The Canadian faces of the liberation

Policy plan of Platform Canadian War Graves Nederland

januari 2018

Names, faces, stories
Every name on our cemetery has a face and a story.
Every name stands for a young man who left his home, his family, parents, wife, children,
and started an unknown and dangerous journey.
That journey ended here in the Netherlands.
For our freedom.
We are obliged to remember their name and their story.

That we will not forget.

Platform CanadianWarGraves.NL (CWG.NL)

Chapter 1. Reason and background

In the liberation of our country, the Canadian army played the main role, many Canadians made the greatest possible sacrifice for our freedom and are buried in our country. We, the CWG.NL platform (*CanadianWarGraves.NL*) that is composed of members of the three foundations that are closely involved with the Canadian fields of honor in the Netherlands, want all these, often young, men to be remembered by providing them with a face through photos and life stories.

The liberation of the Netherlands began in September 1944 when American troops arrived in Maastricht. The Market Garden's daring operation started on September 17. Despite the unparalleled commitment of the American, British and Polish airborne units it ended in a miserable failure. British Ground troops saw no chance to reach the Rhine Bridge at Arnhem to relieve the "Airbornes". Without the latter bridge an allied push north of the Ruhr area to the German heartland was impossible. The at the 2nd of October started Battle of the Scheldt, needed to be able to use the harbor of Antwerp, meant a turning point in the war of Northwest Europe. That is when the necessary supply of the allies went in motion, allowing the fight to continue in the spring of 1945. Under Canadian command Canadian, British and Polish units fought fierce battles for control over of the Westerschelde at the cost of heavy losses. The battle was finished on November 8 but it was not until the end of November that the Scheldt was mine-free and the first allied ship could be unloaded in Antwerp. The complete south of the Netherlands was then liberated, with the exception of a small part of Brabant.

The Canadians

Spring 1945 they large numbers of Canadian soldiers were deployed to liberate The Netherlands north of the major rivers. Pushing back the German army was accompanied by substantial Canadian losses. Then when on May 5, 1945 the German troops in the Netherlands surrendered, the Canadians took control of the western part of The Netherlands, including cities as Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam. In the cities, after the failure of the Battle of Arnhem a major

famine prevailed. In the following days Canadian troops in the Dutch villages and towns were welcomed with open arms by the population.

A large number of our liberators had to pay for our freedom with their death. 5,712 Canadian casualties have been buried in our country. On the three largest Canadian war cemeteries in Bergen op Zoom, Groesbeek and Holten 4,654 Canadian liberators found their final resting place. The rest lies at smaller war cemeteries or civilian burial sites. At the Memorial in Groesbeek are the names of 99 Canadians of whom we do not know where their remains are.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission takes excellent care of these war graves with great respect.

The three largest Canadian war cemeteries are Bergen op Zoom, Groesbeek and Holten.

Bergen op Zoom Canadian War Cemetery

Ruytershoveweg 1, 4622 RJ Bergen op Zoom

At the cemetery in Bergen op Zoom 1,118 (mainly Canadian) soldiers from the Second World War are buried. The vast majority of the here commited to the ground soldiers fell during the Battle of the Scheldt; they died on Dutch territory. 964 of them served in the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and the 4th Canadian Armored Division. 146 casualties belonged to the air force and 5 belonged to the Navy. Of all those killed in the Canadian war cemetery, 136 are from Great Britain, six from New Zealand and five from Australia. A Dutchman is also buried there, 1st Lieutenant Airman J.G.C. Koes, who flew with the R.A.F. And furthermore a Canadian of Dutch origin, shown by the Dutch text on his tombstone: " 'Hier ligt onze geliefde zoon en Broeder Ynte Obbema'."

Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery

Zevenheuvelenweg, 6561 ER Groesbeek

The building of the cemetery in Groesbeek started in 1945. After the Canadian troops participated in the advance towards the German Ruhr area, there was need of a cemetery close to German territory, to bury the Canadian victims that were killed during the battles in the so-called Rhineland Offensive. The cemetery has been arranged under the direction of a team of six Canadians who needed two years to complete the entire cemetery. At that time there were just wooden crosses in the grass. They were not replaced by metal crosses until 1950. At the same time the terrain around the graves was provided with permanent planting, like still can be seen at almost all Commonwealth war cemeteries in Europe. Only from 1954 the white Portland stones were placed and the remaining parts of the cemetery was laid out to the design of the British architect Philip Dalton Hepworth. In total there are 2.619 graves in this cemetery, of airmen, soldiers, officers; some of them were heroes, but all have a personal story. At the cemetery is the Groesbeek Memorial, with which 1,047 soldiers of the Commonwealth land forces are commemorated in name. They died during the campaign in Northwestern Europe between crossing the Seine, end of August 1944 and the end of the war in Europe. Their graves are unknown.

Holten Canadian War Cemetery

Eekhoornweg 10, 7451 HR Holten

From the end of March the Canadian troops continued their advance to the north, during which still a lot of deadly victims
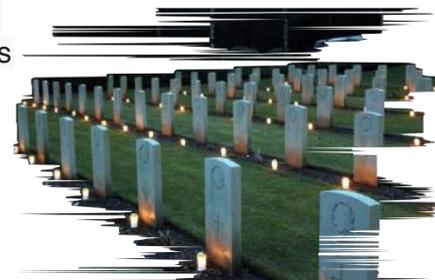
were counted. The Canadian army command was ordered to find a suitable place where those who were killed would find their final resting place. Through cooperation of Holtens municipal council lead by the mayor, Mr. Enklaar and the willingness of individuals to sell land, the grounds could be arranged. A total of 1,394 killed found their final resting place in Holten. On May 5, 1948, when the arrangement of the site was finished, the first official commemoration took place. Numerous dignitaries, including Prince Bernhard, were present. Annually there are various ceremonies at the cemetery, in the months of April, May, November and December.

In 2011 an information center was opened at the Holten Canadian War Cemetery, with data of the 1394 fallen in this cemetery. On the basis of personal stories, anecdotes and photos, often donated by relatives, the thought of those who fell are kept alive. The information center is free accessible and offers a source of information 'for all generations'.

Last chance

There are 5,712 Canadian gravestones in the Netherlands; all those tombstones must have a face and get a story. More than 70 years after the war, many comrades and family members of the killed young men are no longer alive. Their life story thus threatens to be lost forever and we owe it to them to prevent this.

Chapter 2. Objective and approach

Objective: all graves are given a face

We, the CWG.NL platform, want to remember all Canadian soldiers buried on one of ours cemeteries and at cemeteries elsewhere in our country by giving them a face with photos and life stories. This information must be accessible to the public.

Certainly now that most of their comrades, who have survived the war, are no longer able to do that, we have a duty to remember them. During the past years we have already collected many photos and documents. From the information provided by relatives and third parties over a thousand cases and biographies have been composed already. Mainly thanks to the help of many volunteers who want to continu their passion, to show the people behind the war graves, for years to come. With the ultimate goal of giving all graves a "face".

Approach

To make all collected (image)material and personal stories together with the basic data of the soldiers available to the public, we are developing a Digital Monument where all this information can be consulted online. It has to be a publicly accessible website with a Content Management System (CMS) that is easy to update and supplement. Initially by an editorial team, but also by the public information can be added. The website becomes responsive, which means that the user interface is adapted to the device (PC, cell phone) that is used.

Collect basic material and personal stories

First, the currently available material must be collected and processed. *Library and Archives Canada* in Ottawa recently has made available online the authentic personal files. Via the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (which also manages the cemeteries) also online basic military information is available, via (*https://www.cwgc.org*)*.* With this we can at least compile a short business description with: the name, the rank, the date of birth and death, the regiment or armed forces and the place of the grave for all graves (with a name). Volunteers from the foundation make an inventory of the basic material. Already extensive information has reached us of about two thousand of those who have fallen, thanks to relatives and third parties. With this we already have compile many biographies. Concerned authorities and individuals in Canada help to collect source material and to provide that to us. Until now many volunteers

Ernest England sneuvelde op 8 april bij Holten. Over 3 dagen zou hij op verlof gaan naar zijn vrouw en 3 kinderen. Ernest England is de eerste die op 16 dec. '45 op de Canadese begraafplaats te Holten is herbegraven.

edited and conduct it to be published. This material has to be made available unambiguously from the database on the website.

Organization

To manage the organization and costs in a responsible way, a foundation has been created, which can conclude agreements as a legal person. In addition, we propose a editorial working group representing the three foundations (which continue to exist separately: Stichting Bevrijding Brabantse Wal, Stichting Faces To Canadian War Graves Groesbeek and Stichting Informatiecentrum Canadese Begraafplaats Holten) which is responsible to puiblish the available material. This working group consists of representatives from the three sub-working groups, each responsible for each cemetery for inserting their part of the database. The editorial working group will jointly prepare an editorial statute.The sub-working groups process the available information the same way and the editorial working group manages this to assure a clear representation in the database. The coordinating editorial team also detects potential undesirable publications. If relatives are missing, she is responsible for the protection of personal data. The editorial team becomes ultimately responsible for the management, maintenance and updating of the website. The daily supervision is performed by a webmaster who is primarily responsible for processing of the emails with (personal) information about the Canadian soldiers.

Chaptre 3. www.canadianwargraves.nl

The website

We will continue to develop the current website www.canadianwargraves.nl into a digital monument to the Canadian casualties in the Netherlands.

The (future) website has 3 main objectives:

- Giving a face to the fallen Canadian soldiers by publishing make their life story, and;
- Provide a place to remember, to commemorate, and;
- Provide information / transfer knowledge to the younger generation.

The most important users of the website are:

- The relatives, family and friends of the fallen soldier;
- Young people / students;
- Interested parties (including holiday makers / visitors to the cemetery);
- Researchers.

From every group of users we choose a so-called Persona; a person who represents the group and with this personae we will discuss in advance what important aspects of the site are and afterwards we let them test the site for ease of use and we ask their impression about design and content offered. The content of the website consists primarily of basic information about the killed soldier.

Of all soldiers at the three major Canadian war cemeteries and those at cemeteries elsewhere in our country, the basic data, photo of the grave and (portrait) photo are shown. Additional information in the form of biographies, documents and background stories are presented. The biographies can vary in format from half an A4 sheet to documents of many pages, whether or not illustrated with enriching visual material. Additional photos, documents and "links" to background stories, if available online, may complete the relevant file. See the attached concept for an example of how one died liberator is presented on the website. Or look at http://www.facestograves.nl/#barbaro for some examples.

Connecting stories

The website offers space bound background stories, where the coherence between events and people of interpretation and historical significance is provided. The background stories with accompanying photos, documents and internal and external links are linked to names. Special events and operations of regiments are connected to the names of the fallen soldiers. Visitors can view

the data via several entrances to the website, for example via the place or location where soldiers died or where a regiment has been active, via the name of a regiment, the name of a soldier or via a special event described.

With connecting stories the website offers starting points for people who want to visit historic places (souvenir tourism). This is in line with the development of a Liberation Route throughout the Netherlands.

Cooperation with Leiden University

An important part of the users is the group of researchers. This monument will also be an important source of data to them. That is why we are collaborating with the University of Leiden to define the structure of the database. (Leiden University is unique in her research of languages, cultures, art and societies in the world, in their historical context, from prehistory to the present). In addition, the university is closely involved in the development and writing of the connecting historical stories. Contact is Paul van Trigt, researcher at the Faculty of Humanities at the university Leiden. Mr. van Trigt has also been involved in the joodsmonument.nl.

Form and Search functions

The monument *www.canadianwargraves.nl* must be a warm and respectful tribute to the Canadian casualties. All 5,712 Canadian soldiers who are buried in the Netherlands regain a name and a face that is easy to find via the website and app to be. It must be possible to search (using suggested search) on:

- Name
- Regiment
- Date of death
- Cemetery
- From a region / country: on a geographical map
- Timeline
- Death place / temporary burial place
- Etc.

The website must be accessible to all interested parties around the world and that is why the site is set up bilingual (English and Dutch). In order to publish all information and personal stories, we require a publicly accessible website with a Content Management System (CMS), which initially is easy to update and complete by the members of the editing workgroup. The website and its linked data in the database (CMS)will go public when it is approved by the editorial working group. After all, the purpose of this project is to provide the names on the tombstones with a face by presenting a complete and accurate picture of a soldier and his background. The website will be responsive; the user interface is adapted to the device (PC, mobile phone) that is being used so that interested parties also can access (parts of) the database en route and on the spot.

The memories are kept alive by a visit to the Digital Monument (For example, this is done at the Jewish Monument, in the (physical) exhibition centre is shown which people were last visited / remembered).

Community

On the website everyone can find the basic information of all Canadian soldiers who have been buried in The Netherlands or are missing and, if present, the personal information in the form of available photos and documents. As there is still not much information available of all the fallen, the website will also have a demand function, by which visitors can respond to the posted information or supply additional material. The editorial working group checks this afterwards and marginally where the personal stories are concerned

Ultimately we want to realize a community like at the Joodsmonument.nl which is largely open to user input. At the Joodsmonument.nl there is a number of basic data which cannot be changed from "outside". Possibly users can give additions or changes to the basic data by e-mail. Additional (personal) stories and photos can be added by the public, after login and registration. Visitors must create an account and profile before they can post something on the site. The editors have a reactive role on this. She checks and edits if necessary. Additions are being published with the name of the person who has published. More details like the email address of those who have published something are known to the editors. When necessary the editors also help if people on the spot (at the editors in Amsterdam and even at people's homes) to place information the right way. In order not to be accountable for the use of sources that are protected by copyright, we will include a disclaimer.

In addition, people can always offer information by e-mail. This will be processed and published by the webmaster. Also it is important to save stories that are not suitable for publication. for any (partial) future use.

Promotion

We will promote the to potential visitors both online and offline. For online promotion we will use Google Adwords on the internet. With "Grants" Google offers the option for charities to use this free by a contribution from Google. Google Ad Grants is part of the Google for Nonprofit Organizations program. For offline promotion we will place signs on the cemetery with the internet address of the Digital Monument. On top of that we ensure that visitors to a cemetery also see the address so that at the same time or afterwards also the Digital Monument can be visited.

Success criteria

We have established a number of criteria on the basis of which we can determine whether we achieve our goal with the Digital Monument. It's about:
- The number of visitors to the website and the activities they have on the website, to be viewed via Google Analytics, where we aim on 100,000 visitors per year as a target;
- The number of visitors that visit the Digital Monument after a physical visit to the cemeteries;
- The number of stories of Canadian soldiers who are killed, with all 5,712 stories as a goal.
- The number of contributions to the content that is made after a physical visit to the cemetery(s) or just a digital visit to the monument, where we assume 2,000 per year.

- The number of students and participating schools in the project "Give each brick a story ", after which;
  - more attention is paid to the subject in education;
  - more awareness arises about the liberation and its significance for the current events.

Freedom: Lessons for the future

Espacially for secondary students we can make the connection between the Canadian liberators and current events. The meaning of democracy, freedom, fundamental rights and fundamental norms and values is made clear though the individual, personal stories of the fallen soldiers. The young people learn how to recognize signals and trends and to make connections with contemporary (international and political) developments and the meaning of freedom. We want to make the story of the Canadian graves actually interesting. The website must especially appeal to them, curious to discover the personal stories. Here we distinguish the following angles of approach:

- Orientation knowledge: knowledge about the Second World War and the liberation;
- Skills: historical thinking and reasoning; Empathy;
- Attitudes: reflection; moral judgment and action.

In this context, we are already collaborating with Holten secondary schools. The cemetery in Holten offers with the project "Give every stone a story" VWO- and HAVO pupils an opportunity to participate in a school project from authentic army files which have been made available by Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, extract relevant information for a biography. In the 2016/2017 course year, more than 700 students are out secondary education together with volunteers, participated in this project. The other two too cemeteries will, following Holten's example, include this in their offer.

Participating schools receive the files digitally. The students pose by using the service files, a biography of a killed Canadian soldier. At the end, the students receive a guided tour (in the information center) and at the cemetery.

Appendix 1. Data model

❖ Soldiers

Plain data (mainly text fields, whether or not predefined such as places and date fields):

- Name
- Army / registration number:
- Regiment: click-through> regiment info
- Born: date + place
- Location: click through> country map / google maps or geobatch
- Province:
- Nationality:
- Parents:
- Married / and or children:
- Death field: date + place
- Age:
- Named after the soldier: bridges, lakes etc. click to *tracesofwar.com* or another source
- Awards: • Monuments: if possible, click through to tracesofwar.com
- Biography
- Link(s) to other sites with military information
- During which action killed / crash // operation history /

Linked to detail page, of which there may be several

- Media such as
    - Film or video images (via external website such as Vimeo, Youtube or Wistia)
    - Additional photos (including specifying the photo grave and photo military)
- Documents such as
    - Newspaper clippings / Publications (PDFs and fill content using a wysiwyg editor)
    - Archive / Documents

Linked to other data that can be clicked through and / or filtered

- Cemeteries (with the grave number included in the link)
    - Temporary cemetery: click through> show location on map / google maps or geobatch
    - Cemetery + grave number: click through> cemetery at CWGC location on show map / google maps or geobatch
- Monuments

❖ **Cemeteries**

Plain data (mainly text fields, predefined or not, such as location and date fields):

· Name
· Location
· Description

Linked to other data that can be clicked through and / or filtered

· Soldiers

❖ **Monuments**

Plain data (mainly text fields, predefined or not, such as location and date fields):

· Name
· Location
· Description

Linked to other data that can be clicked through and / or filtered

· Soldiers