



Stichting Herdenkingsmonument Mierlo-Hout  
**News letter**  
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### In this issue:

**\*Just a memorial**

**\*Mierlo-Hout Then & Now**

**\*NL-Doet**

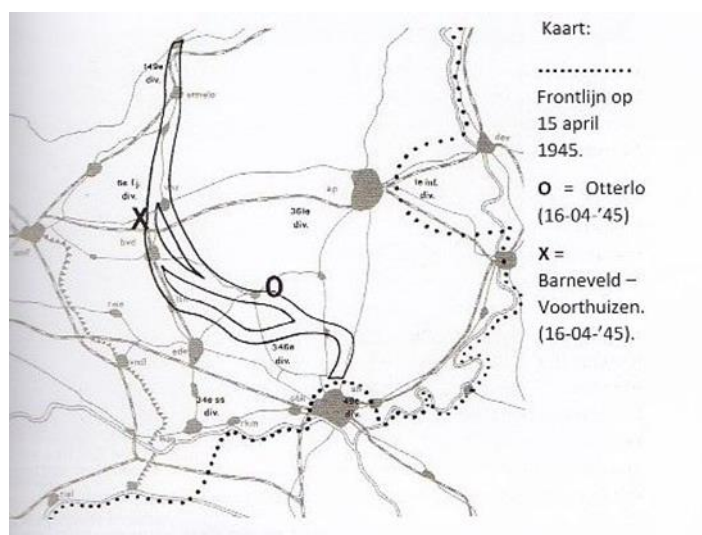
Hello friends,

## Just another monument

### The forgotten battle of Otterlo

It was the last major battle of the Second World War that was fought on Dutch territory. During the war, Otterlo had about 800 inhabitants. The village was at a very strategic crossroads of roads. The main roads ran from east to west and from north to south, the rest of the roads were still mostly dirt roads. The local population consisted mainly of small farmers and there were also people working in the hospitality industry, as shopkeepers or in construction as a mason or carpenter, but there was no industry at all. A real agricultural community. Between the two world wars, several people started a guest house, now usually called Bed & Breakfast and a few hotels were set up. People saw the benefits of tourism and that has remained the case ever since.

After the failure of Operation Market Garden in September 1944, the Allies turned their attention to the last German defense line along the Rhine (the Westwall). The liberation of the northern half of the Netherlands was thus delayed.



After the breakthrough across the Rhine, the Allied armies split into three groups. One of these groups, mainly Canadians, made an itinerant movement and started the march for the liberation of the Netherlands from the east.



Insignia of the Canadian 5th Armored Division

The 5th Canadian Armored Division moved northwest into the Veluwe on April 15 and set up camp in De Hoge Veluwe National Park.

On April 16, 1945, the village of Otterlo was liberated by the 5th Canadian Armored Division. Wekerom and Voorthuizen followed. The division headquarters and an infantry battalion were left behind in the village. In the night of April 16 to 17, the Governor General's Horse Guards spent the night in Otterlo. A meeting took place in the church that evening, at which the Irish Regiment of Canada was also present.



Meanwhile, the Germans tried to reach the - for them safe - western part of the Netherlands. Around 3 AM a German infantry unit of about eight hundred to a thousand men penetrated into the village. The German unit wanted to avoid being surrounded by Canadian troops and tried to reach the Grebbe Line, which was in German hands, with the attack. The German group mainly consisted of Hitlerjugend. There were also soldiers of the Grenadier regiment 952 and remnants of the Grenadier regiment 858 with a total of about 250 men. The 2nd battalion of the Grenadier regiments 951 and 953 provided about 180 men and the Nordkaukasisches Infanterie-Bataillon 803 another about 50 men. The rest came from the two companies of the Sicherungs-Bataillon 1071 and the 2nd and 3rd batteries of the 361st Artillery Regiment (deployed as infantry). At the divisional level, most of the troops therefore came from the 361st Volksgrenadier Division and partly from the 346th Infantry Division.

The artillery continued to fight with small arms, but groups of German soldiers managed to break through the line and entrench themselves in the village.

A fierce battle ignited in Otterlo. Because radio connections did not function, chaotic combat situations arose in the village. The church was surrounded, with the Germans running in between the Canadians. During the fight, four Canadian soldiers fled into the woods and ended up with the armored division in De Hoge Veluwe National Park. In that night all available men had to go on 'deck' and there was literally often hand-to-hand fighting by soldiers who had not fired once in the entire war, they were the truckers, administrative staff, cooks, etc.

Early in the morning, Allied soldiers in the village were relieved by a unit of Churchill tanks and Wasp flamethrowers mounted on two vehicles.

Especially the flamethrowers caused terrible scenes among the German soldiers. Due to the heavy losses and the superior numbers of Canadian equipment, the Germans finally surrendered on April 17.

At the Battle of Otterlo, 150 to 200 Germans were killed, while the Canadians and British lost 17 and 6 men respectively. Four villagers were killed.



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However, only 62 German dead have known graves: 24 unidentified bodies in a local mass grave (vacated in 1949) and 37 identified bodies in the IJsselsteyn German cemetery. Nevertheless, eyewitness accounts, regimental diaries and war correspondents report many more casualties (150 to 200), up to 400 killed according to a CBC broadcast. All sources state that the German casualties included a remarkable number of teenage soldiers.

The liberation of Otterlo came at a high price.



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**Menno de Vries (31) has made a documentary about the Battle of Otterlo. The images have been on YouTube since Saturday, April 17, 2021, exactly 76 years later. This is complete with photos from then and 3D animations made by the born and raised Edenaar. "This is the forgotten battle of the Second World War on Dutch soil. More than a thousand soldiers were involved and more than a hundred were killed. It has become my mission to make this more known."**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CgT9jFg7io](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CgT9jFg7io)

The end result is a documentary of more than fifteen minutes.

Menno de Vries about that: That could have been an hour, but I didn't want that. Therefore, I had to shorten it quite a bit. It is my intention that the documentary should appeal to a large audience and then it should not be too long.

## Mierlo - Hout Then & Now



F| © M. Coolen. Sr



F| © M. Coolen. Jr



## NL-Doet in-between the March showers

We were lucky with the weather conditions on this Friday morning during NL-Doet 2023. This because in the afternoon the weather turned quickly and the temperature dropped from 11 to only 2 degrees within 2 hours and there was rain and wet snow instead of the sun we had in the morning. Fortunately, everyone was already high and dry at school or at home for the start of the weekend. At our foundation, NL-Doet is also the closing of the adoption year for schools. In the past year it was the turn of the students from core group 8, from Kind Centrum In het Hart van het Hout led by Miss Marjolein. During the spring cleaning, the children and various volunteers, including Geert Lemmen and Ronald van der Wegen of Social Teams Municipality of Helmond, cleaned and scrubbed in the memorial park. But the war graves on the Lucia cemetery and the memorial stone of the British soldiers in the Slegersstraat were also taken care of by the youth.



District alderman Cathalijne Dortmans was a guest again this year and she helped, among other things, hoist the flags in the masts at the Monument Mierlo-Hout. The alderman presented the certificate on behalf of the HMMH Foundation. This is a token of appreciation for the school's interest in the history of the war and the liberation of Mierlo-Hout on September 22, 1944.



**OBS 't Hout is the next adoption school, which will participate in the liberation festivities in Mierlo-Hout in September this year. In this way and for many years, youth has been involved as much as possible in Freedom and Remembrance.**

**Because after all... we only have the monument on loan from our children....**

**Mario Coolen also presented the certificate for participation in NL-Doet 2023.**

**To conclude, the photo of NL-Doet 2023.**



**For more information about our Foundation, please refer to our website:  
<https://monumentmierlohout.nl>**