

ARNHEM
after
ARNHEM



R. STOPFORTH

Best wishes -
Bob Stopforth

1993.

ARNHEM

AFTER

ARNHEM

The Arnhem and Oosterbeek Civilians
Fight for Survival.

By

ROBERT STOPFORTH

with a foreword by

MAJOR GENERAL P. TOWER
C.B. D.S.O. M.B.E.

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My final thanks are due to my wife Valerie without whose encouragement and help this book would never have been completed.

Bob Stopforth, August 1992.

Cover photos front:

1. Bob Stopforth and his comrades in a foxhole near Hartenstein in Oosterbeek, 1944.
2. The destroyed city center of Arnhem in 1945.
3. The Pegasus as a wall hanging made of Smyrna wool by Cor Feijten.
4. Arnhem refugees in Hotel Vredelust in De Steeg.

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By same author:

Supply Exhausted.
Pegasus Attacks.
Metantaytipi.
Colts of Pegasus.
Pegasus at Peace.

To Friends:

‘The finest friendships have been formed in
mutual adversity, as iron is roost strongly
united by the fiercest flame’.

Charles Caleb Colton.1825

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Quote:

'With a tale, forsooth, he cometh unto you.
With a tale which holdeth children from play,
And old men from the chimney corner.'

Sir Philip Sidney. 1554-1586.
Died of wounds at Arnhem after Battle of Zutphen in 1586



FOREWORD.

When we flew from England on September 17th, 1944, most of us thought that we were going to free the Netherlands from four years of German occupation, and that the war would be over before Christmas.

We received a rapturous welcome from all the inhabitants in and around Arnhem, particularly in Oosterbeek. Help of every kind was given to us and acts of generosity abounded. But things did not go as we had hoped, and as the tide turned against us, we began to realise how truly genuine and heartfelt was the attitude of our Dutch friends.

Despite the inevitable casualties and the destruction of their property, their steadfast determination to help and sustain us never wavered. Many were the deeds of bravery and self-sacrifice that we remembered, and many will never be known. At last, the surviving airborne soldiers departed across the river, leaving hundreds of wounded to be helped, hidden, and healed by our Dutch friends.

Worst of all, we left the country and its wonderful people with all immediate hope of liberation gone, with a ferociously reasserted enemy authority, and with practically no food to take them through the approaching winter. Great was the contrast with our arrival, and great were to be the sufferings of the brave and generous Dutch. Their purgatory was only then to begin, and for eight more months it continued through the hardest, and hungriest winter for many years.

Eviction from homes, looting, starvation, torture, concentration camps - all were to be experienced and suffered before true liberation arrived in April 1945. Our gratitude, sympathy and compassion are immeasurable, and though the events occurred many years ago, the feelings remain about Arnhem into the generations that are young today.

It is to be hoped that the contents of this book will preserve their memories and of the brave Dutch men and women whose deeds are recorded in it.



Philip Tower,
Major-General.

PREFACE.

This story begins in 1954.

A small group of former members of 1 st. Airborne Divisional Signals invited a dozen Dutch children to England for a holiday.

This was a gesture of recognition to the people of Arnhem and Oosterbeek for their care of the graves of the British airborne troops killed in September 1944.

The cost of the holiday was raised by voluntary effort, and after a weekend spent in the company of survivors of the battle at the little Lincolnshire village of Caythorpe, the children, with their teachers, Mr. Hans Alferink, and Mr. Gerrit van Ginkel, came with me to Hoyland, a village in Yorkshire, for a few days holiday.

In 1987 a reunion took place at the Hotel Dreyeroord in Oosterbeek. Mr. Alferink and one of the boys had died, but most of the others were present- all thirty-three years older. Listening to the stories of the dark days, I realised that a chapter of Dutch history was being lost when the generation involved passed on.

My suggestion last year that those people personally involved in the battle, and who were expelled from their homes in retaliation for their helping the British in 1944, might wish to record and send me their memories met with an enthusiastic response. Now, following my appeal to English-speaking Dutch people in both England and Holland, I have had all the manuscripts translated.

I hope you enjoy this sincere if inadequate tribute to a brave and friendly people who suffered so much, and gave their help, friendship - and many their lives - for the young men who tried to help them in 1944. I wish to acknowledge the help given me in the compilation of this book by those who have sent me their memories of those dark days of 1944 - 45 and those who have translated the manuscripts into English.

Nearly fifty years have passed since these events, and memories may have blurred a little. But many of the following stories were written at that time and have been preserved. I have tried to present the tone and literal message of these stories as accurately as possible.



Bob Stopforth,
1992.

Member of the 1st Airborne Divisional Signals (The Royal Corps of Signals).



St. Eusebius Church.

CHAPTER

1.

PERSONAL MEMORIES OF THE PEOPLE OF ARNHEM AND OOSTERBEEK DURING AND AFTER THE BATTLE OF SEPTEMBER 1944.



Quote:

'There are defeats more triumphant than victories'

Montaigne, 1580.

HISTORY OF ARNHEM.

The story of Arnhem goes back into the mists of time. The site of the Roman settlement of Arenacum was recorded in A.D.893.

It was chartered and fortified in 1233 by Otto 11, Count of Geldern, and joined the Hanseatic League in 1443.

The residence of the dukes of Geldern, it was often attacked by Burgundians, and in 1543 fell to Charles V, who made it the seat of the Council of Gelderland. Arnhem came under the United Netherlands in 1585.

In 1586 the Englishman Sir Philip Sidney died at Arnhem after being wounded at the Battle of Zutphen.

In 1672 it was seized by the French and dismantled. Refortified in the 18th Century, it fell again to the French in 1793.

By the 20th century Arnhem had become a modern city, prosperous, and containing beautiful buildings and parks. The population rose to some 183,000 as befitted the capital of the important province of Gelderland.

RESISTANCE IN THE NETHERLANDS 1940/45.

During the war the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS gained a reputation for infamy and cruelty to partisans in occupied countries, and to Soviet prisoners of war. For example, of some six million Soviets taken prisoner, over half died in captivity.

Resistance fighters in occupied countries were treated as outlaws and not patriots. The Germans could only deal with resistance by terror tactics such as mass shootings of civilians in retaliation.

Vide: Oradour-sur-Glane.

Holland was no exception. Dutch partisans, or those suspected of acting against the Germans were shot without trial. Indeed, executions were carried out in Arnhem shortly before the airborne landings. There have been fanciful allusions over the years to Arnhem being the last chivalrous battle.

This view would not be shared by those participating-neither military nor civilian. Hand-to-hand combat and street fighting, Lightly armed men versus tanks, with flamethrowers incinerating all within range, gave little reason for quarter to be given by either side.

Other examples of treatment of civilians in the following pages bury this myth of chivalry completely-with one exception. The only time humanity had a chance was in shared suffering. The hospitals and first aid centres united foes, doctors, nurses, padres, and patients in the common aim of the relief of suffering.

German post-war accounts of the time include details of brutality towards captured Dutch resistance fighters-although wearing their orange armbands. At Oosterbeek and at Arnhem after the bridge was captured, cold-blooded executions followed.

Another instance in that area was the execution of villagers, the destruction of the village, the evacuation of women and children, and the surviving men taken to Germany for slave labour.

This was the reaction by the Germans to the killing by the Resistance of some German soldiers in the village of Putten. We in Britain where no invasion has taken place for a thousand years might well ask ourselves-would we have done as well were we occupied?

RESISTANCE ORGANISATIONS.

ILLEGALITY.

By this was meant everybody who, even if not in an organised way, was in opposition to the rules set by the occupying power and sought to help in any way those patriots who actively waged opposition to the enemy. The Resistance and Illegality are then two names for the same cause. From 1940 different groups were active until most of them had been eliminated by the Germans in 1941/42.

ORDEDIENST. (O.D).

This was a loosely organised group, - but after about 1941/42 was not an active resistance organisation. It was meant to become activated as soon as the Germans retreated from the country, and its role then was intended to be that of a policing unit, arresting hostile elements and restoring order. The cadre for the most part consisted of former members of the Dutch armed forces. Many members of the O.D. in the meantime took an active part in resistance through other organisations. By mid 1943 the following organisations were active:

L.O.

NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR HELP TO FUGITIVES.

The largest active organisation, spread over the whole land with cells in most places.

And lastly,

B.S. or N.B.S.

NETHERLANDS INTERNAL ARMED FORCES

This originated in September 1944 under orders from the Dutch Government in London under the command of Prince Bernhard. As a result of the different organisations and objectives of the L.K.P. and the R.V.V. on the one side, and the O.D. on the other, many difficulties arose. In most districts B.S. was also divided into fighting and non-fighting divisions. Both divisions attracted people from the L.O. and the illegal press. In the winter of 1944/45, the fighting division operated as a military organisation armed with weapons and military material. Practice and training took place mostly at night. The non-fighting part waited in readiness for the transitional period between the departure of the Germans and the arrival of the Dutch authorities.

THE ILLEGAL PRESS.

National Papers:

'VRIJ NEDERLAND'	-	FREE NETHERLANDS.
'TROUW'	-	FAITHFUL.
'HET PAROOL'	-	THE PASSWORD.
'ONS VOLK'	-	OUR PEOPLE.
'DE WAARHEID'	-	THE TRUTH.

Besides this, a few regional and rural publications were published. Among these were De Zwarte Koerier, (The Black Courier) from Hans Alferink in Oosterbeek.

N.S.F.

NATIONAL SUPPORT FUND.

One of the oldest organisations, a continuation of 'de Zeemanspot' (The seamen's Pot) began for the financial support of the families of seamen who were offshore in 1940. This later grew to be a support organisation for all fugitives and resistance members who had no income. At first, money was obtained through loans from private individuals, but later through bank advances guaranteed by the Dutch Government in London. There also existed a few specialist organisations which were under independent leadership. These also supported the L.O, L.K.P, and later the B.S.

C. I. D.	-	CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE.
P. B. C.	-	CENTRE FOR PERSONAL IDENTITY.
T.D. CLUB.	-	DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTION.
C.D.K.	-	AS ABOVE.
ALBRECHT GROUP	-	ESPIONAGE.

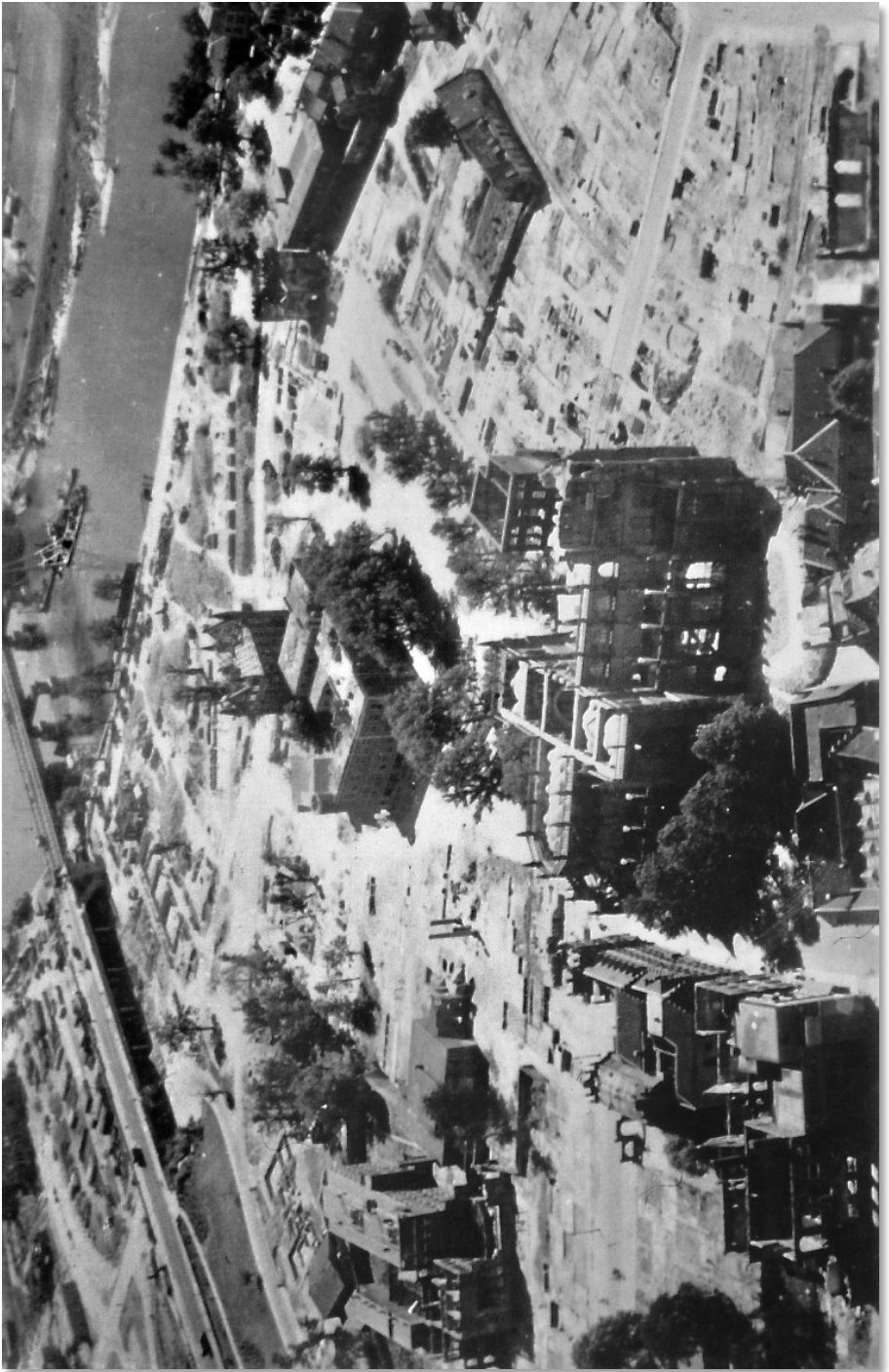
GELDERLAND.

The larger area around Arnhem and its suburbs similar to our County is known as Gelderland. Hundreds of years ago it was independent and rich with many castles and towns. It can be divided into three areas.

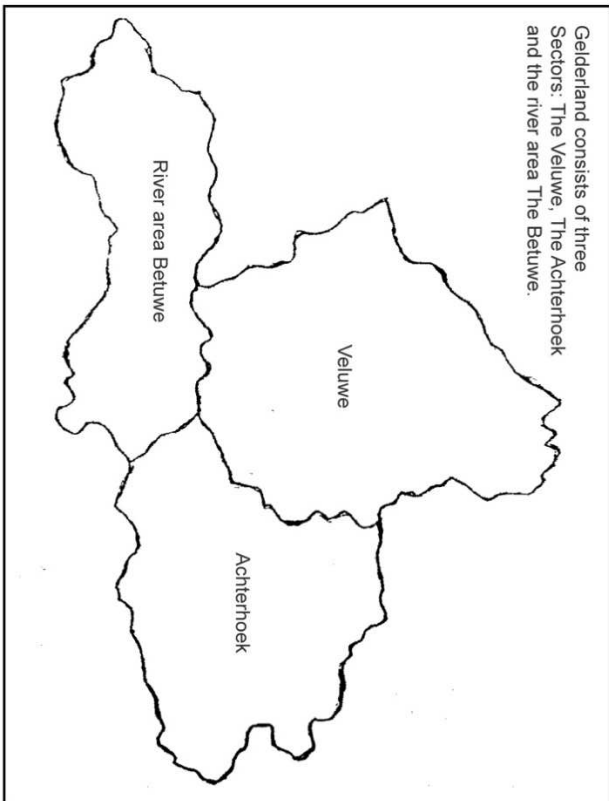
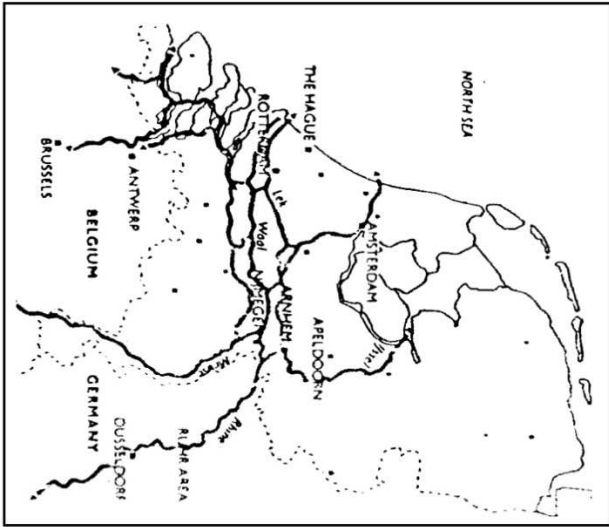
The first, which lies to the north of the Rhine is called the Veluwe. It is largely covered with woods and heathlands, and to the north has many sandy beaches where the Zuider Zee reached. The Veluwe contains the largest nature reserve in the country.

The second area, to the south of the Rhine, is known as the river area. This stretches between Arnhem and Nijmegen north and south and extends westwards between the rivers Waal and Meuse. A flat land of dykes-containing the rivers-it is covered with orchards producing many different kinds of fruit.

Finally, there is Achterhoek. This lies to the east and extends to the German border from the River IJssel. It is land that has been reclaimed over the centuries. The IJssel is a tributary of the Rhine and runs north from Arnhem to the Zuider Zee.



St. Walburgis Church.



CHAPTER
2.
RESISTANCE
IN
GELDERLAND.



Quote:

'He that is taken and put into prison or chains is not conquered, though overcome; for he is still an enemy.'

Thomas Hobbes.1651.