



## Newsletter 2019

### Dear veterans, widows and family members of veterans and friends of our foundation

We are sending this newsletter to all veterans, widows, relatives and family members of veterans and everyone who has a warm heart for our foundation. If you come into contact with others who also want to receive this newsletter then give them our email address [info@driel-polen.nl](mailto:info@driel-polen.nl). For us it is sufficient if they give their name, country, relationship (family, friend, interested party) to the veterans and an email address.

### Looking back on how preparations were made for the 75<sup>th</sup> Commemoration

Shortly after the Commemoration in September 2018, we started to prepare for the Commemoration and other activities in 2019. Now there are still eyewitnesses, veterans from the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Independent Parachute Brigade and people who were living in Driel in 1944 it is important that their stories – in so far as this hasn't already been done – are documented and in doing so create a bridge between the past and present. It is important to continue telling this history and so doing involve relatives and young people more closely.

The context of the first year of intensive cooperation between the 4 Airborne municipalities, Arnhem – Ede – Renkum – Overbetuwe (Driel) therefore focussed on involving youth and telling stories. Within the Province of Gelderland our activities came together with other commemoration activities under the flag of “Gelderland Herdenkt” (“Gelderland Remembers”). The province of Gelderland and the Vfonds ensured that this organization had sufficient funds and these were distributed amongst the different initiatives.

Our foundation also received funds for the 75<sup>th</sup> Commemoration via “Gelderland Herdenkt”. These funds were supplemented by funds from the municipality of OverBetuwe and our own reserves.

A diversity of activities stood on the programme for 2019:

- commemoration on Saturday 21 September 2019 on the Polenplein;
- this would be preceded by a dropping west of the village that every five years was organized by 11 Air Mobile Brigade in cooperation with 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade from Cracow;
- for Sunday 22 September 2019 an event on the Rhine to mark the end of Commemoration activities in the four Airborne municipalities;
- the opening of a special exhibition “Uniform of General Sosabowski in the Roman Catholic Church;
- preparations for screens in the Information Centre (IC);
- preparations for developing a route through the village and the surrounding area that relates to the struggle of September 1944. To accommodate this a route -app will be developed;
- preparations for a presentation related to the contribution the Poles made to the liberation of the Netherlands including an open air exhibition that would form an introduction to the presentation;
- repairing the stained glass window that was presented in 1947 by the then members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Independent Parachute Brigade at the occasion of the opening of the boys school that had been rebuilt in Driel;
- make a start on digitalising our archive.

All these activities were not possible without the cooperation of the Municipality OverBetuwe, volunteers, 11 Air Mobile Brigade, the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade from Poland, both churches in Driel, diverse sponsors (see at the bottom of this newsletter) and local businessmen.

### **Looking back on the 75<sup>th</sup> Commemoration: our guests**

It was fantastic weather and this contributed to a lovely and successful day. Many, many people visited all the activities that took place between 19 until 22 September. Never before had we so many people.

This year we were able to welcome three veterans: Henryk Kubinski, Konstanty Staszkievicz and Tadek Cisek. Unfortunately Mr Kubinski died suddenly on October 22, 2019. We will miss him just as we miss the other veterans that have passed away. We are extremely thankful that he like other of his colleagues shared his life story with us. The extreme hardships that the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Independent Parachute Brigade experienced from 1939 onwards are an important inspiration to continue to tell the contribution of Poland during WW2 as part of the Allied forces.



The email that we received at the beginning of August came as a surprise. It came from the daughter of Tadek Cisek. Till that moment we had not had contact with Mr Cisek. A “new veteran” who in 1944 was part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Independent Parachute Brigade. It was fantastic that he, together with his daughter and son was able to make the long journey to Driel.

We are also very grateful that Mr Staszkievicz and several widows were able to be present this year.

The number of next of kin present during the commemoration activities is rising. Increasingly they are interested in the history of their parents and grandparents and they want to share their stories with their contemporaries. In recent years one of these relatives has suggested setting up a “social community”. We are going to look into this further. For the moment wherever you live in the world and want to know more about contacts between relatives send an email to [info@driel-polen.nl](mailto:info@driel-polen.nl);

### **Exhibition: the Uniform of General Sosabowski**

On Thursday 19 September this exhibition was opened in the Roman Catholic Church in Driel. A number of historians from the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw had in 2018 already a plan to be in Driel during the commemoration with the uniform of General Sosabowski. A fantastic plan that at the very last moment could be realised thanks to those who took the initiative.



After alderman Dimitri Horsthuis-Tangelder from the municipality OverBetuwe's opening words, the exhibition was officially opened by Henryk Kubinski.

During the opening it became clear that there was great interest in the items being exhibited. In addition to the uniform of General Sosabowski there was also an example of a field uniform and various awards that the General had received. The Sosabowski family had made the wristwatch that the General had worn during the war available for this occasion as well as a number of books signed by him and a book with a personal message from General Urquhart. In a separate showcase the awards and the beret of General Alan Mackowiak were displayed.

This exhibition attracted a total of some 2,500 visitors. The Roman Catholic Church provided a separate area that lay directly next to the IC. There was also considerable interest in the regular exhibition in the IC.

At the end of the commemoration HRH Prince Charles visited the exhibition. During this visit General Koziatek of 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade presented HRH a copy of the current parachute badge.

### **Open air exhibition**

Prior to and after the commemoration, an open air exhibition around the monument was set up. This exhibition showed - with many photos - the struggle for live the Poles had to face. On Sunday the open air exhibition could be seen along the route where the crossing had taken place. This exhibition also attracted many visitors.

In the coming months the open air exhibition will be developed further so that throughout the Netherlands from the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020 it will support the presentation about the contribution of the Poles to the liberation of the Netherlands.



### **Opening of all commemoration activities in Arnhem – Remembrance medal**



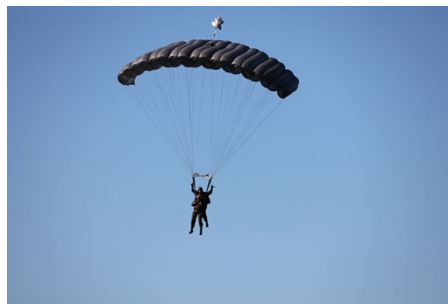
Prior to the commemoration on Friday evening in Arnhem there was an official coming together in the Eusebiuskerk where many British and Polish veterans were present. These veterans – prior to the official opening - have been presented with a remembrance medal by the board of the Airborne Commemoration Foundation. On this Friday evening our chairman was able to give these medals to the three Polish veterans who were present.

After the commemorations medals were sent to all those veterans who as part of Operation Market Garden have taken part in the Battle of Arnhem and are still alive.



### **Saturday 21 September – dropping**

As in previous lustrum years the parachute dropping by the members of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade were prepared with the help of the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Mobile Brigade. Even though a continual strong wind nearly disrupted plans, at the last moment the dropping was able to take place. There was enormous interest in this event and it was estimated that there were some 8,000 spectators. The entire way to the dropping area was completely occupied. Many spectators also watched the dropping from the dike. The bus with the veterans could luckily at the last moment get through to the area via an alternative route and in this way the veterans were able to have an excellent view of the parachutists. Guided by the military music corps from the Garrison of Cracow and the local music society Concordia many people moved towards the centre of the village.



### **Saturday 21 September – commemoration**

At the last moment the announcement came of a royal visit from the United Kingdom and because of the interest this was expected to generate it was decided to set up a tribune as in 2014. Eventually the whole square was completely occupied. It is estimated that around 3,500 people were on and around the square.

The presence of HRH Prince Charles marked the first time that a member of the British Royal family were present at the commemoration in Driel. A memorable occasion which was confirmed by the laying of a wreath with the text “in everlasting remembrance”.

Poland was represented by the deputy Minister of Defence Mr P. Wozny and ambassador Dr Marcin Czepelak. The Dutch government was represented by the Minister of Defence Mrs Bijleveld. There were also ambassadors and military representatives from the United Kingdom, Canada, America and Australia present.

In the different speeches that were given those veterans who were present were specifically addressed and their experiences in September 1944 were drawn together with those of the local people of that time.



The veterans received a loud applause when the wreath was laid and they were supported by the battalion commanders of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade.

Gabriela Kazanek from Lodz who had written the poem “17 September” presented it in Polish.

Katarzyna Serafin from Gdynia during the commemoration supported our chairman by reading the Polish text. A fine and unmissable contribution of the young people who had taken part in the Youth Conference organized by the Airborne International Youth Conference foundation “YOUCEE”.

As in previous years an important contribution came from the local youth choir as well as members of the local football club. Promiky Krakowa took care of the musical guidance.

The national anthems and the choral music during the laying of the wreath came from the music corps Concordia and the military band of the Garrison of Cracow.

### **Saturday 21 September – service in the R.C. church**

Many of those who had attended the commemoration stayed so they could attend the service in the Roman Catholic Church. This year for the first time the Chaplain of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade was present. Together with Pastor Bulhuis he conducted the service.

The Cantorije choir made a deep impression by singing different songs in Polish. The Maria hymn Czarna Madonna was sung by everyone present in full voice.

At the end of the service a candle was placed in memory of all those who had died in 1944 concluded by prayers and a couplet from Czarna Madonna.

### **Sunday 22 September – crossing**

Once every five years it is the responsibility of one of the Airborne municipalities to organize a closing event. Arnhem, Ede and Oosterbeek preceded the municipality of OverBetuwe and our foundation. Some years ago, members of our board requested the commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade at that time whether the members of the Brigade could arrange an event in the neighbourhood of the Rhine. We are grateful to the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade for the way they dealt with this request and for the cooperation of all those inclusive the popular military band of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade “Czazsa” and the military band from the garrison of Cracow.

### **Parachute re-enactors**

Around 13.00hrs a group of about 50 parachutists dropped on land to the south of the dike near the Engineers monument. This group consisted primarily of Poles who had come in remembrance of their countrymen who had landed in Driel in 1944.

The public interest for this, as on Saturday, was enormous. Just as on Saturday the weather was fantastic. After the dropping everyone went to the Rhine where at 15.00hrs the crossing would take place.

In this area the public could visit the locations where members of the 11 Air Mobile Brigade, the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade and re-enactors had placed their equipment and could ask for information. In this way it was possible to compare the equipment used in 1944 and the equipment that is currently available.

At the same time the public could listen to the popular military band “Czazsa” and later in the day also hear the local band Concordia which will be 100 year old this year, the Polish military band and Promiky Krakowa. Food and drinks were provided by food trucks.



## Crossing the Rhine

The veterans and all those present were welcomed by the burgomaster of the municipality OverBetuwe Mrs. P. Hoytink-Roubos at 14.30hrs

The crossing began at 15.00hrs with swimming over the Rhine.

On 21 September 1944 Liaison officer Ludwik Zwolański was the first to swim from Oosterbeek over the Rhine to give General Sosabowski - who had landed by parachute that afternoon - a message from General Urquhart. This action was carried out by one of the members of the 16<sup>th</sup> company named after Major Ludwik Zwolański.

Subsequently 150 military from the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade came in action. Partly as the men who had attempted to cross the Rhine and some played the role of the enemy who would be shooting from the north side of the river. A spectacular performance that was followed by about 12,500 people on the south as well as the north side of the Rhine.



## Offering weapon



After the crossing the family Jacobs offered a weapon that their grandfather Herman Jacobs had found in the family's meadow 75 years ago near where the Polish fighters had landed. Because of the tension and uncertainty of that time he had decided to hide it in the hay loft by his house. Many years later together with his son Leendert he was clearing up the loft and came across the weapon. He asked Leendert to take it with him and to tell no one about it. Shortly before Leendert passed away - he was being cared for at home by his wife - Leendert told her the secret. Following his instructions his son Mark brought the weapon to light.

Together the family discussed his idea of bringing the weapon to the museum of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade in Cracow. Via our foundation contact was made with the Brigade and the reactions were enthusiastic. Via Generaal Smit of the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Mobile Brigade and the Openbaar Ministerie in The Hague the weapon was neutralised and handed over to General Koziattek. The weapon has now been given a place in the museum of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade in Cracow.

If you would like to visit this museum you can get in touch with the team leader of Sekcja Współpracy Cywilno-Wojskowej (Section cooperation with civilians), major Ewa Szalańska-Antkowiak (e-mail: [6bpd.s5@ron.mil.pl](mailto:6bpd.s5@ron.mil.pl)) beforehand. This is necessary because the museum lies in a military area and is therefore not freely accessible.

If next of kin want to part with military clothing, awards, equipment or other items of memory related to the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Independent Parachute Brigade we suggest that you might also think of this museum. Also in this situation please contact major Ewa Szalańska-Antkowiak



### **Ongoing projects**

Our foundation is busy with various projects that will be fully realized in May 2020. This includes:

- bringing screens into the IC. Visitors will shortly be able to watch and listen to the stories of eyewitnesses at any given moment;
- to restore the stained glass window that members of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade had presented in 1947 to the newly built schoolboys school.
- put together a presentation combined with an open air exhibition (see below);
- the development of a route-app that can be used by walkers, bikers and those in cars. We have created a route that will bring the user to 15 places around Driel that bear memories of the struggle that took place in 1944. The text and photos that go together with this are ready. We are carrying out this project in cooperation with the other Airborne municipalities. Now we are waiting for (the decision re) the technical implementation;
- finally together with a number of volunteers we have started to make an inventory of the archive. In the meantime it has become possible to request a subsidy. Hopefully in this way with the help of third parties we will be able to realise this project as soon as possible.

### **Presentation/open air exhibition re the contribution of the Poles to the liberation of the Netherlands**

In July 2019 we began to develop a presentation relating to the contribution of the Poles to the liberation of the Netherlands. Here in addition to the story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Independent Parachute Brigade an account of the contribution of General Maczek's 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Pantzer division will also be given. Attention will also be paid to the Polish pilots and crew members of the aircrafts that were flying from England to Germany on bombing missions. Many of these planes were shot down above or nearby the IJsselmeer.

We can hold the presentation everywhere in the country. In the period prior to and after the presentation there will be an open air exhibition which will support this account.

In this way we will give more recognition to the contribution given by the Poles to the liberation of the Netherlands.

### **Perspective 2020**

In addition to completing current projects and ensuring an opening event will be organised, several special events have been planned for the coming year:

#### **Football match Sunday 20 September 2020**



The football club RKSVDriel was established on 19 October 1945. When it was set up the choice was made for sports clothes in the colours of the Polish flag. A white shirt and red shorts. The shirt carried an emblem of a parachutist. This was in honour of the Polish parachutists.

The committee of RKSVDriel have sent invitations to attend a match that will be played on 20 September at 15.00hrs between their 1<sup>st</sup> team and the team of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade.

### **Unveiling the bust of General Sosabowski during the week of the commemoration in September 2020**

On the initiative of the municipality OverBetuwe, a bust of General Sosabowski will be placed. The bust is a copy of the one that in 2017, in Warsaw was unveiled in the place where the entrance to the new Polish Army Museum has been planned. The date has yet to be set.

### **Musical "Bring my love to Poland" in September 2020**

The foundation Music Herveld (a neighbour municipality) is preparing a musical "Bring my love to Poland" in the context of 75 years liberation of our country in 2020. The exact date has yet to be set.

### **Commemoration in Driel, Polenplein 19 September 2020**

The commemoration in Driel is planned for 19 September 15.00hrs

Finally

**We hope from deep in our hearts that the health of those veterans of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade and the widows of the Polish parachutists is so good that they will be able to attend the commemoration in the coming year.**

**We wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous and healthy 2020**

December 2019

**Stichting Driel - Polen**



<https://www.polen.travel/nl/beleven/historia>

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