

# Belgian News



Over forty people attended the Belgian Club of Victoria Easter Sunday egg hunt at Lysterfield Park, 21 children hunted down the eggs left by the bunny in

the morning, to find a great selection of goodies. Also attending were grand parents from Antwerpen and Oostend, it is great to see so many smile

ing people. The Belgian Club is continuing to organise events, by the time this paper hits the streets the club will be having a bowling evening. Over the

past two months the club has held a film night, attended the Royal Belgian Hockey team's reception, and a music event. In July the National Day is to be

held at the Carnegie club.  
*Georges Bernard*

## FLEMISH SINGER HITS AUSTRALIA



Belgian chanteuse Micheline Van Hautem, has recently toured Australia and New Zealand with concerts in Melbourne, Cairns, Castlemaine, Sydney and many other Australian and New Zealand cities. This is her seventh visit to Australia and her audiences love her. She sings in English, French, Flemish, and Afrikaans. Her speciality is singing Jacques

Brel's songs in all of these languages, but especially in French.

Born in Flanders she is a Flemish speaker but learnt French in school. Jacques Brel died 20 years ago, but Micheline is keeping his songs alive and has been singing his songs for over 15 years. Some of her favourites include Port of Amsterdam.

She has also been singing Edith Piaf songs. Prior she was a pop artist.

Members of the Belgian Club of Victoria attended one of her Melbourne concerts and were delighted at her passionate performance and audience involvement. But what is common with these Flemish Belgian performers like Helmut Lotte and Micheline Van Hautem is their skill in singing in many languages.

*Georges Bernard*



# MECHELEN: A CITY OF BELLS, BEER AND HISTORY

By Georges Bernard

**The Flemish city of Mechelen is located between Brussels and Antwerp, on the Dyle River. Easily accessible with rail it is only 2 hours and 25 minutes from Amsterdam, 30 minutes from Brussels and 35 minutes from Antwerpen, there are of course faster trains as well. The city has a population of less than 79,000 and its architecture is a mixture of modern and baroque styles.**

The Archbishop of Mechelen is the head of the Belgian Catholic Church. This maybe the explanation why the city has so many churches and buildings owned by the church; a great many of them loaded with art.

Most famous for its large cathedral with its high sturdy tower of 95 meters plus.

Sint Romboutskathedraal tower has over 512 steps and takes more than 25 minutes to climb, but the views are spectacular over the countryside. Thousands of tourists come to climb the tower, it is certainly worthwhile.

The cathedral was reconstructed and completed in 1375, after a fire in 1342 partially destroyed the structure. Containing important works of art by Anton van Dyck and many Flemish artists, and also has a 49 bell carillon, June until September one day a week, a one hour concert is conducted.

The cathedral is named after the Irish Christian preacher who converted local tribes to Christianity in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Mechelen is also famous for being the first European city connected to a railway line when in 1835 the first line was laid to Brussels. It became the



center for Belgian rail with metal and railway workshops developing.

#### Museums

The city also boasts some unusual enterprises and sites, for example the De Wit Royal

Manufacturers, tapestry manufacturers, it is possible to visit this enterprise. This is set in the 1484 Tongerlo refuge.

The Speelgoed Museum displays old and new toys and folk art, it is located near the railway.

The Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance, is devoted to the plight of the Jews in Belgium during World War 2, the museum is located in an actual Nazi deportation center.

The city's museum is called Museum Hof van Busleyden, located in a 1506 building, which has a carillon museum, displays of fine arts, craft, pictorial history, lace, furniture and leather gilded wallpaper.

There is also the Technopolis, a hands-on science and technology museum.

#### Dynamic town square

Mechelen also boasts a great town square (Grote Markt) with its magnificent buildings, like many cities in Flanders it is alive and dynamic, entertainment for young and old.

One of the features of the square is the Schepenhuis, it is a castle style structure built in 1473, and the 14<sup>th</sup> century Stadhuis with its magnificent interior. However the cathedral dominates the square.

But the unique experience is when the bells ring and a full

concert takes place, the tower roars, and its monolithic presence is exasperating, one can only look up and wonder how many died building this moment to Christianity.

During the spring, summer and autumn months there are many festivals and events, for example the Hanswijk procession takes place in May, it is Belgium's oldest religious procession, and was commenced in 1272, after the city survived the plague.

#### Relaxation with a beer

On a summer's afternoon nothing is more relaxing than to listen to the bells ringing in concert, with a Belgian beer, seated near the Dyle River.

There are many cafes and restaurants near the Vismarkt where you can drink some of the 550 Belgian beers.

Last year I had the pleasure on a Sunday afternoon listening to a brass band, sipping soft delicate Margriet.. Other great beers are the Anker 's Manneblusser, (6% blond), the Gouden Carolus (7.5% dark), There are some real "sort out the chaff from the wheat" classics like . . . Tripel (9% Gouden Carolus) and Ambrio brown beer of 8 per cent, being a Belgian I just love them all.

After half a dozen pintjese you can go on the canal boat for a pleasant ride around town., unfortunately there are no toilet stops! So hold on tight . . .

If you are wise you will drink after the boat ride.

There are many excellent places to stay ranging from youth hostels to five star hotels.

This city is definitely not on the main tourist route, however for those of us who are seasoned travellers we know a gem when we see it, take my word it is a great experience and worthy of a visit..

#### More information on Mechelen

See the following sites

[www.flanders.be](http://www.flanders.be)

[www.stadmechelen.be](http://www.stadmechelen.be)

[www.dewit.be](http://www.dewit.be)

[www.tourism.mechelen.be](http://www.tourism.mechelen.be)



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