



## Newsletter Driel-Poland 2021

Dear veterans, widows, relatives of veterans and friends of our Foundation.

Our hopes were high for better times in 2021! Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic and constantly changing measures that we must face and follow to fight the virus had, and still have, an enormous impact on this year. As a result, the commemoration of 2021 didn't turn out to be what we fervently hoped for: a commemoration crowned with the presence of veterans, widows, grandchildren of veterans and many interested parties. We were lucky enough, however, to be able to receive more guests than the year before. Many of regular guests followed us via the livestream connection, both at home and abroad. Despite all the limitations, we tried to make the ceremony as meaningful and special as possible.

As a board, we didn't waste time and, in addition to organising the annual commemoration, we have taken up many projects to bring the story of the Poles of Driel into the spotlight.

In this newsletter you can get acquainted with an overview of last year's projects, initiated by us, or the projects that we were closely involved in.

### **Walking trail 'The Poles of Driel'**

On Friday, 10 September 2021, the walking trail 'The Poles of Driel' was officially inaugurated. The inauguration was performed by Alderman Wijnte Hol of the municipality of Overbetuwe, Arno Baltussen, Chairman of the Driel Polen Foundation and Jan Castelein, the organiser of the Polish Tour Driel. The starting point of the route is at the Information Centre 'The Poles of Driel' in the Kerkstraat in Driel, opposite the Polish Square.

### *Experience*

Alderman Hol recalled the collaboration of the organisations involved and the municipalities of Arnhem, Ede, Overbetuwe and Renkum, within the Airborne Region. In all 4 municipalities a walking trail has already been realised.

Alderman Hol: "These routes are in line with the core values of the Airborne Region: to commemorate, create awareness, and experience Operation Market Garden. Opening the route in Driel makes it possible for the residents of the village and visitors to experience, all year round, the story of the Poles of Driel."

On behalf of the Driel-Polen Foundation, Arno Baltussen thanked the Province of Gelderland and the municipality of Overbetuwe for their contribution to this long-standing wish. "Visitors to the Information Centre in Driel are now given an opportunity to form an even better picture of the actions and hardships of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade in September 1944." Jan Castelein announced that the 5 km route of the Polish Tour has been changed this year into the 6 km route 'The Poles of Driel'. He expects that, in coming years, the number of hikers covering this distance will increase. When registering for this route, this year's hikers received a walking map of the route, a so-called minimap.

### *Minimap*

The minimap contains a short description of all 4 walking trails with routes, information, and images. The minimap which, is translated into Dutch, German, English and Polish, is not only given to the participants of the Polish Tour. It is also distributed to various tourist and recreational locations in the region. Moreover, it is circulated door-to-door in Driel. The route is available digitally on the website <https://www.driel-polen.nl/wandelroute-driel/> where the visual material, together with informative descriptions, can be found. A GPX file is also accessible for trail hikers.



### **Commemorations by Driel students**

On Friday morning, 17 September 2021, after a short speech by Chairman Arno Baltussen, a group of children from primary school De Meeuwenberg in Driel paid their respects at the graves of Polish soldiers at the cemetery in Oosterbeek. They laid bouquets of flowers in red and white and lit a candle on every Polish grave. A big number of Polish graves lie on the edge of the military cemetery. Arno explained to the children that these men were first buried in the cemetery in Driel, and later reburied in the military cemetery in Oosterbeek.

Children from primary school De Kameleon from Driel gathered at the monument on Monday after the commemoration to pay tribute in their own ceremony. During classes at school, the students' attention was drawn to what happened in Driel in September 1944. The children wrote down a wish, which is displayed at our Information Centre at the back of the Roman Catholic church in Driel.

We are extremely grateful that the schools pass on the story of the Poles of Driel to the young generation growing up in the village. After all, it is the children and young people of today that make the society and the world in the future.



## Unknown soldier given a name: Corporal Edward Trochim

One of the unknown Polish soldiers at the Airborne cemetery in Oosterbeek was given his name on Friday, 17 September 2021: Corporal Edward Trochim.

After fifteen years of research Mateusz Mróz gave Polish soldier Edward Trochim back his name. After his speech, Mateusz scattered a handful of soil brought in a bag from Trochim's mother's grave onto the grave and then collected some soil to take it back to Poland, to Trochim's mother's grave.

Edward Trochim was born on 22 December 1922 in a village named Kamionka, in the north-eastern Poland near the border with Belarus. In 1937 after completing a 7-year education at the primary school in Sokółka, he emigrated to France, together with his father and younger brother. In January 1940 he joined the Polish army in France. It was regrouped there after Poland was overrun by Germany and Russia in the autumn of 1939.

Trochim was assigned to the 7th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division. After the surrender of France, he returned to his French home. During his way to join the Polish armed forces in Britain, he was arrested by the Vichy police when crossing the Spanish border. He was imprisoned in a concentration camp in France's Western Sahara. In 1942, after being set free by the Americans, he joined the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade, which had been established in Scotland. After his training he received Badge No. 4188. There he was assigned to the anti-tank division, armed with 6-pounder guns. This division was flown over by gliders during Operation Market Garden on 19 September. The gliders contained an anti-tank gun, a jeep as a tractor and two paratroopers.

### *Shot during fierce battles*

On 19 September in 1944, Corporal Edward Trochim landed together with Aleksander Użłowski in glider No. 134 on the LZ "L" landing zone near the Johannahoeve. This landing took place amid fierce fighting. The 156th Parachute Battalion was in retreat, covered by the 7th Battalion, The King's Own Scottish Borderers. The latter had to control and cover the landing areas of the Polish gliders.

### *Stone with name thanks to research*

Corporal Edward Trochim was buried in a field grave near his glider as an unknown soldier of the Polish army. In May 1946 his remains were moved to the British war cemetery in Oosterbeek. Trochim was laid in an unnamed tomb. Thanks to research by amateur historian and 'reenactor'/paratrooper Mateusz Mróz, it has now become clear which grave holds the remains of the corporal. As a result, the stone with 'A SOLDIER OF THE WAR 1939-1945' could be replaced by a stone with the real name; Corporal Edward Trochim.





## Commemoration on the Polish Square

Also, this year we had a special commemoration. We were lucky to be able to receive more guests than the year before. This year about 80 guests were present at the Polish Square: guests from Poland and the relatives of veterans living in the Netherlands and few guests from England. Sadly enough, we didn't welcome veterans. Fortunately, the live streaming connection made it possible to follow the commemoration for those who could not be present. As far as we are concerned, the new tradition of livestreaming will be continued. Even though we are not certain if the commemoration next year will be fully open, we sincerely hope that it will be more public friendly. If you wish to watch the commemoration of 2021, follow the link; <https://bit.ly/3q7IRaK>



## Call

In the future we hope to receive more relatives of the members of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade, not only at the commemorations but also during other related occasions throughout a year.

Over the past few years about 100 relatives have registered with us. If you happen to know relatives of members of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade, please forward this newsletter to them and inform them about the possibility of getting registered. Invitations to attend the commemorations, newsletters and other important information will then be sent annually.

## Celebration in the Roman Catholic Church in Driel

On Saturday 18 September, the so-called 'Polish Mass' was held in the Catholic Church in Driel. The mass was celebrated by Priest V. Bulthuis and Deacon S. Kruszynski. The vocals were provided by the mixed choir 'Cantorije' from Driel. Among the songs sung by the choir there were also Polish songs.

The Covid measures in September allowed more guests and mass participants in the church. After the holy mass, the priest and deacon walked to the monument for prayer. The candle commemorating those who passed away was lit.



## Airborne Driel flags

For several years now, in the month September, Driel is decorated with Airborne flags hanging on the flagpoles. This year, Airborne flags were also hanging on the lampposts in Driel, not with the Airborne Pegasus, but with the Polish Eagle. Next September the "Airborne Driel" flags will be available again at various points of sale in the village. The dimensions of the flag are 100 x 150 cm. The sale price of the flag is 20 Euros, excluding shipping costs.

If you are interested in a flag, please send an email to [info@driel-polen.nl](mailto:info@driel-polen.nl)

Since 24 September the 'Airborne Driel' flag has proudly been hanging next to the five battalions' flags at the headquarters of the 6th Airborne Brigade in Kraków. The 6th Airborne Brigade consists of five battalions: 1 commando battalion, 3 airborne infantry battalions and 1 logistics battalion.



### **Explanation of the role and deployment of the Poles during operation Market Garden**

Prior to the 77th commemoration on 19 September in Oosterbeek, Arno Baltussen, Chairman of the Driel-Polen Foundation, together with historian Dr. J.G.M.M Rosendaal, gave a speech about the role and deployment of the Poles during operation Market Garden. More than 1750 allied soldiers who fell during the Battle of Arnhem are buried at the Airborne cemetery in Oosterbeek.

You can watch the interview broadcast at <https://youtu.be/QcSPbDNBmGw>  
(available only in Dutch)



### **Digitisation of the archive**

Since the eventful days in 1944, there have always been warm relations between the Polish paratroopers and the population in the region, mainly with the population of Driel.

By organising annual commemorations and the opening of our Information Centre 'The Poles of Driel', our Driel-Polen Foundation played, and continues to play, a crucial role in maintaining these warm ties. Over the years, the Foundation has built up an archive. This archive contains correspondence and memories of the former combatants.

Unfortunately, the archive is poorly accessible to those who are not directly involved in our Foundation. Moreover, the room where the archive is stored lacks necessary climate control devices, which poses a serious threat to conservation of old and vulnerable files. We strive to make the archive safe and accessible to everyone. We have transferred the physical documents to the Gelders Archive where interested parties can view and consult them.

Thanks to various subsidies, we can start with the actual process of digitisation. A delay in granting the subsidies and the pandemic forced us to start the process a bit later than planned. A small club of enthusiastic volunteers is just getting started.

Your help is more than welcome! If you want to give us a hand in sorting out and the digitisation, please register as a volunteer via: [info@driel-polen.nl](mailto:info@driel-polen.nl).

You can also support us with a financial contribution. We are a member of ANBI charity. That means that your contribution is also tax deductible in The Netherlands. Donations can be made at: Bank account number NL67 RABO 0315 1131 46 (BIC: RABONL2U) with reference to "digitisation of the archive".

## **Youth**

In addition to the process of digitisation, we do our utmost to develop a programme for schoolchildren aged 10–15 years that will link the events of 1944 to current themes such as freedom, migration, and discrimination.

## **Plans for 2022**

In September 2022 the Women's Volleyball World Cup will be played in the Netherlands and Poland. 30 municipalities in the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands are involved in organising and housing the various teams. The Municipality of Overbetuwe is proud to host the Polish Women's team. We, as a Foundation, are proud of the collaboration between the Netherlands and Poland. We hope, together with the Municipality of Overbetuwe, to contribute to bringing the story of the Poles of Driel to the volleyball players, competitions' visitors, and other interested parties. And all this in a very special way.....

To be continued!

For more information: <https://bit.ly/33qZtBy>

The commemoration of 2022 in Driel is scheduled for Saturday 17 September, at 3 p.m.

**We wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous and above all healthy 2022!**

December 2021 Driel-Poland Foundation