

# **FROM CLOGS TO THONGS**

by

Eve ten Brummelaar

March 1994

# **From Clogs to Thongs**

*Published for the Dutch Australian Centre about  
the Dutch migration to Australia*

*March 1994*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This booklet was to be a sort of catalogue to accompany you while you wandered around the Exhibition.

It grew out to be a short history of Dutch Migration to Australia. I have been mainly concentrating on Sydney, however people from other areas will recognise some of the stories too.

I would like to thank all the people who gave me relevant bits of information and details I needed. They patiently picked up their phone yet again or rang me back, following an "urgent request" on their answering machine. I also thank my family who put up with a totally disorganised household as I sat at the word processor.

References are mentioned at the back of this booklet.

*Eve ten Brummelaar*



## INTRODUCTION

*“Immigration is the mother of Australia, the tie that binds us all. Settlers from other lands arrived in antiquity, 40 000 or more years ago; our newest are walking from Jumbo jets on this very day”.*

The “First Fleet” arrived on 26 January 1788 and founded a raw settlement on the shores of Sydney Cove. These first European immigrants came unwillingly, as convicts dragged from the gaols of Britain.

The first free settlers landed in 1793. Initially there were far more convicts than free settlers.

In 1867 transportation of convicts ceased for all Australia (in 1840 for NSW)

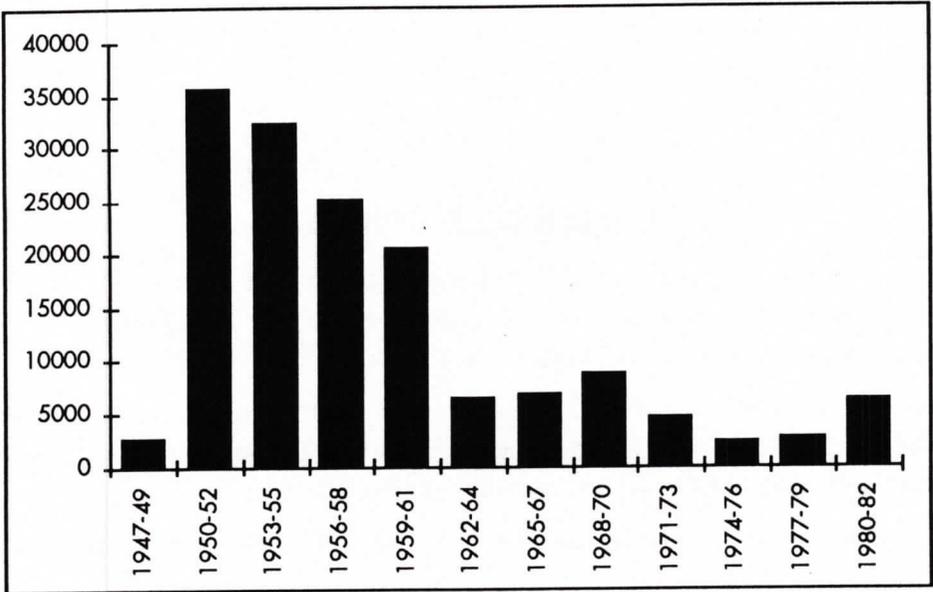
By then other events had conspired to create a vigorous free society of settlers mainly from England and Ireland, in which convicts formed only a small proportion of the population.

The dramatic expansion of the wool industry from the late 1820s created a demand for labour. At the same time, Industrialisation in the Old World resulted, among other things, in many people suffering poverty and distress. An urgent new catchcry emerged : migrate, migrate!

The British Government appointed emigration commissioners and the first shipload of assisted migrants (free settlers) left Britain in 1832. By 1841, however, all forms of officially assisted immigration from Britain to NSW were suspended for over a hundred years.

After the Second World War Australia had a population of just over 7 million people. Not enough for a country which needed thousands of houses, schools, hospitals and other public amenities. Power blackouts were common.

Arthur Calwell, Australia’s first Minister for Immigration, in a speech made in 1946, pointed out that Australia urgently needed many workers in a



*Dutch Migration to Australia, 1947-49 to 1980-82.*

short time. The imperative “Populate or Perish!” soon came into currency. Assisted Passage Schemes started in 1946 for British ex-servicemen and their dependants as well as for other selected British migrants. In 1951 a new assisted passage scheme was concluded with the Netherlands and Italy, and between 1950 and 1961 nearly 116,000 Dutch born people migrated to Australia. (the so-called “Big Wave”) In all, between 1947 and 1982 more than 150,000 Dutch migrants travelled to this land, far away from the Netherlands.

## THE DECISION TO GO

One question, invariably asked by authors, researchers, officials, friends, enemies and curious souls, is, "Why did you leave Holland to live in Australia?" Indeed, why did people go, and what sort of people decided to take this big step?

Ian McArthur, who worked as an Australian Immigration Official, arrived in the Netherlands in 1951 and observed,

*"The country had been devastated during the war. There had been tremendous food shortages. I think there were over 100,000 people unemployed in Holland in the early 1950s. There was still quite an amount of rebuilding going on, but there was no rationing any more. Rationing was by price.*

*The effects of malnutrition during the war were evident. The middle class were well off and the working class were certainly very badly off.*

*There was a certain anxiety in 1951. When I left Australia, family and friends said, "Oh, you have to be ready to flee if the Russians come."*

*There was talk of a third world war. They (the Dutch) felt that nuclear weapons could be used, that the country could be overrun again and a lot of them felt they wanted to get out of Europe and never see it again. I think the threat of war was a very strong factor in decisions to migrate".*

Most certainly, the "cold war" influenced many to look for a "safer country". As a well known Dutch humorist once wrote,

*"They look forward to digging in the soil, with a shrewd smile upon their faces because they feel safe from the threat of war".*

However, during the late sixties it was actually quite a shock for many who

had sought to escape from thoughts of war to discover that Australia, following the “All the way with LBJ” slogan, was sending troops to Vietnam. This proved to be quite unsafe for our sons.

Up to 1950 many foodstuffs and articles were still rationed in the Netherlands. “Distributie bonnen” (coupons) were still in use, even for simple commodities such as bread. A number of older people were sick and tired of shortages and warlike situations. “First the depression, then the war. I’ve had enough. Out!”.

Many young people in the Netherlands wanting to get married and start a family could not obtain a house. They had to live with their parents, or auntie Em, or pay huge sums as “key money”.

The Dutch government at that time could see an overcrowded little country. With a baby boom in 1946/1947, a shortage of jobs, food, housing and buildings the government started a positive, encouraging, (one might say aggressive) “emigratie politiek”.

There were “information evenings”, pamphlets, advertisements and golden promises. Australia was so big and free, so many opportunities, so much sunshine, so good for the children. Somewhere along the line reality occasionally fell between the boards.

So what sort of people took the step to emigrate?

Prof Sj. Groenman wrote:

*There are many images of emigration and the emigrant which have been passed on without any critical evaluation. However, these images have certainly not been just trumped up.*

*If it is said that the emigrant is a scout inspired by a pioneering spirit, a go-getter with too much energy for his limiting fatherland; or if - the opposite - the emigrant is discussed as a Jack-of-all-trades and master of none or as a fortune hunter who failed to make it in Holland, these images were not just made up as part of a harebrained scheme.*

*Somewhere they are connected with reality, or ... they WERE”.*

Professor Groenman goes on to point out that an emigrant today should not be equated with the folk who left their country in past centuries. The pioneer and the Jack-of-all-trades have perhaps been replaced with “just

somebody” who for various reasons decided to go.

One of the images of the typical emigrant, “the strong man who....” is also rather old fashioned. “The strong woman” has often been there too, deciding whether to emigrate or stay put. Studies have shown that the success or failure of migration often depended greatly on the wife and/or mother of the family.

Dutch born people also included those who lived (or had lived) in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) for shorter or often longer periods. Many of these migrated to Australia because they couldn’t feel at home any more in the Netherlands. They longed for sunny days, and found Holland stifling and “narrow minded”. They too hoped for a better economic existence in the promised land of plenty.

The answers given to the question “what made you decide to emigrate?” have proved to be so diverse and involved that most researchers have found it difficult, if not impossible to narrow the range down to just one or two generally applicable main reasons.

Individually, people migrated for a variety of reasons. Often they gave one reason for the move while suppressing or ignoring underlying factors.

“Down Under” there was another question waiting to be answered. “And HOW do you like Australia?!”. Often this question was hurled at the unsuspecting immigrant before he/she had properly left the ship or the plane.

Which brings us to the other side of the coin. Whether Dutch born migrants came for adventurous reasons, or because they hated uncle Harry, was of no consequence to the Australian authorities. The Australians had their own specific ideas about what “a good migrant” should be.

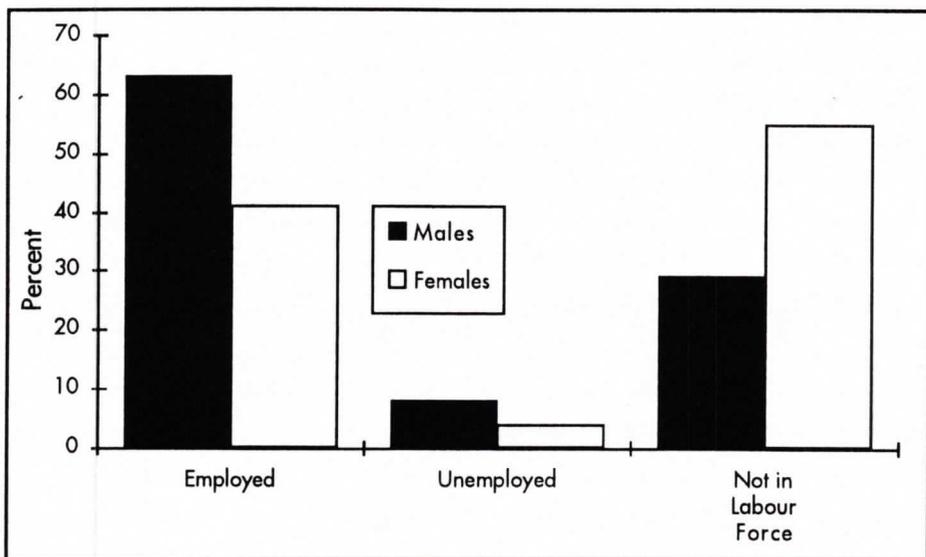
Many Dutch immigrants to Australia came when the White Australia Policy was still firmly in place. Essentially, the Australian Authorities were seeking people who, in effect, *looked* good and who would fit easily into the Australian way of life. Ian McArthur writes:

*“We wanted fit, able men capable of working. One of the main questions of selection was, ‘Are you prepared to take any kind of work on arrival until you get settled?’ A positive answer was expected.*

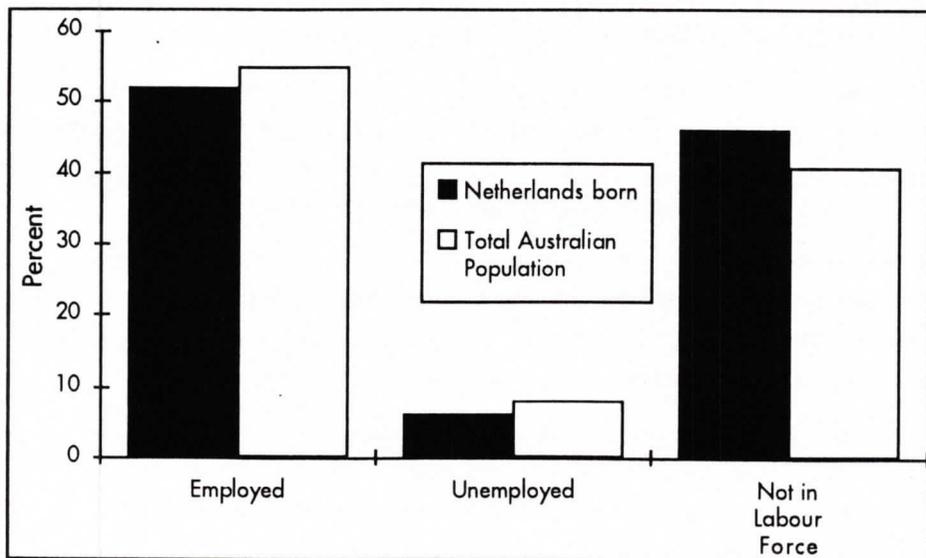
*“People who were in good middle-class positions, such as managerial*

executive types, were told they might have to work as labourers but that, if they were good enough and had an excellent knowledge of English, they may be able to work their way up to a similar position.

*A lot of Dutch people did, in fact, do that."*



*Labour force distribution by sex, Netherlands-born only. Source: 1991 Census.*



*Labour force status, Netherlands-born and total Australian population Source: 1991 Census.*

## THE VOYAGE

Migrants travelled to Australia in ships and by plane. Many of them had assisted passages, others paid entirely for themselves or coughed up part of the fare.

They were sometimes put in cabins which they shared with family, but were normally accommodated with strangers. On board ship accommodation was often in dormitories deep down in the vessel. Bunks two or three above each other. Men and women separated. Generally not exactly a “Love Boat” cruise.

And the voyage could take a long time, up to 32 days. Many became seasick. A number of newly weds complained that their honeymoon had not turned out to be a romantic affair, sleeping in different quarters on an overcrowded ship.

One had to be fit and healthy to be able to achieve migrant status. On board the ship one had to stay healthy. One lady, who developed a nervous rash on her hands and face, wrote in her diary,

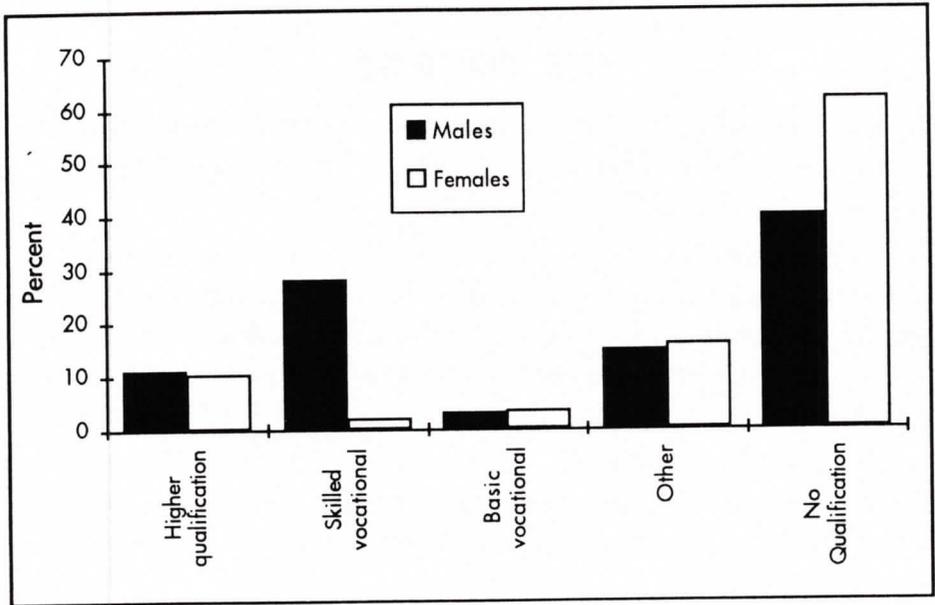
*“I’ll hide somewhere. If they see this rash they will put me off the ship”.*

Travelling by plane wasn’t always so relaxing either. Planes in the fifties made frequent stops for refuelling. Catharine Vanderhorst relates:

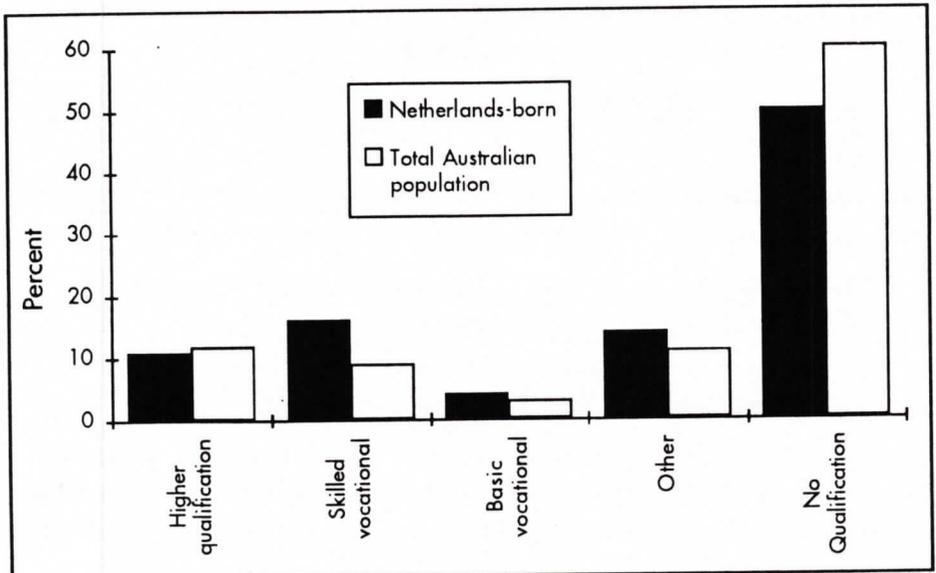
*“We left by plane on the 14th of September 1954 and we arrived in Melbourne on the 22nd of September. We found it very hard in the months after we arrived because factories were more or less closing down for Christmas and it was very hard to find a proper job”.*

Whether it was a ship or a plane that carried them away, many emigrants as they gazed for the last time upon the buildings and houses of the land where they had lived and belonged for many years, thought, “I’ll never see this again”.

Much later, after having becoming established , many Dutch immigrants were able to visit their former homelands, but after disembarkation they had first to struggle through some tough years in their new country.



*Level of qualification by sex, Netherlands-born only. Source: 1991 Census.*



*Level of qualification, Netherlands-born and total Australian population Source: 1991 Census.*

## THE FIRST YEARS

While still in the Netherlands or in Indonesia, intending migrants tried to obtain as much information about life in Australia as they could lay their hands on.

One realises, as one gets older, that obtaining information about a country in this way is actually never good enough to create a comprehensive and correct image. To begin with, information is hardly ever completely objective. On the one hand, the Australian and Dutch officials, keen for the migration to take place, would paint a rosy picture, of life in Australia, while on the other hand, disgruntled migrants would be inclined to tell gloomy stories about all the hardships they had to endure.

The Dutch who decided to migrate were generally disposed to the rosy picture. "The homes on the photographs with their neat, rather large gardens looked beautiful, didn't they? And there would be plenty of good work. Yippee! And they really *wanted* us to come ; surely we would be welcomed with open arms?"

But no, they were not. By no means. Fair dinkum Aussies resented the influx of so many "foreigners" and often did not extend a friendly welcome. Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Poles, Lebanese, Spanish, Asians ... have all , in their turn, been distrusted and eyed with suspicion, just as they disliked each other. The latest grumblings had only recently come from New Zealand where a group of people resent the arrival of "those racist White South Africans" ... It must be said, however, that this is not a peculiarly Australian trait. Migrants everywhere have tended to be similarly received.

While the multicultural Australian society of the late twentieth century seems to have worked out rather well, it is probably fair to say that the anti discrimination laws have not been made because human nature is generally so sweet and tolerant.

However, as the Dutch in the fifties and sixties bent over backwards to “assimilate”, they were considered to be good migrants. The fact that they brought their Calvinistic work ethic with them was helpful too. “They are such hard workers.” But even the Dutch had to refrain from speaking Dutch in trains or on buses. “Don’t jabber that silly language, speak normal English!”.

The beautiful homes of the emigration brochures proved practically unattainable for the newcomers. Many new immigrants were transported to “camps”, which were certainly far more primitive than the Dutch homes they had left behind. Others tried to rent “something somewhere” or lived in tents and sheds while they built their homes themselves; hard yakka if one hadn’t done that sort of work before.

The lucky ones, who had been sponsored by family, travelled to crowded little places and shared one room with their family.

One woman told her story thus:

*“We were like sardines in a tin. My husband pointed to a tiny shed like structure. It was being built by him and his brother to house us with our two children. I asked him how he could expect me to live in a place made of plywood! Whereupon I was firmly told that this was absolutely not plywood. This was genuine weatherboard! At that stage it didn’t make much difference to me. Coming from a city in Holland, a “house” to me was solidly built, a row of sturdy bricks upon other rows of equally strong bricks. But it turned out to be quite cozy, albeit a bit small”.*

The camps and barracks were considerably less cozy. “Open air” showers, community food, unpaved roads, crowded. There have even been people who muttered “concentration camps” under their breath.

One family, however, did receive a warm and rather glittering welcome – at least initially. Young and radiant Adriana Zevenbergen, who arrived in 1958 with her husband and two small children was the 100,000th migrant. After all the festivities were over she unpacked her big case and settled down. Whether she escaped the initial difficulties of starting a brand new life is debatable.

Many people brought cases of stuff that was deemed to be irreplaceable.

Huge packing cases full of kitchenware, sheets, clothing, furniture, hair curlers, radio, books, paper, pens, stove, crockery, pictures, a bath, a pram..... you name it, it was packed.

Most had the mistaken idea that in Australia, kangaroos were hopping around in the city streets and that department stores would not exist.

Furthermore, what was packed was generally all they had. Plus a bit of money and lots of enthusiasm to make it.

And they brought their own names of course, although unfortunately, many changed their names, to even more completely fit into the Australian scene. Those who didn't have experienced for years exasperated voices over the phone or behind counters, "Can you spell that again please?!"

It is perhaps ironic now that Australian telephone books list so many names which are taken for granted. Names which 30 to 40 years ago were deemed to be "unpronounceable".

However, having said all this, it should be pointed out that tens of thousands of Dutch people who came to Australia are now quite happy. Most are very glad that they took that enormous step, so many years ago.

A comment now heard often and indeed repeated to journalists from the Netherlands who happen to visit Australia, "Holland is a nice little country to visit occasionally. But I wouldn't like to live there any more. Australia is my home!"

## **REGROUP AND ORGANISE**

Articles and books are likely to throw up a variety of traditional epithets about “the Dutch character”. They are said to be tenacious, diligent, arrogant, stubborn, individualistic, critical and honest (often received as blunt). They are fond of “gezelligheid” (feeling cozy), a table cloth and flowers on the table and wood panelled walls. They enjoy political arguments, any argument really. They hate a cool breeze in the house (tocht) and they love herring, raw with onions.

And they can organise. Boy! Can they organise!

After overcoming the initial cultural shocks, the Dutch migrants of the 1950s immediately started to set up Dutch clubs. The oldest one had already been formed before the war, The Netherlands Association of Sydney.

Some thirty Dutch clubs have been formed since, catering for and organising card games, carnival gatherings, dances, folk dances, drama, theatre, choirs, group trips to Holland, dinner nights, cocktail parties, Indonesian nights and bus tours. A variety of suitable gentlemen played the role of Saint Nicholas each year - at least one of these rode a horse through the streets of Sydney. Some clubs even managed to build their own clubhouse.

Meanwhile they argued, and tried to push their own way through. However, thanks to a number of excellent leaders in the Dutch community, they generally made up again and suitable compromises were found.

One argument simmers on between the “Big Wave” migrants of the 50s and 60s and the newcomers who came in the eighties. The latter were actually not “the migrants”, but rather “guest entrepreneurs”. They brought more money with them, generally managed to find good jobs or form their own companies and are of course much younger. It is a situation comparable to the old convicts and first settlers, and the newer settlers who arrived towards the end of the 19th century. The older people consider

these young ones to be cocky, uninformed and pushy (all this perhaps tinged by some jealousy). The young bright ones see the oldies as old fashioned stick-in-the-muds who won't budge for professional vibrant ideas. But even in this situation many compromises have been reached.

The Dutch Clubs were not only organised for fun. In 1956 a Netherlands Co-operative Building Society was formed with initial funding from the Commonwealth Bank, later also with finances coming from the Netherlands Emigration Service in the Netherlands.

The Board of this Building Society was formed by people who worked very hard on a voluntary basis. Sometimes Board members travelled around on a push bike to visit prospective clients. Many interviews took place in the kitchens or lounge rooms of the volunteers.

Three schemes were formed involving overseas funds totalling \$7.77 million and matching funds provided by Australian lenders totalling \$10.07 million. Overall a sum of \$17.84 million. In NSW alone more than 1700 families were able to obtain a house through the Netherlands Building Society.

*“In every respect this Building Society was a great success. The directors and the Secretary carried out their tasks competently and fully justified the trust placed in them by the Bank and the Netherlands Emigration Service. The Dutch proved to be reliable borrowers, who always met their commitments promptly.”*

The Wilhelmina Fund was created before the war to help “lost seamen”. Through the fifties and to the present day this Fund has been used to assist people from Dutch descent who need help as a result of hardship, floods and fire.

The Federation of Netherlands Societies Ltd was set up in 1967 to coordinate all the activities of affiliated clubs. The man who became chairman of this Federation in 1967 still holds that position. He is one of those community leaders who is capable of settling arguments and disputes in a benign manner.

One of the activities of the Federation was the creation of a Social Work Committee. The members of this committee motivate and stimulate enlightened self interest, mainly among people growing older and sometimes

becoming lonely and isolated. Many “drop-in groups” (instuif groepen) have been organised.

This sort of work has also been carried out by Dutch speaking ministers and priests and the people who attended their churches. The Dutch congregation in the Uniting Church have had a central church building for Dutch services since the sixties.

Dutch speaking priests also have been very actively involved with the Dutch migrants.

There is a PDMA (Protestant Dutch Migrant Organisation) and a CDMA (Catholic Dutch Migrant Organisation).

Radio 2EA Dutch programme was, before the SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) came into being, sponsored by the Federation of Netherlands Societies Ltd.

The Dutch Australian Weekly was started in the fifties. A newspaper in the Dutch language which reached all the major cities in Australia. After some difficulties in the eighties it was taken over by a young editor. It is now called the Dutch Weekly, and also goes to New Zealand.

It should be pointed out that more than half of the Dutch born people assimilated so well that they have had little or no contact at all with these extensions of Dutch culture. Many of them have even managed to largely forget their Dutch language. Even the meetings in Dutch clubs and various other organisations mentioned above are now conducted in English.

But most of the Dutch migrants, whether inclined to maintain aspects of their original culture or not, have created a pleasant existence for themselves in Australia.

There are many Dutch shops, restaurants, motels and travel agents. Actually there are also many Australian steak houses and pubs they enjoy!

Yes, many are doing all right. They have gained a certain pride in what they have been able to achieve and have started to organise even bigger and better things.

## **JULIANA VILLAGE**

The Juliana Village retirement home was the brainchild of Jan Logeman. As Jan wrote in "Juliana Village - Recollections and Projections" (1980):

*"Maybe you have to be a little bit crazy if, after a year of propagating the need for a retirement village and with capital of \$47.00, you can keep smiling and go ahead with a project that finally costs about one and a quarter million dollars. But, if you succeed in persuading the most able people from your environment to form a board of directors, there must be something to say for craziness".*

*"I have told the story before. The idea was born in Sutherland Shire Hospital, where I was recovering from a heart ailment. Around me were some interesting men. All born and bred in Australia. We talked a lot together. But, when the conversation went back to the past, the depression years, wartime etc. I withdrew. Their experiences were different from mine in Holland.*

*"At that time I began to understand that, if people born overseas came to old age and enter a retirement village, they could be very lonely, even amongst a lot of nice people. I came to the conclusion that it might be a good idea to build a village where, if not the majority, at least a large minority of the residents would be of Dutch origin".*

As Jan recalled, it all began with "capital" of only \$47.00. However, money started coming in from all sides. Starting with coins it soon built up. There were a number of fund raising activities.

There was a form of Ladies' Auxiliary: About a dozen women who met fortnightly at each other's homes. The group was called "Vlijtige Vingers" (Diligent Fingers).

As Toni Rietbergen writes:

*"It was an all year round effort to get money together for the Village.*

*Between the breakfast dishes and the pea soup they knitted, crocheted, embroidered and sewed booties, jackets, dolls, handbags, cushions etc. together. And if you are after a good hang-up their coat hangers are the thing. And remember the hundreds of tulips at the Mardi Gras? Their work ... although the first ones turned out like dandelions.*

*"They stuffed animals until they themselves looked like snow-covered Christmas trees. Indeed, Noah's Ark would not have held all the animals they made over the years. From mice to elephants, from frogs to giraffes".*

The Mardi Gras (Hollandse Kermis) was held seven times from 1972 to 1978 and attracted thousands of visitors. Total proceeds of these seven events were over \$42,000.

Many companies assisted the Juliana Village project. To try and name them all would take up too much space. However, KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines) and Philips deserve a special mention. Finally, the Queen Juliana Fund of the Netherlands gave \$93,924.08 (215 000 Dutch guilders).

The \$200,000 (unencumbered) needed to qualify for the grant of \$400,000 from the Department of Social Security had by this stage been reached, and in November 1980 the Juliana Village was officially opened.

## **HOLLAND FESTIVAL**

Following the success of the Kermis and Juliana Village an even bigger and more elaborate fair came into production. The Holland Festival.

The first Festival was held in 1982 and has been held annually in February at the Fairfield Showground. The event was even held twice in 1988, when the Dutch Queen, Koningin Beatrix visited Australia and the Festival in November.

Henk van der Weide instigated the Holland Festival, and the first programme can be seen in the Exhibition.

The Holland Festival Committee, part of the Federation of Netherlands Societies Ltd, works hard every year to prepare and organise the Festival, and an average of around 15,000 people visit the Festival every year over the three days it is held.

Every year as part of the Festival, a "Charity Quest" is organised. The prize for the winning ticket is a return trip to the Netherlands for two with \$1000 spending money. The Quest Entrant who raises the most money (selling tickets and raising promotion money) also wins a return ticket for two to the Netherlands plus spending money.

The trips are donated by KLM Video, TV and radio consolation prizes are donated by Philips and the spending money by the Holland Festival.

Initially the Quest Entrants were relatively young girls selling raffle tickets. Nowadays the "radiant young girls from Dutch descent" are a bit hard to find. So "older women" had a go. Judging by the success they had this year, they might make it grandmothers next time, who knows?

The Holland Festival raises an average of about \$20 000 per year. This money is deposited into the Federation Benevolent Fund, an organisation under the umbrella of the Federation of Netherlands Societies Ltd.

## **ABEL TASMAN VILLAGE**

Following the success of the Juliana Village, the idea to build a second Retirement Village (after Juliana Village) had always been at the back of Jan Logeman's mind. However, it was Anton Kool who actively and decisively started to work for the second village.

Perhaps Anton Kool was a little bit less crazy than Jan Logeman was more than 20 years ago. At the start he certainly had a little more capital with which to work.

It is worth contemplating the following differences between the circumstances operating at the time the ATV project was launched compared to those in effect when the Juliana Village was first mooted.

- The economic situation had changed drastically.
- People were not so “naive” any more, and would not so easily part with their money.
- Australian Government(s) were not so willing any more to allocate money, and only certain suburbs had been targeted for the building of retirement villages.
- The rules for the building and running of retirement villages generally had become more stringent.
- The prices of land and building costs had risen sky•high.
- The middle aged enthusiastic people who had put such a lot of effort into the Juliana Village project had by now become “old and grey”, albeit still willing and quite capable to do a lot of necessary work.
- Many of the younger people in the Dutch community were less “amusingly simple” than their elders, and were not so eager to do a lot of work for nothing – “just to realise a vision”.

Considering all this it becomes clear that the creation of the Abel Tasman

Village was uphill work, right from the start.

However, various interest-free loans were obtained:

- From the Federation Benevolent Fund \$ 165,000.
- From Juliana Village \$ 100,000.
- From the Wilhelmina Fund \$ 30,000.

With this collateral the work for the ATV could begin in earnest.

*“A provisional committee was created as a sub-committee of the Federation in 1985. They accepted as their first task, the need to survey the needs of the community. The result of the study was a clear indication that it was NOT a nursing home which was required, but accommodation very similar to that provided in Juliana Village.*

*“The next task undertaken was the location of suitable and affordable land. The architect, Mr Kristensen, and several ATV Board members - all in a voluntary capacity - spent a large number of days searching for the right site.*

*“Eventually, in 1987/1988, a block of land was suggested to the Board by Father J McCann OMI who was the parish priest for a Roman Catholic community in Chester Hill. With his assistance and the understanding attitude of the local and the senior dignitaries of the Church, it became possible to purchase the land on very favourable terms. In fact, at a price well below the official market value.*

*“The only condition on the sale was the requirement that a multi-purpose hall be incorporated into the Village which would also be available for the conduct of religious services for the local parishioners.*

*“The Federation decided to create a separate legal identity which would be charged with the planning, design, construction and the ongoing care of the organisation in the village.*

*A company (limited by guarantee) was registered on the sixteenth day of December 1988.*

*“It was decided to name the development the “Abel Tasman Village”. This name was chosen to express the connection between the future residents, citizens of Australia and their country of origin which pro-*

*duced one of the discoverers of the Australian continent - Abel Jansz Tasman (1603-1659) who mapped part of the Australian coast in 1642-44.*

The Abel Tasman Village is no longer a vision, or a plan. Thanks to all the efforts and support it stands there, large as life.

The Australian Government provided a grant of \$1.3 million!, and in September 1993 the ATV received its first residents. Hans Timmers had already been appointed manager by this time. Today, about 50% of the self care units have been leased and approximately half of the hostel units are occupied.

The impressive “Big Hall” is used as a dining room, with part of it partitioned off to make it “more cozy” (gezelliger).

The 1993 Christmas dinner in the Hall was an enormous success.

The Board of Directors of the ATV have probably had some last minute headaches about THE opening, but by now they can relax. A bit.

No doubt as more people come to live in the Village, more difficulties will have to be solved. Invariably, where people live together, difficulties crop up, but the Manager and the Board will solve them.

It is important to note here that the ATV Board members are NOT, nor have they ever been paid!

When Juliana Village was being planned and built nobody doubted the fact that Board members did voluntary work. Everybody else did too.

These days, as has been stated before, people are more “practical” and “business like”.

“Nobody works for nothing, right?”. Wrong! Some still do.

Nudge, nudge, wink, wink, “But surely the board members get something out of it. A percentage??”

No, they didn’t and they don’t. Not even petrol or bridge money. Whether that’s “old hat” or “stupid” or “Dutch” or “naive” ... you have to make up your own mind.

Visit the Abel Tasman Village, admire it and be proud of it. It is one more monument to the multicultural aspect of life in Australia.

## **DUTCH AUSTRALIAN CENTRE**

The Dutch Australian Centre was officially founded at a meeting on the 6th November 1982. In May 1984 it was incorporated and it is now known as the Dutch Australian Centre Ltd. It was started by a very small number of people and was partly inspired by a Migrant Museum (Utvandrarnas Hus) in Sweden.

The idea was to build a Centre, and gather all historical and cultural materials with reference to the Dutch migration to Australia. It was soon discovered, however, that a number of valuable resource materials had already been “lost” or were in the process of being thrown away. The DAC wanted, among other things, to build up a reference library, so that the children, grandchildren and succeeding generations could go there and research their “roots”.

The idea grew, and the DAC’s latest pamphlet states:

*“Since its inception the Dutch Australian Centre has had as its fundamental objectives the collection, preservation, dissemination and promotion of Dutch culture and heritage in Australia, and the provision of a broad based source of information, assistance, advice and interest - with a particular emphasis on the promotion of social activities - for the benefit of people of Dutch nationality or descent in Australia as well as the wider Australian community.”*

The DAC started with an idea, a dream - and nothing else. Initially many people could not comprehend the dream. They saw only “nothing else”. As soon as “Dutch Culture” was mentioned, they assumed an attitude of disgust. “Culture” meant a string quartet playing Mozart or “one of those paintings nobody understands”. It took years to nurture understanding of the fact that culture is part of the people, part of all of us, our language, our attitudes, our value judgments, our fun, our food, our thought patterns,

even poffertjes (small rather greasy but yummy pancakes) are part of our culture.

The DAC has had various stalls at the Holland Festival. Exhibitions with slides, photographs, documents, embroidery, Dutch books, small pamphlets, larger pamphlets, historical material, maps, Life Saving organisations (Australian and Dutch), selling Dutch and Australian sausages. The maps, showing where people came from in the Netherlands and Indonesia, and where they are now in Australia can be seen upstairs in the Centre.

About 30 oral histories have now been recorded on cassettes. People telling how they came here, and what they did in this, their new country. Some of these oral histories will also be played upstairs so that you can listen to them.

Through talking to people, pleading with people, the DAC strove to boost its membership. Bit by bit the core members of the DAC managed to convince more and more people that their dream wasn't just a silly dream, but could be made into a reality.

The Abel Tasman Village Board, through its Chairman Anton Kool, gave an undertaking to the DAC Committee that within the ATV a small building would be built in which the Dutch Australian Centre would be allowed to carry out its activities. In this way the ATV with the DAC would benefit the whole community.

The DAC Building, the building in which you are now standing, was designed by Helga ten Brummelaar, architect and member of the DAC board. Helga was subcontracted to the architect of the whole ATV, Mr Leif Kristensen (who also designed the Juliana Village for which he was given two special awards).

As soon as this building became reality, interest in the work of the DAC grew. Money was obtained from the Netherlands, from the "Nederlandse Emigratie Fonds", "Stichting Wereldcontact".

The Minister of Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, the Hon Michael Photios MP, also granted the DAC \$10,000. Mr Photios will officially launch the DAC in April/May of this year.

Mr K Birkman of the Netherlands Embassy provided \$1300.00 for this exhibition. His Excellency J Th Bast, Ambassador of the Netherlands in

Canberra, will officially open the building on the 26th March 1994.

So here we are! A modest beginning perhaps, but we, the DAC Board, are bursting with pride and enthusiasm.

We will make it work.

We will organise more exhibitions, and make the DAC a venue for social, cultural and business gatherings.

The Centre will also serve as a focus for community services. The CACP - Community Aged Care Packages (Thuiszorg) - has already occupied one of the offices.

We will build up our Reference Collection.

The archive material is at the moment still in many boxes, stored in a cellar. (A good cellar, fairly clean and with a more or less stable temperature). This material will be sorted out (with help of DAC members, old and new) and suitably stored.

A lot of work awaits us.

No, it isn't daunting.

It is exciting!

## THE EXHIBITION

By now you might have seen the Exhibition, illustrating many of the points made in this booklet. Or perhaps you have still to see it. Don't miss the video films, they are quite interesting. Absorb the Dutch experience.

In 1988 the Australian Bicentennial Authority, via the SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) commissioned the Dutch Language Group (among other language groups) to write a radio play about the older people in their community. It was broadcast in August 1988 under the title: *Clog Wogs, an Endangered Species?*

It ended thus:

*200 years from now, that is - after us - about  
Seven or eight generations  
With their own relations  
With new problems again  
For living and existing.  
I wonder, what would it be like?*

*200 years from now - well, if the world still exists  
(with perhaps some trees)  
Would people still dream  
About future and peace ? And would the past,  
Would WE, as we are now, be of any value?*

*200 years from now, our lives and experiences  
Happened ages ago,  
Would they be satisfied  
With our migrant history?  
That big wave from the Netherlands.  
Or would our experience be lost and forgotten?*

*After two long centuries, memorial celebrations?  
Re-enactment of our determined efforts  
To learn to speak English?  
Our Dutch names  
With which we arrived  
Remembered with pride? Or changed "it's such an old story"!*

*200 years from now, what would it matter to us  
If they would say: "My ancestors Dutch?  
Don't interest me too much"  
Our culture, given to this country,  
Would anything be left?  
It can't affect us anymore then! No... and YET...*

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Mijntje Hage

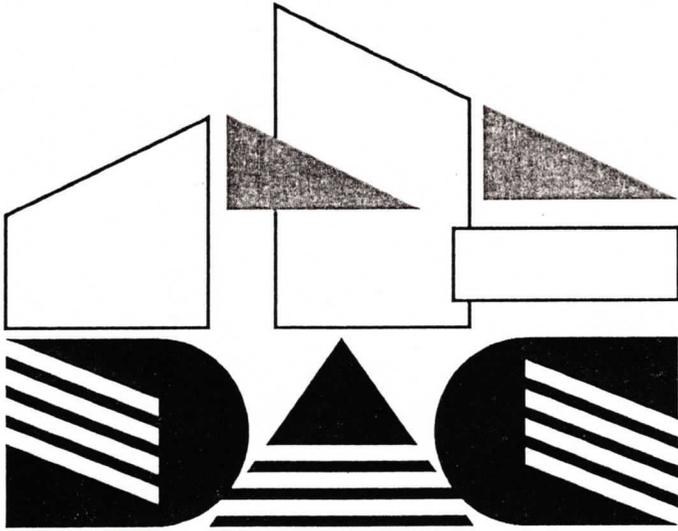
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Theo ten Brummelaar, April 1989



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