

Belgian News

Mussels, witlof and beer

by Georges Bernard

The Abel Tasman Club in Carnegie (also known as the Carnegie Hall) was the venue for the Belgian Club of Victoria's Mussel Festival on October 23.

The lunch attended by nearly ninety people was a great social event with friends from all nationalities meeting to enjoy the great Belgian style foods.

Of course many Belgian beers were available including Delerium Tremens, Floris fruit beers, Chimay, Rocheford, Grimberger, Duvel, Stella Artois, and Kwak.

Of course for those who are not used to drinking these fine Belgian beers they can berather overwhelming given the alcohol content tends to be double or more compared to Australian beers.

The kitchen was overwhelmed by the massive job of cooking the mussels, but they were delicious, Tineke and her crew were flat out keeping up with the demand.

ButtherijstpapmadebyCaroline was fantastic (see picture); she



spent three hours making this delightful Flemish desert. It was great to see so many eating this dessert.

The facilities at the club are very accommodating, with volunteers working behind the bar and serving the food.

Many members of the Dutch community also attended, and enjoyed their club atmosphere.

FLEMISH WRITERS MEET



For the first time all four regular *Dutch Courier* Flemish writers met at the lunch, pictured are Frieda De Doncker, Georges Bernard, An Sneyers and Ruth Meex, they have been regular contributors to the newspaper for the past two years.

An Sneyers is also busy organizing the Grand Connection, aiming to connect young and old in the Belgian-Dutch community. What a great innovative idea!

BELGIAN CLUB AGM

Prior to the lunch the BCV held its Annual General Meeting at the Heritage Centre next door to the Abel Tasman Club, the meeting elected the following office bearers:

Marie-Paule Van Damme, President

Kathy Lefevere, Vice President

Georges Bernard, Secretary

Hector Peeters, Treasurer

Dirk D'hont, Event Organisers

Carolina De Stoop, Membership Secretary

Sagrys Aelbreg, PR and Webmaster

Nancy Demuynck, *Vlaming in de Werld* (VIW) representative

The committee will be organizing five major event for the year coming.

St Nicholas has left and is on the way . . .

On Saturday, December 3, at 1.30 pm the Belgian community will be visited by St Nicholas and Zwarte Piet at Alma Road Community House, Alma Road East St Kilda. Over the past two years a large gathering of children have been present to welcome St Nicholas, and it is expected to be another exciting event this year.

The Belgian community's St Nicholas event is also a social gathering for adults with members bringing specialist Belgian foods for afternoon tea. See the Facebook site Belgians in Melbourne for more information or ring 9710 1309.

On the Sunday, December 4 St Nicholas will continue his travels to the Abel Tasman Club to meet the Dutch community

CHARLOT - THE LITTLE TRAMP

When I mention a whangee cane, a bowler hat, oversized shoes and a toothbrush mustache. what character comes to mind? Not a clue? What about silent movies like *The Kid* (1921) and *City Lights* (1931)? *City Lights* was praised for its mixture of comedy and sentimentality. Need more hints still? What about *Modern Times* (1936), *The Great Dictator* (1940), and *Limelight* (1952)... Ring a bell?

Ah, of course, the great Charlie Chaplin!

Sir Charles Spencer "Charlie" Chaplin was born on 16 April 1889 in Walworth, London. His parents were Charles Chaplin, Senior and Hannah Hill. Charlie learnt singing from his parents who were music hall entertainers. They separated shortly after Charlie was born, leaving Hannah to provide for her children. Charlie and his half brother Sidney ended up spending most of their childhood in orphanages, as Hannah could no longer raise her children due to her mental illness. Charlie's father died of cirrhosis when Charlie was only twelve years of age in 1901. At 19 years old Charlie left school and went on a tour with a small group of comedy entertainers, starring in small comedy acts later on.

Charlie Chaplin moved to the United States in 1910. Chosen by Mack Sennett, the Keystone Studios' popular comedy director, Charlie appeared in silent comedy, directing 35 silent films, starring as the Little Tramp in nearly all. In these early movies of 1914 (*Making a Living* and *Tillie's Punctured Romance*) Chaplin changed his style: no more over-acting, he became more delicate and precise in his movements, thus the role of "The Tramp" was created. The French referred to Chaplin as "Charlot". Having appeared in over 30 short films, Charlie figured that it was time for him to develop his own personal talents and left to work at the Essanay Studios. This was just the beginning of his amazing film career.

Additional to the films I already mentioned are: *The Tramp* (1915), *The Champion* (1915), *The Vagabond* (1916), *The Cure* (1917), *The Immigrant* (1917) and *A Dog's Life* (1918). Then there was *Shoulder Arms* (1918), which poked fun at World War I. His classic - *The Kid* - from 1921 was a real touching story of slum life. *The Pilgrim* was made in 1923. In that same year, high quality feature-length movies were



By Frieda G De Doncker
Produced in collaboration with Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford: *A woman of Paris* (1923), *The Gold Rush* in 1925 and *The Circus* in 1928 - two of Charlie's funniest movies indeed! *The Gold Rush* was Charlie's own personal favourite movie with its balance of social satire, slapstick comedy and dramatic moments of tenderness. In 1931 he directed *City Lights*, a beautiful tale about the tramp's friendship with a drunken millionaire and a blind



flower girl. Personally I consider that one of his best movies. Chaplin's later film "The Great Dictator" (1940), which was his first "talkie", created a real stir. In the film, Chaplin plays a humorous caricature of Adolf Hitler. The movie however earned five Academy Award Nominations! In 1947 Charlie both wrote and directed the movie *Monsieur Verdoux* which was condemned by the American Legion of Decency for its strong moral statements. Charlie's message in this movie was stating that abuse of workers in an attempt to increase business profits was similar to mass murder! A lot of anger was directed towards him during the 40s and 50s. Charlot was not afraid to express his political views and his hatred for dictatorship. When Chaplin and his family travelled to London for the premier of *Limelight* (1952), he was denied re-entry to the United States. In reality,

the government had almost no evidence to prove that he was a threat to national security. He and his wife decided, instead, to settle in Switzerland.

Chaplin was one of the most creative and influential personalities of the silent-film era. Charlie was also a great composer. Who doesn't know the songs "Smile" composed for the film "Modern Times" and "This is my song" from Chaplin's last film "A Countess from Hong Kong"? This song was made popular by Petula Clark. Charlot was married 4 times and had 11 children all together, 8 with his last spouse Oona O'Neill (18 at the time of her marriage to the 54-year old Chaplin) whom he married in 1943 till he passed away in 1977. Charlot had his last child Christopher at the age of 73.

Hetty Kelly however was Chaplin's first love, a dancer whom he fell in love with when she was 15 and almost married when he was 19 in 1908. When she refused he was reportedly crushed when she agreed to his suggestion not to see each other again. In 1921 Hetty died of influenza.

Chaplin's health began to slowly fail in the late 1960s. He had difficulty communicating and was wheelchair bound. In the 1970s Charlot was recognised for his contribution to films and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II of England. Two years later, this sympathetic comic character died in his sleep in Vervey, Switzerland on Christmas Day 1977. On 1st March 1978 his corpse was stolen by a small group of Swiss mechanics. Their attempt to extort money from his family failed though. The robbers were captured and Chaplin's corpse was recovered 11 weeks later and reburied under 6 feet (1.8m) of concrete to prevent further attempts. Also a minor planet, 3623 Chaplin, discovered by Soviet astronomer Lyudmila Karachkina in 1981, is named after Chaplin. May you rest in peace amongst the stars.

A film about Chaplin's life entitled *Chaplin*, was released in 1992, directed by Oscar-winner Richard Attenborough, starring Robert Downey Jr. Geraldine Chaplin, playing the part of Charlie Chaplin's mother, her own grandmother. Finally, Charlie Chaplin, thank you for entertaining us for almost 75 years long!! And to my readers, don't forget ... You'll find that Life is still worthwhile, if you just smile!

Bonjour Dinant

—Citadel, cliffs, saxophones and a beautiful river

Text: Georges Bernard

Photos: Marion Bernard

My adventures in Belgium continue onto Dinant, a city in Wallonia, in the province of Namur. This beautiful Meuse riverside city of 13,000 is located approximately 80 kilometers from Brussels.

The city can be reached with an hourly train via Namur from Brussels Midi station, it is about 90 minutes. Why would you drive in Belgium?

When one views the city it is obvious that a 100 meter cliff surrounds the tightly built place, and it looks like Dinant is hanging at the bottom dominated by a monolithic citadel with the flood prone river squeezing it against the massive walls of rock.

Just below the Citadel is the Gothic Cathedral Notre Dame with its great bronze tower shaped in a sphere, this building is central to the city and dominates the riverside scene. This church was rebuilt as the original was destroyed in 1227 by a massive rock fall.

A 420-step walkway and cable car connect the two structures; with a picturesque view from the Citadel it is quite a tourist attraction.

You can also take a road to reach behind the Citadel, how-



ever, I do not recommend taking the car into Dinant with its lack of parking and tight lanes and roads.

The Citadel was built in 1050 by Prince Bishop of Liege to protect his fiefdom. The French destroyed the fortress in 1703, rebuild in 1820s by the Dutch occupiers.

A visit to the Citadel is a must, featuring thick walls and deep structures into the cliff, it is an excellent site, with the usual tourist facilities, but with very good historic displays relating to the Dutch occupation.

A guide will take you around and explain its history, and include the World War I massacre of French soldiers inside the Citadel.

Dinant was unlucky in war with the town destroyed in 1466 and the murder of many copper and brass dinanderie craftsman. After the battle for Dinant in World War I the German Army executed over 610 men, women and children because of allegedly resistance, this figure does not include French and Belgian soldiers. The city also suffered major damage by the Germans.

SAX CITY

The city has a fair share of restaurants, cafes and great selection of local foods, with the influence of the French kitchen. You will observe many saxo-

phone designs, and shops with saxophones displayed; this is because Adolphe Sax the inventor of the saxophone was born in Dinant in 1814.

Many tourists take the boat rides on the beautiful Meuse river with its magnificent cliffs. For the more adventurous you can climb these cliffs, but beware of the danger, the King of Belgium Albert I died in 1934 near Dinant in a climbing accident.

Close to Dinant is the Grotto of Dinant with its rock formations and wide range of colours.

Leffe Abbey built in 1152-1200 by Henry the Blind, Earl of Namur for the Premonstratensian Order of Floreffe is also worthy of visit. The French revolutionaries sacked the abbey in 1794, in 1903 the order restored the buildings, it is located only one kilometer from central Dinant. No longer do the monks brew Leffe beer, it is brewed in Leuven, however a small beer museum is located near the abbey.

My next move was the local café near the riverside for a Leffe brune 6.5% with its chocolate flavor and colour, my Dutch born partner Marion was game to take on a Leffe triple 8.5%, we enjoyed these great beers from Wallonia, they are my favourite Belgian abbey beers what a dream they are . . . but remember not too drink too many . . .