

GROESBEEK CANADIAN WAR CEMETERY

February 8th 2013, 1100 a.m.

Commemoration of “Operation Veritable”
started on February 8th 1945 at 5.00 a.m.

When we arrived this morning, with a group of seven persons, at the Canadian War Cemetery, the ground and the 2617 soldiers' graves, were covered with a virginal cover of snow. The white rim of each gravestone standing out separately. In contrast to this morning in 1945 when Operation Veritable started, it was remarkable quiet and peaceful.

Most of the soldiers buried here, died during this operation in their fight for our liberation. In total 25.000 soldiers were either killed or wounded during this operation.

Mr. Nol Saedt. 92 years old, who was personally present at the beginning of Operation Veritable at Groesbeek is also present this morning. Two Airborne Friends, Marco Cillessen and Frank van Duin make their way through the snow, shuffling with their feet as near as possible to make for us a path to Canadian Lieutenant Gordon Rosenburger Holder's grave, one of the 500.000 allied forces. He was killed during this operation on the 19th of February 1945 at the age of 24.

After a word of welcome by Piet Janssen, chairman of the Groesbeek Airborne Friends, Frank van Duin told us about the life of Gordon, as described in a English book. We all received a summary of this book and a synopsis on paper of the beginning of Operation Veritable together with a picture of the heavily damaged church of Wyler.

A little later, thanks to a remarkably clear tape, we could listen to the speech of late father Gerard Thuring, recorded on February 8th 2009. On this tape he mentioned the very difficult and dangerous landings in Normandy in June 1944 and the airborne landings in September 1944.

After listening to the tape a poem of Ruyard Kipling, “The Question” (1916), was recited, in which the poet questions the effects on human values of the First World-war (1914-1918).

Orange coloured flowers were now laid upon lieutenant Gordon Holder's grave. The flowers looked beautiful on the white snow. A recording of the Last Post followed. It sounded so beautifully that morning on this impressive, silent cemetery that one couldn't help looking around for a life musician.

After a minute silence a recording of the Canadian and Dutch national anthems were played after which we all together recited the Act of Remembrance.

We returned peacefully to the parking-place and decided to meet each other again at “De Oude Molen”, a restaurant in Groesbeek. Although the restaurant was officially closed the owner immediately opened the doors when he saw the group of Airborne Friends.

Around an oval table we enjoyed coffee or warm chocolate milk, offered with many thanks from and to of the late pastor Thuring and we chatted for a short time.

What a beautiful and magnificent happening this was !!!

Wil Thuring

Airborne Friends present:

Piet Janssen
Nol Saedt
Marco Cillessen
Gerrie Driessen
Frank van Duin
Jeanne Melchers