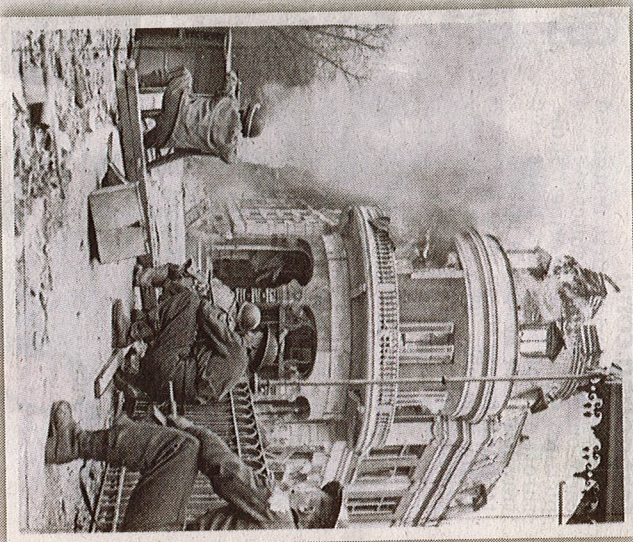


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much more than just
poignant memories of
World War II.
The city, with its many
hotels and friendly
restaurants, is the
ideal base for exploring the
surrounding area.

On the northern edge of
Arnhem lies the Royal
Burgers' Zoo, founded in
1913, and situated in the
wonderful woods of the De
Hoge Veluwe.

It is probably the best
and the most imaginative of
all the zoos in Europe,
showing animals in their
natural habitat.

They have a walk-through
oceanic aquarium, with the
biggest coral reef outside
Australia; a desert; a tropi-
cal rain forest; and the
largest indoor mangrove
swamp in the world, with
Caribbean manatees.

The national parks of De
Hoge Veluwe and the
Veluwezoom, with their
forests and heaths and
miles of cycle routes, can be
explored on free-to-use
white bikes or on foot.

There is also the Nether-
lands Open Air Museum,
with farms, ancient cottages
and windmills; artisans,
blacksmiths and others
there recreate rural life in
the Netherlands over the

centuries, with the visitors
allowed to lend a hand.

North of Arnhem at
Apeldoorn is the royal
palace of Het Loo, built by
William III, our 'King Billy'.

Among the ravishing
moated castles of the
region are Kasteel Slangen-
burg, which was where
SS-Gruppenführer Wilhelm
Bittrich, the commander of
the II SS Panzer Corps, had
established his headquar-
ters just before the battle.

Generalfeldmarschall Wal-
ter Model rushed there on
September 17 when British
paratroopers began
dropping near his headquar-
ters in Oosterbeek. Model
was convinced they were
coming to capture him,
rather than the great Arn-
hem bridge over the Rhine.

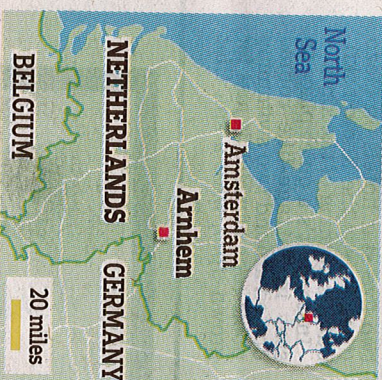
Today, the castle is used
as a guesthouse by a near-
by monastery, and its
grounds and beautifully
restored buildings are
open to the public and well
worth visiting.

Further south, the manor
house of Kasteel Henkens-
lage on the western edge of
St Oedenrode was the
headquarters of Major
General Maxwell Taylor, the
commander of the American
101st Airborne Division.
His 'Screaming Eagles'

Escape: Short haul



Pictures: ALAMY



were desperately holding off
German counter-attacks on
'Hell's Highway' — the route
north towards Arnhem along
which the British Guards
Armoured Division had
advanced in vain.

Kasteel Henkenslage is now a
wedding and function centre and
may not always be open, but its
gothic-style architecture and
moat make it a charming visit
for many tourists nonetheless.

After this year, over the
weekend of September 21-
22, political leaders, roy-
alty, generals, British,
American and Polish paratroop-
ers, local dignitaries and above
all the remaining veterans of
this, the greatest airborne
operation of all time, will congre-
gate to commemorate the dead,
both military and civilian.

Every September at the time of
the anniversary, houses in
Arnhem and Oosterbeek are
decorated with flags bearing the
Pegasus symbol of the British
airborne forces.

It is an incredibly moving sight,
and it is well worth making the
journey to see it.

Triumphal arches will be
erected to welcome the veterans.
At 10am on Saturday, September
21 this year a parachute drop will
once again take place on Ginkel
Heath, along with all the other
ceremonies of remembrance.

On the Sunday at 11am, at the
memorial service in the Corn-
monwealth War Graves cemetery
on the edge of Oosterbeek, local
schoolchildren will lay flowers on

the graves of those buried there.
It is hard to imagine that this
quiet and peaceful village was
almost totally destroyed in the
bitter fighting 75 years ago.

Oosterbeek lies along the north
bank of the Lower Rhine, on
rising ground, with trees and
beautiful views over the river
and beyond to the polderland
flood plain of the Betuwe.

Anyone interested in the events
of 1944 must visit the Airborne
Museum housed in the Harten-
stein Hotel, in Oosterbeek, which
became the British headquarters
during the battle, thus making
the actual museum as note-
worthy as its content.

For British troops, the failure
of Operation Market Garden led
either to prison camps or
produced a sense of anti-climax
made worse by the relentless
autumn rains.

For the Dutch, the conse-
quences were incomparably
worse. More than 3,600 civilians
were killed in the fighting and its
aftermath, with tens of thou-
sands more severely injured.

About 20 miles south of
Arnhem in Nijmegen, which had
suffered so much from German
shelling and fire-raising, 2,200
civilians are estimated to have
died, 5,500 were disabled, and
10,000 wounded. Some 22,000
houses were destroyed (only
4,000 remained unscathed).

Nijmegen, the oldest city in The
Netherlands, is still worth a visit.
Though few old buildings remain,
there are fragments of the origi-
nal Roman city wall and Valkhof
hall features an 8th or 9th-
century Carolingian chapel and
the remains of an imperial castle
demolished in 1798.

In late September 1944, after
the failure of Operation Market
Garden, the German revenge
for Dutch assistance to the
Allies in the battle was vicious.
Some 200,000 people, including
the whole population of
Arnhem, were forced from their
homes, which were looted
and destroyed.

In the summer of 1945, the
communal efforts to clear rubble
and restore essential services
were not enough to revive

Peaceful: But in 1944 Kasteel Henkenslage was the HQ of the
U.S. 101st Airborne Division. Inset: British Infantry in Arnhem

Arnhem and the devastated
towns around it. An appeal was
launched to the rest of the
country to help.

Amsterdam virtually adopted
the city, and craftsmen arrived
to help rebuild Arnhem.

The story spread — thanks to
the public relations skills of
Bungemeester Chris Matser,
the working-class son of a
mason, appointed mayor in
1945 — and assistance came
from all directions.

The reconstruction of Arnhem,
with its fine buildings and
churches, was finally completed
in 1969.

For me, the most poignant
moment of last year
was when the Mayor of
Arnhem, Ahmed Mar-
couch, launched the Dutch
edition of my book on the Battle
of Arnhem in its equivalent of a
cathedral, the beautifully rebuilt
St Eusebius church, known as
the Grote Kerk.

Large photographs of its
destruction in 1944 were
displayed on the walls around
us. The city's rebuilding into the
tranquil haven of today must be
little short of a miracle — and the
generosity of its inhabitants
is undeniable.

Although the Dutch had much
to forgive for the disastrous
failure of Operation Market
Garden, their kindness to Allied
troops at the time and ever
since towards the airborne
veterans has been, for the
British, one of the most moving
legacies of World War II.

ANTONY BEEVOR'S *Arnhem:
The Battle for The Bridges, 1944*
is out in Penguin paperback,
priced £8.99.

DOUBLE rooms at Hotel
Blidenberg in Oosterbeek from
£100 per night (*Blidenberg.nl*).
BA flights from Gatwick to
Amsterdam Schiphol from £84
return. Trains from Amsterdam
Schiphol to Arnhem take 75
minutes and cost from £15.50.

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