

2005

The Liberation of Holland: A Photographic Record

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Recommended Citation

McGirr, Bob "The Liberation of Holland: A Photographic Record." Canadian Military History 14, 4 (2005)

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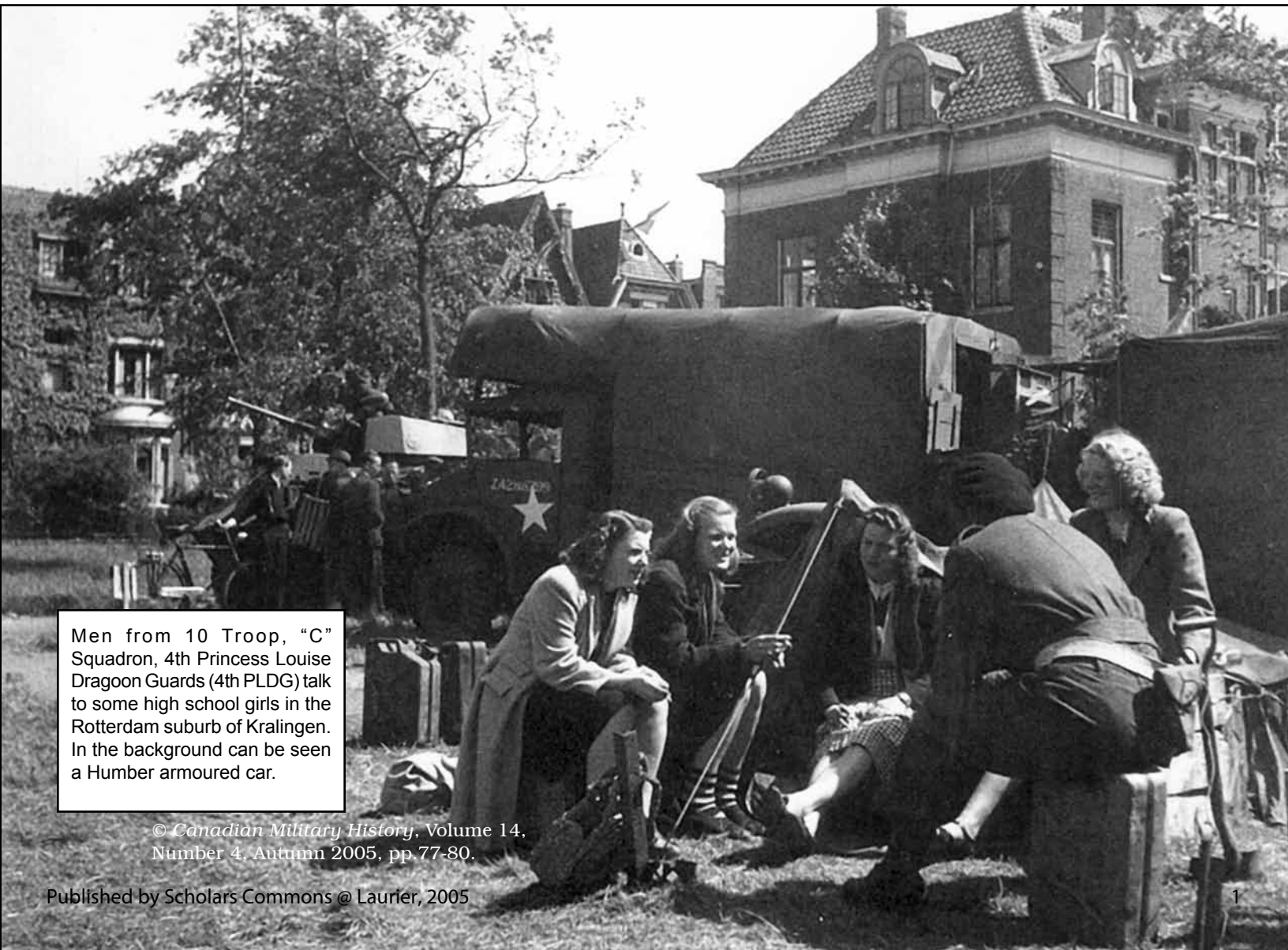
The Liberation of Holland

A photographic record

Editor's note – These photos have been supplied to *Canadian Military History* by Dr. Bob McGirr, who served as a troop leader and squadron gunnery officer in the 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, 1st Canadian Infantry Division's reconnaissance regiment. McGirr obtained these pictures in the Netherlands during the 50th anniversary reunion of the regiment. The photographs were taken by official Dutch government photographers and show a variety

of scenes during the Liberation of Holland and the role of Canadian army.

Dr. McGirr was born in Winnipeg in 1922 and joined the army after pre-med studies at the University of Manitoba. He was posted to the 4th PLDG in January 1945 and served to the end of the war. He received his medical degree from Queen's University in 1954 and subsequently practiced in Ontario.



Men from 10 Troop, "C" Squadron, 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards (4th PLDG) talk to some high school girls in the Rotterdam suburb of Kralingen. In the background can be seen a Humber armoured car.



Top: The original Dutch caption for this photo reads, "A young but highly admired Canadian liberator writes his address on a piece of paper for the obligatory postcard he will undoubtedly receive from each of these girls."



Middle: Dutch boys in their element during a show of Canadian army equipment in Rotterdam, 10 May 1945.



Bottom left: During Operation "Manna," which took place between 19 April and 7 May 1945, American B-17 Flying Fortresses loaded with food for the occupied population of the Netherlands fly over Rotterdam on their way to the dropping areas outside of the city.



Bottom right: The dropping area outside Rotterdam near the town of Terbregge. Note the food containers dropping by parachute in the top left corner of the photo.



A Bren carrier of the 4th PLDGs parades through Rotterdam, 9 June 1945. General H.D.G Crerar, commander of First Canadian Army (6th from left) takes the salute. With him on the viewing stand are Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes, commander of 1st Canadian Corps (8th from left) and Major-General Harry Foster, commander 1st Canadian Infantry Division (4th from left). Behind Foster, a former commander of the 4th PLDG, stands his aide-de-camp, Captain Bob McGirr (3rd from left in black beret).

A bird's-eye-view of the centre of Rotterdam after the war in 1945. The debris has been removed and the damage done to the town hall and post office has been repaired. The Church of St. Lawrence remains an empty ruin and the railway station was so damaged that it would be completed levelled and rebuilt. In May 1995 40 veterans from the 4th PLDG celebrated the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in the restored Church of St. Lawrence.





Top: Queen Wilhelmina pays a visit to Rotterdam on 5 October 1945 to commemorate 20 people executed by the Germans. Nicknamed the “Iron Lady,” she was tough, outspoken and respected. In October 1945 she ordered General Guy Simonds to take all Canadians out of Holland. Simonds is reputed to have responded, “Including our dead, your Highness?”

Right: Bernhard, Prince of the Netherlands (driving), arrives at the town hall in Rotterdam on his birthday, 29 June 1945. Prince Bernhard was very popular with the Canadians. Maybe it was the contrast with his mother, Queen Wilhelmina.



Call for Papers

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5-6 May 2006

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