

ICCC – Holten

Does reading the above ring a bell for you? No? If I write 'Information Center Canadian Cemetery Holten', I think it will become a little clearer.

Many of you recognize the photo on the right. The 'Stone of Remembrance'. When entering a CWGC cemetery, anywhere, you will see an identical stone.

So also at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.



Yet the first impression of the Holten cemetery is, in my opinion, essentially different from various other CWGC cemeteries.

The free spaces around the 'Stone of Remembrance' are a beautiful piece of nature. Especially during the flowering periods of the various plants.

What also makes CWGC Holten different is a beautifully designed building next to it.



The Information Center Canadian Cemetery

In the information center, the memory of the fallen servicemen is kept alive.

There are personal stories, anecdotes and photos.

In the cinema you can watch an impression of the liberation of the northern and eastern parts of the Netherlands.

You can find background information about the cemetery and you can listen to impressive stories about the fallen servicemen.

At the information tables you will learn even more about the liberation and our liberators.

A little history

In the mid-1980s, nine friends formed a group who gathered each Saturday afternoon 'to close' the week in an entertaining and informative way.

They named themselves 'The Closers'. Next to having an enjoyable and entertaining couple of hours, the group felt that they had to do something extra, especially to the Holten community.

Among other things 'the 9' contributed to the May 4 Memorial, held every fifth year on the Canadian War Cemetery.

In 2006 the first ideas for the foundation were discussed.

These ideas were further developed into plans.

Under the inspiring leadership of Gert Jan van 't Holt –who had a wealth of knowledge, information and documentation on the subject- these plans were worked out in detail.



To this end, the foundation Information Center Canadian Cemetery (ICCC) Holten was set up. The Closers, together with "joiner" Ben Beens, formed the first foundation board. The plans for the ICCC became reality with the official opening on September 2, 2011 by Princess Margriet and Prof. Mr. Pieter van Vollenhoven. Unfortunately, two board members passed away meanwhile: Gerrit Oolbeekink (died January 5, 2007) and Gert Jan van 't Holt (died October 10, 2014).

What can you find inside?

Information wall.

After passing the reception desk you see on your right the (tilted) map of East and North of the Netherlands. The routes followed by the division are depicted.

Also the liberation date of many towns and villages and some well-known places where heavy fighting took place



The theater.

The circular wall of the cinema lists the names of the 1,394 soldiers buried in Holten.

Take your time and watch the 17-minutes film, shedding light on every aspect of the Canadian War Cemetery.



For all generations.

In the front window of the information center is an artwork, made by the glass artist Annemiek Punt. It was donated by the Prins Bernard Cultuur Fonds. In the form of a poppy, it represents: remembrance, peace, freedom and jubilation.



The information tables.

The information center can be of help if you want to know more about the lay-out of the field of honour and about the Canadian soldiers who are buried here.

There is something to find who they were and, if known, what is the story of their lives.

Experience room.

In here, you can hear the thrilling stories of Canadian soldiers. Select one name out of ten on the screen and come face to face with a fallen liberator.

The footage and the sound drag you into his dramatic life story.

Back wall.

This wall has three niches.

Here you can watch documentaries and films about the liberation of the eastern- and northern part of the Netherlands and video's about the cemetery.



Reading table.

If you wish to take some more time reading the life stories from the information tables again, or the accounts of key liberation operations, you can do so here. Several interesting articles are filed on the reading table.

Tiled wall.

On show on this wall are drawings made by primary school kids, expressing what freedom means to them.

Multifunctional room.

Groups can be informed/entertained in the multifunctional room. This room is equipped with an excellent audio and video system. This is also the room where we greet our guests for the guided tours.

Activities

Annual ceremonies.

Every year on a **Sunday nearest to April 12th**, a memorial service is held for the 20 fallen servicemen of the Regiment 48th Highlanders of Canada.

May 4, Remembrance Day in the Netherlands.

Every year on this day, a memorial service is held. A central role in this ceremony is played by children of primary schools.

In this way, we hope to convince them that war should be prevented, that peace should not be taken for granted and that we must do everything within our power to keep our freedom. The ceremony is open to the public.

Remembrance Day.

A special commemoration is held on the second Sunday in November.

This commemoration starts at 11:00 AM and is open to the public.

Christmas Eve.

On Christmas Eve, children of the primary schools place lighted candles on all graves.

The initiative for this was taken in 1991 by Leena van Dam. In her native land, Finland, it is tradition to commemorate deceased loved ones in this way on Christmas Eve.

The ceremony starts at 4:30 PM and is open to public.

Other ceremonies.

Throughout the year, various Canadian Regiments or organizations visit the cemetery and hold their own commemoration.

These commemorations are usually published in advance. These are also freely accessible.

Guided tours are also organised.

There are two types of tours, open tours or tours by appointment, tailormade.

Open tour:

Motto: Find out the stories behind the graves!

During the school holidays we have open tours. Usually on Tuesday afternoons.

The tour starts in the information center and continues on the Canadian Cemetery.

More information on:

<https://www.canadesebegraafplaatsholten.nl/en/visitor-information/guided-ours/>

Needless to say that several volunteers are active for these tours.

A foundation cannot function without the efforts of volunteers.

By the way: all activities of the ICCC are carried out by volunteers.

Their common motivation:

To keep on telling the stories of the Canadian liberators and the sacrifices they made for our freedom.

LEST WE FORGET!

Last but not least: 'School Projects'.

Motto: every stone has a story

The ICCC Holten gives secondary schools the opportunity, at low cost, to introduce students to the personal stories of our liberators.

During this project, students draw up a biography of a deceased Canadian soldier using authentic service records.

These service files from the Canadian archives are made available digitally to the schools.

After completing the project, the biographies created are presented to the ICCC.

They are added to the other stories and made accessible to the visitors.

Students see that their work is used as information material and is not only aimed at achieving a grade.

Finally, a visit with a guided tour in the center and the cemetery can follow.

In summary:

A visit to the Information Center Canadian Cemetery Holten is highly recommended.



The centre is freely accessible to everyone and easily accessible for the disabled.

For more information:

<https://www.canadesebegraafplaatsholten.nl/en/home/>

Herman Sligman

