

Dutch Museum gets warm reception on icy South Island

words Arjan Van der Boon and
Ambassador Mr A.C.A. (Arie) van der Wiel
photos Arjan Van der Boon

In July 2011, two intrepid representatives from the Dutch Connection weathered frost and snow on the South Island to tell people there more about their Museum Project. They travelled for 1000s of kilometres during one of the coldest spells in many years, and woke up with ice on the inside of their campervan on most mornings – whether it was in Nelson or Invercargill.

“We have been in touch with the Dutch clubs throughout the country for many years, but on the South Island we’d only ever presented our plans to the Christchurch society,” says the Chairperson of the Museum Trust, Arjan van der Boon. “We’d always missed out on the card clubs, coffee groups and the Invercargill Society (not part of the Federation). Now that our project is moving ahead fast and strong, it was time to tell people more.”

Ambassador Arie van der Wiel joined the activities in Nelson and Christchurch. The Ambassador visited Christchurch also, to show his support for the Nederlanders in this hard-hit region.

The Ambassador met Addo Mulder at the Tasman Statue, which was created through his efforts in 1992 on the occasion of the visit of HRH Queen Beatrix and HRH Prince Claus. Nelson Deputy Mayor Ali Boswijk was there as well. Being married to the son of Eelco Boswijk, who ran

Nelson’s most popular coffee house ‘Chez Eelco’ as the party headquarters of the local community for 40 years, she has a healthy interest in anything with Dutch connections!

“Next year we will celebrate that it was 370 years since Abel Tasman and his crew, as the first Westerners, set eyes on this country. It was very interesting to share a lunch with several local experts on Tasman and his explorations, to see what we can organise to commemorate that event.”

Arjan van der Boon, left,
Nelson City Council deputy mayor Ali
Boswijk, Addo Mulders and Nether-
lands ambassador Arie van der Wiel at
the Abel Tasman statue.
photo Martin de Ruyter,
Chief photographer The Nelson Mail





Abel Tasman's visit reviewed

One of the project ideas for the Abel Tasman commemoration is to organise a seminar about a number of controversial issues around the visit of Abel Tasman in 1642. Rudi Mack in a number of publications raises the assumption that Dutch sailors may have landed on Golden Bay on 18 December 1642. His research is based on printed illustrations of Tasman's visit to New Zealand published in Amsterdam in 1705. Secondly, an archaeologist did find new clues to the historic Tasman Maori clash. In Abel Tasman's journal the clash is attributed to misunderstandings between cultures such as the reply by the Dutch with trumpet music to the performance of a haka and blowing a putatara, a Maori shell trumpet, by the Maori at their first encounter. Or as another argument goes, the white people on the ships were strangers and so were their enemies. Otago researchers argue that it is simply not sufficient to say that Maori did not like strangers. A more likely explanation, according to them, is that the incident took place in the middle of the kumara growing season. Probably Tasman and his crew were seen as a potential threat to their food reserves.

These are just two stories. It could well be that Abel Tasman sometimes falsified the records. It was for example Tasman's habit of showing continuous coastline on charts at points he knew there were unexpected inlets, which could prove that the newly discovered 'Statenland' was not part of the famous Great South Land he was searching for. He falsified his findings to avoid problems with his superiors.

Based on more recent research the proposed seminar could bring to light on what really happened. The plan is to organise such a seminar in April next year and present the results around the commemoration date of the visit of Abel Tasman in December 2012 (photo previous page).

Ons Museum en Cultureel Centrum

'Ons Museum en Cultureel Centrum' for the Nederlanders in New Zealand is moving from strength to strength. In September 2010 a Trust Deed was signed in Foxton under the blades of De Molen – in the presence of the Ambassador and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Nathan Guy – that partnered 'Ons Museum' with five other local

organisations.

"We started talking to Tangata Whenua in Foxton and found that we had joint aspirations, and one thing led to another," says Arjan. "Together with the Te Taitoa Maori group we established a very strong relationship with all the other Trust partners and that has turned our Te Awahou – Nieuwe Stroom project into an absolutely unique initiative. The support from Horowhenua District Council has been phenomenal and we are now busy establishing a world-class \$12 million multi-purpose facility next to De Molen."

Te Awahou – Nieuwe Stroom will host a Maori arts centre, the Dutch Connection, the Flax Stripper museum, a gallery, a library, an I-Site visitor information centre, a cafe, and a kiosk for river activities.

Partners: Te Awahou – Nieuwe Stroom

The Dutch Connection, Te Taitoa Maori o Te Awahou, Horowhenua District Council (HDC), The Library, Save Our River Trust, Flax Stripper Museum

Arjan: "The time has come to let people discover more about De Nederlanders: the Dutch touch that you can find all through New Zealand. Let us highlight the stories of Klisser's Vogel's bread, La Grouw's Lockwood Homes, Faber's glasshouses and Verkerks deli products. Let us explain our influence on horticulture, and how Suzie van der Kwast was at the roots of Wellington's coffee culture. Let's celebrate the achievements of our artists and sports people, and the hard work of all those Dutch dairy farmers in Fonterra."

Through the Dutch Museum the Dutch Connection will tell the inspirational success story of the Dutch in New Zealand. It will also provide a place to enrich and enhance social and cultural exchanges between the Netherlands and New Zealand.

"The Dutch Connection Museum will connect the Nederlanders with each other, and highlight the proud Dutch presence in Aotearoa," says Arjan. "It will inform, educate and inspire. In addition, it will act as a focal point for our Dutch community that is spread far and wide throughout the country. *Dit wordt onze plek om samen een heerlijk kopje koffie te drinken en een overvloed aan gezelligheid*

photos above:

Arjan and Kees Zegwaard, with Eelco Boswijk's statue in the main street of Nelson
Arjan and Kees and their trusty campervan in the icy High Country



Arjan and Kees, with Invercargill Mayor Tim Shadbolt and Peter Grandiek from the Dutch Society. Showing off a Delft Blue tile tableau of an Abel Tasman drawing of the Maori.

te vinden.

"We've got to tell our story, in our place – onze plek. So that our children and grandchildren can feel proud and pass on their stories."

After their South Island visit, the Dutch Connection will focus on the main cities in the North Island during the next few months. "We are organising November 'Koffie-maand' " says Arjan. "We will ask people to invite old friends they haven't seen for a while to catch up over a cup of coffee and talk about the Museum."

"We need everybody's support. People can give us items for our collection, a financial contribution, or offer us their stories for safekeeping and archiving. All contributions are appreciated! Samen staan we sterk".

Integration

Ambassador Arie van der Wiel emphasises yet another role for the centre. "It is important that we have one place where the people of two nations can come together and create a future with closer ties in the realms of culture, science, business, the arts, entertainment, international cooperation and immigration. Right now, we have the 'Anne Frank' exhibition touring New Zealand. It will be great to see more of those private initiatives blossom." The ambassador also believes "that the museum can also give a better understanding of the phenomenon of migration, in particular to learn more about the successful integration of the Dutch emigrants in New Zealand. Integration has become one of the major political issues in the global debate on migration. Especially, now the so-called multicultural society is strongly criticised and by many politicians considered a failure.

"Some argue that it was the forced integration policy by New Zealand to scatter new immigrants throughout the country, also known as pepper potting, and the pressure to assimilate i.e. to focus on their new country: its culture, its language and its habits, which contributed to this successful settlement. It is also to be realised that often Dutch immigrants were treated as second

class citizens, as they easily could again be stripped of their new nationality. That created strong resistance but not alienation of New Zealand, as is shown by the fact that the return rate of migration remained remarkably low. However, it formed the basis for the establishment of Dutch clubs in different parts of the country, where people gathered over the weekends to speak Dutch, play Dutch card games and celebrate Dutch national festivals. However only a small proportion, less than 10%, joined these Dutch clubs.

Studies have shown that of all different migrant groups in Australia the Dutch have spread themselves most widely throughout the country. Close to two-third of the male immigrants of Dutch origin married non-Dutch women. Four out of five never read Dutch newspapers. Studies showed moreover that children of Dutch migrants retained less of their parents' language than other ethnic minorities.

What is the reason for this? Why are Greek and Italian communities such as in Australia much more visible and show a much stronger national identity? This can not only be caused by the policy of the recipient country. It must probably also have to do with the cultural background of the Dutch immigrant. The strongly individualistic way of life of the Dutch may have contributed to the integration process. But of course the integration was also helped by the fact that going to a country with Western outlook obviously tends to be easier than settling in a country with a completely different culture. Now that the multicultural society is widely criticised it is of great interest to study how this integration process of the so-called invisible Dutch migrant community happened and which lessons learned could we draw from here. The new museum centre can play a key role in stimulating these kinds of debates and promote studies in these areas."