



Textile Research Centre Newsletter: May 2015

Spring has arrived and there are lots of things happening and many activities are being planned at the TRC Leiden. It's a little hard to know where to start.

Intensive Textile Courses

Between 18th and 22nd May, 2015, the TRC organises again, for the third time this year, its acclaimed five-day intensive course on textiles and textile production. The course, which is being given in English, looks at the processes of making a piece of cloth, from the raw fibres to the end product. The participants learn about the theory and practice of fibre identification, spinning, dyeing, weaving, and decorative techniques such as printing and embroidery. The course is practically orientated and the students are encouraged to try out the wide range of techniques that are being discussed.

The group of students is always limited to eight people, in order to ensure the greatest benefits to the participants. The course is given by Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, director TRC. There are currently two places open for the May course. The fee for a full week of tuition is 550 euros. The course will be repeated between 12th - 16th October, but in October there are no places left. So please join either the May 2015 course, or next year, from 21st - 25th March 2016; 16th - 20th May 2016 or 17th - 21st October 2016. For information and registration: info@trc-leiden.nl



From Wednesday 13th until and including Saturday 16th May there will be a national textile festival in Leiden that is being organised by *Stichting Textiel Informatie en Documentatie Centrum* (STIDOC; <http://www.textielfestival.nl/>). There will be over forty venues in Leiden with exhibitions, workshops, displays of ancient and modern textiles and related items. It is going to be a very busy and exciting period. Thousands of visitors are expected everyday in Leiden to visit all the venues, but be aware: one day to see everything will simply not be enough!

The TRC is also involved in the Festival and will be displaying its colourful and inspirational exhibition of the appliqués from the Street of the Tentmakers in Cairo (the current exhibition has been extended until the end of June in order to make sure more people can see it).

The TRC will be open for the full four days of the Festival, between 10.00 and 16.00 hrs.

Wednesday Morning Workshops

Every Wednesday morning at the end of each month the TRC organises a workshop, between ten in the morning until one in the afternoon, that combines theory and practice, or, in other words, people will watch, listen, and do. These meetings prove to be a great success, and most workshops do in fact attract more people than the maximum we can take (15).

For the 27th of May, the workshop will deal with early medieval textiles and decorative needlework from northwestern Europe, including the Leiden area. Textile finds from early medieval sites in the Netherlands and the surrounding countries show that needlework in the period before 1000 AD was not only functional but could be highly decorative as well. This is a feature that to date has received scant attention in literature. Participants of this workshop will learn about the special sewing techniques and materials used in this period, which is linked to Emperor Charlemagne and the Vikings. But they will also practice some of the decorative stitches that have been documented in 'royal' burials in England and Denmark and those used for several garments found in the Netherlands, including the Leiden area. Participants do not need to have any previous experience with needlework.

This workshop will be given by the Leiden municipal archaeologist, Chrystal Brandenburg. The maximum number of participants is fifteen, so please register as soon as possible at info@trc-leiden.nl. Costs are 25 euros, including materials and coffee/tea. Language of communication: Dutch (English if and when required).

For the end-of-June workshop, on 24th of June, Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood will talk about the appliquéés of the current exhibition, and invite all participants to make some themselves.

The Next Exhibition

Dressing Sheba Textiles, garments and jewellery from Yemen

10th August until 17th December 2015

The image of the Queen of Sheba, dressed in exotic textiles, clothing and jewellery and dancing in front of King Solomon, has inspired the imagination of artists for hundreds of years. The Biblical land of Sheba, now known as the Republic of Yemen in the extreme southwest of the Arabian Peninsula, has long been described as the source of abundant trade goods, including emeralds and rubies, purple dyes, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and incense (*Book of Ezekiel 27:16*).

Yemeni dagger sheath and gold embroidered belt. TRC Collection



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Dutch traders in the 17th and 18th centuries went to Yemen to acquire silk (*stickzijde*) and metal threads (*goudtraet*) and more that came from as far away as Syria, Egypt, Iran, India, China and Indonesia, to bring these precious goods back to The Netherlands for the wealthy citizens of Europe. In the 20th century Yemen was still attracting trade from all over the world. Sadly, in recent months Yemen has become the scene of a bloody civil war and interference from outside.

The local geography of deserts, mountains and long coasts has meant that Yemen developed a diverse range of textile and clothing traditions that reflect local cultural and economic characteristics. This diversity is reflected in the many textiles and outfits that will be displayed in the new TRC exhibition. They include men and women's outfits from the four corners of the country, including indigo dresses with chain work, intricate embroideries of many types, locally hand woven textiles for men and women, examples of the famous eye faceveils. Also on display will be examples of the intriguing and colourful red velvet and satin bridal dresses and modern interpretations of traditional forms. Over one hundred items of Yemeni textiles, dress items and accessories are on display. Yemen has also for long been famous for its silver jewellery. Thanks to the generosity of Paul Spijker ([Toguna](#), Amersfoort), a range of silver items worn by Yemeni girls and women will also be on display.

The exhibition also focuses on the exquisitely embroidered dagger belts worn by men, which were produced by women of the Al Buraai family in the remote Haraz Mountains, north of the capital, Sana'a.

Some Recent Donations

April and May are the months of royal and historical events in the Netherlands, with numerous public holidays. In particular, these holidays include *Koningsdag* (the King's Birthday), Remembrance Day (4th May) and Liberation Day (5th May). Two items that reflect such specific moments in Dutch history have recently been given to the TRC.

The first is a printed cotton panel with the image of King Willem III (r: 1849-1890) and the date 1874. It was given to the TRC on the 23rd April by the municipality of Velsen, Noord-Holland. The panel is in bright orange (the colour of the reigning dynasty, the House of Orange) and celebrates the 25th anniversary of King Willem III's reign. He was the great-great-grandfather of the current Dutch king.

The printed text under the depiction of the king is that of the national anthem of the Netherlands until 1933, when it was replaced by the *Wilhelmus*. The text of the former anthem is based on a poem by Hendrik Tollens (1780-1856), with music composed by Johann Wilhelm Wilms (1772-1847). Nowadays the text sounds somewhat anachronistic and certainly very chauvinistic: *Wien Neêrlandsch bloed door d'aderen vloeit, Van vreemde smetten vrij ...* [Whose Dutch blood flows through his arteries, free from foreign blemishes.....]. Not a text for the faint-hearted politically correct among us!

The second item has a somewhat darker history. At the beginning of April 2015 we were given an embroidered kerchief worked in a red and beige cotton thread. The embroidery includes a central text that we read as **34 Stadskanaal J.K. 17-5-1945 Ons Belang 5-9-45**. Surrounding it are some 25 embroidered signatures.

Stadskanaal is a town in the province of Groningen in the northeast of the Netherlands. *Ons Belang* ('Our interest') was the name of a local factory producing strawboard. The date on the embroidery is no doubt of particular importance: the nearby major town of Groningen was liberated from the Germans by mainly Canadian troops in mid-April 1945.

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As pointed out to us by Deandra de Loeff, the name of 'Ons Belang' was not only that of the local strawboard factory, but also that of a temporary internment camp for men and women arrested for collaboration with the Germans. In fact, the camp was 'opened' on 7th May, some three weeks after the liberation of the area, and remained in use well into 1946. The camp was located on the premises of the strawboard factory, 'Ons Belang', hence of course the name of the camp. The initials J.K. that were embroidered on the kerchief, as we initially read them, could in fact also be read as I.K., for 'Internerings Kamp.' One of the embroidered names is that of Tony Bijland, to whose name is added the embroidered word *zwemster* (swimmer [fem.]). Tony Bijland was a female swimming champion who was particularly active in the early 1940s. Born in 1923/24, she trained in Hilversum with the HZC swimming club. In various war-time newspaper articles she is linked to the *Nationale Jeugdstorm* (the Dutch variant of the *Hitlerjugend*). She joined the 'European youth swimming championships' in (German) Breslau in 1941. She was interviewed for the *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden* (Thursday, 13 July 1944; with photograph).

Whether or not she sympathised with the German occupying forces remains unknown. We should not forget she was very young at the time, but it does explain her presence in the internment camp in 1945. How she ended up there, and how and why her name and those of the other people, appeared on an embroidered handkerchief, remains a moot point.

If anyone has any further information about this kerchief or *Internerings Kamp Ons Belang*, could they please get in contact with the TRC at info@trc-leiden.nl ?

TRC Needles

There are currently well over 1300 entries on TRC Needles and the aim is to have 2,000 by the end of the year, reaching c. 5,000 entries within four years. Ambitious but achievable with the help of everyone. You can have a look at TRC Needles via this address: www.trc-leiden.nl/trc-needles

TRC Needles is constantly being brought up to date with new entries, checking old ones, thinking about how to improve its contents, appearance and range. If you have any suggestions or comments concerning TRC Needles, or indeed ideas for entries, then please let us know at info@trc-leiden.nl

TRC Textile and Dress Library

A small group of TRC volunteers are working very hard on the library and most of the books are now catalogued and on the TRC Library bookshelves. Thanks to the help of Coen van der Geest and Jaap Kolkman a new section is being created on the TRC website and we will soon be in a position to put over 2000 book titles on-line so that you can see what we have. Please note that these books are available at the TRC for research purposes, but not for loan.

In addition, books listed in the TRC website under 'Books Showcased' (recommended list of books) will be cross-referenced to the library so that you can easily find them.

We are always looking for items for the TRC Library. If you have any suitable books you are willing to donate please let us know as soon as possible.

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