



MARKET GARDEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

The unsung hero of the battle for Nijmegen Bridge by Jack Pritchard

It was at Sneek, in the province of Friesland in Holland, that a young Dutchman escaped to England in an open boat when his country was overrun by the Germans in 1940. He was determined to do all in his power to rid his country of the German invaders, not from an office, working as an interpreter as his qualification warranted, but as an infantryman in the elite regiment of the Grenadier Guards.



Adriaan Slob

It was a decision that required ratification by his embassy, and after prolonged diplomatic discussion it was agreed that Mr Adriaan Slob should be seconded as an intelligence officer to No 4 Company of the First Battalion of the Grenadier Guards, though he was to remain a member of the Netherland forces, and would not be given a permanent transfer. Such was his status that he was able to transmit and receive correspondence from his family in Sneek.

It was early in 1943 that I was first introduced to Lieutenant Adriaan Slob, and his clandestine approach to a type of warfare not at all consistent with the direct rifle and bayonet approach in which we were so thoroughly trained. The knife or dagger and the garrotte were the chosen weapons in the type of warfare that the lieutenant envisaged.

A Dutchman who could speak English fluently proved to be invaluable when the leading formations of the Guards Armoured Division entered Holland in September 1944. Much information about German positions was elicited from his fellow countrymen, and his ability to disseminate between the true and the false resulted in a number of successful actions against an unprepared enemy.

At about 11am on Wednesday, 20 September in Nijmegen he helped to bring in wounded men to a butcher's shop, owned by a Mr Meussen, situated on Ziekerstraat, where minor operations were taking place, with the butchers block acting as an operating table.



MARKET GARDEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

In the cellars below the shop were a family of four children, who with their parents had sought shelter with the butcher, after their own home in the old city had been torched by the Germans. The eldest of these children was Hendrika Bos, who spoke reasonably good English. Her father called her from the safety of the cellar to translate the information he had, about the German positions in the town, to the Grenadier who had entered the room. She started to translate the information, but Lieutenant Slob stepped forward and told Mr Bos that the translation was unnecessary. The detailed information was then given directly to the Lieutenant.

Reports of German defensive positions and their estimated fire power proved to be of vital importance to the Grenadiers. There can be little doubt that the intelligence officer, who was vastly experienced in assessing the value of such information, quickly formed a daring plan to destroy the headquarters of the SS Hauptsturmführer Karl-Heinz Euling. On the following day, assisted by his driver, Guardsman Trevett, he collected the bodies of his fallen Comrades, and supervised the burial of five of his friends near to Sionshof. The war reporter Eric Baume wrote a novel about this event, but the name of Lieutenant Slob was not mentioned. Sometime between June 1944 and the end of February 1945 the Lieutenant was awarded the Military cross. On 23 February, 1945 he was due to take part in a great offence, starting from Nijmegen against the Siefried Line and the Rhineriver. He arrived in Nijmegen on 21 February. The following day Adriaan and two other officers were driving across the Keizer Karel Square in a jeep when a tank crashed into them from behind. The two officers were thrown from the jeep, but Adriaan remained in the vehicle, fatally injured. The next morning he died in the British field hospital at Marienbosch (Jonkerbos). He lies at rest among his British friends and colleagues in the war cemetery at Jonkerbos, the only Englandvaarder to do so.

