



June 2024

RCL 005 Branch Liberation of the
Netherlands

2024-06

Welcome your new editors!

President, Wim Poppenk would like to take this opportunity to express the Board's thanks and well wishes to former editor, Herman Sligman (along with his helpers, Ruud Janssen and Dre van Roomen) for his hard work on the past 68 newsletters. His dedication, research and commitment have been appreciated by all.



Comrades Berry Swarthoff and Amanda Slotboom proudly accept the torch from former Edi Tor Herman Sligman and continue with our Branch 005, Newsletter.



Berry has been a member of Branch 005 since 2003 and is a proud member of the Color Party and reserve Sgt. at Arms. He is passionate about the Canadians/Brits in the Netherlands during the Second World War. He has hosted many veterans and continues to do tours for Canadian and British families till this day. Is co-founder of the Indigious legacy project. And also manages his liberation museum.

Amanda is a Canadian who lives in the Netherlands and has been a member of Branch 005 for 4 years. Amanda is now a member of the board as treasurer. She proudly descends from a family of Canadian soldiers who served in both world wars.

IN THIS EDITION:

Keep reading to find your comrades traversing Northern Europe in the footsteps of our Liberators. Ceremonies, commemorations, famous guests, and battlefield tours, oh my!



Zutphen – May 31, 2024

COMRADES HARM KUIJPER AND AMANDA SLOTBOOM (AND 300 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS)

Following a ceremony in the Holten War Cemetery (as mentioned in our last newsletter), the Canadian students from New Brunswick split up onto six buses to continue their tours in Nijverdal Museum (led by our President, Wim Poppenk) and Holten Visitor's Centre.

The buses then came together near the centre of Zutphen to split into six groups for guided tours, but first they were greeted by Zutphen Mayor, Wimar Jaeger. The tours were led by locals, as well as Comrade Slotboom. Comrade Kuijpers assisted floating between the groups.

The tours included stops at the Canadian Bridge, water tower, and Ijsselkade (where 10 resistance fighters were shot and 9 killed by the SD on March 31, 1945).



Other stops included the Coehoornsingel where students were encouraged to look up at the houses where bullet holes were still evident from the battle of April 7 and 8, 1945. Students were also shown the Stolperstein (Stumbling Stones) at Coehoornsingel 90, remembering a family who was deported and killed in the camps at Westerbork and Auschwitz.

Students, aged 13 to 18, along with their parent and teacher chaperones, all expressed interest and asked great questions throughout the tours. There is no doubt, they will go home from their trip changed.

A huge thank you to Comrade Harm Kuijper who worked with the North Shore Regiment and the New Brunswick School Division to arrange this very special part of the trip for the Canadian students.





On June 6, 1944, the culmination of three years of hard work, planning, espionage, and training came to fruition across the beaches of Normandy. The American troops at the beaches code named Utah and Omaha, the British at Gold and Sword, and the Canadians at Juno Beach.

The air and sea armada must have been something to see! 11,590 Allied Aircraft were there to support the landings, flying 14,674 sorties. 127 were lost. The landings on the flanks of the beaches included 2,395 aircraft and 867 gliders. By sea, the naval force consisted of 6,939 vessels, including 4,126 landing craft



CANADA ON D-DAY

06/06/1944



JUNO BEACH

21,000 troops landed
14,000 Canadians
7,000 British

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

39 squadrons committed
7 aircraft lost
22 airmen killed

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

61 major warships
46 landing craft
17 motor torpedo boats
Several wounded

1ST CANADIAN PARACHUTE BATTALION

543 paratroops jumped
19 killed; 10 wounded;
84 captured

JUNO BEACH CASUALTIES

340 soldiers killed, 574
wounded, and 47 captured
on or beyond the beach



TOTAL COST TO CANADA

381 killed
584+ wounded
131 captured



Sources : see www.junobeach.org/infographics for more information on these figures and photos.



RCL in France

In the week of the commemoration of the 80th anniversary, three comrades from our industry, Gerrit Bruggink at Arromanche, Yvonne Swarthoff and Berry Swarthoff, represented us at Juno Beach. Comrades Dré van Roomen, Johan Pieters and Daan Breugelmans, as well as Lars de Graf attended the commemorations at the British Normandy Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer and were present as the board of The Dutch Polar Bears (more to follow!)



Also present at the special commemoration's in Normandy were our own King and Queen, Willem Alexander and Maxima, as well as French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal and the thousands who gathered along the sunny beaches.

Thirteen Canadian World War II veterans were present, the oldest of whom was 104 years old.



Prince William spoke a few words in both English and French, expressing his gratitude to the veterans and all the heroes who landed on June 6, 1944. "It is almost impossible to imagine the courage that would have been required in the heat of battle that same day," he said. His Royal Highness then thanked the veterans for their 'extraordinary acts of courage and sacrifice on Juno Beach and in the liberation of Europe. You all showed heroism and determination that ensured that fascism was defeated.'

After the Prince of Wales and the Prime Ministers of Canada and France laid wreaths together, the Canadian band The Trews, among others, took to the stage to perform their moving song 'Highway of Heroes'. This song was written about the highway (401) in Ontario where all Canadian heroes who have fallen are repatriated by road from CFB Trenton to Toronto. Along the highway, Canadian flags fly at half-mast and thousands of Canadians stop to pay their respects to the fallen. To listen to the original song, [click here](#).

Notes from our comrades

Comrades Berry and Yvonne Swarthoff

A number of Comrades attended various commemorations in Normandy. The weather was beautiful and the veterans and thousands of visitors were able to enjoy the many parades with vehicles, aircraft, music and other events.

No fewer than 13 Canadian veterans had taken the trouble to travel to Normandy. They were also welcomed as great heroes, as if the population had been liberated again.

Not only the liberation was commemorated, but also the deaths and the heavy battle that took place in it



Bill Watson



Charles Davis and Berry



To honor all Canadian's First Nation Soldiers

Before the ceremony started, the paratroopers of the Canadian Skyhawks made a dazzling entrance....



Nicol Hufner, owner of Canada House in Bernies-Sur-Mer, was honoured with a coin from our Branch presented by Comrade Bruggink

Misadventures of a Willy's jeep on the beach!



Ardenne Abbey massacre

Comrades Berry en Yvonne Swarthoff



In the name of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 005, a wreath was laid at this abbey on June 6, 2024

During the Battle of Caen, eighteen Canadian soldiers, all prisoners of war, were executed by SS soldiers inside the Abbaye d'Ardennes (Ardennes Abbey). It was not until early 1945 that their bodies were found.

The abbey is a 12th-century gothic building located in Saint-Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe, west of Caen, with towers that form an ideal observation point overlooking the area north of Caen and out to sea. On 7 June 1944, Kurt Meyer, leader of the German 25th Panzer Grenadier regiment of the 12th SS, moved his HQ here, in part due to this view.

That day, in the midst of the Battle of Caen, Meyer could see from atop the abbey that the Canadian troops were progressing, and so decided to launch his counter-attack. The troops of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders were launched into the Battle of Authie, a nearby village. The battalion of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division left Buron on the morning of 7 June, in the direction of Carpiquet and its airfield.

During the fighting at Authie, held by German troops in the afternoon, 84 Canadian soldiers and seven civilians were killed. Twenty Canadian soldiers were taken prisoner and sent to the Abbaye d'Ardennes: eleven of these were executed that afternoon and buried in the abbey's gardens, while the others were taken to Bretteville-sur-Odon. Five of the eleven men who were executed belonged to the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, the other six to the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regiment). On 8 June 1944, seven additional prisoners of war from the North Nova Scotia Highlanders were taken to the abbey and interrogated by the SS, before being executed with a shot to the head. It was only in late winter that year, and early spring of 1945, that the bodies of all the soldiers were recovered. The crimes were attributed to Meyer's unit.

The abbey, severely damaged by the fighting, was taken by the Canadian Army in the evening of 8 July. Years later, on 6 June 1984, a memorial was unveiled in the garden where the tragedy took place, near the southwest wall. The memorial garden was set up by the Canadian authorities, with the help of the Vico family who lived there during the occupation and even after the war. The garden has an oratory, in memory of the eighteen soldiers massacred there by the SS, and every year on 7 June a commemoration is organised there.

A total of 156 Canadian soldiers were executed by the 12th SS in the days and weeks following D-Day.

We Will Always Remember Them

1st Canadians in Normandy

Comrades Berry en Yvonne Swarthoff

Monument at Le-Mesnil

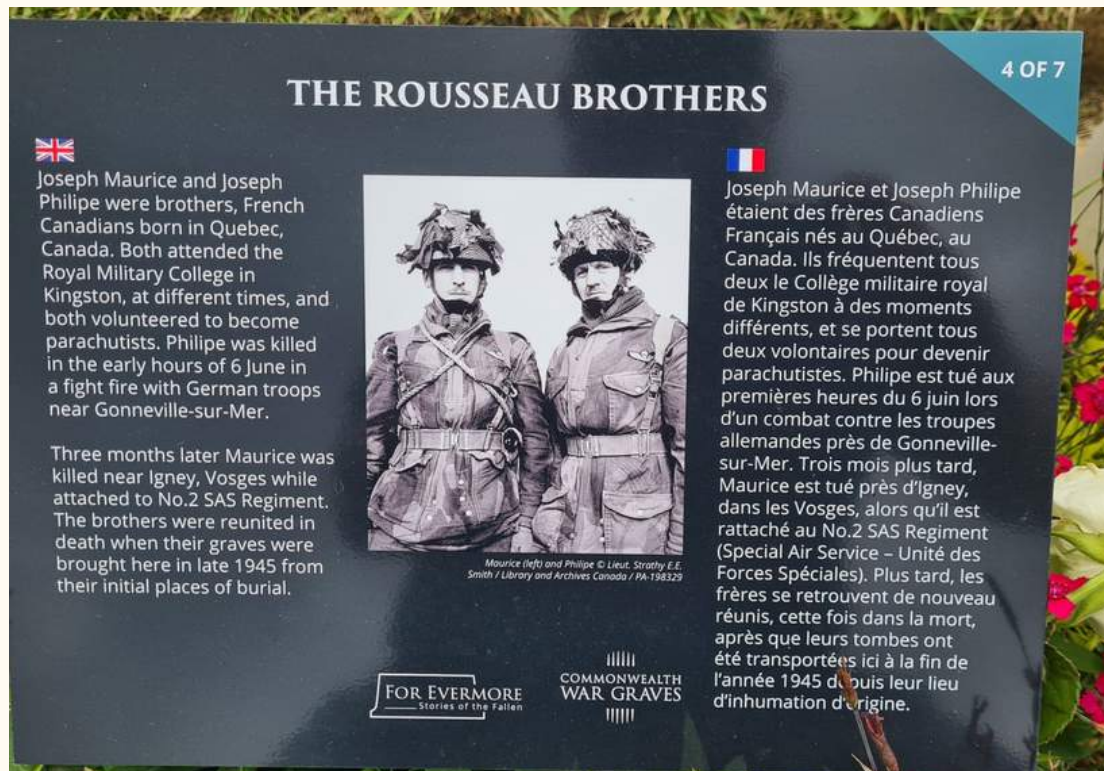


1st Canadian Parachutist Batt



Cemetery at Ranville

Monument at Varaville



In 1943 the unit was shipped to England and officially became part of the English 6th Airborne Division. As part of this division, they landed in Normandy on the night of 5 to 6 June 1944 during Operation Tonga, the airborne operation of Operation Overlord. Like the many other units that were part of this operation, the Canadians generally landed far from the drop zone. Despite this, they managed to achieve their objectives, including destroying two bridges over the Dives. However, when the unit was relieved for a month and a half, a large part had been killed. Of the 27 officers and 516 men, 24 officers and 343 soldiers were killed.

They were the first Canadians to arrive in Normandy and achieve their goals

Comrade Gerrit Bruggink

We traveled to Normandy on June 1st, arriving at Longues-sur-Mer at the Base Camp. On the 3rd, with friends, we visited the British Normandy Memorial.

On the 5th of June we traveled to Anguerny, France to visit a brass plaque dedicated to Gunner, Bill Ross and his comrades who spent their first night in Normandy near this place after conquering the village. The plaque was dedicated in June, 2009 in the presence of Bill Ross and his family.

This location is very personal to me. I knew Bill for many years and now his son, Mark.



"It is here that Bill Ross and his courageous comrades of The Queen's own Rifles of Canada spent their first night on Norman soil liberated on June 6th, 1944. May they always be honoured. We will remember them. With gratitude and affection, The WBS [Westlake Brothers Souvenir] Association and the children of the CM2 of Anisy, June, 2009."

The 6th of June proved to be a busy day, first meeting up with the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada and later in Bernières-sur-Mer. Sadly, issues arose with many of our group not receiving entrance tickets and therefore could not attend the commemoration.

Friday, June 7 found us visiting Port & Bessin Huppain where we laid a wreath at the Memorial in Huppain at 9:30; another at Port-en-Bessin Huppain at 10:00; then 10:30 at Jardin du Souvenir and the monument Captain Cousins; followed by another wreath being laid at the 47th Royal Marine Commando at 12:15.

At a reception afterwards, it was mentioned that there was a Canadian representative. Nice isn't it?



Comrade Dré van Roomen

The Dutch Polarbears Foundation from Rosendaal is proud of the close relationship with RCL005. Half of the board consists of members who are also members of the RCL Branch 005.



Comrades Johan Pieters and Dan Breugelmans, and TDPB board member Lars de Graaf and I planned ahead (early 2021) and booked our accommodations for the week of D-Day 80, with a stay at B&B “Domaine Airborne” in Angoville au Plain, nearby Utah Beach. The B&B is run by a Dutch couple and we highly recommend this as a place to stay and start your adventures in Normandy.



Our planning paid off and we were able to take Johan's Willys Jeep with us, with which we explored the “off the beaten track”. On June 2, we went to Utah Beach with the Jeep and explored several well-known places in the area (Batteries of Crisbecq, Azzeville, drop/landing zones O and Ste Mère Eglise), while enjoying beautiful weather.

On June 3th, we followed in the footsteps of the British Polar Bears (49th West Riding Infantry Division), starting in Caen and then on to Carpiquet Airport, where we were lucky to spot the Dutch Dakota DC3 and some Spitfires. After this we continued our way towards Hill 112. Then to Chateau d'Adrieu, headquarters of the 12th Panzer Division HJ. That area is also infamous for the liquidation of a number of Canadian soldiers, who were found by the polar bears. These Canadians turned out to have been murdered and were found lying in a row.





Day 4 (Wednesday) was dedicated to Ste Mère Eglise, where we rode the Willys Jeep in the parade. Crowds were up to 10 deep... Afterwards we visited Camp Geronimo. But what a hustle and bustle in the town where the paratrooper is still hanging in the church tower... Actually way too busy... All in the name of "Band of Brothers" in the area.



Thursday was the most special day for me. We were invited guests at the official **UK National Commemorative Event to Mark the 80th Anniversary of Normandy Landings**, as organised by the UK Ministry of Defence, Royal British Legion, and the Normandy Memorial.

This special invitation required a very early start and strict security measures (including snipers)!

The Memorial itself overlooks Gold Beach and where several thousand silhouettes were also placed for the occasion, simulating the troops coming ashore. Lots of military tributes, soldiers in gala uniform, etc. Not to mention a dozen British World War II veterans! Then King Charles III with Queen Camilla arrived on location, later followed by French President Macron and British Prime Minister Sunak.

What a beautiful ceremony!! Lots of military tributes, speeches by King Charles, Macron and others. Veterans' stories were told by British actors, flyby by The Red Arrows and, to top it all off, a "goosebump" song by Sir Tom Jones. I'm still impressed by it. Down to the last detail and with military-precise organized event.



The Canadian Remembrance Torch



The arrival of the Canadian Remembrance Torch was also a big highlight at Juno Beach. This Torch was first brought to the Netherlands in 2022 with the group, In Our Fathers' Footsteps. At that time, the group walked 20 kms on each of 3 days, encountering many special places and people, including Princess Margriet and Mr. Pieter an Vollenhoven at Het Loo Palace.

The trip was described as being "life changing; healing; and emotional."

The 2025 trip was much requested and has resulted in the plans to share the Canadian Remembrance Torch here in the Netherlands, ultimately resting at RCL005 Branch Headquarters at Mondani until the 80th anniversary of our Liberation in May 2025.

Initially in 2022, the Torch was lit at the Parliament Building in Ottawa and carried aboard a plane to the Netherlands. It was then handed over to Princess Margriet and then given to the RCL for safekeeping and has been used frequently by the Youth Auxiliary over the past two years.

The Canadian Remembrance Torch, with flame lit, was flown from Ottawa to England this year, to play an important role in the commemorations on the beaches of Normandy.

The Torch has now multiplied! There are 14, so the copies can be given to the presidents and members of royal houses (Joe Biden, President of USA; Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; Emmanuel Macron, President of France; Prince William, King Willem Alexander, and more). These Torches will be ignited by the flames from Ottawa.



The flame of the Torch will be spread throughout the Netherlands during the relay on May 4/5 in Wageningen in 2025.

The Torch will come from the beaches of Normandy with a Canadian Naval ship, to be brought ashore in Vlissingen. From there, the group has requested that the flame be brought to Lochem. The RCL005 'Liberation of the Netherlands' branch, and particularly Berry and Yvonne, owners of Mondani Canadian Restaurant, are very proud to have been asked to become the gatekeepers of the flame, keeping it burning for the coming 10 months in the countdown to the 80th anniversary of the Liberation.



A Special Friend in Normandy



Veteran, and friend of Branch 005, Jim Parks, served with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles as a rifleman. He shared his experiences of his convoy crossing the Atlantic Ocean to the UK, his training in England and Scotland, and his experience landing on Juno Beach just two minutes before the main assault wave. Jim Parks served through Normandy, Caen, Carpiquet, Leopold Canal, and Nijmegen. He finished up his war service in Germany in 1945. He recalled that the method of disembarkment on the 6th of June was not how they had practiced in their

training in Scotland. He was a mortar carrier and he landed at H-2 (two minutes before the main assault). He came off his carrier in water too deep, and he ended up swimming. He was hit by a landing craft and he 'saw stars.' All of their equipment remained on the boat. Jim recalled that while waiting for orders and equipment, his group began to pull the bodies of his comrades out of the water, fearing that when the tanks came in, they would be unable to see them.

Jim's brother, Jack, asked a bulldozer who was working on the shore to go out into the water, using the bulldozer blade to extend as a means to rescue several soldiers who were stuck in the waves. The rescue was a success!

The company then moved along the 'Oak Line' to the town of Putot where they dug in. On the night of the 7th and 8th of June, three companies were decimated because the Germans infiltrated the fields of high wheat where they were dug in. Jim recalled they lost 256 men, killed, wounded, or captured, that night.

Jim's interview with the Juno Beach Centre covers his entire service in Europe and we recommend you take a few minutes to listen.

[Jim Parks Interview](#)



Canadian Bomber Crash Near Schijf

Story courtesy of Hans-Jorg van Broekhoven
www.zuidwestupdate.nl



In the early morning hours of June 17, 1944, three of the seven man crew of a Canadian Halifax bomber were killed when their aircraft crashed during their run to Sterkrade/Holten, near Essen, Germany.

With thanks to Comrade Ad van Uffelen's extensive research and the help of many others (including our friends, The Dutch Polar Bears), the men of this mission are now remembered at a monument which was unveiled last June.

On June 17, 2024, Ad opened the ceremony at the monument at the intersection of Nederheidsebaan and Acchtmaalsebaan in Schijf, just 100 metres from where the bomber crashed. The monument depicts four parachutes, referring to the survivors: Tom Inverarity, Jack Dougherty, Fred Haldenby, and Edward Downing. Sadly Bill Good, Peter Ager, and Alfred Boehmer did not survive. The surviving crew found a safehouse, but sadly, were betrayed and three were taken to Poland as POWs.



The commemoration was well attended by delegates of the RCL, Royal British Legion, the Council of B & W Rucphen, Stichting Veteranen Rucphen, The Dutch Polar Bears, local students, residents, and refugees from Yemen.

Opened by Ad, the ceremony continued with a poem, speeches, and personal messages of the family members of the airmen. Following the laying of wreaths and playing of the national anthems, Ad closed the commemoration and looked back with pride.

Our comrade has maintained regular contact with the relatives of the airmen sometimes traveling to visit them in Canada, and knows that the families appreciate that their ancestors are not forgotten. Ad noted that the refugees from Yemen who attended the ceremony, escaping the violence of war there, found it very special that we still commemorate our liberators.

If you missed the ceremony and would like to watch, it is available in Dutch [here](#).

Congratulations Ad!



In recognition for all of his hard work and dedication , our Comrade Ad van Uffelen was presented with a “veteran coin”. Rucphen toen en nu noted:

“Ad has been committed to giving the boys who fought in WWII the recognition they deserve for a number of years.”



VeVa Marches!

With VeVa (Safety & Craftsmanship), students combine a full MVO course with practical weeks at the Ministry of Defence, preparing them for a starting position. Of course, because this is a Defence program, the students engage in a lot of physical activity and discover the power of discipline and teamwork. Internships are done with one of the armed forces (Army, Navy, or Air Force). ROC Nijmegen is one of 22 ROCs around the Netherlands who facilitate this training.

On Friday, June 21 the VeVa Marches took place.. The Marches are an initiative of and for “Help For Heroes” Foundation, aiming to stimulate recognition and appreciation for veterans among a broad, and especially young audience.



The march is also meant to allow the participating students to experience what it is like to be part of a close-knit team, physically committed to a common (good) cause and to let them feel what it is like to receive appreciation for the effort they have made. Thus a “challenge coin” is awarded to all participating students after the march at the closing parade.

The march also has its serious moments. During the 25 km march, the students of ROC Nijmegen visited the Canadian cemeteries at Mook and Groesbeek.

I was moved and touched...“said Anja Hagenaars, Director of Safety at ROC Nijmegen. “Our young students walked past many graves of very young soldiers who gave their lives for peace and security for all of us.”



Anja continued, “Many proud parents, veterans, grandfathers and grandmothers stood in the pouring rain, enjoying these future soldiers. I am afraid of war in the future, but I have boundless confidence in the VeVa students.”



Canada Day

Our clubhouse at Mondani Canadian Restaurant in Lochem once again opened the doors and welcomed over 50 guests to celebrate Canada's 157th birthday, including His Excellency, Hugh Adsett, Canadian Ambassador, and Colonel Amy Pleasance, Commander of the Canadian Forces Support Unit in Europe, with her family.



President, Wim Poppenk took the microphone to thank everyone for coming and to make some very special announcements. First, Wim once again thanked Danny Murphy for his years of service to the Branch and his dedication to the Poppy Campaign. As we all know, it is the woman behind the man who makes it possible to devote so many hours, so Lies Murphy was also given a big round of applause and a bouquet of flowers to thank her for her support.

The atmosphere was 'gezellig' and lots of laughs and good conversations were had all around the clubhouse, inside and out. The weather was favourable and we only endured a few raindrops in the early evening. The BBQ was Top !!





The time then arrived to say farewell to Colonel Marc LaFortune, the Canadian Military Attaché to the Netherlands, who has been stationed here for four years. Wim thanked Marc for his limitless effort and support of our Branch, the veterans, and the families of veterans.



Marc was presented with several gifts, including the statue of a Canadian soldier with a little girl, which he found quite fitting, thinking of his daughter Gabby when he deployed years ago. He also received his “clump” (clogs) from Berry and Yvonne, a Certificate of Appreciation, and a one of a kind Quilt of Valour, depicting a soldier and his daughter. Dré van Roomen also expressed the thanks and appreciation with a gift from The Dutch Polar Bears.



Flip the page for a little more about our friend Marc LaFortune!



Colonel J.M.A. LaFortune, C.D.

Colonel LaFortune joined the Canadian Armed Forces in December 1989 and has served in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Saint John and Afghanistan (2004). He continued his studies and took command of the Royal Canadian Artillery School in 2008.

Col. Mark was promoted to his current rank in July 2013 and deployed as part of Operation IMPACT in 2015.

In preparation for his Dutch posting, he attended language training, which has been on display and we are quite impressed!



Thank you!

Thank you Mark for this special friendship. Your friends from RCL Branch 005, The Liberation of The Netherlands

Coming Soon!

Saturday July 13, 2024 @ 10.00

Colour Party training - Mondani, Lochem

Monday, July 15, 2024 @ 11:00

4 Days March - Opening Commemoration at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery

Thursday, July 18, 2024

4 Days March - Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery
Promotion Tent, Colour Party, and Branch members present to meet marchers along the Zevenheuvelenweg, available to provide guidance upon request

Saturday, September 7, 2024

Airborne Walk - Oosterbeek
Promotion Tent present at Oosterbeek War Cemetery

Saturday, September 21, 2024

Ginkelse Heide - Ede
Promotion Tent present at the heath throughout the day, ceremony and air demonstrations

Find us online:



Please support our Branch

All donations are appreciated and always welcome. We have ANBI status. All donations qualify for a tax deduction. Please visit the link to our website above.

In the next issue:

Issues will come out semi-monthly, so check your inbox in September when we'll share stories from The Dutch Polar Bears, the Youth Auxilliary, Nijmegen/Groesbeek 4 Day Marches, and more!

We will also start sharing some stories of past and currently serving Canadian soldiers. If you have a friend or relative and want to share their story, please reach out!

Finally, the newsletter is nothing without the members. Please read and share the newsletter, but also consider contributing. Let us know what is going on in your area of the Netherlands, Germany, or Canada (or wherever else you may be)!

How are you honouring the brave souls who are (and have) fought for Canada?



Contact us at info@rcl005.org or via Facebook