



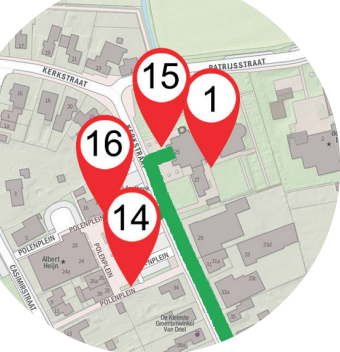
# The Poles of Driel

Walking in the footsteps  
of Sosabowski  
and his troops

**STICHTING DRIEL-POLLEN**

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# The Poles of Driel: Walking in the footsteps of Sosabowski and his troops

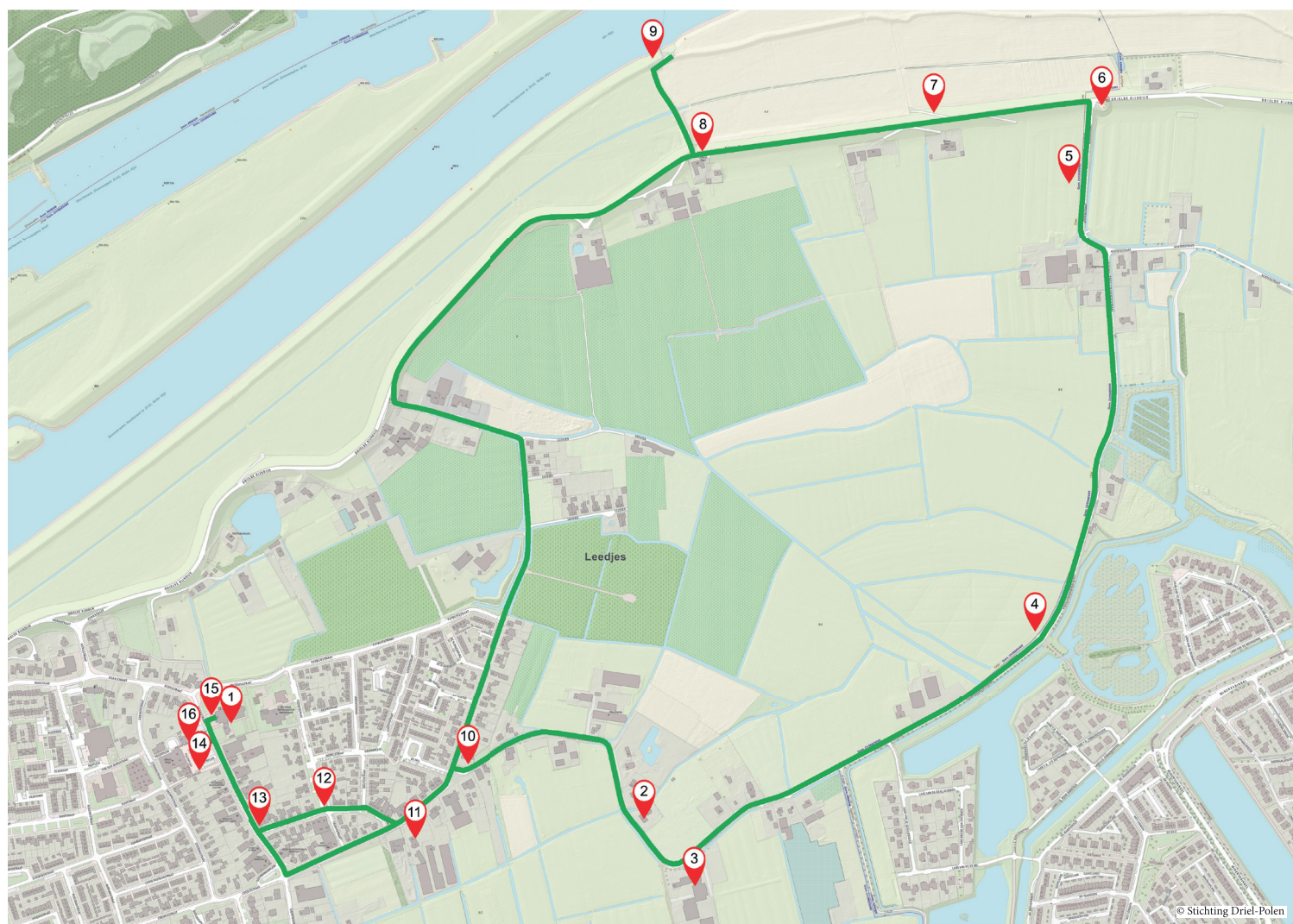
***This is a hike along important milestones in and around the village of Driel where the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade fought during the Second World War. The route goes, amongst others, over the landing sites and past the headquarters of Major General Sosabowski.***

This hike passes important milestones in the village of Driel where the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade fought during the Second World War.

They were here to support the surrounded British troops near Oosterbeek. To reach the British troops, the Poles had to cross the River Rhine at Driel.

The route – of about 6 kilometres – takes you, amongst others, over the landing sites and past the headquarters of Major General Sosabowski.

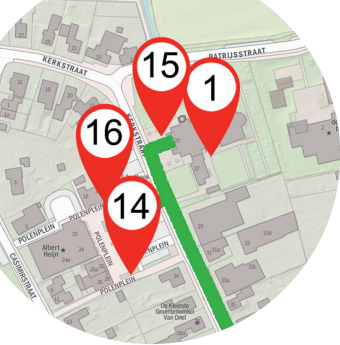
The hike starts and ends at the 'Information Centre: The Poles of Driel' which was developed by the Driel Poland Foundation.



The development of this route was enabled thanks to the province of Gelderland. In collaboration with the Airborne Region (the four municipalities involved), tourist organizations and Liberation Route Europe, 4 routes have been developed in this way.

All four can be found via [visitarnhem.com/airborne](http://visitarnhem.com/airborne).





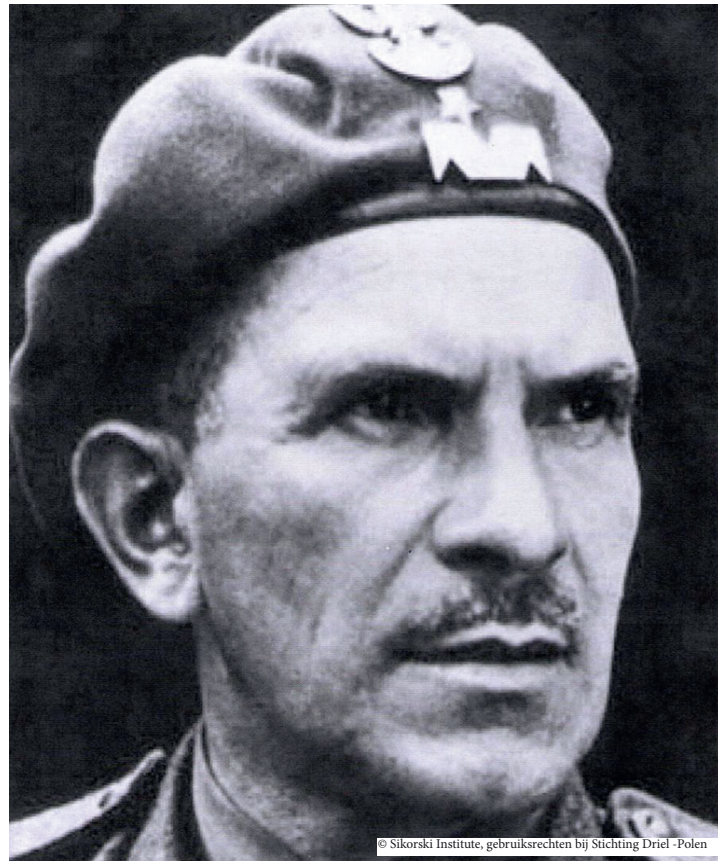
# The Poles of Driel: Walking in the footsteps of Sosabowski and his troops

*'Bound by Friendship and Gratitude'*

Deze wandeling is vanaf september 2021 opgenomen in het wandelnetwerk van de gemeente Overbetuwe. De wandelroute 'Polen van Driel' is dan ook voorzien van bewegwijzering. Je kunt de route eenvoudig lopen door de pijltjes te volgen. Ook kun je de route uitbreiden met behulp van keuzepunten. Op het informatiepaneel bij 'De Polen van Driel' vind je een kaart met de aansluitende wandelroutes rond Driel. Dit ga je zien....



The monument in Driel on the Plac Polski (Polenplein) after the 2014 commemoration with wreaths of Dutch King Willem-Alexander and the Polish president Komorowski.



Major General Stanisław Sosabowski (May 8th 1892 – September 25th 1967), commander of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade.



Aerial photograph of the village of Driel and its surroundings, taken on September 12th 1944 by the 541st squadron of the RAF.



The hiking trail drawn on an ordnance map from the Second World War.





# 1. Information Center The Poles of Driel

*'Bound by friendship and gratitude'*

On September 21st, 1944, the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade landed during Operation Market Garden near the village of Driel. The consequences were great, both for the civilian population of Driel and for the Polish paratroopers.

The information center at the back of the Catholic Church sheds light on the struggle of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade near Driel during Operation Market Garden.

It also discusses the origin of this brigade, the dishonourable treatment of the Poles after the failure of operation Market Garden, the rehabilitation and the close bond that exists between Driel and Poland.



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## 2. Landing sites: then fields and orchards

***On September 21st 1944, around 17:15, this was the landing area of the Polish troops. Around 1000 paratroopers were dropped here.***

On September 21st 1944, this area formed 'Dropzone K' (DZ K).

The surroundings of Driel at that time mainly consisted out of fields and orchards. At 17:15, around 1000 paratroopers of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade jumped out of the 73 Dakota-transport planes of the American air force and landed on these fields



Historical and recent images combined: Polish paratroopers near Overasselt in September 1944 along with a present-day photo of Driel.



Major General Sosabowski in full gear before departure from England, near the Dakota's that would bring the Poles to Driel.



Polish Paratrooper leaves a Dakota during an exercise.



One third of the Polish troops landed two days later, on September 23rd, near Overasselt, just behind the city of Nijmegen. They arrived in Driel on the 24th.



Aerial photograph Driel from 1944:

- (1) Catholic church (location of the Information Centre)
- (2) Boys' school/Field hospital
- (3) Headquarters
- (4) Driel ferry





### 3. The first clashes: German attacks repelled, losses to be mourned.

*The Polish troops took up positions in and around Driel, including at the predecessor of this post-war farm, the Baarskamp. 2nd Lieutenant Richard Tice was killed in a first German attack on one of the Polish positions.*

During the first night, the Polish troops tried to reach Oosterbeek to support the surrounded British troops there. Unfortunately, they did not succeed in crossing the Rhine river, after which the Polish soldiers took positions near Driel in the early hours of September 22nd, 1944.

One of the Polish positions was located in the predecessor of the post-war farm Baarskamp. A platoon of 28 men under the command of 2nd Lieutenant Richard Tice created foxholes around the farm. A first German attack, supported by armoured vehicles, was repelled. During this attack, Tice got killed.



Farmhouse Baarskamp as it was before the war. A platoon of 28 men created foxholes on the edge of an orchard behind the farm.



Abandoned containers on the landing zone in 1945. These containers were used to drop supplies



With the help of armoured vehicles, the Polish troops were heavily attacked, 2nd Lieutenant Richard Tice, (American volunteer - 22 years old), did not survive.





## 4. Stranded aid: supplies do not reach the British troops in Oosterbeek.

***In the evening of Friday September 22nd 1944, parts of the allied ground army – coming from the south of the Netherlands- reached Driel. The amphibious vehicles with supplies for the British troops near Oosterbeek, stranded in the dark just before the Rhine river.***

In the early evening of Friday September 22nd 1944, parts of the allied ground army –coming from the south of the Netherlands- reached Driel.

Among those were two DUKW's: amphibious vehicles with supplies for the surrounded British troops at Oosterbeek.

They got stuck in the dark on the muddy, steep access roads to the river.

None of the vehicles reached the other side. In a right-angled bend, which was in the road at the time, a DUKW ran off the road and ended up in a ditch



Aid for the British troops strands when the DUKW with supplies becomes stuck.



Aid for the British troops strands when the DUKW with supplies becomes stuck.



## 5. German positions behind the railway embankment take Polish troops under fire.

*After the landing of the Polish paratroopers, the German commander quickly sent in troops from the east, who took up positions behind the railway embankment. This 'Sperrverband Harzer' was attacked by the Polish troops, mainly with the help of (heavy) artillery.*

After the landing of the Polish paratroopers, the German army quickly deployed troops from the east, fearing that the Polish soldiers would advance towards the traffic bridge at Arnhem.

To cut them off, the Germans had established a strong defensive position behind the railway embankment of the Arnhem-Nijmegen railway line on the 22nd of September 1944.

The soldiers made foxholes, dug themselves in, and waited for the enemy. This assembled group of different units, was called 'Sperrverband Harzer'.

They attacked the Polish troops mainly with the help of (heavy) artillery.



Aerial photograph of Driel from 1944:

- (1) The landing zones
- (2) Route location
- (3) The railway bridge and railway dike



View on the railway bridge and railway embankment where German troops had taken up positions and from where they were firing on the Polish soldiers.





## 6. Rijndijk and Engineers Monument: the crossing of the Rhine

*This location - situated opposite the village of Oosterbeek - played an important role in both the Polish troops' attempts to reach the British in Oosterbeek and during the withdrawal of the British soldiers from Oosterbeek in the night of 25/26 September.*

Around this location, Polish troops attempted to reach the British in Oosterbeek. As the Driel ferry had disappeared, the Poles had to look for boats to cross the river. The first night they did not succeed, but during the second night, 52 Poles reached the other side with the help of inflatable boats.

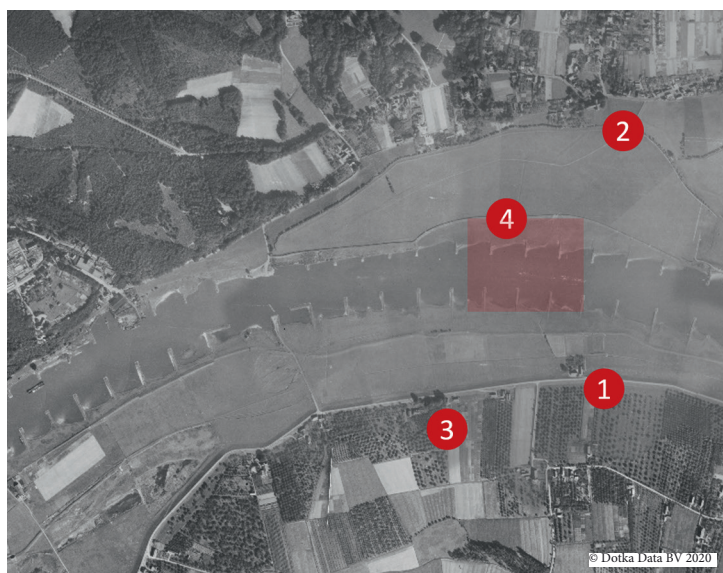
During the third night, 153 Poles managed to reach the other side with the help of boats that had been brought in. This is the same location as where the British and Poles crossed the Rhine in their retreat from Oosterbeek on the night of 25 to 26 September.



Remains of the house on the dike where the Polish soldiers established a company headquarters from which the crossing attempts were coordinated.



A British paratrooper (as seen from behind), who crossed the river, consults with Polish paratroopers.



Aerial photograph of Driel from 1944:

- (1) Company headquarters
- (2) Old Church in Oosterbeek
- (3) Farmhouse de Nevel
- (4) Rhine river and crossing area



Monument for the Canadian and British Engineers who supported the retreating troops from Oosterbeek during the night of 25 to 26 September.



The current situation, with the house that replaced the destroyed one after the war.





## 7. The Nevel: Poles take up positions around Driel.

*Because the Polish troops could not cross the Rhine on the first night, they took up positions around Driel. They also guarded war prisoners here. Among the German prisoners of war were two Poles. They had been forced into German military service and therefore fought alongside the German troops.*

As the Polish troops could not cross the Rhine immediately on the first night, to support the British troops in Oosterbeek, they withdrew to Driel on the evening of September 21st, 1944. They took up defensive positions in the surroundings of 'De Nevel' farm. The men made foxholes, dug themselves in, and waited for the enemy. A few soldiers had to guard 11 prisoners of war. Two of them turned out to be Poles who had been forced into German military service.



Captured Germans under surveillance of the Poles. Presumably in the Molenstraat area.



In Oosterbeek, near villa Transvalia, along Kneppelhoutweg and Hoofdlaan, Polish paratroopers took up positions after crossing the Rhine. They dug themselves in and made fox-holes for protection.



Among the German prisoners are two soldiers who turned out to be Polish. They had been forced into German military service.



Aerial photo from 1944:

- (1) Villa Transvalia
- (2) Old church
- (3) Kneppelhoutweg/Hoofdlaan
- (4) Westerbouwing
- (5) Your location





## 8. The attempt of the Dorsets: doomed to fail.

***In the night of 24 to 25 September 1944, after two earlier failed attempts by the Poles, a final operation was undertaken to reinforce the British troops in Oosterbeek. Unfortunately, the soldiers of The Dorsetshire Regiment also failed to reach the other side of the Rhine. This time the Poles did not take action, because the intended boats were not there.***

In the night of 24 to 25 September 1944, a last attempt was made to reinforce the British troops in Oosterbeek by the Poles and the troops of The Dorsetshire Regiment. The Poles did not come into action, as the intended boats were not there. The Dorsets tried to cross the river at the opposite side of the Westerbouwing, which was located on high grounds. During a meeting with British officers in Valburg, Sosabowski had advised against crossing at this location because the German troops occupied this hill. The attempt to cross the river failed and Sosabowski's objections to the chosen location, proved to be right.



Major General Sosabowski with, on the left, Major Desmond Pascale of The Dorsetshire Regiment in Valburg. Sosabowski's alternative to the Rhine crossing was turned down.



A plaque commemorating the efforts of The Dorsetshire Regiment on the wall of the Westerbouwing restaurant on the embankment



Driel ferry seen from the embankment. The German troops had a similar view at the Dorsets crossing site.



## 9. The Driel ferry: disabled for the Germans and unusable for the Poles.

***The first objective of the Polish troops was to use the Driel ferry to cross the river and to reach the trapped British troops in Oosterbeek.***

***However, the ferry turned out to be unusable.***

***The ferry operator disabled it on Wednesday 20th September to prevent the German troops from using it.***

In September 1944, the Poles arrived in Driel. The intention was to cross the Rhine here, using the Driel ferry. Across the river, in Oosterbeek, the 1st British Airborne Division was surrounded. The British waited anxiously for the Polish reinforcements from the south. As early as Wednesday September 20th, ferryman Peter Hensen saw that on the other side, German troops were in control of the area. The ferry operator therefore decided to disable the ferry to prevent the Germans from using it. As a result, the Polish troops were also unable to use the ferry



The ferry before the war. This ferry, on which cars could cross the river, had been disabled by the ferryman in order to prevent the German troops from using it.



The ferryman Peter Hensen after the war on his ferry with Major General Sosabowski.





## 10. Headquarters and bust of Major General Stanisław Sosabowski.

*The bust of Major General Stanisław Sosabowski looks out over his headquarters, at Molenstraat 12.*

*This house was the residence of miller Beijer in September '44. In the morning of the 22nd, the general established his headquarters there.*

In the morning of 22 September, Major General Stanisław Sosabowski, commander of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade, established his headquarters in the house at Molenstraat 12. His bust now overlooks the former headquarters. In a wide circle around the house of miller Beijer, the various army units moved into position. They dug foxholes and set up a defense line.

From his command post, the general went to inspect his soldiers and, to the great hilarity of his men, he travelled on a ladies' bicycle.



The bust of Major General Sosabowski, unveiled in September 2020, was created by artist Martin Abspoel. It overlooks the headquarters.



On September 22nd 1944 Riet Uijting took this photograph on the Molenstraat, corner of Baltussenweg.



During a visit in 1945, Polish soldiers took this photo of the house of miller Beijer, Sosabowski's headquarters.



Again the 1945 photo of the headquarters with a current shot of the house, number 12 on Molenstraat, on top of it.



Sosabowski next to his headquarters on Molenstraat talking to Captain Wrottesley of the Household Cavalry who arrived with the Polish troops on September the 22nd.





# 11. The Household Cavalry came to reinforce the Polish troops with eight armored cars.

*Early in the morning on Friday 22 September 1944, units of the Household Cavalry reached the Polish soldiers under cover of a heavy fog. The Poles were reinforced by eight armoured vehicles with cannons, working radios and 20 soldiers.*

Early in the morning on Friday September the 22nd 1944, troops of the ground army coming from the south reached the Polish paratroopers near Driel.

From Nijmegen, units of the Household Cavalry had slipped through the German lines. They were lucky that there was a thick fog, so the soldiers were not discovered.

They drove into Driel from the west, over the Drielse Rijndijk, without firing a shot. In this way, the Polish troops got reinforcements of eight armored vehicles with cannons, working radios and 20 soldiers.



Armoured car with troops and Polish paratroopers on the Molenstraat. This is at the same location as where you are now.



The ridge of the roof and the chimney in the background on the picture from 1944 can be recognized on this current photo of the house at Molenstraat number 2.



Polish paratroopers recover fallen soldiers (Molenstraat). Near Driel, 30 Polish soldiers died. They found their first resting place on the cemetery near the Roman Catholic church.



A Polish paratrooper with civilians who fled Oosterbeek, enjoys a cigarette and the attention (location photo unknown).



Cora Baltussen, one of the citizens of Driel, helped the Poles as an interpreter and as a nurse. She can be seen on this photo with Sosabowski, after the war.





## 12. The emergency hospital in the school: Operating dressed in flak jackets.

*The medical company of the Polish paratrooper brigade chose the Roman Catholic primary school as its emergency hospital. The medical staff ultimately treated a total of 159 wounded: Polish and British soldiers and Dutch civilians.*

The medical company of the Polish paratrooper brigade chose the Roman Catholic primary school to serve as an emergency hospital. Until shortly before the fighting, it housed refugees from the western part of the country. The beds were ready to be allocated to Polish patients, so to speak. The doctors and hospital soldiers eventually cared for a total of 159 wounded: Polish and British soldiers and Dutch citizens.



The emergency hospital on September 25th 1944. Polish ambulances of the ground army had managed to reach Driel. As a result, 70 patients could be evacuated to Nijmegen.



In 1945, a few Poles visited Driel. At the time, they were stationed in Germany, where they were part of the Allied occupying forces. Here they are looking at the havoc in the school.



Polish doctors and nurses, dressed in flak jackets as protection from the German shootings, help the wounded in the field hospital in the school.





## 13. Fighting around the Dorpstraat on the southern side of Driel

*At the T-junction of Dorpstraat-Honingveldsestraat, the Polish troops had taken up positions. When the German troops launched the attack on September 23rd, the Poles had to retreat in a hurry.*

At the other end of Dorpstraat, some 800 meters to the south, the Polish soldiers had laid anti-tank mines at the T-junction on the Dorpstraat and the Honingveldsestraat. These positions around the Honingveldsestraat were attacked by German troops on September the 23rd. The Polish soldiers retreated to the Dorpstraat. While doing so, a radio operator got his antenna caught in the bushes and fell behind. Henk te Dorsthorst, inhabitant of Driel at the time, helped him to break free.



The Polish soldier Bier found his first resting place in a field grave at the Dorpstraat. He is possibly the radio operator who was helped by Henk te Dorsthorst, a resident of Driel at the time.



Dorpstraat photographed by Poles during a visit to Driel in 1945. The damage to the houses can be seen on the picture. Because of the war damage, many of the houses were broken down.



A Polish paratrooper in position with a stengun 9mm pistol machine gun (location of photo unknown).



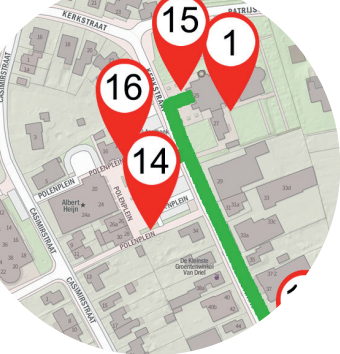
Aerial photo from 1944 showing:

- (1) the walking route and
- (2) the T-junction Dorpstraat - Honingveldsestraat



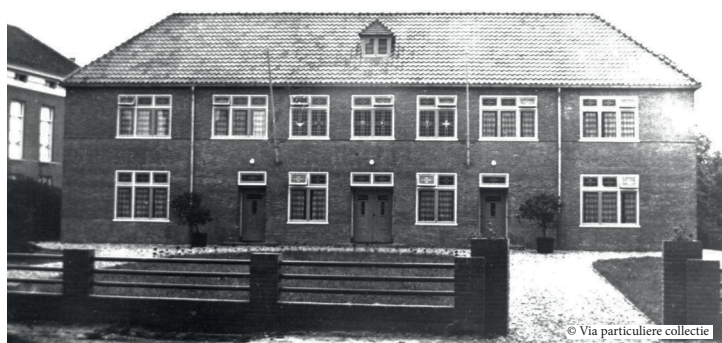
A Polish paratrooper in position with a PIAT (a portable anti-tank weapon). Location of photo unknown.





## 14. The Roman Catholic parish house set up as a medical post

At the beginning of the Battle of Arnhem, under the leadership of the local female doctor, Dr. A. van den Burg - van der Poel, the Roman Catholic parish house was set up as a modest first aid post for civilians. Among the first patients were crew members of a Stirling supply plane. This aircraft had crashed on September 19th 1944, after dropping supplies for the British troops over Oosterbeek. One of the other citizens who helped at the aid post was Cora Baltussen.



Roman Catholic parish house.



The badly damaged houses on the east side of the Kerkstraat together with the Catholic Church.



Cora Baltussen (1912-2005) dedicated herself to the rehabilitation of Polish troops and keeping their memory alive. Cora Baltussen, together with veterans in 2004.



Polish veterans receive a standing ovation from the audience, King Willem-Alexander and Polish President Komorowski at the annual commemoration in 2014.



# 15. The Catholic Church: from viewpoint to information centre.

*On September 24th 1944, Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks, commander of the ground army, visited Driel. Together with Major General Sosabowski and three other British officers, he watched the situation across the Rhine from the church tower.*

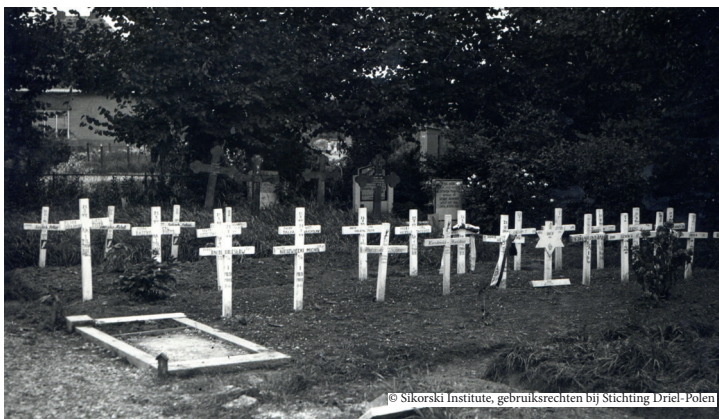
In the early morning of Sunday September 24th 1944, Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks, commander of the 30th Corps -the ground army- came to Driel. Together with Major General Sosabowski and three other senior British officers, he climbed the tower of the Roman Catholic Church, which offered a good view of the floodplains, the Rhine and the battlefield across the river. On the spot, Horrocks decided that one last attempt would be made (by the Dorsets) to reinforce the British troops in Oosterbeek.



The heavily damaged church in 1945. The church was so damaged that it was decided to rebuild.



The Polish graves at the Catholic Church.



The Polish graves at the Catholic Church.

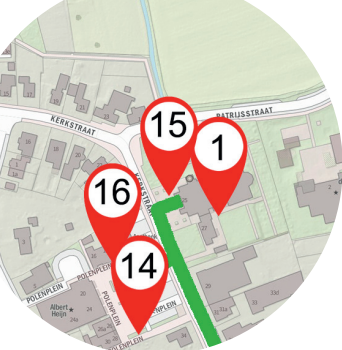


An interior photo of the former Catholic church.



Polish graves on the Field of Honour in Oosterbeek after the Polish victims were moved there.





# 16. The monument at Plac Polski and the annual commemorations in Driel

*On September 21st 1946, a sober monument was unveiled to commemorate the events of two years earlier. The efforts of Polish soldiers are commemorated every year here.*

On September 21st 1946, a sober monument commemorating the events of two years earlier was unveiled. A new memorial to the Polish Parachute Brigade was erected 15 years later. Sculptor Jan Vlasblom designed a modern sculpture of 'youth holding on to freedom like a precious jewel'. The stone above it is like a parachute. On the pedestal 'Surge Polonia' (Poland will rise) was placed. The efforts of the Poles are commemorated every year here.



The first version of the monument erected by the Driel people in honour of the Poles.



2014: Veterans in conversation with King Willem-Alexander and Polish President Komorowski (behind the King) and Chairman of the Driel Poland Foundation Mr Baltussen (l).



The present monument was erected in 1961. This is a photo from that time, still surrounded by greenery and in the background the parish house can be recognized.



A total of 97 Polish soldiers were killed at Driel and Oosterbeek in 1944. The plaque now lists 93 names. The plan is to replace the plaque for a version with all 97 names.



The Sosabowksi memorial unveiled in 2006 at the monument in Driel.