



Arnhem 1944 Fellowship Newsletter Oktober 2012

Arnhem Fellowship Events 21st September 2012

A large number of members assembled in the Concert Hall in lower Oosterbeek for the AGM on the above date and I hope everyone enjoyed the meeting. It was sad to report that our founding Chairman Major Tony Hibbert was unable to attend this year - Sir, we wish you well.

The four trustees who were due for re-election were all elected for a further period of a year. Five additional trustees - Hiltje van Eck, Jos Hekking, Cees van der Bosch, Gerard Gijsbertsen and John Howes were co-opted for a period of three years.

As well as the usual reports, mention was made of the new items of clothing available from the website - my thanks go to Rob Gorman for all his efforts in this area and Chris Gryzelka spoke about his efforts to try and get a memorial post to the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron placed in the Oosterbeek area. The Fellowship are supporting this plan and have written a letter of support to the powers that be.

If any member wishes to also write in, they can do so to:

De Gemeente Renkum
General Urquhartlaan 4
6861GG Oosterbeek
Holland
quoting Reference Enquiry D8288.

In the afternoon the second Fellowship walk was held with about 70 people present. I would like to thank again Robert Sigmond Publications for the support in producing the 28 page tour guide and Allan Smith and Mr Weverstraat Robert Voskuil for supporting me on the walk.

A report on this walk has been provided by member Graham Francis:

Revisiting Theirs Is The Glory Battlefield Walk

The afternoon following the Arnhem Fellowship AGM saw the inimitable Niall Cherry lead the second annual walk. The subject was that most memorable of British war Films, Theirs is the Glory.

A unique piece of cinematography, combining as it did archive 1944 footage with scenes shot in 1945, using survivors of the battle, on the sites of the battle.

Over sixty people were in attendance, when Niall kicked off proceedings at the Oosterbeek Old Church. He introduced our special guest, Allan Smith, great nephew of the film's director, Brian Desmond Hurst. Allan's enthusiasm and passion for the film was soon evident and he regaled those present with a series of fascinating insights into the making of the film.

He explained how Brian, a veteran of Gallipoli, had been determined to honour and reflect the experiences of the soldiers at Arnhem and spent many hours recording their stories and memories. He illustrated the talk with a number of stills taken from the film, as did others present. Allan is making a documentary on the making of the film and is keen to identify all 200 participants and to meet any veterans still surviving.

After describing the scene at the Church, including the famous Lonsdale speech, we moved on to Weverstraat. Resident expert, on all things Arnhem, Robert Voskuil described the situation there in both 1944 and in 1945 when the street, together with a destroyed German tank, were used for several scenes. We moved northwards via Jagerkamp and Paasberg before turning into Pietersbergseweg, where the exploits of the late Tony Crane were described. We were then privileged to be invited inside the Tafelberg, where Niall and Allan stood on the historic staircase to tell the story of the building, in both the battle and the film. No one present could have failed to be moved when Allan related how in 1945, veterans used breaks in filming to walk the grounds and identify the sites of the field burials of their fallen comrades. There was just time for a visit from Arnhem and film veteran, Gerry Dimmock, before we concluded.

Thank you to all present, to Robert Sigmond for a splendid souvenir booklet and to Niall, Robert and Allan for providing such an enjoyable afternoon. I look forward to seeing Allan's documentary, but in the meantime roll on 2013 and the 3rd annual walk. Some photos from the AGM and walk have been posted on the Fellowship's website.



Veteran Gerry Dimmock in a jeep again in front of the Tafelberg

Johan Snoek

Whilst Johan Snoek was not a Fellowship member, a few words about him are, I feel appropriate as he recently passed away and is an important player in the aftermath of the Arnhem fighting. I am grateful to Bart Houx and John Howes for their help the following:

It is with regret that we announce the death on August 31st 2012 of Johan Snoek, and his name whilst possibly unfamiliar to some, will always associated with Brigadier Shan Hackett - the commander of the 4th Parachute Brigade in September 1944. As you will be aware, Brigadier Hackett was severely wounded during the perimeter fighting in Oosterbeek and taken to the St Elisabeth's Hospital where he was operated on by Captain Lipmann Kessel of 16 Parachute Field Ambulance and almost certainly saved his life. About a week later Hackett was 'kipped' by the Arnhem Resistance and taken by car to Ede. He was hidden in Torenstraat 5, the home of the three De Nooij sisters. Then, on 1st October 1944 another sister arrived in the shape of Mrs Rie Snoek-de Nooij from Renkum, accompanied by two of her children, Johan and Marie. Hackett was still very ill and confined to bed and it was a few days before Johan was allowed to visit him and Hackett described him as 'a tall fair young man with a long face'. At this time Johan was 24 years old and it was several months before Hackett was fit enough to think about trying to escape to Allied occupied territory. The first idea was to try and cross the Rhine near Renkum but this plan never came to fruition and Johan suggested that they try and escape through the Sliedrecht region in southern Holland. Hackett agreed to this and Johan commented; When we began our dangerous cycle ride to Sliedrecht in late January, Hackett said that for him it went without saying that I was in command. I had never thought in those terms. Come off it, I laughed we're doing this together aren't we? I didn't feel that I was subservient to him, but neither did I want him above me. During the journey he always accepted my proposals and was most positive'.

So why was this area chosen? Johan had been born in Gorinchem, still had family there and had contacts in the local Resistance. Johan was able to assist in guiding Brigadier Hackett to Allied lines in February 1945 using a canoe to paddle across the Biesbos.

After the war, Johan was recommended for one of the 'Resistance' decorations such as the King George Medal of Courage in the cause of Freedom' but it appears nothing was awarded. However, his citation remains in the archives and part of it reads as follows:

'Mr Snoek was active in the assistance of evaders after the Arnhem operation. He brought a severely wounded high ranking officer to his Aunt's house in Ede, where he was sheltered and fed until 30th January 1945.

Many attempts were made to evacuate this officer to safety, but mainly owing to his weak condition and the difficulties of crossing the Rhine, all these failed. Finally, Mr Snoek, on his own initiative bicycled approximately 48 miles, contacted an old acquaintance and through him found an escape route by boat to the Allied lines.

He returned to Ede and took this officer and two others by bicycle to his contact at Sliedrecht, whence they were successfully evacuated. He then handed over this route to the local escape group and approximately 50 evaders escaped by this means.

In addition he transported and sheltered two agents who were actively concerned with the rescuing of evaders.

Mr Snoek has at all times proved himself to be loyal and courageous'.

Johan was born on 25th May 1920.

Dinner

On a more upbeat note, some people may be aware that one of the co-founders, Colonel John Waddy, organised a special battlefield tour to raise money for the Parachute Regiment Afghan Trust.

A dinner to 'close' the tour was held in Oosterbeek on Saturday 22nd September with amongst others the commander of the Dutch Army - Lieutenant-General De Kruif, the British Ambassador to the Netherlands - Paul Arkwright and numerous other Ambassadors, Defence Attaches, Generals and Colonels. The Hon Secretary was somewhat surprised to get an invitation to the dinner, but nevertheless turned up. The British Ambassador is due to hand over command in about 9 months and so this was his last 'Arnhem' do. The opportunity was taken at the dinner to present him with a memento of his support over the years which was a model of the John Frost bridge.





After a few words from the Ambassador, it was the President of the dinner, Lieutenant-General De Kruif's turn. He said he was first taken to the Arnhem road bridge when he was 6 years old by his father and seems to have in interest in what happened in 1944. Towards the end of the speech he left his position at the head of the top table and walked to where Colonel Waddy was sitting together with Paul Arkwright. The Colonel was asked to stand up and then much to my amazement and horror the Hon Secretary was asked to join the group! It is said that the look on my face as I walked to join was 'what the hell am I getting landed with now?'

From nowhere the General's ADC appeared with a long wooden box and Colonel John Waddy presented with a ceremonial Dutch Army officer's sword with had been specially engraved with a message.



The Hon Secretary still wondering what I'm doing here and admiring how sharp it looks.



A further box was brought forward and thankfully I was just asked to accept it on behalf of Major Tony Hibbert. My first words were to the British Ambassador 'How am I going to get this through airport security?', or something similar but more akin to the barrack room.

I was able to hand it over for passage through the 'diplomatic bag' and I hope Tony now has the gift. To both John and Tony - it is richly deserved!

As usual if anyone has anything they would wish to make the Fellowship aware of please contact me.