



Photographic Tour 2008 Operation Market Garden

As part of The War Graves Photographic Projects' remit to photograph every war grave around the world regular visits to the main battlefield areas are programmed to enable volunteers to take an active part in this process. Apart from building on the Team ethos these trips always include a mixture of hard work, emotion, and often humour.

To share in the experience of others during these visits and hopefully encourage participation on future visits we nominate a 'Scoops' for each trip and in this instance Janis Patterson, a long time volunteer from Cumbria, volunteered to take on the role.

Please read on!

Steve Rogers – Project co-ordinator

Saturday, 24th May 2008

5.45am – Johnson's coach sets off for Holland from Henley in Arden, Warwickshire. Kevin and Liz Crowe showed their enthusiasm for the trip by turning up a day early but realised when the coach did not turn up at the designated time. Luckily, they were still able to go on the trip, unlike Marion Bushby who had to pull out, leaving Nick to go on his own this time. Eventually the last group were picked up at Folkestone and more old friends greeted. At the suggestion of John, the coach driver, a project poster was stuck to the front of the bus. This prompted the question "How many men does it take to put a sign up?" Answer: Two outside the bus and one inside. Steve's suggestion that we capture one cemetery before we set off was politely turned down by Jim and we set off on Eurostar for France.



Phil Bourner once again gained lots of brownie points by producing an excellent booklet explaining "Operation Market Garden". Not content with putting the rest of us to shame with this prep work, Phil also produced a comprehensive guide to VCs won in Holland and Belgium.

Apart from John, the driver, taking us on a scenic tour of the Euro tunnel car park ("around again please driver, you will not jump the queue") the journey under the Channel was uneventful. We even managed to persuade the immigration office that group was made up of pensioners so we did not have to traipse through as pedestrians showing our passports. Once in Belgium, we had a quick comfort stop and found that no one had change for the toilet. The toilet theme would recur again and again over the weekend.

With a long drive to the Arnhem area from the Channel ports some of the group, who had been up a considerable time to catch the coach in the early hours, caught up on sleep whilst the remainder watched an episode of 'Band of Brothers' which depicted the American aspect of their drop zones to the north of Eindhoven. At least nowadays John Wayne is not in every war film. Unfortunately neither of the group had managed to get a copy of 'A Bridge Too Far' prior to the journey.



First photographic stop was at Eindhoven (Woensel) General Cemetery where almost four-fifths of the men buried there belonged to the air forces. With a total of 679 graves to photograph, this did not take long for our large group so we were able to wander around the civil cemetery comparing the stones to ones we are used to back home.

The weather conditions for photography were near perfect. Not bright sunlight, but warm enough for T-shirts and even the flowers were in full bloom for the occasion.

The time also enabled the John in the coach to manoeuvre the coach in a three point turn as the cemetery entrance in is a residential cul de sac.

17.50 – Arrived at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Berg en Das, just outside Nijmegen. Horror registered on everyone's face when we drove into the car park and spotted a building in the process of being demolished. There was a big sigh of relief when we found that this was not the actual hotel.

Check-in went smoothly and a group dinner had been organised that night in the hotel restaurant. Bob Rogers turned up for dinner an hour late because someone had told him that clocks didn't go forward although no one admitted to this and Bob could not remember who it was! Timing was a factor in the failure of the original "Market Garden" concept but, in Bob's case, it was only the starter that he missed.

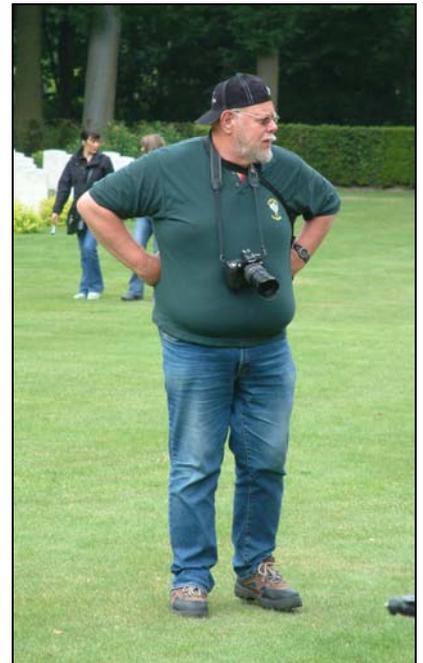
One of the Netherland volunteers, Gerrit Bouma, joined us for dinner and gave a very interesting presentation on the research he does in connection with the war graves in Friesland, Holland. Gerrit began his research after retiring as a Warrant Officer with with Fire & Rescue service at Leeuwarden Air Base.

His research starts with crashed aircraft, then he goes on to find all he can about the aircrew.

Photographing graves is only a small part of the investigation that goes into Gerrit's work. Because the airspace over Friesland was the main route from the UK to Germany during WW2 there were many air crashes there due to the placement of guns along the coast and the German Air force occupying the Dutch airfields.

The last wargrave in Friesland was the most difficult for Gerrit to get. It was a Jewish grave in a locked cemetery and Gerrit had to ask the grass cutters to let him in.

Steve Rogers thanked Gerrit for his talk and for the CD of photos. He commented that it is often harder work photographing one stone in a cemetery, than lots of graves. Everyone was presented with a CD of music by the Leeuwarden Band, together with a guide to Friesland. Gerrit hoped that this would encourage us to take the opportunity soon to visit one of the least known areas of Holland.



Gerrit Bouma

On completion of the meal some of the more sensible members of the party went to bed early, so as to be well refreshed in the morning. The remainder of the group retired to the bar for a nightcap but Debbie Corbett and Lorraine were coerced into having an Irish coffee before retiring. This is a "tradition" started in Den Anker Restaurant in Ypres but, after the tasting session, Den Anker still retains the coveted title of "The best Irish coffee maker in Europe". And so ended day 1

That'll be two each for Lorraine and Debbie



Sunday, 25th May 2008

9.30am – After breakfast we set off with cameras at the ready. Peter & Jeanette Shaw, Phil & Maggie, were running an hour late because they forgot to put their watches on an hour. Where have I heard that before? Steve and Jim Pedersen got off the bus to move some “road closed” barriers so that we could actually get out of the road from our hotel. The heavy rain which woke some of us up at 6am was now beginning to dry up, just in time for our first stop at Jonkerbos Cemetery with 1543 identified casualties. It wasn't long before there were shouts of, “I've found a Wade” from Nigel who is researching this particular name. One stone in this cemetery had the full address of the casualty, something which no one had seen before. Most of the casualties here came from No 3 Casualty Clearing Station. A lot of rear view photos were taken by Marsha and we are all waiting with trepidation for these shots. Harry Paterson took a spooky photo of a stone which was half shaded, while the other half was in the sun. The inscription said “...in sunshine and in shade...” No other stones there looked like this. Pauline Pedersen found a note on one headstone from a recent visitor with the poignant message ‘Michael, I have never forgotten you and will never do so. Sadly, you, unlike me, never returned to Cambridge to complete your degree, much to my regret. Your friend and school chum – Eric Goldren, President Hale Branch, RBL.



Bob practiced with his tripod but never did get the hang of it



Next stop was “The Bridge Too Far”, the replacement for the original bridge in Arnhem. Steve gave a “dit” on the events that took place during “Operation Market Garden” and how John Frost and his men held the bridge. Phil Bourner gave the first of several “dits” on VC recipients, this time on John Grayburn. Phil thought that the film “A Bridge Too Far” was so far from the truth, that it should be renamed “A Myth too Far”. Much has changed in the area now but paintings and original photographs in the Airborne museum at Oosterbeek enable us to see what the causeway would have been like in 1944.

All this photography was beginning to whet our appetites, but before lunch we visited the Airborne Museum. Here we managed to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of “Operation Market Garden” and a few souvenirs were purchased. At Arnhem (Oosterbeek) Cemetery, Phil gave another “dit”, this time on Lionel Queripil VC. Before the trip Pauline Pedersen had spoken to her friend, John Hebden, who was a glider pilot at Arnhem. John was very unassuming about his role, but did say that he was very lucky to have survived. It was decided to lay the Project wreath on the grave of G Lawson, a friend of John's. Steve read the war poem “It Was Thus” and Pauline laid the wreath on behalf of John and the Project. Also buried in this cemetery were two Commonwealth War Graves Commission staff members, something which you don't see very often.



On next to Arnhem (Moscowa) Cemetery, on top of a hill overlooking Arnhem, where there were 36 casualties. The war graves had plenty of flowers on them when it was realised that a local custom was to put all the wreaths from the nearby crematorium on them after funerals -a nice gesture that ensured fresh flowers were always on them. Phil and Debbie set off to photograph a lone grave in the Jewish Cemetery. Phil was heard to say "I have a compass", but it was some time before they arrived back at the bus. It had proved to be a bit of a challenge getting the photograph as the area was uphill and overgrown.

After a full day we drove back to Nijmegen and base to a beautiful evening of sunshine. Steve briefed us to eat plenty in the morning for breakfast as a lunch stop was not guaranteed. We did!

We found out that communications and timing were two of the problems with "Operation Market Garden". These problems kept occurring on our trip too. Christine Jackson asked the waitress at the restaurant for some vinegar but she couldn't make herself understood. The waitress eventually came back with a huge container of vinegar – she had looked the word up on the Internet. If only they had the Internet in WW2 the outcome might have been different. After Irish coffees round a roaring fire (Den Anker still has the top rating) Jeanette persuaded Martin to come up and dance. Yes Martin. I do have a photograph and it is rather good!



Monday, 26th May

9.30am start - First stop was Groesbeek Cemetery, just 5 minutes from our hotel. A party from the Canadian Memorial Society was visiting the grave of Aubrey Cosens, VC. Phil very quickly made the guide's acquaintance, asking if there was any info he could give him. Phil arrived back on the bus with a big smile on his face. The guide had given him copies of the original witness statements, along with the letter to Cosen's father informing him of his son's death. Phil did a "dit" on John Daniel Baskeyfield, VC who is commemorated on the memorial, while Marsha found another two Talbots. There are 1035 names on the memorial and 2599 named graves in the Canadian war cemetery which is flanked by two tall maple trees at the entrance gate. It was a damp misty morning, but good for taking photos.

We now advanced to Germany and Reichswald Forest War Cemetery where there are 7495 named graves.

Pauline's attention was caught by six graves alongside each other, each with a cross placed before it, dated only a few days previously, and bearing the message 'RIP. ED910 AJ-C & Crew: P&M Beadles, England. Dates of death on the headstones were 17th May 1943; the CWGC Register confirmed each crew member as belonging to 617 Squadron, so it was confirmed that this was one of the famous 'Dambusters' crew. It was evident here and in Rheinberg cemetery that the majority of casualties were of aircrew and one could not imagine the horrors they must have gone through. The work of the CWGC was seen at first hand, as there was a large party of gardeners hard at work. Progress here was swift, with the cemetery being photographed in two halves. Sophie, Steve's daughter, was kept busy downloading the images to a laptop as people's memory cards filled up quickly. Just when we thought all was finished, we realised that there were still two blocks to do.



With batteries and spare memory on their cards everyone set to the work and it was finished in no time at all. Some more group photos were taken from the top storey of the building at the entrance and one of the younger gardeners presented Sophie with a bunch of flowers!



'TWGPP' at Reichswald

Steve emphasised Sophie was only just 17 !!

Laptops were beginning to run out of juice so it wasn't possible to download any more photos until we got back to the hotel. The group was doing so well that we were now given an additional objective. The plan was to advance further into Germany and capture photos of the graves in Rheinberg War Cemetery. There was just time for a quick lunch stop at a motorway service station. The events of the last couple of days were beginning to take its toll on the project director who was seen walking around with a lady's handbag (must be a sailor thing!)

At Rheinberg Phil was really puzzled when a VC grave was pointed out to him. The books all said that he was buried somewhere else. No doubt, the book publisher will be asked to amend their records. BBC war correspondent, Kent Stephenson, is buried here. He was killed, along with the seven crew, when the 49 Sqn Lancaster he was travelling in was shot down over Germany. There were five graves here with crosses placed before them with a similar message to that in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery but with ED925 AJ-M Crew. Another Dambuster raid crew.



Back into the Netherlands and only one more stop before the tasks of the day were completed. Mook War Cemetery contains 307 named casualties, so it was done in no time. The Paterson, Shaw and Jackson party were dropped off in the centre of Nijmegen where they checked out the sights and had an evening meal. The rest of the group returned to our hotel to relax and have a thirst quenching drink, before going for a meal. Everyone was soon well fed, although they felt sorry for the lone waitress who had to look after them all. Who said that Monday was a quiet night for eating out?

Tuesday, 27th May

Everyone went down to breakfast, after packing bags, all ready for the off at 0900. Peter Maguire, briefed 'Scoops' on the events of the previous night and assured her that it had been uneventful. Perhaps everyone was beginning to tire after all the hard work of the past few days. No more photos to take now, there was a long journey ahead of us before we all arrived home. Time to watch a "A Myth Too Far", sorry "A Bridge Too Far", en route and time too for Bob to get stuck in the loo on the bus. Another great trip in enjoyable company and already I am looking forward to the next one.

Janis Paterson alias 'Scoops'

..... and so with another 18000+ images under our belt covering all nationalities that just about concluded the first photography trip for 2008. With Gallipoli just a couple of months away volunteers are looking forward to the next 'excursion' and a somewhat more ambitious event taking us to places many have only read about. Notwithstanding Terminal 5 we hope that it will be an equally enjoyable trip! Ideas for 2009 gratefully received.

Steve





**Strike a pose -
Volunteers at
work & play**

