

Airborne War Cemetery at Oosterbeek - 20 short stories



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Directions from the Airborne Museum to the Airborne Cemetery in Oosterbeek

It is a 20 minute walk from the museum to the Airborne Cemetery. Exit the museum, and turn left. Follow the footpath, pass the barrier, and turn right on the main road (Utrechtseweg). Turn left at the crossroads with traffic lights. Follow this road (Stationsweg) until you cross the railway line. Immediately after the bridge over the railway line, turn right (Van Limburg Stirumweg). Follow the green sign ARNHEM OOSTERBEEK WAR CEMETERY. Follow this road. After the bend in the road you will find the entrance to the Airborne Cemetery on your left.



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Airborne War Cemetery

The Airborne War Cemetery is a military burial field. The work on the layout began immediately after the liberation of the Netherlands, and the cemetery was consecrated on 25 September 1945. More than 1750 servicemen are buried here, most of those were killed during the Battle of Arnhem, others in later fighting in the area. Around 1700 Graves are of Commonwealth servicemen, amongst them 33 Canadians, and some of Australia and New Zealand. There are also 79 Polish graves, 3 Dutch and 3 non-war (former employees of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, who tended this site for many years).

The 3 Dutch servicemen, who were fighting under Allied command, are: August Bakhuis Roozeboom (age 22), Jacob Groenewoud (age 27) and Samuel Swarts (age 27).

Two British veterans who died after the war, were buried on this site in 1955 and 1966.

On the far side of the cemetery stands The **Cross of Sacrifice**, embedded with a bronze sword, which represents the faith of the majority. At the entrance of the cemetery stands The Stone of Remembrance with “**Their name liveth for evermore**”, to commemorate those of all faiths and none. The geometry of the structure is based on studies of the Pantheon.

On both sides of the entrance there is a shelter building. In both buildings you may find a marble plaque with an eagle, crowned with laurels, and the dates: 1939☆1945. The building on the right side of the entrance houses a register box, containing an inventory of the burials and a plan of the plots and rows, as well as a visitors book.

Individual graves are marked by 4 different shapes of headstones:

(A) for the 3 Dutch servicemen, (B) for the 79 Polish servicemen, (C) for the Commonwealth servicemen, and (D) for the 3 employees of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



The 20 short personal stories

Each grave has its own sad tale to tell.

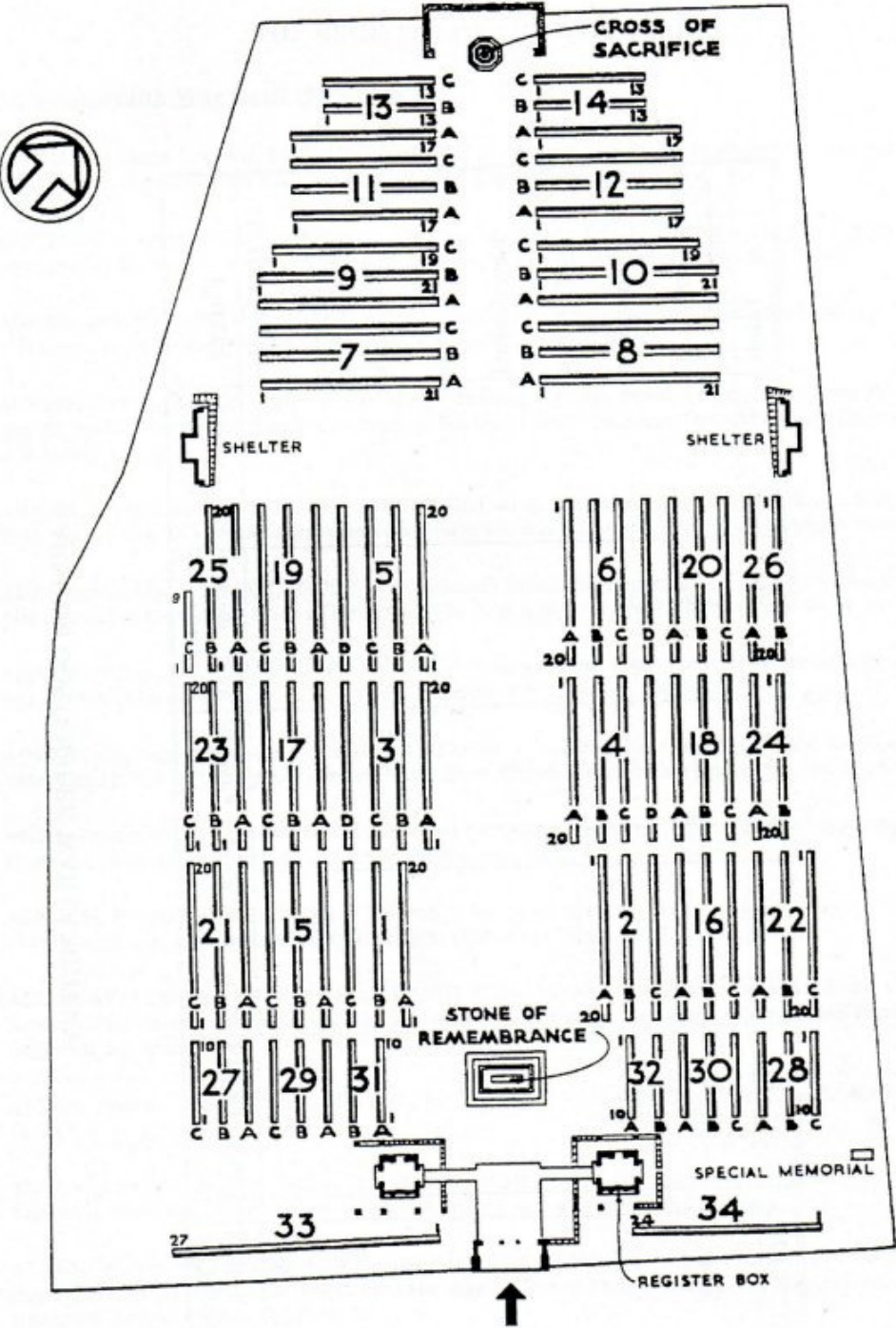
More than 200 servicemen were not older than 21, 3 were only 17 when they died! Many of the servicemen were identified, and we know where, when and how they were killed. Very often they were buried in a field grave during the battle, and brought to this cemetery after the war. 245 of the burials remain unidentified until this day. Their headstones bear the inscription “**Known Unto God**”.

But every man who was killed left relatives behind: parents, brothers, sisters, a wife, fiancée, children. And many of these men had close friendships in their unit, and very often their friends watched them die. We have made a random selection of 20 personal stories. We could have chosen any 20 other personal stories instead.

Each grave has its own sad tale to tell.

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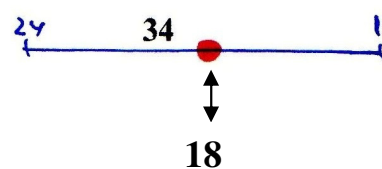
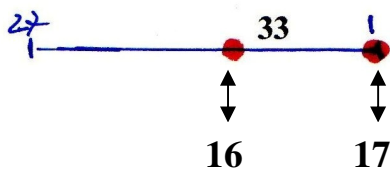
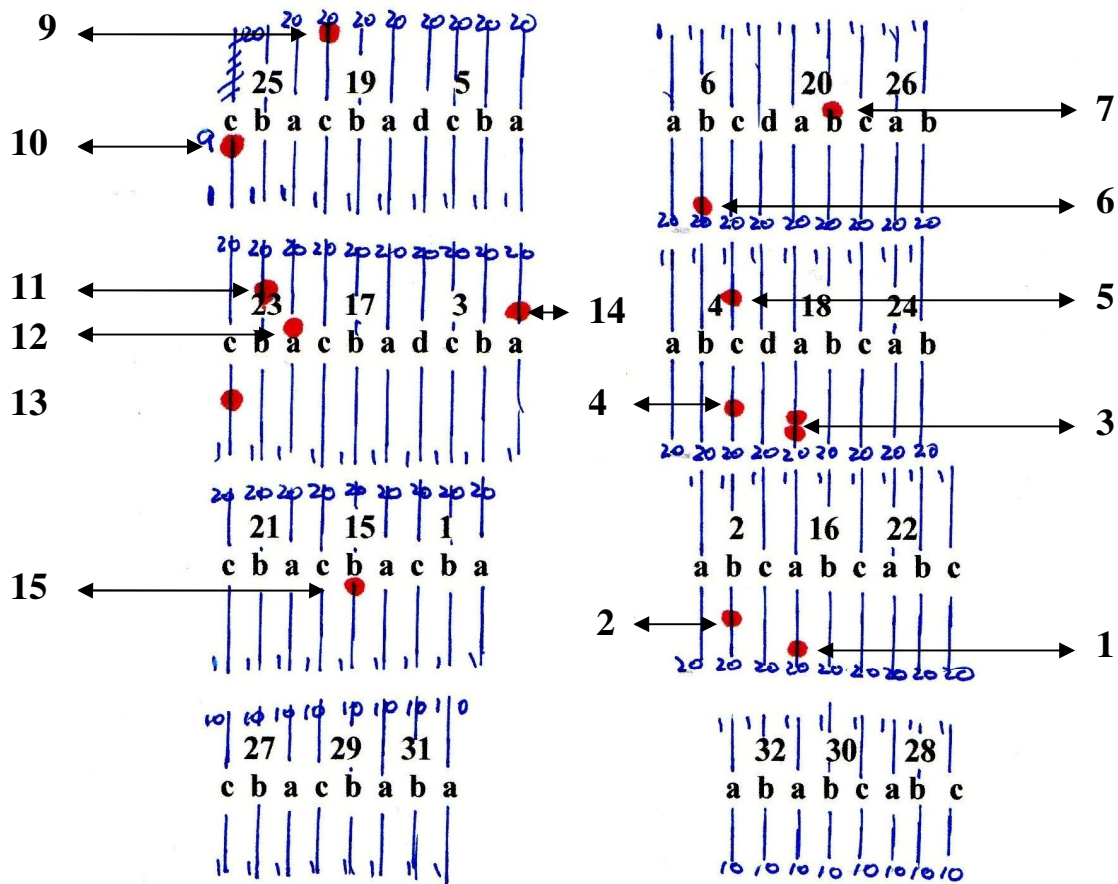
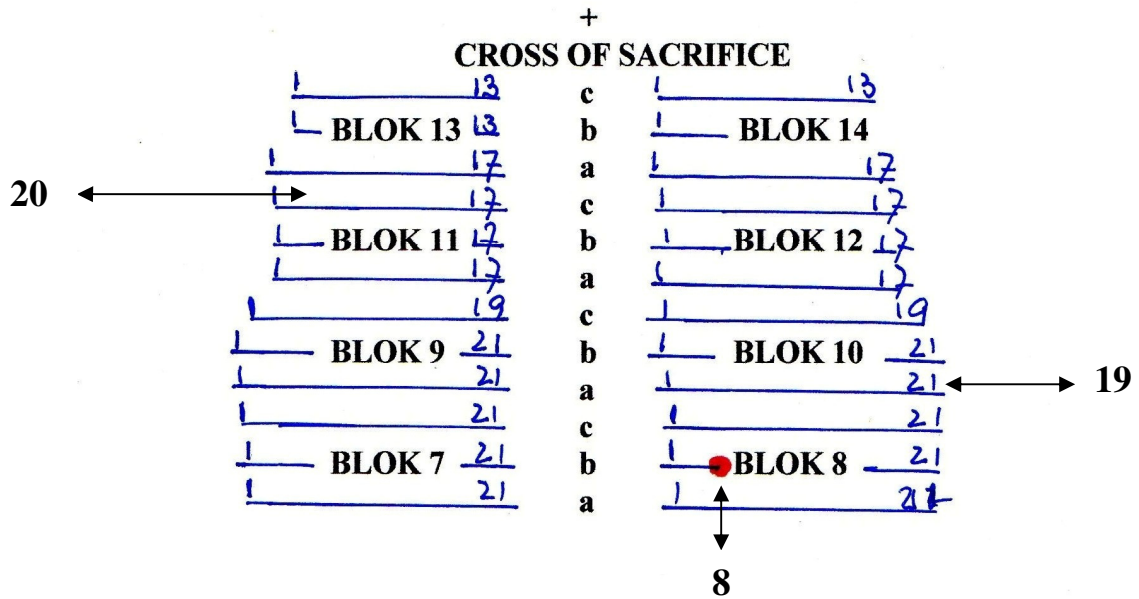
Map of the Airborne Cemetery in Oosterbeek



ARNHEM OOSTERBEEK WAR CEMETERY

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LAY-OUT AIRBORNE CEMETERY



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1. Vernon Smith, row 16.A.19.

Age 21, British

Vernon Smith is killed in action near Hotel Hartenstein, the Headquarters of the First British Airborne Division in Oosterbeek.

2. David E. Plummer, row 2.B.16.

Age 19, British

On September 22, 1944 David Plummer tries to bring an injured man on a stretcher to safety. He is shot dead by a sniper.

3. Thomas Gronert, row 18.A.17 and Claude Gronert, row 18.A.18.

Age 21, British

These twin brothers are fighting side by side at the railway station in Oosterbeek. Thomas is hit, and cries out for help. Claude tries to help his brother. After the fighting has stopped, the brothers are found dead lying side by side. They are subsequently buried side by side.

4. Peter B.N. Davis, row 4.C.17.

Age 28, British

Peter Davis' plane, fully loaded with a stock of gasoline, is shot from the sky. A German camera crew is filming the crash. His brother died in service too.

5. Dennis A. Matthews, row 4.C.5.

Age 25, British

Dennis Matthews' plane is hit and his parachute catches fire. In desperation he tries to use a provisions basket as an emergency "parachute". He is shot in midair.

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6. (believed to be) Stanley E. Watling, row 6.B.19.

Age 28, British

Stanley Watling is killed on September 19, 1944, but he is buried as an unknown soldier. In 1993 his body is identified by means of a golden brooch. 50 Years after his death, his widow visits his grave for the first time.

7. Jacobus Groenewoud, row 20.B.12.

Age 27, Dutch

Jacob Groenewoud plays an important part in gathering information amongst the local population. He volunteers to break through the lines to get help, but is killed. He is post-humously appointed Knight 4th class Military Willemsorder, the highest Dutch decoration.

8. Robert C. Bondy, row 8.B.7.

Age 35, British

Robert Bondy is a private chauffeur to a lord. He wishes to serve his country, and becomes a chauffeur in the army. When his glider crashes on landing, his jeep falls on top of him. He is killed instantly.

9. George T. Parkes, row 19.C.20.

Age 25, British

George Parkes is the eldest in a family of 10 children. He sees action in Africa, Italy and France. Just before leaving for Arnhem, he tells his sister he is afraid he will not come back this time.



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10. George Froud, row 25.C.9.

Age 27, British

George Froud was missing in action after September 21, 1944. His wife Vera refused to believe in his death, and travelled to Europe to find him. His body was not found until 1997, by which time his wife had died. A "V" he carved out of a piece of debris during the fighting was found with his body. It is thought to stand for "Vera", his wife.

11. John S.A'D. Coke, row 23.B.17.

Age 33, British

John Coke survives the Battle, but is killed during the withdrawal of the troops. His brother is also killed. At the request of the family they are buried close together.

12. Hans Rosenfeld (alias John P. Rodley), row 23.A.11.

Age 29, German in British service

His real name is Hans Rosenfeld. He is a mathematics student in Stuttgart, but escapes Nazi Germany and joins the British army. Because of his German and Jewish background he calls himself John Peter Rodley. He is killed by a stray bullet in a ditch on the "Stationsweg" in Oosterbeek.

13. Hubert K.S. Misiuda, row 23.C.6.

Age 35, Polish chaplain

The chaplain offers to help evacuate wounded Polish soldiers across the Rhine. His request is denied, but he goes anyway. Hubert Misiuda is shot dead on the river.

14. Eric J. Holloway, row 3.A.15.

Age 24, British

Eric Holloway is defending a house. The house collapses following a German attack, but he remains at his post, thus stopping the German attack single-handed. It is his last action in battle.

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15. Brian Brownscombe, row 15.B.10.

Age 29, British

Brian Brownscombe has a successful meeting with German doctors concerning the treatment of the wounded. On leaving the premises he is shot through the head by a drunken German SS-officer. He dies on the pavement beside the hospital.

16. Stefan Plichta, row 33.A.11.

Age 30, Polish

British troops find an unknown soldier in the woods in Neerloon. Stefan Plichta identifies himself in Polish. The British think he is talking in German, and they kill him.

17. Czeslaw Gajewnik, row 33.A.1.

Age 26, Polish

Czeslaw Gajewnik is killed during the evacuation over the Rhine on September 26, 1944. His body is finally found in the river Lek at Tienhoven, some 80 kilometres further on.

18. Richard Tice, row 34.A.13.

Age 22, American

Richard Tice is a American volunteer who has joined the Polish army. Some people in a field at the village of Driel call out to him in English. When he shows himself, they turn out to be Germans and they shoot him on the spot.



THEIR NAME LIVETH

FOR EVERMORE

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Captain R.B. Hutt



Trooper R.A. Armstrong



Trooper R. Edwards

19. Raymond B. Hutt, row 10.A.20.

Age 29, British

On April 17 1945, Captain Raymond Barnes Hutt and his regiment arrived in the deserted and destroyed city of Wageningen. The German occupation force has left the city, leaving treacherous landmines behind. Raymond is killed in a mine explosion exactly one month after his 29th birthday. His wife Julia Marie vows never to remarry. She visits her husbands' grave every year on March 17, his birthday, to lay a bouquet of white flowers. Julia Marie dies in 1991, and her ashes are buried in her husbands' grave.

20. Robert A. Armstrong, row 11.C.4 and Raymond Edwards, row 11.C.5.

Age 22 and 24, British

Robert and Raymond are two young friends in the British army. Raymond is a driver of a Sherman tank and Robert is his co-driver. Their journey begins on the beaches of Normandy in June 1944. On September 23 1944 they are positioned in an orchard, ready for the assault on the village of Elst. To locate the best way to exit the orchard, Raymond opens the hatch of the tank. The Germans open fire, and a grenade hits the hatch, killing Robert and Raymond. The two friends lie buried side by side.

These two stories were sent by Mr. C.F. Petter from Renkum.