

Stichting Erfgoed 40-45, gemeenten Valkenswaard en Waalre

For our British friends and families of the fallen

Dear Reader,

Even during the summer pause our Foundation Heritage 40-45 Valkenswaard-Waalre has been anything but idle. Behind the scenes, work has continued at full pace: research, commemorations, collecting stories and making valuable archives accessible.

In this newsletter you will find not only a review of the past months but also a glimpse of what lies ahead. September was a particularly moving period with the 80th anniversary commemoration at Valkenswaard War Cemetery on 17 September and the associated activities in town. We are grateful for the presence of many locals and especially proud that the British



Ambassador to the Netherlands attended the ceremony. We very much hope to build a lasting relationship with the British Embassy and would like to get in touch with the newly appointed Defence Attaché in The Hague.

In this edition, two personal contributions add special meaning this newsletter. Mervyn Cardwell shares the moving story of his first visit to his grandfather Guardsman Norman Mallon's grave; and Simon Williams, descendant of Private Joseph Desmond, reflects on Valkenswaard's liberation and the Flower Parade tradition.

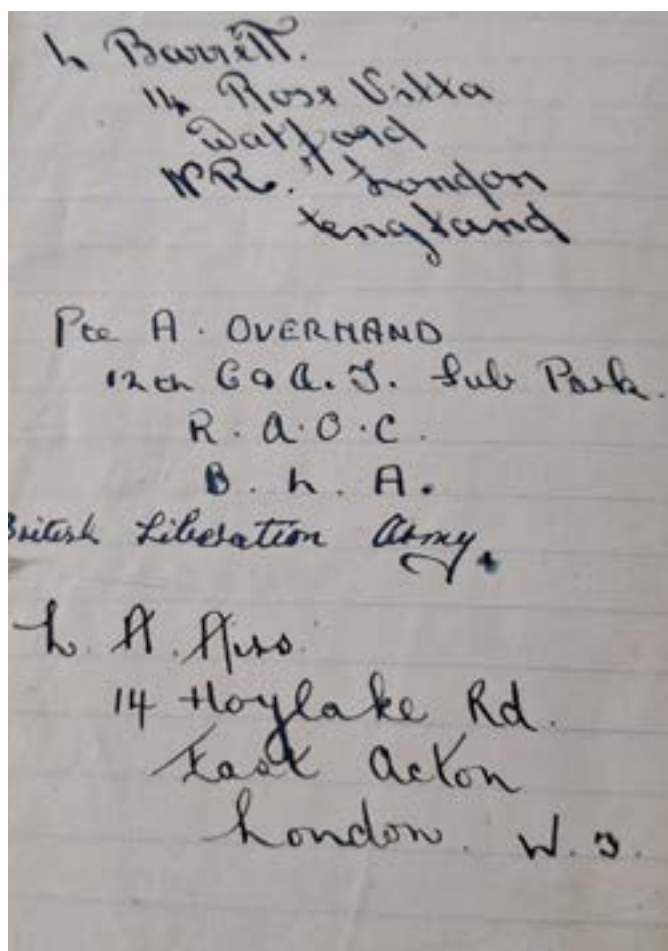
We invite you to read on, remember, and – if you can – help us keep the history of Valkenswaard and Waalre alive. Together we ensure that the past continues to speak. ●



A Gifted Diary

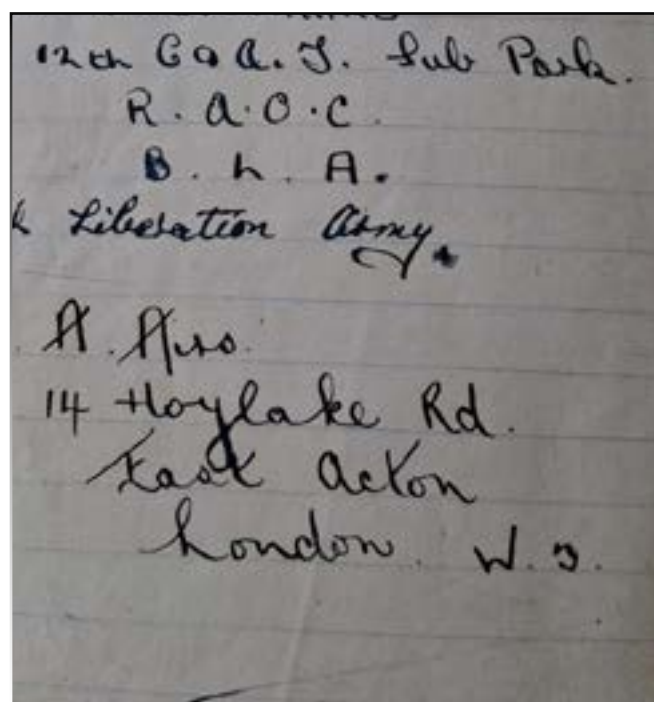
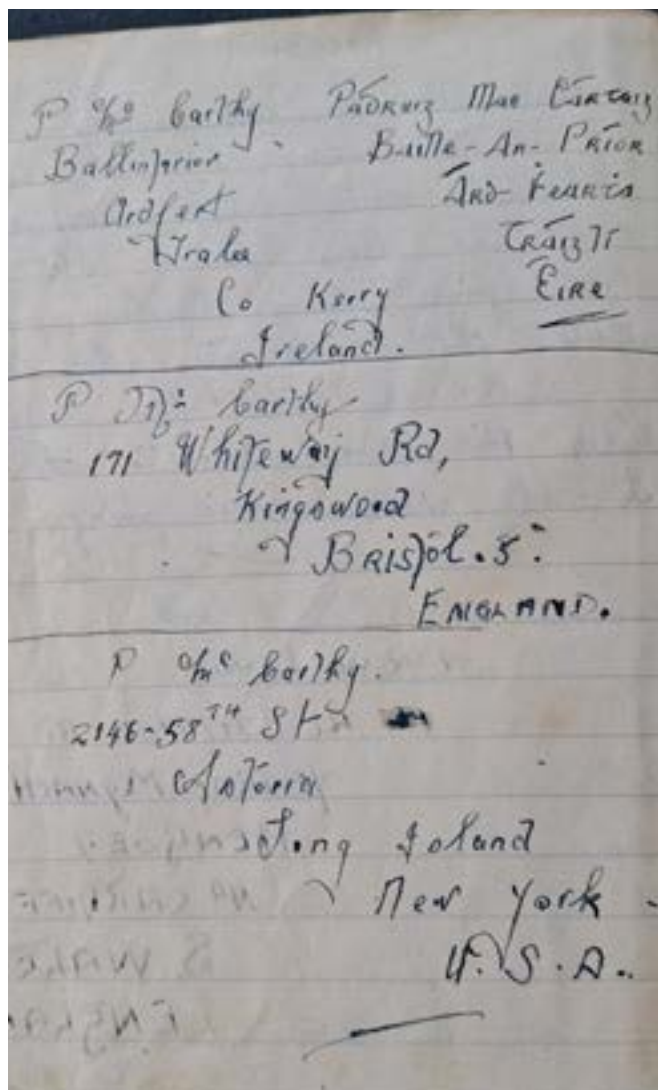
A few weeks ago the Foundation received a remarkable gift from Jack Neutkens: the diary of his late sister Maria Neutkens. Maria, who in 1944 lived at Karel Mollenstraat 60, wrote her diary while ill in bed, observing life in the street from her window. Covering the period from 27 July to 17 September 1944, her notes offer a unique glimpse of the last months before Valkenswaard's liberation.

The diary contains not only her personal observations but also English, French and German song lyrics and the names and addresses of British soldiers. As most of it is written in pencil it will take some time to digitise fully.



Jack also shared a family story: that General Montgomery may once have sat on their window sill, cigarette in hand, looking at the damage to the Willem II factory. This has not yet been verified. If any reader can confirm or add details to this anecdote, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Photographs of addresses and messages left by British soldiers in the diary are attached. If you recognise a name or can help with further research in the UK, please contact us. ●



Ronald M. McBeath,
1 Station Cottages,
Grantown-on-Spy,
Morayshire,
Scotland.

Chas T. Cobley,
17 Richmond Close
Aylestone Rd,
Leicester
Eng.

B. Lucking,
"The Bungalow",
Boddam Road,
Hornby
Lancashire
England.

James G. Fisher
19 Woodstock Rd
Handsworth
B'HAM 21.
ENGLAND.

R. Mooney.
12 Thornton St,
City Road,
Bradford
Yorks

J. Mooney
97 City Rd
Bradford
Yorks

K. G. Girdle
38 Windsor Rd,
Enfield
Middlesex
England.

A. W. Binding
7 Dodington
Bridgwater
Somerset
England

Ronald Baker
10 Coventry Rd
Polyton,
Southampton
Hampshire
England.
Best of Luck.
R. A. & K.

A. R. Levered
55 The Uplands
Rogersstone
Nr Newport
Monmouthshire
England.
See to a future meeting
Laffy R. 200

Dion Gamble, James.
 90 Parliamta Range.
 Leeds. II.
 Yorkshire England.
 Ronald Smith
 102 Talbot Road
 Northampton
 England 6-10-1
 Best of such little
 snows ever.
 Thomas Mallorby
 Bradford, 1791
 Yorkshire,
 England.
 THE YAIR Adan Oueruel.
 BURGHEMUR. Perth.
 Scatted for Ever Scotland.

I R W. LEWIS.
 H.L. STATION. RD.
 YSTRAD MYNACH.
 HENGOED.
 NR CARDIFF
 S. WALES
 ENGLAND.



Mervyn Cardwell, grandson of Guardsman Norman Mallon

Hello, my name is Mervyn Cardwell. I'm from a small village called Aghalee in Co. Antrim, N. Ireland, and this is the story of how and why I went to the War Cemetery in Valkenswaard to visit my grandfather Norman Mallon's grave!

I suppose I should start with a little bit of a back story, as up until around a year ago I knew very little about my grandfather. I had heard the name but knew little of the circumstances regarding his death. I'm sure, as in a lot of families from that time, my late father Enoch Cardwell was born out of wedlock; therefore these things weren't talked about.

Around a year ago a cousin of mine sent me a link from a local online church magazine requesting information on any family of the late Norman Mallon. I believe this was from the Foundation / Ray Bogaars, shared by the then adoptee of his grave – a Dutch gentleman who incredibly is married to a lady from the same area as my grandfather, father and I are from.

At that time I made contact with Ray, who was able to give me information that I hadn't previously known – even copies of letters between my grandfather and grandmother, which I believe he had received from a recently deceased uncle of mine. Ray also sent me a copy of his book *The Road to Valkenswaard*, which for anyone with a family member buried in the War Cemetery in Valkenswaard, or indeed any surviving soldiers' families, is an amazing account of the events between the 10th–18th September 1944.

In short, all this new information about my grandfather, whom I had previously known very little about, piqued my curiosity and I wanted to go and visit his grave. My wife and I like to travel anyway, so that was no problem for us. Unfortunately at that time my brother was suffering with terminal cancer and I was unable to go. Sadly, he passed away early in February this year and my wife suggested taking some of his ashes to my grandfather's grave in Valkenswaard when we would visit.

As you can guess, this year's been pretty chaotic for us. We managed to make it over, getting to Valkenswaard on the evening of the 15th July and staying until the morning of 18th July. It was all very last minute as we only booked the week before, leaving very little time for arrangements.

We booked Ryanair flights from Dublin to Amsterdam on 14th July, stayed the night there and travelled by train to Eindhoven on 15th. We hired a car in Eindhoven and made the short drive to the



Fletcher Hotel Jagershorst, which is just outside Valkenswaard – an excellent hotel for anyone making the journey over. Our flight back to Dublin on the 18th was from Charleroi in Brussels, which was easily reached by connecting train journeys.

As I mentioned, it was all very last minute, so with that in mind I can't thank Ray enough for agreeing to meet with us on the morning of 16th July. He had also arranged to meet with Geoff Welham, who currently sponsors my grandfather's grave.

We all spent a good part of the day together visiting the cemetery, the "Family Suykerbuyck" restaurant (formerly Café "Rustoord"), Joe's Bridge in Belgium where we saw some of the old foxholes dug in the woods beside the bridge, a German War Cemetery in Belgium and also the stretch of road where my grandfather was believed to have been killed. Ray also showed us his own collection of war memorabilia, which is incredible – and as if that wasn't enough, he rocked up on a 2nd World War motorcycle, which was pretty cool!

All in all a fantastic experience and one that I would highly recommend for anyone wishing to visit their lost relatives, even if it's only to visit the graves and pay your respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. For me it was a very moving experience. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Geoff and especially Ray for everything they've done and continue to do – for taking the time to meet with this stranger and share your knowledge. ●

Simon Williams, descendant of Private Joseph Desmond

There is a wonderful moment, one of any number of wonderful moments I could list, in the film *A Bridge Too Far*, when Elliot Gould's 'Colonel Stout' – an entirely fictitious character – encounters Michael Caine's 'Lieutenant-Colonel Vandeleur' – very much a real person – in the midst of euphoria in Eindhoven. A bridge has been blown up, and engineers and bridging equipment are very much needed with some urgency to get the advance moving again and put the Allies back on track.

The two men are surrounded by a sea of jubilation, cheering, singing and curiously well organised flag waving including instances of American Stars and Stripes and British union flags alongside the, perhaps more expected, Dutch red, white and blue tricolour. The exchange between the two goes something like this:

Stout: Hey You! You Vandeleur?

Vandeleur: Yes.

Stout: I'm Bobby Stout.

Vandeleur: (incredibly British) How do you do.

Stout: Helluva day, huh? Look at 'em. Wild.

Vandeleur: Have you ever been liberated?

Stout: I got divorced twice, does that count?

Vandeleur: (with a knowing and appreciative smile)

Yes, that counts.

The imagined scene vividly, by all accounts, captures the release and the colour of the liberation of the parts of The Netherlands freed from German occupation by Operation Market Garden, even those areas only temporarily thus in and around the town of Arnhem to the north of the corridor of the fighting. In the town of Valkenswaard, the limit of XXX Corps' advance on 17 September 1944, liberation is very much celebrated every year in a riot of colour and now of music and performance, as a ringing endorsement of the freedom they have enjoyed since that day 81 years ago.

The market town to the southwest of Eindhoven was as far Operation Garden reached on the first day of the battle back in 1944. Garden, of course, was the ground element of Operation Market Garden and 2nd Army's attempt to cross the Rhine, sweep up towards the north German plains and on to Berlin, ending the war by Christmas (as the story goes). The battle ended in failure, but much of the area liberated to the south of Arnhem remained in Allied hands through to the end of the war. In Valkenswaard, this liberation was celebrated in a very particular way and is now replayed every year, on the third Sunday of September.

Each float for 2024 took a local folk story or legend as their inspiration.

Many of the after battle accounts note the appearance of orange materials and various kinds of flowers as a means of celebrating the apparent liberation of the country. The story goes that, in Valkenswaard, in the years following the liberation, on 17 September the children would decorate their bicycles and carts with flowers and ride them through the town. This act evolved into a tradition that, in 1953, became an official 'bloemencorso', 'flower parade'. As the years





liberation anniversary was given the theme 'Stories of Freedom' – a theme that would be as relevant today as on each instance of celebration since that day in 1944 when the men of the Irish Guards and the Devonshire Regiment fought their way into the town and ended German occupation. On the 60th anniversary, the parade was recognised as being of national historic significance and is now celebrated as a festival of art and culture.

Last year, sat in a stand in the market square alongside other families of soldiers of the British armed forces who had fought in the area during the Second World War, it was difficult not to be moved by the creativity unleashed by the festival and the continuing relationship the town, the Dutch, have with those that liberated them during the war. 2024's parade preceded the commemoration service at the

went by the sophistication and elaborate nature of the carts and floats created developed into what is now a truly incredible sight to see.

By 1963, over 150,000 dahlias were used to decorate the floats in the parade. Today between 2.5 and 3 million flowers are used, each individually applied in the few days running up to the Sunday parade through the town. 1963's total would be enough for just one of the floats in this year's parade! The 1994 parade, the 50th



Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery southwest of the town. Convivial delight transformed into appropriate remembrance, each grave marked with flower tribute and framed photograph, beautifully

kept by both the employees of the Commission and the volunteer sponsors of each of the servicemen's graves. A reminder of the right to celebrate freedom, to enact freedom, and the responsibility to remember, the duty to never let these stories and sacrifices be forgotten.

Keeping memories alive. I was fortunate to be invited to speak at the 80th Anniversary Commemoration Service at Valkenswaard Cemetery memories alive. I was fortunate to be invited to speak at the 80th Anniversary Commemoration Service at Valkenswaard Cemetery



The floats last a weekend and then are taken apart for another year. The reason why the floats are always rebuilt stays with the people of Valkenswaard all year round... 'Have you ever been liberated?' ●

Pupils from Were Di Secondary School Place Stones at British Cemetery

On Monday 15 September our Foundation accompanied 80 pupils aged 12–13 from Were Di Secondary School in Valkenswaard to the British War Cemetery.

We gave them an introduction to the cemetery itself and to Operation Market Garden. Each pupil had been asked in advance to paint a small stone and, if they wished, write a message on it. At the cemetery they were invited to place their stone at a grave of their own choice.

Many stones were laid on the graves of the youngest servicemen. In conversations with the pupils it became clear how strongly the soldiers' ages impressed them. One pupil remarked: "That soldier is the same age as my sister now." Some were so moved by the visit that they sat quietly for a while afterwards.

It was a touching and meaningful experience — not only for the students, but also for their teachers and for us. ●



Short news messages

Research into Jean Descubes

Following the 4 May commemoration and questions raised in the town council, we conducted further research on Jean Descubes, the French soldier who died on 13 May 1940 in Valkenswaard's Carolus Hospital from his wounds. Though not killed in the town itself, he was the first WWII soldier to be buried there. After the war his remains were transferred to Saumur, France.

The Foundation strongly supports the plan for a memorial plaque but believes this should be done carefully to avoid errors that have occurred elsewhere. Extensive research in French archives shows there are no obstacles; Descubes received a French military decoration and is named on several monuments. A 40-page report has been submitted to the Mayor and Aldermen of Valkenswaard to inform their decision.

17 September 2025 – 80th Anniversary Commemoration

This year marked the 80th commemoration ceremony at Valkenswaard War Cemetery on the Luikerweg. Organised by the Bond van Wapenbroeders and the Municipality of Valkenswaard, our Foundation again provided name boards at each grave and laid a wreath. The Flower Parade Foundation also joined the ceremony.

Given the special anniversary we asked the municipality to invite additional guests, including the Defence Attaché and the Director of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). We were honoured by the British Ambassador's attendance and look forward to closer cooperation with the British Embassy in the years ahead.



Updated Adoption Lists

In recent months we have obtained additional adoption books and older adoption lists for the British War Cemetery in Valkenswaard, including from the Freedom Museum in Groesbeek. These documents may shed new light on missing information about some of the soldiers buried along the Luikerweg.

New Information on Fallen Soldiers

Last month we received valuable new information about several servicemen at Valkenswaard War Cemetery:

- The adopter of Private Yates contacted a family member, and we have added the resulting information to our archives.
- We learned that the grandson of Lance-Corporal Renton visited his grandfather's grave and kindly shared further details with us.
- Researcher Tracey van Oeffelen once again provided important newspaper clippings, this time about Cpl. Dymott, Cpl. Lowes, Trooper Milne and Private Matthews.

All new information can be consulted on our website.

Christmas Eve 2025 – "Lights on Christmas Eve"

Once again our Foundation will organise the tradition of placing candles on every grave on Christmas Eve. This year it will take place on Wednesday 24 December 2025. Please mark the date in your diary. The start time will be announced later; we kindly ask for voluntary contributions towards the cost of the candles.



18 September 2025 Annual Static Show

Because the market square was occupied by the weekly market, this year's Static Show moved to the Luikerweg. Between Café De Baron and De Vijzel chemist, visitors could view tents and historic military vehicles from 11.00 a.m. onwards. At 4.00 p.m. the vehicles departed to join the ceremony transferring the liberation flame from Bayeux to Eindhoven. Our Foundation manned an information stand to receive stories and answer questions. ●



We thank all our British friends and families for your continuing interest and support. By sharing stories, photographs and memories, you help us ensure that the men who fought and fell here are never forgotten. With warm regards,

Foundation Heritage 40-45 Valkenswaard–Waalre

Your Help

The Erfgoed 40-45 Foundation is a non-profit organisation. All donations go directly to our work: researching graves, educating youth, maintaining remembrance, and supporting visiting relatives.

We're always looking for sponsors or wartime stories, photos, and items.

Interested? Email us at info@erfgoed40-45.nl

Thank you for keeping the memory alive - together.

**VWCAP part of
the foundation Erfgoed 40-45, gemeenten
Valkenswaard en Waalre**

**Correspondance:
Willibrorduslaan 48, 5581 GG Waalre.
info@erfgoed40-45.nl**

**Website: www.erfgoed40-45.nl
www.valkenswaardwarcemetery.nl**

**Bank: IBAN nr. NL 27 RABO 01.16.58.46.45
t.n.v. Stichting Erfgoed 40-45**

The foundation has the ANBI status.