

## **UTRECHT BRANCH**

Venue: Bergwegkerk, 92B Bergweg, Zeist

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### **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR.**

This is the last Bulletin before the close of the 2005-006 season, which has witnessed some ups and downs. We are determined to continue our work to improve the standard of speakers and widen the range of talks. However, since we have to book speakers well in advance – and Gail, Joop and Carol, as the National Programming Committee, have the unenviable task of having to coordinate the speakers' programmes with all the GNE Branches – we cannot change the programme overnight. We are also conscious of the dwindling numbers of members through a variety of causes and, as the politicians say, 'we are actively pursuing this'. But (there's always a but) we also rely on you, the members, to persuade, cajole and bribe if necessary, friends and acquaintances to come along and try us out. Don't forget the first visit as your guest is free and without obligation.

We have reintroduced the Christmas party and have engaged a top class musician to entertain us. Another addition to the programme is that we are arranging for you to experience the excitement of the BBC Young

Peoples' Speaking and Writing Competition at our own meetings, as a starter. We have asked some of the contestants to come and give their presentations to you and subject themselves to your searching questions, just like the real thing. They are very enthusiastic about this idea – more later. Your new Vice, Herman Steeneken, has also started an active PR campaign compiling a list of all regional media outlets. As a result of recent press articles we had several visitors over the last month or so whom we are nourishing carefully, though as you probably know, a successful seduction can often take time. Please will you help, when you see strangers, by introducing yourselves, charming them with your praises and generally making them feel welcome (and perhaps even obliged). We also need to go on the offensive by dredging up old contacts and persuading them to give us introductions to a wider base of both members and speakers. You and your ideas really do count.

To make the GNE more accessible and more readily understood, I intent to have an information file compiled over the next few months which will be under the control of the Secretary but will be available at our meetings for everyone to look through.

The final of this year's BBCYPPS&WC (to give it its full title) was held earlier this month in the Academiegebouw of Utrecht University, in the very room where the Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713. Those of you who didn't go missed a real treat, not to mention copious quantities of complimentary food and wine. The GNE has now established the

University of Utrecht, more specifically the James Boswell Institute, as the competition's alma mater, in a large part due to the untiring efforts and boundless enthusiasm of our own branch Ceres and Interlocutor, Ingrid de Beer. The Committee is offering Drs Herman van den Berg, Director of the JBI, a free subscription to our branch in appreciation of his support and enthusiasm. We were all entertained once more to a feast of youthful passion, which left most of us speechless with admiration. If these young 16-18 year olds are representative, our future is in safe hands.

**The winners** this year were:

Public Speakers – Kimberly Camu from Doorn, with runner-up Leon de Wit from Utrecht.

Young Writers - Casper van Gemert from Valkenswaard, with runner-up Martin van Brakel from Utrecht.

With three out of the four winners local, Utrecht can be very pleased with itself. The speakers go on to London for the International Final there, whilst the writers go to Scotland for a week's writing course at the Arvon Foundation. There will be a fuller article on this event in the September issue of the Bulletin.

On behalf of your Committee, I wish all of you an enjoyable summer and we look forward to seeing you again in September. In the meantime, keep your comments and criticisms coming!

Neil Merrick

P.S. There is no increase in subscription for next season.

### **A short preview of the next season**

One of the perks with the job of editor of this Bulletin, well perhaps the only perk, is some foreknowledge of the next season's programme and such an exciting season it promises to be.

There will be lectures on a wide variety of subjects such as architecture, gardening, travel, history, literature and art. Among the list of lecturers I was delighted to discover the name of Ann Barrington-Ward who in 2003 delivered such a highly professional talk on

Coventry Cathedral, and of John Pilkington. John has been off adventuring again, this time exploring the world's twelfth longest river, the Mekong. The author Helen Hollick will let us see the battle of Hastings in 1066 from whole new perspective, stripped of Norman propaganda.

More of this in the September issue.

### **COMING EVENTS: APRIL Friday 28th in the Bergwegkerk at 8 p.m.**

#### **JOHN SUTTON - The Queen's face; the portraiture of Elizabeth I.**

Throughout her long reign Queen Elizabeth I was obsessively concerned with her royal image, sometimes issuing proclamations banning debased visual representations of herself, at others having these unacceptable icons consigned to the bonfire. This was undoubtedly due in part to the Queen's excessive vanity; but it also arose from her astute realisation of the overwhelming importance of pictorial propaganda in the power-politics of the age. Indeed the Queen's very survival often depended upon the way she was visually perceived by her subjects – she needed a divine aura to instill their obedience. To study the portraits of Elizabeth I is thus to witness the creation of a legend; and this slide lecture will explore that process from its humble and tentative beginnings in the 1560s and 1570s, through the increasingly ambitious and complex royal iconography of the 1580s, to the final exuberant and extravagant flowering of the 1590s when Elizabeth was transformed into a transcendent, supermundane being – a veritable goddess. Look upon the Queen's picture and you will be transfixed. Vivat Eliza!

John Sutton is a Senior Lecturer in History at Anglia Polytechnic University. He specializes in the history of Early Modern England, teaching modules on the English Renaissance, 1558-1640; the English Civil War; and the Jacobite cause. In 1983-84 he made a television series on Eastern England in the 1640s, entitled 'A War in the Kingdom' and screened on

Anglia TV. He regularly hosts historical special interest week-ends for Hilton hotels; and teaches on the International Summer programmes for Cambridge University. He is currently organizing four Day-Schools to mark the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Second English Civil War and the trial of Charles I; and to commemorate the quatercentenary of Oliver Cromwell's birth. He is also the historical adviser to the Palace House Museum in Newmarket which was recently opened by HRH, Princess Anne. He has previously lectured to the Netherlands/England Society on topics such as Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh and Charles I.

**COMING EVENTS: MAY**  
**Friday 19th in the Bergwegkerk at 8 p.m.**

**MICHAEL LEACH - Poles apart**

Many people, understandably, confuse the Arctic with the Antarctic. But they are very different and are home to completely different animals.

Luckily Michael has worked in both of these amazing places and is happy to sort out any confusion. The talk covers polar bears, penguins, snowy owls, elephant seals and many other animals from both ends of the earth. Michael has been a full-time wildlife author and photographer since 1977. In the 1980s he spent four years filming wildlife documentaries for TV but finally decided that he prefers still photography. Today Michael works mainly with mammals and birds. He is a specialist in high-speed photographic techniques that freeze rapid action – such as birds in flight – at 1/20,000th of a second. His photographs have been appeared in 600+ books and in more than 50 countries; plus every major wildlife/environmental magazine in Britain and U.S.A.

His television film-work includes: World About Us, Really Wild Show, Wildtrack, The Ark, You Can't See the Woods (with Prof. David Bellamy), Bluetits and Bumblebees (with Chris Baines), ECO, Fiddling With Nature (with the late Yehudi Menuhin), and Countryside Hour.

Michael is a lecturer on the national speaker list of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (R.S.P.B.), British Trust for Ornithology (B.T.O.) and The National Trust. He gives around 100 illustrated talks a year in venues as varied as Natural History Societies and Women's Institutes.

**RECENT EVENTS:** Friday 10th February 2006, 8.00 pm in the Bergweg Church, Zeist.

**CAROLAN THE BLIND HARPER** – a talk by Peter Galinsky, illustrated with slides and music.

Peter, a regular visitor to our meetings, which of course is quite unconnected to fact that his mother lives in The Hague, proved once again the breadth of his talents.

First a word about the instruments Peter showed us on slide and played to us. The Irish harp, as used in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is called a *clarsach*. A modern reproduction was shown on slides at the home of Peter's friend, Michael Hamish. Peter's instruments were a b-flat clarinet, a transverse Baroque flute and two recorders, the descant (soprano) and the treble (alto).

Carolan was born in 1670 and died in 1738. He became blind at the age of 17, but he was a man of strong will and he refused to let his blindness dominate his life. He set out on a horse to travel around Ireland, entertaining people, mainly rich families and their guests. His first success was at the home of a George Reynolds and he returned often, to stay and play there. Mrs MacDermitt Roe became his patron and Dr John Stafford his main friend and drinking partner and Carolan composed a tune in his honour which he named *Carolan's Receipt* (a 17<sup>th</sup> century receipt is what the Dutch call today a receipt, a prescription). Over time, Carolan became an established and respected musician, both as a harpist and as a composer and he published the *Complete Collection of the much Admired Old Irish Tunes*. Most of the tunes he had written down himself, since as you would expect with traditional folk songs they were passed on vocally and not written down.

Many of the tunes played by Peter had names which sound strange to our ears, such as *Carolan's Draught and Fanny Power*. Another was *Shebeg and Shemon* (the small fairy and the big fairy). Peter played us some *planksties* (or planxties), and I defy anyone to find those words in a dictionary.

There is something of a mystery surrounding Carolan after his death, about his skull and how it was ground up to make *wall rue*. Anyway, Peter's talk ended with a picture of his wife Margaret at a graveside by a rose bush planted by one Margaret Nisbet, though the connection with Carolan, I'm ashamed to say, escapes me at the moment. But this is, after all, an Irish story.

A postscript. Peter tells me he has sold the Edinburgh Bookshop and has recently completed a course as a teacher of English as a second language (known as a TEFL course). He is looking forward to a complete change of direction using his newly acquired skills. For a Dutch-born English lad of mixed Dutch-East European parentage who speaks mainly Scottish I find that very brave. We wish him well.

NLM

**RECENT EVENTS:** Tuesday, 21st March 2006, 8.00 pm in the Bergweg Church, Zeist.

**HERALDRY** – a talk by David White, Somerset Herald.

David's talk was in many respects a brief résumé of hundreds of years of the knightly side of British history. David concentrated on the English and Welsh aspects of it, which is his College's responsibility, and took us through the whys and wherefores of titles, coats of arms and ancestry.

David came to heraldry in fact through his own interest in ancestry, a.k.a. genealogy. Starting at the College as a research assistant he then became the Rouge Croix Pursuivant of Arms and subsequently the Somerset Herald of Arms. He has no direct connection with the Dukes of Somerset, either professionally or personally, since over the centuries it became customary to nominate a relative or proxy as Herald and the position of

Herald is now wholly divorced from its origins. David is employed by the British Crown, but the remuneration is, to say the least, severely limiting and apart from a few clerical staff, most of the College's officers rely on fee income from genealogical and armorial research for clients, and from lecture tours. His talk to us was somewhat of a busman's holiday.

The Herald's College, as it is sometimes known, is responsible for heraldry in England and Wales. Heraldry in Scotland is under the Court of Lord Lyon. Other heraldic colleges and sister organizations exist in other countries including, would you believe, The College of Arms Foundation Inc in New York.

The College of Arms in England and Wales was incorporated by Richard III in 1483, some 200 years after the last of the Crusades and more than 150 years after the abolition of the Templars in 1312, so anyone who was expecting the 'real story' behind Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* was in for a disappointment. The Duke of Norfolk, traditionally the premier English Duke, is, in his capacity as Earl Marshal, also the hereditary head of the College of Heraldry and presides over it, operating under a royal charter with responsibility for all matters to do with heraldry, granting of armorial bearings, and the recording and tracing genealogies. As Earl Marshal he is also responsible for organizing royal and state ceremonies. The Dukes of Norfolk have also retained, through the ages, their on-off relationship with the British Crown, but also their Roman Catholic faith. This of course has caused problems with an essentially protestant Britain, and the various Dukes had to appoint protestant proxies to oversee the College. The problem was overcome by the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829.

The College is based in Queen Victoria Street in London and is controlled by 13 officers; three Kings of Arms – Garter, Norroy and Ulster, and Clarenceux; six Heralds – Windsor, Richmond, York, Lancaster, Chester, and Somerset; and four Pursuivants – Rouge Dragon, Rouge Croix, Bluemantle, and Portcullis. Their work

comes to them either direct via recommendation or through previous tasks, as well as during their turn as 'Duty Herald'. Heralds' duties include attending on the Sovereign, formally dressed on Herald's costume, on all state and many other important occasions, such as the opening of parliament.

David's lavishly illustrated talk took us through the design of coats of arms and shields which, surprisingly perhaps, the 'owner-to-be' can more or less choose for himself providing it sticks to the overall rules. He showed us illustrations of some wonderfully colourful, even 'jazzy' examples of coats of arms, including one comprising no less than 135 individual shields – at 15 across and 9 down it looked more like a fantastic jigsaw puzzle. Curiously, anyone can have a coat of arms, proving that you are entitled to use it is David's job. Some women are allowed their own individual coats of arms though by and large (there are exceptions) the right to hereditary titles and to coats of arms passes down through the eldest son, or if there isn't one, sideways to a brother, then down. Thus the daughter of a titled person without sons can end up with the estate and no title, and her uncle with the title but no estate!

Life's often unfair, don't you think? In the Navy we called it a green rub.

NLM

**AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST** - the bimonthly contribution from our London-based columnist and winner of the International Final of the 2003 Public Speaking Competition, Arthur Krebbers:

### **'Isseh?'**

The division between written and spoken English is increasing. The written half is hastily trying to keep track of his speaking counterpart. This speaking side, lazy as he is, has started dropping letters of the alphabet in the middle of common words. Fortunately, this flaw could easily be covered up in script by planting apostrophes in place of the unpronounced letters. But now Mr Speech has

invented new compound words, of which the spelling is all but clear.

Name for example 'Isseh?'. This word, if you word refer to it as such, is a chart topper in the list of newly created fashionable English slang. It is an abbreviation for 'Is it really?', or 'Is that so?', thus portraying the emotions of being surprised and being puzzled. Youth are using it everywhere in the big city and, I must admit, it is very tempting to also adapt to this phrase. Even the strictest guardians of the English language can't help but fall prey to these new terms. They save you a lot of time and breath, which makes them ideal for the modern day busy man, 'homo activus'. Maybe some day the spoken language will get its own autonomous status en turn 'proper English' into a kind of 'Latin', only functional for intellectual people...

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