijmegen, often takes students to the graves. "Groesbeek, with its Freedom Museum, is a great place to talk about the importance of freedom. You'll find a Dutch, transatlantic, and European story there."

### **Wilhelmina**

The book shows how the commemorations at the cemetery and the many visits from the Netherlands and Canada are part of a long-standing tradition. As early as 1945—when construction was still underway—a commemorative march and wreath-laying ceremony took place with thousands of people. A year later, many participants in the revived Four Days Marches deviated from the route to pay their respects. In 1947, there had already been a royal visit from Queen Wilhelmina and Prince Bernhard, who had to arrive by car along a dirt road.

### **Adoption**

Even before the opening, residents spontaneously started caring for and "adopting" war graves. Committed citizens maintained, and continue to maintain, close ties with relatives of those who died in Canada. Groesbeek is not unique in this regard, according to Verheul.

We can't explain it better, so in short: buy this book and learn more.

It is available at bookstores, the Freedom Museum, and can be ordered through:

[Faces of Liberation | Amsterdam University Press](#)

If you would like to know which 117 life stories are included in the book and/or know who is in the accompanying pictures, please contact us:

[info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)

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Visit to Groesbeek

I met Marian Straatman for the first time when she came to Camping de Lubert to collect my husband and myself to take us to Groesbeek War Cemetery on May 1st, 2025. We had been communicating for a few months by email regarding my uncle - John Burke 6th Bat H.L.I. Glasgow Regiment whose name is on the Memorial Wall.

Read more in his Life Story: [BURKE John-MEMORIAL-MSN](#)

On arrival we were introduced to other members of Faces to Graves. I saw the photos of the young men placed at their graves and at the memorial wall, among them my uncle's. An overwhelming feeling of sadness, joy and pride was experienced, it was as if for that moment they were all with us.

Marian then took us to Jonkerbos War Cemetery where we saw the graves of the two men who died alongside my uncle. Frederick Foster and Vernon Bastin.

Cannot thank Marian and Faces to Graves enough for what they do for these young men in not forgetting the sacrifice that they made. Faces to Graves gave

themselves what seemed like an impossible task through determination and hard work in given a face to the name of nearly all the heroes in the cemetery.

Thank you all from the bottom of my ♥

Joan Burke Reid



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### **Operation Picture Me**

Anyone who researches the Canadian soldiers who died in World War 1 and World War 2 and uses the Canadian Virtual War Memorial and Find-a-Grave will quite often see the term: "Submitted for the project Operation Picture Me" when looking at the photos and newspaper clippings on those sites.

Some may ask, what is Operation Picture Me?

Simply put, OPM started 25 years ago when I submitted one single family photo to the CVWM. My great uncle Anthony Smith was killed in WW1. I soon realized that the "Faces" were slowly fading from the memories of those who knew these heroes.

After that first submission, I started searching for photos of others so I could add a "Face" to the names listed on the CVWM.

My goal is to find a photo of all the Canadians who went off to war and did not come home so their names and "Faces" will be remembered forever. About 2005, Readers' Digest published an article about Operation Picture Me. (A copy can be read below.)

There are about 118,000 names on the CVWM and so far, I've been able to add a Face to almost 60,000 of Canada's Fallen Heroes.

Over those 25 years I've submitted over 300,000 items to help tell the stories of these men and women. Eventually I noticed that some of the items I submitted to the CVWM were later added to Find-a-Grave by someone else. So, for the past 13 years I've sent in over 127,000 items to Find-a-Grave. To find the items I submit I search through many on-line newspapers, visited Legion Halls and went in the archives of many Universities and High Schools. I sometimes post on

the FB pages of the towns they lived in hoping to contact their family. I also stopped in the 48th Highlanders Regimental Museum to search their archives.

In 2010 I became the manager of the 48th Highlanders Museum and had the privilege to travel with several Highlander veterans who were attending the 65th Anniversary of Liberation.

To honour those Highlanders buried at Holten, I sent along about 12 photos to be added to the graves so visitors could see the Faces of the Highlanders who gave their lives for the liberation of Netherlands.

As I walked through the cemetery at Holten I was saddened to see there were very few graves that had a photo. My guess, there were only about 35 graves that had a photo.

I met Gerry Van Holt at the celebration at Holten. He was so happy to see that almost all the 48th Highlanders had a photo. He asked me if he could keep the photos after the event. He said he would like as many photos as he could and that one day they would be shown in a visitors' centre.

I was very pleased to give these photos to him. It was then I decided to adopt Holten and when I got home, I went through the collection of photos I had already sent to the CVWM and was able to send him over 200 more photos. Over the years I've sent Holten about 600 photos/newspaper clippings.

I later created a youtube video titled "48th Highlanders of Canada at Holten Canadian War Cemetery Netherlands" I wanted a way to promote my goal of finding photos to send to Gerry and I thought this might help. Here is a link to the video:

[48th Highlanders of Canada at Holten Canadian War Cemetery Netherlands](#)

I became aware that my research was a potential gold mine for other groups and I started to share my finds. I've helped to add to the archives of many Regiments including the 48th Highlanders, Queens Own Rifles, PPCLI, Toronto Scottish and Grey and Simcoe Foresters. Groups that have a presence on Face Book such as Dieppe Blue Beach Every Man Remembered, The Khaki and Blue Project, 18th Battalion, 21st Battalion and 160th Battalion have all been sent items to add to their research. And finally, Faces of Schoonselhof, Faces of Agira, Faces to Graves Bergen op Zoom and Faces to Graves Groesbeek have all benefited from the work done by OPM.

Operation Picture Me is basically a one-person project and was created so the future generations of students will learn about those men and women who made the supreme sacrifice. These Canadian Heroes were and always will be part of the Greatest Generation.

It's been over fifteen years since I've been to The Netherlands, and it was nice to know that some of the photos/clippings I've sent were used to help tell the stories of the Liberators during this year's celebration. The cemeteries looked so much better than it did in 2010.

Hopefully Faces to Graves will be able to find those missing photos so everyone will have a photo on their grave. And I look forward to sending more of my discoveries to Alice van Bekkum and the team at Faces to Graves Groesbeek. They did a wonderful job honouring the heroes at the 80th Anniversary of Liberation.

*D.J. Archer*

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Donation from Carl Cudmore



It turned out to be more challenging than expected, but we finally succeeded: we received a generous donation from Carl Cudmore via PayPal. We then updated the instructions on our website.

The donation app also seemed temporarily down, but that issue has been fixed.

Learn more about Carl's father in our Digital Monument:
[CUDMORE Lester Harvey-OTS](#)

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### **Pieter Valkenburg knighted**

July 2, 2025 Pieter Valkenburg was appointed Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau, which is a special Dutch Royal award.

The decoration was presented to Pieter by Her Excellency Margriet Vonno, Ambassador of The Netherlands to Canada, in a beautiful ceremony hosted by His Honour, Dr Wassim Salamoun, Lt Governor of Prince Edward Island. Also present were Mark De Wit, the Defence Attaché for The Netherlands, and Wendy Sewell, Assistant Defence Attaché.

Pieter received his knighthood in recognition of the military research he's done (and continues to do) to help ensure that Canadian soldiers buried in The Netherlands are not forgotten, and that their stories are told.



Photo by Matthew B. MacFarlane, from left to right: Her Honour Marie Salamoun-Dunne, His Honour Dr Wassim Salamoun, Lt Governor of Prince Edward Island, Daria Valkenburg, Pieter Valkenburg, Her Excellency Margriet Vonno, Ambassador of The Netherlands to Canada, Lt-Colonel Mark de Wit, Defence Attaché for The Netherlands to Canada.

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Four Days Marches Commemoration

The Canadian military delegation organized the commemoration prior to the Four Days Marches on Monday, July 14, 2025. A photo report can be found on the next page.



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## **Farewell to Jelle Reitsma**



On Wednesday, August 14, Saskia Peters and Alice van Bekkum visited Jelle Reitsma, who, for health reasons, must step down as an advisor to our board.

During a joint lunch on the terrace of De Boschvijver restaurant in Apeldoorn, we presented him with the Faces to Graves coin and the accompanying certificate for his tremendous dedication.

Chairperson Alice van Bekkum recounted their first meeting after the commemoration at the "The Man with the Two Hats" monument in Apeldoorn. Jelle, a retired Cavalry Brigade General and member of the Remembrance and Commemoration working group of the Apeldoorn Liberation '45 Foundation, shared a story during the commemoration about two Canadian soldiers who died during the liberation of Apeldoorn. She discussed this with him over coffee afterward. She and Jelle expressed their desire to create a digital tribute for the soldiers at the Canadian Cemetery in Groesbeek. She asked if he would like to help set up this initiative, and he immediately agreed.

Since the foundation's inception ten years ago, Jelle has been an advisor and has attended nearly all meetings. When the national foundation was established by the three Canadian cemeteries in the Netherlands, Jelle and Alice, representing Faces to Graves, became chair and general board members, respectively.

Jelle will continue to be available to the Research Team members as a resource for military issues.

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Change of Command Ceremony in Geilenkirchen

On Thursday morning, July 17, 2025, the Change of Command Ceremony took place between Lieutenant Colonel A.V. Pleasance, CD, and Lieutenant Colonel S.C. LeBlanc, OMM, CD.

We at Faces to Graves were excited to attend; it's always a meaningful event filled with laughter and tears.

It was a beautiful ceremony, perfectly organized. Even the sun provided warmth for this farewell and a warm welcome.

We thank Lieutenant Colonel A.V. Pleasance, CD, for our great collaboration over the past few years. We also wish Lieutenant Colonel S.C. Leblanc, CD, all the best in her new role. We look forward to welcoming her and all other Canadian Forces Support Unit (Europe) service members to the Canadian Cemetery in Groesbeek.



From left to right: Transfer of command from A.V. Pleasance to S.C. LeBlanc. Lieutenant Colonel S.C. LeBlanc, OMM, CD, Lieutenant Colonel A.V. Pleasance, CD.

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### **Photo by Raymond Seguin**

We did not have a better photo of Raymond than the photo in the newspaper, until we received a message from Joel Stoppels, battlefield guide from Groningen with great news!

Joel tells us what happened:

"I recently bought an old black-and-white photo of a Canadian soldier on Marktplaats — purely by chance, without knowing who it was.

It wasn't until I turned the photo over that I saw his name and address:

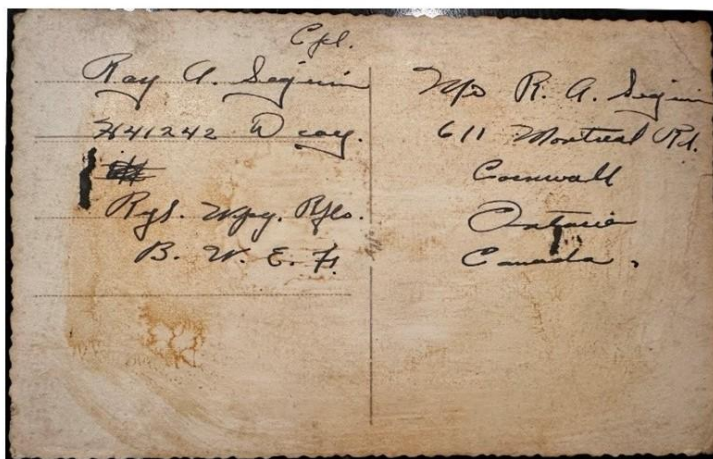
Cpl. R.A. Seguin, H/41242, D Coy, Royal Winnipeg Rifles – 611 Montreal Rd., Cornwall, Ontario, Canada.

From that moment on, it stuck with me. I started researching his story and discovered it was Corporal Raymond Auréal Seguin, killed on February 16, 1945, during the Battle of Moyland Wood."

Joel reached out for Faces to Graves and we could tell him that the life story of Corporal Raymond Auréal Seguin was already published.

Written by the students at All Saints High School, and through Vanessa Kirtz, the teacher, Joel was connected to his family in Canada.

He is of the opinion this photo belongs to Raymond's relatives...



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Farewell to Jochen Rengers

Jochen Rengers has served as treasurer at Faces to Graves for the past four years, but unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to him this week.

Introduced by the late Dick Akerboom, he met Alice van Bekkum, chair of Faces to Graves, in October 2021, and almost immediately joined the first board meeting on November 17, 2021.

A few days later, the handover with his predecessor, Adriaan van der Pol, co-founder of the Faces to Graves foundation, occurred on November 27.

Over the past four years, Jochen has seen the challenges that come with the foundation's rapid growth firsthand and has helped guide it.

He has carried out his duties within the foundation with excellence. At his farewell, he received a heartfelt speech from Chairman Alice van Bekkum and was awarded the Faces to Graves coin. Saskia Peters, a general board member, presented the accompanying certificate. He also received a book token, which he can use to select a book of his choice.

We have appointed a new treasurer, Jaap de Bruijn, who lives in Gennep and is ready to assume his role. The handover has now been finalized.



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## Introduction of Our New Treasurer



Over a year ago I moved from Utrecht to Gennep and I stopped working in June this year. When I was approached by the chair of Faces to Graves, Alice van Bekkum, to become treasurer, I didn't hesitate.

What the liberators did must not be forgotten. Young people gave their lives, so we could live in freedom. By telling their stories and giving them a face, they remain in our memories.

Unfortunately, little has changed in the world to this day. Many people are still killed in wars worldwide, and young people still give their lives so that others can live in freedom.

*Jaap de Bruijn*

PS: Sometimes the donation module on the website is not working properly. This mainly concerns the option to donate by credit card. We are investigating whether it's possible to use a different donation module. Since this year it is possible to donate via PayPal.

The PayPal account is [penningmeester@facestograves.nl](mailto:penningmeester@facestograves.nl)

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Donation from José Koes



Faces to Graves received an email from José Koes of Winnipeg, Manitoba, who was planning to donate in honor of her 80th birthday as a token of appreciation for our organization. She mentioned: "My name is (Marie-) José Koes, born on August 30, 1945, in Druten, the Netherlands. My mother was Marie van Son.

Just before the ceremony, which was broadcast live on CBC on May 2, I learned about the war graves in Groesbeek from Liesbeth Huisman-Arts and Vanessa Kirtz from Canada, who contribute significantly to this meaningful project.

Initially a name in my mind, now a person in my heart—this perfectly captures the feeling I've experienced my entire life.

My family, especially our daughter, was thrilled by all the details you shared about my father, Joseph Marcelli Gilles Bienvenue."

You can learn more about his life, including additional details about José, here:

[BIENVENUE Joseph Marcellin Gilles-LHN](#)

José is the very first liberation child who didn't share a sad story, but the opposite. When Dutch girls were found pregnant by a Canadian soldier, their families often isolated them and forced them to give up their children.

José remembered that her father, Joseph, met her mother, Marie van Son, at a party organized by the village women. He would sometimes visit her mother's family, where they connected because both spoke French. He even occasionally brought food to Mrs. Van Son, who was bedridden.

Until one day, her father's comrades brought Marie the sad news that Joseph had been killed. When Marie discovered she was pregnant, her baby was warmly welcomed into the family. Three brothers living in the village also acted like fathers to her. Because of this, she never truly missed having a father; she didn't know any different. She knew there was no father, but it wasn't talked about. She still remembers visiting the grave in Groesbeek with her mother.

The family tried to learn more about Joseph through the Red Cross, but they were unsuccessful. "I kept it a secret for the rest of my life, believing I would never find out who my father was.

Until I watched the CBC broadcast this year, which marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation, I wasn't aware of Faces to Graves. Their board shared my father's story — even a photo! They've also helped me reconnect with family members, and I am now in contact with them. Forever grateful!"

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### **Passing of Win Barbaro**

We received the sad news: on October 1st, Win Barbaro passed away. She was the niece who unveiled the Antonio Barbaro monument in Mook, along with veteran Donald Somerville, a Royal Canadian Engineer and comrade of Antonio Barbaro, and her sister Debbie. A photo of Antonio's grave can be found in the Faces to Graves brochure. Read more about Antonio Barbaro: [BARBARO Antonio-AVB](#)



From left to right: Antonio with Don and Win, Win during the unveiling (third from the right).

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Visit from Canada

On Saturday, October 4, 2025, Hugh and Karen Loughborough from Toronto, Canada, visited Heerewaarden. In October 2023, Gijs Krist, a member of the Research Team, used Faces to Graves to create a memorial plaque for the fallen crew of the AVRO Lancaster ZN-Z LM570, which crashed on June 22, 1944. Squadron Leader James Arthur (Jim) Loughborough, Hugh's uncle, was on board and wanted to visit the plaque with his wife.



First, they visited the plaque at the church in Heerewaarden, which Gijs Krist created in 2014 for the eight fallen crew members.

Then, they visited the grave of his uncle and the six other crew members at Uden War Cemetery. After lunch at Het Zwaantje in Mook, the visit continued to the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, where Reargunner Clarence Elgy Scott from Burnaby, British Columbia, is buried in grave **XV. E. 8.**

Hugh and Karen were visibly moved to see how many young men gave their lives for our freedom. They are deeply grateful to everyone at Faces to Graves.

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### Don Halbert

In October, we received a message from Don Halbert. He's been experiencing health problems for some time, preventing him from writing his life stories. Our other Canadian member of the Research Team, Jim Little, will be helping him. Don, we wish you a good recovery!

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Visit by Jennifer King

Every year on November 8th, Canada honors Indigenous veterans who served in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and other conflicts. This day is known as Indigenous Veterans Day. According to available information, 64 Indigenous soldiers are buried at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery.



Jennifer King and Tom Conway from Canada, along with their children, Hazel (11) and Robby (6), visited the grave of Private Maxwell Warren King on October 30. Jennifer is a grandniece of Maxwell, who was killed on Monday, April 16, 1945, during fierce fighting in Otterloo.

First, the family visited the Indigenous exhibition, which will be on display at the Freedom Museum from May 2 through November 30, 2025. The exhibition was created in collaboration with Dr. Mathilde Roza of Radboud University. It also highlights Maxwell Warren King, one of the Indigenous soldiers who sacrificed their lives for our freedom.

We Will Remember Them.

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### **Visit by the Deakin Family**

On a beautiful day in late October, Adrian Deakin from the United Kingdom, son of Lt. Alfred Samuel Deakin, visited his father's grave together with his wife and children, and for the first time also with his grandchildren. His father was killed when Adrian was four years old; unfortunately, he himself has no lived memory of his father.

Faces to Graves captured beautiful footage of this event, which was also attended by grandson Alfred, Adrian's father's namesake. He and his grandfather were interviewed by Alice van Bekkum, chair of Faces to Graves. She recalled that 10 years ago, she received an email from Adrian, in which he asked why there was no commemoration at the cemetery on the weekend before November 11th, as is customary in the United Kingdom. To be found here: [Interview Family Deakin](#)

Nowadays, there is on the 11th of November itself, when Canadian soldiers stationed in Germany organize a commemoration for Remembrance Day.

Read more about Lt. Deakin: [DEAKIN Alfred Samuel-GDJ](#)



From left to right: Vicky, Alfred, Andrew, Adrian, Hilary, Edward, Elizabeth Wilson, Lara

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Poem by Harry Percy Saunders

Gijs Krist is working on the life story of Lieutenant Harry Percy Saunders and discovered that shortly before he was killed in action, he wrote a beautiful poem:

Nijmegen, Holland – February 1945

I think peaceful thoughts and I dream peaceful dreams
The loud distant rumble and gun roar just seems
To remind me of thunder, a storm that is near
The flashes are lightning, I've nothing to fear.
The battles are over, the peace flag's unfurled
God's in His heaven, all's right with the world.

But down the road winding along at a creep
The wounded are coming packed tight in a jeep
I hear now the groans and the life-ebbing gasp,

My day-dreams are shattered, the picture I grasp,
The jerries are shelling—terrific the roar
The bastards are ranging, they've found us once more.

I think wicked thoughts and I dream wicked dreams
As over my slit trench a "minnie" bomb screams
That close tearing fragment of 88 shell
Has my number on it—it has, sure as hell,
But no, it was Joe's turn—just happens that way.
He could have gone out if he'd wanted, today.

Reports will go back when this battle is done
They'll tell the good news, "We lost only one".
But "the one" was a guy with a wife and a kid
Who died—not because of what he, himself, did.
The soldiers all wonder just what will be done
For Joe's wife and baby, when this war is won.

Still over the dug-out death whispers, death screams,
You've been lucky so far—not this time, it seems.
You get cold and clammy—they can't scare you more
Your mind starts to work, but you don't know the score.

Then deep gentle memories of love, peace and home
Flash in and flash out as your thoughts start to roam.
That's all that saves you from going clear nuts.
It's worth more than training, or whiskey, or guts.

But after it's over and life lies ahead,
You push on through rubble, and dying, and dead

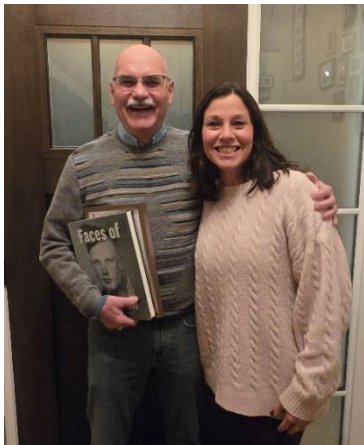
And deep in your heart you start thinking once more
That your number's not coming up in this war.

So it continues, day after day,
Same simple pattern and same deadly way.
But soon 'twill be over, please God may it seem
But a nightmare in passing. Let us wake from this dream.

Learn more in his biography on our website. [SAUNDERS Harry Percy-GKT](#)

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### **Certificate for Jim Little**



It has taken a while, but on November 4, 2025, Jim Little, our Canadian member of the Research Team, finally received the book *Faces of Liberation*, in which 20 of his lifestories are included.

He received it from the Dutch Consul in Calgary, Catriona Le May Doan, together with the certificate for writing 250 life stories, which was sent by Alice van Bekkum.

In the meantime, Jim just keeps on writing, and he almost reached 300 stories now.

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Remembrance Day

Soldiers from the Canadian Forces Support Unit (Europe), stationed in Geilenkirchen, Germany, organized a beautiful ceremony at the cemetery. They traveled to Groesbeek by bus, with about 250 people. After the commemoration, they went to the Freedom Museum for lunch and a visit. A photo report:



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### **Unveiling of Memorial Bench**

Following the commemoration at the cemetery, a memorial bench of Faces to Graves was unveiled in the garden of the Freedom Museum.

A brief trip down memory lane: at the end of July 2019, one of our volunteers, Marian Straatman, met the family of Captain Sydney Sol Pappelbaum at the Canadian Cemetery in Groesbeek.

At Sydney Bucovetsky's request, Rabbi Levine of the Jewish Community in Nijmegen conducted a short Jewish Remembrance Ceremony. The three grandchildren of Mr. I. Elzas, who adopted Captain Pappelbaum's grave at the time, were also present.

The life story of Capt. Sydney Sol Pappelbaum can be found on our website: [PAPPELBAUM Sydney Sol-MSN](http://PAPPELBAUM Sydney Sol-MSN)

Sydney Bucovetsky and his family remained deeply involved in the work of Faces to Graves after their 2019 visit. He soon inquired about the possibility of a memorial bench in honour of his uncle in Groesbeek or elsewhere in the municipality of Berg en Dal.

Faces to Graves then sought a common ground and joined forces with the Freedom Museum in Groesbeek. This resulted in a beautiful location for the bench: in the museum's garden, facing the cemetery.



When you sit on the bench, you look in the direction of the largest Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands, where 2618 graves are located and over 1000

names of the missing soldiers are inscribed on the memorial's panels. As the crowd flies just 1400 meters from here to the cemetery.

In this way, we also want to create a symbolic connection between the museum and the Canadian War Cemetery. We owe our freedom in part to the efforts of the Allied troops, of which the Canadians were part of.

It is written on the back of the bench: *"When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today."*

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New Board Members



My name is Marcel Hoogenboom, I'm 52 years old and live with my husband, Chiel, and our Rottweiler, Mientje, in the beautiful Waal village of Ophemert in the Betuwe region.

I was born and raised in Oost-Souburg, Zeeland, where I attended MAVO (Highschool) in Vlissingen and MHS (Hotel Management School) in Middelburg. Love brought me to Gelderland, and after a year at Van der Valk Hotel in Cuijk, I started working at Hotel Erica in Berg en Dal in December 1999.

This hotel was acquired by Fletcher Hotels on February 1, 2007, and I became their hotel manager shortly afterward. At Hotel Erica, I've organized over 350 weddings and already arranged WW2 memorial tourism for Fletcher Hotels in the region. The basis for this last endeavor stems from a promise I made to my grandmother that I wouldn't let anyone forget the stories of World War II, especially since my grandfather was a resistance fighter, was betrayed, and imprisoned in the Oranjestad and four concentration camps. The Liberation Route Europe audio spot and a Vector of Memory in front of Hotel Erica are tangible proof that I've fulfilled this promise. I was also named Hotel Manager of the Year at Fletcher Hotels in 2016, and, together with Team Erica, was named Event Venue of the Year in 2018 and Wedding Venue of the Year in 2019.

On March 1, 2023 (two weeks before my 50th birthday), the management of Fletcher Hotels offered me a new dual role: Wedding Specialist and LRE Specialist. I'll be working for all wedding venues and responsible for WW2 memorial tourism for all 120 Fletcher Hotels in the Netherlands. Fulfilling the promise, I made to my grandmother continues unabated.

And now, even a board position at Faces to Graves. I'm deeply honored that they've considered me and eager to take on this new challenge with great enthusiasm.

Marcel will be our new secretary.



Hi everyone! My name is Maxime Thijssen and I'm really excited to join the Faces to Graves board. I'm 25 years old and graduated in Transatlantic Studies at Radboud University which reflects my interest in the connections between Europe and North America — something that ties in beautifully with the work we do here. I also co-wrote the book *Faces of Liberation* which gave me the chance to help share the personal stories behind the names we remember. I'm passionate about keeping these memories alive and am really looking forward to contributing to the team and learning from all of you!

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### **Finally** | Alice van Bekkum

Two new researchers have joined the Research Team: Rens Thiecke and Harrie van Ewijk. We wish you much success in compiling your first life story. And a very warm welcome to an additional translator: Loes Coleman! Unfortunately, we have received news that Maurice Nagelhout is retiring due to health issues. We're sorry to see you go, Maurice, and we wish you all the best!

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On November 11, I called Beatrice Messinger to wish her a happy birthday. She is the sister of Ernest Harrison, whose name appears on the Memorial; he is missing. I met Beatrice in Wageningen on May 5, 2011, and she handed me a flyer seeking for help to locate her brother's grave. Later, I played a role in establishing a monument on the Duffeltdijk in Leuth, at the site where Ernest was killed.

We learned this from a report by a German officer who witnessed the incident and was later taken prisoner by the Canadians. Even after the war, he attempted to inform Ernest's family of his temporary burial site and wrote a letter to the military authorities on their behalf.

At Beatrice's request, this letter was read aloud in church last Sunday. Beatrice received many reactions to German pastor's noble act.

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Recently I received a message from Jim Little, our Canadian member of the Research Team: He was interviewed by CBC Edmonton Radio via Zoom on November 11th: [Edmonton AM | Live Radio | CBC Listen](#)

Later, Jim participated in the Field of Crosses Remembrance Day ceremony in Calgary, where he planned to meet Sheri Gray, the granddaughter of Max Bossert. More details can be found at: [BOSSERT Max-JLE](#)



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After producing 20 newsletters, others will now take over. I sincerely thank everyone who contributed reports over the past few years and for all the photos we've published—many thanks!

Thanks to your cooperation, we've successfully showcased all Faces to Graves activities in these newsletters. Together, we've built a valuable archive that allows us to easily track when events occurred.

We introduced our Digital Monument on May 1, 2020.

Canadian liberators in the spotlight: a tribute to those who never returned.

Since then, our Research Team volunteers have tirelessly added more life stories. Today, there are almost 1,500 stories on the website, and we continue working to honor every soldier with a meaningful tribute.

While many might assume that only Canadian soldiers are buried in Groesbeek, the cemetery also features 255 Britons, 3 Belgians, 3 Australians, 2 Poles, 1 New Zealander, 1 Dutchman, 1 Soviet Union Russian, and 1 Yugoslavian.

Our member Bernhard Deeterink has committed to giving these few soldiers of different nationalities a "face" by sharing their stories. If you'd like to learn who they are, please send a message to info@facestograves.nl

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### **More in the region**

If you want to know what there is to do in our region, take a look at: [Infocentre WW2 | Infocentre WW2](#)

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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. You can find our sponsors' logos on our website. Sometimes we feel like thanking a donor personally. Unfortunately, we can only do so when we have a contact address. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity 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, Gijs Krist, José Koes, Liesbeth Huisman, Marian Straatman en Saskia Peters.

Sources of photos used: Alice van Bekkum, Anneke Poppenk, Gijs Krist, Henk Baron, José Koes, Liesbeth Huisman, Matthew B. MacFarlane, Saskia Peters and Tom Conway.

Ria Lap took care of the translation of most items in this newsletter and Tefke van Dijk, former Research Team 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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Finally, we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2026.



Questions or comments? Please contact us: info@facestograves.nl

