

BULLETIN

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UTRECHT BRANCH VOL.19 No.4 – APRIL-MAY 2010

Venue: Noorderlicht Church, 92B, Bergweg, Zeist

Dear Friends of the Utrecht Branch

This is the last Bulletin for the 2009-2010 season. We started quite relaxed; all speakers invited showed up. However then the first ripple appeared: the speaker for April withdrew her appointment because of a plausible reason. Fortunately we have a very cooperative member, Paul Franssen, a Shakespeare expert at Utrecht University. He volunteered to give a talk about “William Shakespeare's Portraits”. So far so good. However, the speaker for the March talk (Louise West on Jane Austen) had a retina surgery and announced that she possibly could not come either. All alarm bells started ringing again. Again Paul was our help, he promised to shift his lecture to March. At the very last moment Louise West was able to come to Deventer and Utrecht (sorry for the other branches) and she gave a marvellous lecture (see the review elsewhere in this Bulletin). We had over ten extra guests, a group calling themselves the “Janites”.

The programme for the 2010-2011 season is ready. The National Programme Committee contacted many potential lecturers and persuaded them to come to The Netherlands and deliver a lecture at several branches. But now the time has come that these three Utrecht members want to stop (Gail Scarisbrick and Carol and Joop Brettschneider, *we are proud of you and many thanks*). Others will take over; we wish them success. The next year's programme is published in this Bulletin and, as you can see, some speakers we met before are coming again and some speakers who we do not know yet will present subjects that are very appealing.

Ten members of our branch served as volunteers at the annual “BBC Young Writers and Public Speaking Awards”.

For the 90th anniversary of GNE a National Special Event (at “Het Loo” in Apeldoorn) is organized by Jan Bakker. Over sixty GNE members have already registered (13 from Utrecht). The maximum number of applicants is 85 so hurry if you want to attend.

A bit early in the year but as this is this season's last Bulletin, the Committee wishes you a nice summer's holiday and we all hope to meet again, in good health, in October.

Herman Steeneken
Chairman Utrecht Branch

COMING EVENTS

APRIL, Friday 16th in the Conference Room of the Noorderlicht Church at 8.00 p.m.
PORTRAITS OF MR WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE – a slide illustrated talk by **Paul Franssen**

In the spring of 2009, the discovery was announced of another portrait of Shakespeare, painted in 1610, when Shakespeare would have been 46 years old. It showed a man of well-dressed, youthful, gentleman-like appearance, and pleased those fans that had always found the Shakespeare bust in

Trinity Church, Stratford, a little disappointing, resembling a pork butcher, as someone once remarked.



The "new" picture, known as the Cobbe portrait, is one of a few dozen likenesses of the Bard to have emerged over the centuries. Yet, it is sometimes hard to imagine that all of these portray the same man. Besides, for some pictures modern dating tests have shown that they were made many years, even centuries, after Shakespeare's death in 1616. Not surprisingly, the Cobbe portrait is currently at the centre of a heated controversy among Shakespeare scholars and art historians. In fact, with the partial exception of two portraits – the Droeshout engraving and the "pork-butcher" bust in Trinity Church – which were both of them produced posthumously, there is no likeness of Shakespeare that is universally agreed to have any authentic claim to being a true, first hand likeness of the dramatist.

In his talk, Paul Franssen will discuss a number of these portraits, including the Cobbe, Sanders, Droeshout, and Flower portraits and the Trinity bust, and for each try to answer the questions: is this what Shakespeare really looked

like? Why do (or don't) we think so? How did this portrait come to us, and what alternative possibilities are there?

Paul Franssen teaches British Literature, esp. of the Renaissance and eighteenth century at the English Department of the University of Utrecht and is Treasurer of the Shakespeare Genootschap Nederland en Vlaanderen, www.shakespeare.let.uu.nl

MAY, Wednesday 19th in the Conference Room of the Noorderlicht Church at 8.00 p.m.

HALKHAM HALL – a slide illustrated talk by **Michael Daley**

The main subject of the talk is the history of Holkham Hall and its inhabitants from the builder of the house Thomas Coke (pronounced Cook) to the present generation.



Holkham is one of England's finest Palladian houses with an outstanding art collection. Designed by William Kent and built between 1734 and 1764, it is the perfect English house from the Golden Age of the Grand Tour, surviving intact in its original setting and with the founding family still in custodianship. The talk also covers the founder of the family fortune Sir Edward Coke who was Elizabeth I Attorney General and prosecutor of Walter Raleigh and the Gunpowder plotters.

Part of the talk covers how the house is managed in the 21st century and its place in the Holkham Estate. (*More information about Holkham Hall is available on www.holkham.co.uk*).

Michael Daley is the Administrator at Holkham Hall. He functions in effect as the manager of the house. Responsible not only for safety and security of the house, its chattels and inhabitants, he also controls public access and undertakes specialist Private Guided Tours throughout the year. Michael had served in the Royal Air Force since 1962 leaving in July 1993 having been awarded the MBE in the Summer Honours list. He began work at Holkham in the same month acting as the fire and security officer. He was looking for a job with less responsibility but failed completely in that respect. Michael was responsible for designing and writing a disaster and salvage plan for the house and for a full review of security and electrical services. He took over as Administrator in July 1997. Michael has lectured to a large number of groups over the years ranging from Women's Institutes to local Historical Societies, through Art clubs and on one occasion the local Conservative Party.



INVITATION to the FINALS of the BBC AWARDS 2010 on Saturday, 10 April from 13:00 – 18:00 hours. Venue Auditorium of the University of Amsterdam.

In the BBC AWARDS SEMI-FINAL of March 20th four competitors qualified for the Final. If you would like to attend, please contact our Secretary .

ARE YOU QUITE SURE YOU WON'T BE SORRY



TO HAVE MISSED THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE THERE AT THE LOO ON APRIL 24th WHEN GNE CELEBRATES ITS 90th ANNIVERSARY?

Just fetch the invitation you were sent either by post or by email, look at the sumptuous programme for the day and quickly contact Jan Bakker, either by phone: 030 6992007 or email: jbakker@scandent.nl for a last minute reservation **AND JOIN US.**

RECENT EVENTS

FEBRUARY 12th

The English Language: Emphasizing its debt to Dutch – Roy Skan

In an entertaining and interesting lecture Roy Skan took us through the history of the English language. This, it turned out, involved much of the history of the human race as well, at least from the moment, some 6,000 years ago, when modern man moved into Europe at the end of the last ice age, skirting the glaciers that still covered much of Northern Europe. Apart from Europeans, we were also told about Neanderthals, about the ancient Ainu people in Japan, who look far more European than the modern Japanese, and about the Sinhalese who took a form of Indo-European based on Sanskrit with them to Ceylon. Sanskrit, and the Lithuanian language is actually quite close

to it, are believed to be among the oldest surviving forms of the Indo-European language group. As for Britain, that was first populated by people who probably did not speak an Indo-European language. Yet they did speak: the people who built Stonehenge from heavy materials that had to be shipped across the Severn and then moved some 200 kms from South Wales must have had some language to organize such a venture. Roy Skan suggested that this language may have been similar to modern Basque, one of the few surviving non-Indo-European languages in Europe. The others, such as Finnish, Hungarian, and Turkish, actually came to Europe later than the Indo-European languages. Roy's main focus, however, was on the Indo-Germanic tribes that started to come into Europe from Africa by way of the Middle East, some 6.000 years ago, one wave of migrants and conquerors following another. The first were the Celts. The modern names of regions all over Europe often still bear witness to once having been predominantly Celtic, from **Galatia** in Asia Minor by way of Gaul (France) to **Portugal**. The Celts were followed by the Germanic tribes, the Slavs, the Latins, and other groups; those who reached Britain, all left their mark on the English language.

The Celts were the dominant population group in Britain from about 500 BC till 450 AD. In the middle of that period they were joined by the Romans, however, who twice invaded Britain, first under Julius Caesar, then again under Claudius. The Romans were attracted by the tin and gold mines as well as trying to secure the borders of the empire against the raiding Belgicae, an unruly Celtic tribe that lived both on the Continent and in Britain. The Roman army consisted of soldiers from several parts of the empire—in London they even built a temple dedicated to the god Mithras, associated with the region that is now Turkey—who presumably all brought their own languages with them. The Latin language left its imprint on British place names ending in –chester, which comes from Roman “castrum” or fortress.

After the Roman withdrawal, the next conquerors were the Germanic tribes, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. Originally these warlike tribes had been called in to protect the Celtic kingdoms from Scottish raiders, but they then decided to stay. Their languages still form the main ingredient of modern English, in its various dialects. Originally these tribes were great enemies of Christianity, so that few written records survive from the early ages after their arrival, as learning was associated with the Christian monasteries. Britain, originally converted to Christianity under Roman occupation, had to be rechristianized from Celtic Ireland. In a later stage, English monks like Willibrord and Boniface carried their mission to the Continent, where their Anglo-Saxon tongue was still more or less understandable.

This was not the last of the upheavals in Britain: Scandinavian tribes invaded the north-east, leaving many place names ending in “by” (town) and “thorp” (village), as well as words such as “take” (Sc “ta”), replacing Anglo-Saxon cognates of modern Dutch “nemen.” And famously, in 1066, William the Conqueror led his army of Normans, themselves of Scandinavian origin but now French-speaking, to defeat the Anglo-Saxons and set up their rule over large parts of England. Again, French left a large imprint on the English language, although often the original gender came to be disregarded: Marylebone in London, of course, ought to have been Marie la Bonne! Then as now, language also had a social dimension: whereas the court spoke their variety of French, the common people, of Anglo-Saxon stock, persisted in speaking their native language. It was only gradually that the two languages merged into what we now know as modern English: a Germanic language as far as structure is concerned, but with a vocabulary with a large percentage derived from French. To some extent, the social distinction between words of French and Germanic stock still exists even nowadays: French-derived “enter” is a more prestigious form than the simpler, Germanic, “come in”.

In later centuries also Latin and Greek words entered the English language, especially learned jargon, whereas German influence tends to be connected with either psychology (“gestalt”) or with war (“blitzkrieg”). Roy Skan only briefly touched on the influence of the Dutch language, which was largely confined to loan words in the nautical field, such as “boom” and “schooner.”

Roy Skan also spoke of more general issues, such as the fact that all Indo-European languages have a system of gender, with masculine, feminine, and neutral words, at least in their older phases; but there is a tendency for languages to become simplified as time goes by, shedding not just gender

but also case. English, of course has nearly completely shed both original features, whereas Dutch retains two genders, and German all three, plus a fairly elaborate system of declension. Roy also illustrated his talk with maps to show the movements of the various tribes, charts showing the first 10 numerals in a series of Indo-Germanic languages compared with their non-Indo-Germanic equivalents (from Arabic to Chinese), and translation exercises, asking us to translate sentences with excessively French or Latinate diction into less complex terminology of Germanic origin. Or should that be: by saying the same thing in simpler words that come from Anglo-Saxon?

P.F.

MARCH 12th

Living with Jane Austen's Legacy at Chawton – Louise West

Ms. Louise West told us about her work at Jane Austen's house in Chawton, which is now a museum. Most of her talk was concerned with Austen's life, the rest with activities undertaken at the Museum. Jane came to Chawton in 1809, when she was 33 years old, and here she wrote the final versions of her six novels. Jane was born in Steventon in 1775, as a vicar's daughter. She had 6 brothers and one elder sister, Cassandra. Jane's mother used to breastfeed her children for 3 months, and then send them to a family in the village, to be house-trained, until the age of 2. Not that Mrs. Austen was particularly lazy; the rectory was also a small farm and a boarding school for boys. It must have been a noisy household, and the two daughters seem to have grown up as real tomboys, not unlike Catherine in *Northanger Abbey*. After attempts to have the girls educated in Oxford and Southampton failed, their father saw to their schooling himself. The sons went into the Navy, the Church, or banking; for the daughters there were no such career opportunities. Cassandra was to be married, but her fiancée died before the wedding; she never seems to have been involved with other men after. Jane, by contrast, was a "husband-hunting butterfly" in her youth, a kind of Lydia Bennet. Her affair with the young Irishman Tom Lefroy, which features prominently in the romanticized biopic, *Becoming Jane*, came to nothing, probably because neither had any money. It was after this affair that she began to write the first versions of what we now know as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Then her parents decided to retire to Bath, selling the entire furniture and everything in the house. Jane seems to have objected to such a radical move, but, like Anne Elliot's in *Persuasion*, her objections went unheeded. Jane disliked Bath, where the family had no settled home. By this time Jane was 25, Cassandra already 27, so attempts were made to find husbands for the girls at dances and parties, but to no avail. When Mr Austen died, the women were thrown upon the charity of their male relatives. First they moved in with Jane's brother Frank in Southampton. They seemed to be sliding into genteel poverty, but then an offer came from another brother, Edward. In his youth, Edward had gone to live with a rich childless couple, the Knights, as their adopted son, more or less like Frank Churchill in *Emma*; he had even taken their family name. Now the Knights had died, and left him all their possessions, and he invited his mother and sisters to live on his Hampshire estate. Thus the three women came to Chawton Cottage, a likely model for Barton Cottage in *Sense and Sensibility*. Edward's stately mansion was close by, as a constant reminder that they, as poor relations, owed their occupation of the cottage to his charity.

In Chawton, Jane resumed her writing. A creaking door told her when visitors were approaching, so she could hide the manuscript: she liked to keep her authorship a secret. Cassandra helped Jane to find time for her writing by doing much of the housework, while their mother was a keen gardener, who sometimes embarrassed her genteel daughters by digging up the potatoes herself. Jane now also managed to get some of her books published. Earlier, in the 90s, she had managed to sell an early version of *Northanger Abbey* to a publisher, but he did not actually print it, so that Jane bought back the copyright. Now she did manage, with the help of her brother Henry, to find a publisher for *Sense and Sensibility*, on condition that she paid for the first print run herself. The book was an instant success. Asked for a follow-up, Jane offered *Pride and Prejudice*. All her books were published anonymously, as written "by a lady," or "by the author of *Sense and Sensibility*." Henry, however, told the secret to some friends: Jane was angry at this invasion of her

privacy. She might have gone to London at this point, and become a literary lion, but preferred to work in seclusion and secrecy at Chawton. After publishing *Mansfield Park*, she even attracted royal attention: she was invited to visit the Prince Regent's library, with its librarian who was a real-life version of Mr Collins. She was even asked to dedicate her next book, *Emma*, to the Prince Regent, whom Jane herself did not really like; however, at the publishers' insistence she agreed. As her health began to decline, she wrote *Persuasion*, a melancholy book, and started the unfinished *Sanditon*, whose 11 chapters seem more upbeat. In the last few months, she moved to Winchester to be closer to a doctor she hoped might cure her, but in vain: she died in July 1817, and was buried in Winchester Cathedral.

In the 1990s, Jane Austen achieved a broad popularity, largely due to some excellent film and TV versions of her novels, including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Persuasion*. This has brought growing numbers of visitors to Chawton, from over a hundred countries. The Museum shows them not just the house, but also some of the original furniture, such as Jane's authentic writing table, donated by the descendants of a family servant. Other furniture, though not original, is of the Regency period, and there are specially manufactured replicas, such as Jane's bed. The museum exhibits some of Jane's letters in the original Manuscripts, and has developed interactive displays to draw in younger visitors. Smaller exhibits include two topaz crosses, a gift from brother Charles, and lottery fish, a kind of counters, that in *Pride and Prejudice*, fascinate Lydia even more than uniformed men. Jane's original copy of *Lovers' Vows*, the scandalous play at the centre of *Mansfield Park*, is on display, as is the hand-written piano music that served as the basis for the soundtrack of *Becoming Jane*. Activities include workshops on the novels' textual history, on dancing (in period dress), and, last year, a bicentennial conference. Louise West's lively and informative talk will, undoubtedly, bring even more visitors to Chawton in the coming years.

P.F.

PROGRAMME 2010-2011

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|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Friday 15 th October 2010 | Climate change | Julian Paren |
| Friday 19 th November 2010 | The Truth Agenda: Exploring Unexplained Mysteries, Global | Andy Thomas |
| Friday 17 th December 2010 | Christmas Party | |
| Friday 21 st January 2011 | The Dutch Connection in British History: Dutch Lives in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography | Lawrence Goldman |
| Wednesday 16 th Feb. 2011 | Dickens in the 21 st Century | Florian Schweizer |
| Friday 11 th March 2011 | A Stroll through the Axis of Evil | John Pilkington |
| Wednesday 13 th April 2011 | The rime of the Ancyent Marinere | John Gilroy |
| Wednesday 11 th May | How was Castle Howard Built? | Christopher Ridgway |

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