

UTRECHT BRANCH

www.gne-utrecht.nl

VOL.15, No.3 FEBRUARY/MARCH 2006

New Year Message from the Chairman.

September starts a new Season for us, but January starts a New Year. I always find that confusing!

I would like to say heartfelt thanks for everyone who helped with the January meeting and the festive New Year party. Too much space would be taken up thanking everyone by name so I shall stick to the main features. First of all, my thanks to the various members of the committee who, often at the last minute, pulled out all the stops to get the show on the road – your new chairman overlooked many of the little details which were second nature to his predecessor. I promise to do better. All seemed to go well on the day, and so far as I know nothing untoward happened (projector and stand excepted).

I also wish to thank our in-house entertainer who opened the evening with an intriguing ‘questionnaire’ which had us all hijacking other member’s interrogations to get victims to provide answers – but I never found anyone who would admit to wearing socks in bed, neither did I see anyone with a hand round a throat trying to force an admission. Many thanks to the snack providers, and congratulations on their culinary ingenuity, as well as the arm-twisters and helpers who laid it all out in such an appetizing way. My thanks also to the raffle organizers and providers of prizes.

Although we deliberately kept charges on the event itself down to a minimum, we made a modest profit, mainly on the raffle. Every little bit counts though, and helps to keep membership subscription costs down. And finally, thanks to all of you, the members. Without your support there would be no entertainment, no speakers, and no party. I trust everyone enjoyed it, but please make your views known to the committee so that next time we can repeat what is good and eliminate what is not.

A reminder about the BBC Young Writers and Speakers Competition which starts next month. Please don’t be shy about coming along, you will not only be showing support for the participants but you will be enchanted by the quality of the entries and by the skill, knowledge and passion of the competitors, none of whom is over 18. All rounds are being held in the James Boswell Institute of Utrecht University at the rear of the Kromhout Kazerne near the Galgenwaard Stadium. There is ample parking for cars and reasonable access by public transport. The start time is 1.30 pm and the dates are:

Preliminary rounds on Saturdays 4th, 11th and 18th February;

Semi-Finals on Saturday 11th March;

National Final on Saturday 8th April.

The committee wishes all of our members a healthy and prosperous 2006.

Neil Merrick.

COMING EVENTS: FEBRUARY

Friday 10th in the Bergwegkerk, 8.00 pm

Carolán, the blind harper; his life and his music. A musical talk by Peter Galinsky. Peter Galinsky was born in the North-East of England in 1955. When he was nine, the family moved to Holland. His mother is Dutch and his father English. After 13 years of life and education in Holland Peter decided to return to England and spent some time in London before moving to Edinburgh in 1978. There he found work in a second hand bookshop and, in 1980, became the proud owner of the Broughton Bookshop. In 1989 chance put a tenor recorder in his hands. One of the first real pieces of music he attempted, once he had come to grips with most of the basic fingerings, was called Carolán’s Draught. It was written some time after 1700 by the blind Irish harper Thurlough O’Carolan. Born in 1670, of humble

parentage, he became blind at the age of 18. He earned a living by visiting the houses of the rich and the poor, the Catholics and Protestants, the English settlers and Irish Gaels, playing, singing, entertaining, carrying news and generally making himself a very popular and highly respected visitor. His name was famous throughout the country for his table talk and witty repartees, his love of drinks and his ability to hold it, his gifts of second sight, his loyalty, but of course most of all for his music. His tunes were written for a patron, in recompense or gratitude for hospitality, friendship and good company. Thus a large number of his tunes bear as title a personal name.

In his talk Peter will follow him on some of his visits to the gentry, and include some of the many anecdotes of his life; these he would intersperse with a selection of his melodies. Peter doesn't play the harp, but they can be played on virtually any instrument and he will use his recorders and clarinet. In addition he will show slides to help form a picture of an era which came to an end at much the same time as Carolan's death in 1738. Baroque influences can be found in some of his more mature compositions. The travelling harpers, not infrequently blind, were becoming figures of the past. And then there is that lugubrious story of Carolan's skull, which was said to have medicinal properties..... Ireland is the only country in the world which has for its emblem a musical instrument: the harp... and Thurlough O'Carolan is one of its most enduring composers.

COMING EVENTS: MARCH

TUESDAY 21st in the Bergwegkerk,
8.00 pm

An Introduction to English Heraldry. A slide illustrated talk by David White.

This introduction to heraldry will give an explanation of the essentials of heraldry and include the origin of the heralds, the uniqueness of each coat of arms, the organisation and control of English arms both yesteryear and today.

Heraldry has its own terminology. To blazon a coat of arms is to describe it in heraldic language which includes specific terms for colours to words describing the positions of animals.

'Herald' is the middle rank of Officer of Arms, and is also used more loosely to describe all Officers of Arms. They have responsibilities for the overseeing of heraldry, the granting of new coats of arms, genealogical research, and state ceremonial.

The College of Arms in London has a maximum of thirteen heralds. They wear a tabard embroidered with the Royal Arms and process at certain state occasions. The English and Welsh heralds take part in the State Opening of Parliament each year at Westminster and in the Garter Service at Windsor Castle in June. The Scottish heralds have a wider number of ceremonial roles. David White is the Deputy Chairman of the Heraldry Society, which exists to increase and extend interest in and knowledge of heraldry, armory, chivalry, genealogy and allied subjects.

He is also Somerset Herald at the College of Arms.

RECENT EVENTS: Thursday, 10th
November 2005, 8.00 pm in the Bergwegkerk

Follies – a talk by Wim Meulenkamp.

The Oxford dictionary describes 'follies' as: foolishness, foolish acts or ideas (like a friend and I climbing the Forth rail bridge one night, but that's another story), a revue with glamorous scantily clad performers, or costly ornamental buildings. Wim's talk was about the last named, but his richly illustrated slides showed just what an extraordinary range there was – and still is.

Architectural follies are defined by an expert and writer on the subject, Jeffery W Whitelaw, as primarily constructed to be looked at and enjoyed without necessarily having any utilitarian purpose, although they have sometimes been erected as buildings such as luxury dovecots, or as monuments, often by insignificant people wishing to be remembered. They are not confined to the

United Kingdom, but while they are most common there, they are found everywhere. They originated in the 1700s, during the time of the great landscape gardeners, and were used to complement or enhance the overall visual effect. In the United Kingdom, some the National Trust's great houses have follies in their grounds.

Wim's illustrated tour took us through England, Germany, France, Belgium and back to the Netherlands where a surprisingly large number of follies have been built. The variety was enormous, from fully constructed mini-castles (sometimes fantasy ones) and false ruins, to reproductions of old cottages (Jennifer homes and Jenever houses for refreshment stops) complete with wax dummies of people (or in one case a mummified real body) or acting as disguised countryside toilets, to two dimensional wooden depictions of people, animals and shrubs.

The folly which remains sharp in my own memory is the large Roman-style colosseum high on a hill overlooking Oban in Scotland. Wim's talk could only touch on what is a vast subject. If you would like to know more I suggest:

- Books, Jeffery Whitelaw's 'Follies Album 93' obtainable from Shire Books amongst others.
- Websites: follytowers.com; hgstump.de; follies.nl; sussexgallery.co.uk; odd-stuff.info/follies; homepage.ntlworld.com/follies; and johnmadjackfuller.homestead.com (to name but a few!)

RECENT EVENTS: Friday, January 13th 2006, 8.00 pm in the Bergwegkerk

Prior to our monthly talk, Ingrid de Beer entertained us with a brain-teasing set of totally irrelevant but mind-stretching questions to get us in a festive mood. After the talk we had our New Year party. Both of these you will find commented on in more detail elsewhere.

Peter Sturge, who you will recall, frightened us all to death on his previous visit by demonstrating we were all criminals at heart, was our guest speaker at this, the opening talk of 2006. His subject was –

Tracing an English Family History.

In Victorian times, genealogical research became almost de rigeur. Everyone was trying to prove they were related to royalty or someone famous, though I don't suppose anyone would have owned up to having Attila or his like as a long lost relative. But, as Peter showed, the advent of the Internet has changed things. He did emphasize though, that many 'researchers' still hope to make that prized connection with someone famous, even of Royal Blood. He also pointed out, as perhaps many of us already knew, recent gene research shows that we all come from the same biological African family – the Adam and Eve theory has been proved, at least in part. Peter warned us too, that almost all families have a milkman in their ancestral tree so that family names may not always be what they seem.

The talk was divided into two sections, both illustrated with overhead transparencies. In the initial part he explained firstly where and how to get information such as genealogical societies via the internet or, in some places, local groups of like-minded enthusiasts. Then there are permanent records – family ones, local ones, church ones, government ones. Wills are good source of information. There are also many books to help the researcher which also suggest other avenues of research. He then went on to say that it was best to start backwards. Genealogical history includes the development and use of names. In England in the 1500s, 67 percent of the population shared just five first names – Henry, John, Richard, Robert and William. Peter pointed out that if we assumed we each had four grand-parents and eight great-grandparents after 64 generations back we'd have more people in the tree than have ever existed on earth. Clearly, most of us are more closely related than we realize.

In the second section Peter's talk took us through his own family tree. What at first sight sounds as though it might be a bit of chest-beating, turned out to be a fascinating look at English social history. He found out that his forebears were largely Quakers, right back to the time of the founding of the Religious Society of Friends by William Fox during the English Civil War period in the 1700s. This section of Peter's talk was aptly illustrated by his being dressed in the customary Quaker's costume of the period. Peter has organized family (tree) get-togethers. The last one was so large there was too big a group of people to photograph. Although the subject of the talk was specifically English, there are similar research organizations and methods in the Netherlands. An uncle of my wife, Janny, has produced a family tree going back to the 1500s. No royalty, no famous people, but as far as we can tell, no milkman either. Good Calvinists.

NLM

In this coldest period of the year a most suitable contribution from our London-based columnist.

THE HOMELESS

Like every city, London is full of extremes. The most vivid of these being the juxtaposition of extreme wealth and poverty. On the one hand we have the rich businessman who is heading towards his office in his German automobile. On the other hand we have the homeless. They patrol bins and beg when they come across affluent looking tourists. Their pleas confront you with an internal conflict: the heart tells you to give something, but the mind says that the money you donate will be transformed into drugs or alcohol in no time. But the mind also tells you that there is a different category of homeless people. You see them on every street corner. They sell their own newspaper, 'The Big Issue'. One of them regularly stands in front of my local supermarket. So far he has used the little money he earns for bus driving

classes. His ambition is to become a fully qualified chauffeur within several months. So, could there be such a thing as an English dream?

Arthur Krebbers www.akrebbbers.com

WITH THE GNE TO ENGLAND

GNE Twente branch, intrepid travellers as they are, have again planned a trip to England. Members from other branches are welcome to come along.

Departure June 7th by boat from Hoek van Holland to Harwich.

4 nights stay in a hotel near Bristol, from where trips to Bath, the New forest and Salisbury will be made.

4 nights stay in Betws-y-coed in Wales, which will be the base for trips to the Snowdon National Park and North Wales.

3 nights stay in Chesterfield, with trips to the Peak District.

Returning by boat from Hull to Europort.

The price including luxury touring car, and accommodation on board and in the hotels (half board) is € 1219,00 per person (by double room or cabin). This is inclusive lunches, consumptions, and entrance fees to all attractions.

Anyone interested in taking part in this holiday is asked to contact Hans Kräwinkel (tel.0534331839) or email - hans@jeweha.demon as soon as possible.

Contributions to the Bulletin from members are always warmly welcomed. We would like to encourage you all to make it a New Year resolution to become more active members of your GNE branch by attending more meetings, letting us know what you want to see and hear, and of course contribute to the Bulletin. Contributions to the Editor for next Bulletin before 9th April.

Bulletin GNE Utrecht Branch

Vol.13 no.3, February/March 2006

Editors: Marga Waterborg
(coordinating)
Carol Brettschneider

