

B U L L E T I N

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NEDERLAND-ENGELAND

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UTRECHT BRANCH VOL. 18, No. 3 FEBRUARY/MARCH 2009

Venue: Noorderlicht Church, 92B Bergweg, Zeist

Dear members of the Utrecht Branch

First and foremost to those of you we didn't meet at the January event

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

and a healthy and trouble-free 2009

And for those of you becoming a bit depressed by the persistent cold, look at the new logo of the BBC Awards heralding the warmth and colour of the next season to come.



For the BBC Awards, started by the GNE, in cooperation with the British Council, as a public speaking competition for schools in 1988, and extended with a young writers competition in 1995, is pre-eminently a pre-Spring affair, running from February to March. Since we have the BBC as the main sponsor the two competitions are run in parallel as one annual event: the BBC Young Writers and Public Speaking Awards. Thanks to the support of many parties, the Awards has now become a prestigious national event in The Netherlands – something the GNE can be very proud of. This year the young people have these five subjects to choose from:

Inspired by the Olympics?

The credit crunch: its positive effects

What the world can teach the Dutch

Fitting in or standing out

What BBC TV does for me.

28th February 2009, Preliminary rounds Utrecht: Cals College, Nieuwegein.

Venue open: 13:00 hr; start: 13:30 hr. End of programme: 17:00-17:30 hr.

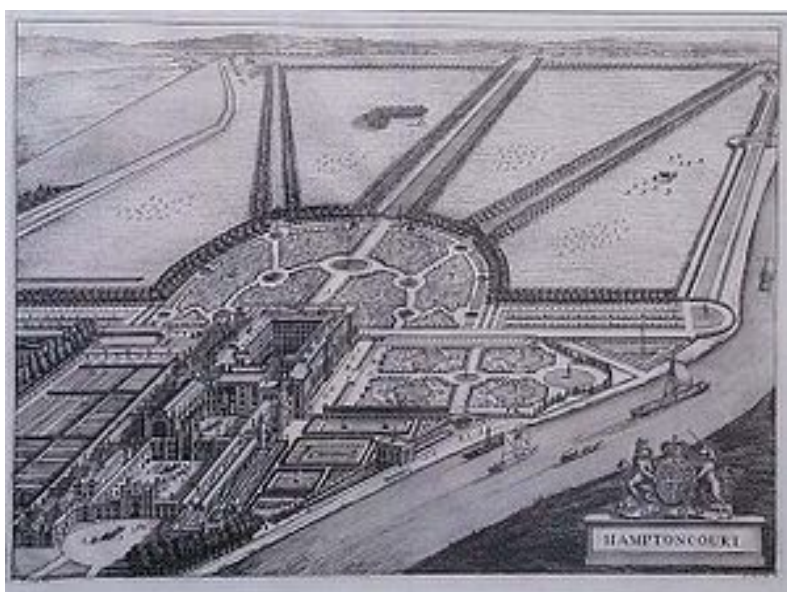
14th March 2009, Semi-finals: James Boswell Instituut, University College Campus, Utrecht.
Venue open: 13:00 hr; start: 13:30 hr; end of programme 17:00-17.30 hr.

28th March 2009, National final: Auditorium of the University of Amsterdam.
Venue open: 13:00 hr; start: 13.30hr; end of programme: 17:00-17:30 hr.
For the Preliminary rounds and the Semi-finals the entrance is free.
Intending to visit the final, please send an email to: bbcdutchawards@bbc.co.uk
or contact our Secretary.

COMING EVENTS

February, Tuesday, 17th in the Conference Room of the Noorderlicht Church at 8:00 p.m.

DRAWING THE BAROQUE LANDSCAPE - KIP, KNYFF AND ENGLISH GENTLEMEN
– a slide-illustrated talk by **Ray Biggs**



Ray has been associated with the historic house environment since 1989. He currently manages the visitor programme for the Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust in Lincolnshire and Perthshire (www.grimsthorpe.co.uk).

Ray Biggs is chairman of Hidden England, a group of five historic houses that have joined forces to promote their estates to a wider audience. Previous time was spent with the National Trust in Derbyshire and Staffordshire. He is a member of the Antiquarian

Spalding Gentleman's Society and the Silver Society. His MA was awarded by Leicester University (dept. of Museum Studies). Ray visited us before during 2006/07.

Ray forwarded us a rather cryptic introduction to his talk:

”Why were so many trees planted towards the end of the 17th century?

What part does a wooden lighthouse play in the story?

Can we trust all we see in the detailed drawing?”

Combined with the attractive alliteration of Kyp and Knyff this made us very, very curious. What are Kip and Knyff? Garden tools? Wikipedia enlightened us that Jan Kyp and Leonard Knyff were two Dutch engravers following in the tracks of William of Orange's Glorious Revolution. Their major work was *Britannia Illustrata: or Views of Several of the Queens Palaces, as Also of the Principal seats of the Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain, Curiously engraven on 80 Copper Plates. (1707)*”.

March, Friday 6th in the Conference Room of the Noorderlicht Church at 8:00 p.m.

HEART OF THE SAHARA - a slide-illustrated and sound enriched talk by **John Pilkington**

Every week throughout the winter, caravans of up to fifty camels arrive bellowing and snorting in Timbuktu. They are at the end of a three-week, 450-mile trek and each carries four huge slabs of

Taoudenni salt, the `white gold` of the Sahara.

With three camels and a Moorish guide, John set off from Timbuktu to find stunning desert landscapes and a life lived much as it was a millennium ago.

Taoudenni has no houses, no fresh water, no medicines, no electricity, no telephone, not even any cooking fuel apart from camel dung. For the hundred or so salt miners it's a posting from Hell. People around the world name Timbuktu as the remotest and most primitive place they can think of, but people in Timbuktu name Taoudenni. Taoudenni is Timbuktu's Timbuktu.



John Pilkington has been called one of Britain's greatest tellers of travellers' tales. In 1983, after journeys in Africa and Latin America, he completed a 500-mile solo crossing of the western Nepal Himalaya, and told the story in his first book, *Into Thin Air*. His interest in Asia grew further with the opening in 1986 of the border between Pakistan and China, making it possible " for the first time in forty years " to retrace virtually the whole of the Silk Road. John was one of the first modern travellers to do so, and he wrote about the journey in *An Adventure on the Old Silk Road*. This was followed in 1991 by *An Englishman in Patagonia*, recounting eight months spent exploring the southernmost tip of South America. In 2000 he became one of only four people in modern times to walk the 1,600-mile Royal Road of the Incas in the Andes of Ecuador and Peru. In 2003 he explored the Mekong River and, with two Tibetans, reached and mapped its source at over 17,000 feet. In 2006 he turned his attention to the Sahara Desert, and joined a camel caravan carrying salt for 450 miles from the mines of Taoudenni to Timbuktu.

RECENT EVENTS

November 2008, Friday 14th in the Noorderlicht Church

The Crop Circle Mystery – Andy Thomas

In November we broke away from our traditional well-trusted talks to delve into one of those unexplained mysteries, Crop Circles. Andy began his talk by ruining our illusion that crop circles are modern phenomena. It appears that they were well known and documented as far back as 1678 in Hertfordshire. He produced a slide of an old print with a definite crop circle and a devil. Circles have appeared throughout the centuries but there has been an explosion not only in numbers but also in the complexity of the designs since the 1970's. They appear all over the world though a large proportion seem to appear in Southern England. Not only are they found in fields of all sorts of cereals but also in grasslands and bracken. Some of the circles are definitely fakes but they are easily recognisable: the crops are damaged, the stems of the plants bent and broken where men have pushed the stems over with planks. Discounting these obviously manmade circles there are so many questions to which we have no answers. The mathematical precision with which they are made and complexity of the designs, the fact that the crops are not damaged although it has been found that they have been biologically affected by whatever has made the circles. The nodes have found to be

bent and elongated, not broken or crushed but laid over neatly in a “woven”, pattern. There is speculation about the use of heat, probably within the micro spectrum. Crop circles don't only appear at night but eyewitnesses have seen them appear in a matter of seconds accompanied by high-pitched sound and bright lights. One even appeared near Stonehenge within range of visiting tourists and a main road.

What are they? There is so much speculation. The military forces trying out new ideas? Natural phenomena including mini whirlwinds? However these explanations do not seem to do justice to these incredible circles. I have already mentioned the geometrical patterns some of which are fractals. Some are beautiful representations of the Heavens and star systems as they were in the past and some depicting the night skies of the future. Two stand out as exceptional, one appearing near Andover in 2001 that cannot be decoded with what appears to contain a DNA blue print that is different from ours. The second found four years later in East Sussex again made of dots but when seen at a distance it can be seen to be an alien face. The dots can be read in English as “Beware the bearers of false gifts and their broken promises. Much pain but still time. Believe there is good out there.” Is it really communication from others out there in the Universe or is it a very complex hoax. How does it occur? So many questions that still cannot be answered. Who knows? Following his fascinating and well-illustrated talk Andy left us with more questions than he or we could answer. It was however, a very fascinating and thought provoking evening.

CB

Friday, 12th December 2008, 8.00 p m in the Noorderlicht Church, Zeist.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

There is no way of describing the tension that your committee experiences when organizing the annual Christmas Party! Are the entertainers arranged and properly prepared, is their coordination in hand? Is the food all taken care of (happily, Bram, our cool-headed warden looks after the drinks). Is the raffle organized, are the prizes all ready? In fact, is everything going to be alright?

Well, as they used to say in New Zealand, "she'll be right, mate", and so it was!

After the opening (and maiden, although you would never believe it) introduction from our new Committee recruit Marilyn van Doesburg, we launched straight into the festivities. Mike Ebbs, with Cor van Doesburg supporting, and with Andy Baxter at the piano, started us off with those, for some of us anyway, nostalgic nonsense songs of Michael Flanders and Donald Swan that were so popular in the UK in the middle of last century. First came "The Song of the Weather", bemoaning the English climate, alternating between frost and snow, rain and flood, cold wind and scorching sunshine, mist and fog. Then came that marvellous tongue-twisting song about the "Big Six-



Wheeler, Scarlet-Painted, London Transport, Diesel-Engined, Ninety-Seven Horsepower Omnibus". The 'double decker' as it's known is such a sensitive issue that Boris Johnson was elected Mayor of London partly on his promises of doing away with the recently introduced 'bendy-buses' and restoring the trusted 'Routemaster' double decker buses. The economy may be in shreds but a promise is a promise and Boris's future may well

rest on this emotional obsession. The Brits are funny people.

With our happiness buds stimulated, Alison Morgan, our girl in the Twente Branch, then entertained us in magnificent fashion, a latent but natural 'conferencier', she took us in humorous style - and dressed for the part - through just exactly what it means to have 'Gone Dutch'. Then it was time for a coffee break and an exchange of thoughts. But our thoughts were interrupted by a charming piece of entertainment coming in the form of some well known, indeed traditional, songs at the piano by Mrs. Boumeester.

After the break, another musical duet came from Messrs Ebbs and van Doesburg - "The Misalliance". Then Alison led us all into that wonderful English Christmas 'rondgezang' "The Twelve Days of Christmas", each verse creating an ever-lengthening chorus.

There then followed the inimitable GNE Utrecht Christmas Buffet, one could perhaps even say the *pièce de résistance* for some! And would you believe it, not a scrap was wasted!

Nicely content and gently imbibed we settled back to listen to Alison's lovely dissertation of 'My Party', again complete with all the appropriate (changes of) wardrobe and other paraphernalia. Based on a poem by Kit Wright it tells the story of a children's party and what can go right and what can go horribly wrong. Impressed, and perhaps grudgingly sympathetic towards the numerous parents who have actually endured the real thing, the Ebbs-Doesburg duo sang the famous 'Hippopotamus Song' and who can ever fail to imagine what it must be like in terms of pure enjoyment for those magnificent beasts to 'wallow in glorious mud'! The entertainment sadly over we got down to the commercial bit of the evening, the raffle, after which it was time to finish and /or renew our drinks and wish each other a Happy Christmas and a Wonderful 2009.

They say that the sign of a good party is when no-one swears, no-one falls over and no-one's sick. Well, apart from one of Alison's fictitious little party goers who was sick, nothing happened that shouldn't have happened so I guess it was a really good party!

Please would all those who were involved in the organization and execution of the Party accept the heartfelt thanks of the Committee. The entertainers especially. Because of illness and 'wat anders' the normally smooth process had a few hiccups but I bet you never even noticed it, did you?

Two additional comments:

Firstly Bram Kiel 'de koster' our constant warden and behind-the-scenes guide and helper, retired at the end of the year. At the party, the Branch thanked him for his efforts to make things run smoothly for us throughout our time at the Noorderlicht Church, not always an easy task! We presented him with a bottle of wine.

Secondly, our evening's introducer and Committee member Marilyn van Doesburg has, since the party, been forced to have another operation and will be out of action for some time. We wish her well (and Cor success with the housework and cooking) and we hope to see her back in action in due course - Your Branch Needs You, Marilyn!

NLM

January, Friday 16th, 8:00 p.m. in the Noorderlicht Church, Zeist

The Botanical Gardens of Leiden – Carla Teune

The Hortus Botanicus in Leiden was founded in 1590 on what was then the edge of the City of Leiden. It now stands in the middle of this busy City on 2,5 hectare land. Our Speaker outlined the History of the University to which the gardens were attached and how it was founded in 1575 following the Liberation from the Spanish. She gave us a very detailed description of the first garden, which they have now reconstructed following the original plan on a 16th century woodprint. The gardens owe much of their form and fame to the drive and energy of the first director Carolus Cleisius. Having studied in Wittenberg met Calvin and converted from Catholicism he came to Leiden from Frankfurt with a reputation as a learned man. He had already translated many books about rare plants. He corresponded widely with like minds all over Europe, was widely travelled

and was a tireless collector of plants. He is known to have brought the first sunflowers from Mexico, introduced the first tulips into Holland and travelled to England to obtain samples of the newly discovered potato plant from Peru. During his time in the Botanical Gardens he started the first nurseries and introduced the teaching of Botany as a subject. He commissioned 1800 watercolours of plants, which currently sit in the University of Krakow. They have no idea who the painters were!

Another man who had a great influence on the gardens was Dr. van Siebold who travelled extensively to the Far East and is responsible for the large selection of oriental plants to be found to this day in the gardens.

Coming up to date our Speaker gave us a tour of the gardens and some of the rare and interesting plants there. Did we know that the Horse chestnut tree was originally a native of Hungary, Northern Greece and the former Yugoslavia? That the Ginkgo Balboa tree is the link between a leaved tree and a fir tree? That an example of this tree is one of the two oldest examples of it's kind in Europe. Did we know that Winter Aconites are poisonous and that they are the same family group as our common buttercup? That the Hortensia came originally from China via Japan?

A delightful talk about the history of the gardens, the plants in them and the plans for the future, interspersed with anecdotes of her years working there and as a pensioner her current voluntary work. I have a sneaking feeling she will still be working there in one form or another when she is 90!

CB

STILL TO COME:

April, Friday 24th A Glimpse of Chatsworth. A slide illustrated talk by Christine Robinson

May, Friday 12th The Jurassic Coast – a World Heritage Site, a slide illustrated talk by Peter Goddard

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