

New Zealand Action Committee
Ex-Japanese War Victims

Dear All,

NOVEMBER 2013.

I thought I had the time on my hands but time flies by. So here we are again.

Some of this years events:

- **ANZAC Day.** Hans van Ess and myself attended the Birkenhead parade and laid a wreath at the monument. For the first time in many years, Paul Friedrichs was not able to represent the Veterans.
- **EJOS AGM.** The AGM in Birkenhead was well attended and you can read the minutes in this newsletter. Thank you people for your confidence in me running the EJOS. I am privileged to be able to do this.
- **SJE AGM 4 June in The Hague.** I was able to attend the SJE (JES) AGM last June since I was there on holidays. I think some 40 to 50 people were present in a conference room from Hotel Bel Air. It was good to meet the SJE committee again.

Quote from the AGM: "We can report that politici in The Hague are listening to us. The Silent Walk (MAR 19) was a big success with 3-rd and 4-th generation participating. 10,000 signatures were presented. (60 signatures from EJOS) Secretary of State M. van Rijn gave us confidence that he wants the "Indische Kwestie" to be solved. Indisch Platform has conferred with him and his associates."

While in The Netherlands I also visited the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam with a "Buiten Kampers" exhibition, *The Past is a Foreign Country*. It is the first in a series of photo commissions by the Tropenmuseum. Anoeck Steketee photographed people in colonial costumes in towns and cities. They are often of anonymous colonial figures. Sometimes they have a more specific role, such as a student or a plantation manager.

- In August I spent time sorting out EJOS documentation I received from Henk Zeeman in 2 trunks! Elmiere Draper started 1 suitcase and reduced the contents. Thank you. It has been drastically reduced. I have most of the Newsletters starting at the beginning of EJOS in 1989. This was a major job I can tell you.
- **End of WW II Commemoration.** We had a special lunch function at the Allenby Hotel, Papatoetoe, on 24 August. We had 52 people who enjoyed the rich buffet lunch together. Ivo's speech:

1 minute silence was observed.

Commemoration of the liberation of the Pacific on the 15th August 1945, now 68 yrs ago. It was raining at this time in The Hague. An Indisch Monument in the Hague was erected in 1988 and later, in 1995, a clock was installed. At this years commemoration, speeches were presented;

- Diederik van Vleuten's speech referred to his great-uncle Jan, born in 1906, the brother of his grandfather, Sam. "Uncle Jan experienced the Japanese concentration camp and was very depressed. Eventually his doctor advised him to write his memoirs down. Jan remembered everything very well. It took him about 2 yrs and I received them at Christmas 1981". Diederik van Vleuten tells about the memoirs of Uncle Jan in his one-man show.

- Speech by a 17 yr old Lyceum pupil, Babiche Kuels. She tells about her grand dad in the Dutch-East-Indies during the Japanese occupation. "If you believe him he had a good time in the Japanese Camp".

The date of the formal surrender was the 2nd of September 1945 and it took place on board the American battle ship, Missouri, in Tokyo Bay. The surrender papers were signed on the Missouri. The ship was used since that is "neutral" ground. The Captain is the only one in charge.

Towards the end of the WW II conditions in the overcrowded camps had quickly become indescribably bad – in fact, abominable. Of the more than 100,000 civilians prisoners and some 42,000 POW's interned in Japanese concentration camps, more than 13,000 had died as a result of either horrific torture, malnourishment, slave-labour or diseases such as beri-beri, dysentery, dehydration, malaria etc. Unless one has lived through their experiences, it is impossible to imagine what 3 ½ yrs of concentration camp-life was like.

Some more information for your interest:

Once called **Batavia**, this famous harbour city was long ago the prized destination port for the Dutch VOC trade ships. After a long journey across the Indian Ocean, this port was the place where ships could re-stock their food supplies and start trading their silver coins for valuable spices. Indonesia has a special tradition of using puppetry to tell stories, called Wajang Kulit. This includes traditional tales of gods, goddesses, monsters and battles and nowadays more current stories feature in this world of puppets. Wajang kulit stories are often based on Hindu epics, the Ramayanak & Mahabharata. Hinduism was introduced to now Indonesia from India via maritime trade 2000 ago.

Als je Moeder sterft, en je Vader reeds lang geleden.

Hoop dan dat je hun liefde erft, want "kind" zijn is nu verleden.

September 2012. Uitspraak van de Chinese premier van Buitenlandse Zaken; Japan moet alle illusies laten varen, bij zichzelf te rade gaan, en terugkomen op z'n fouten, zodat we de goede verstandhouding tussen onze landen kunnen herstellen.

Statement by the Pope; **WAR is only a defeat of humanity.**

Broome war hero Gus Winckel dies aged 100 on 17 August 2013. In March 1942 some 8000 people were evacuated from the Dutch-East-Indies to Australia. Gus Winckel was one of the pilots. There were 15 flying boats anchored at Broome when Japanese ZERO's attacked. People on board the planes jumped in the water, but many got killed. Gus, the Dutch military pilot is famous in Broome for taking a plane's machine gun in his hands and shooting down one of the Japanese fighters laying waste to the town.

25-28 OCT Was the Tall Ships visit in Auckland harbour with the bark Europa, schooner Oosterschelde and trainingship Tecla all from The Netherlands.

I leave you with this statement; On a Burma railway monument;
'For your life tomorrow, we will give ours to day.'

Kind regards,
from Ivo Pabbruwe

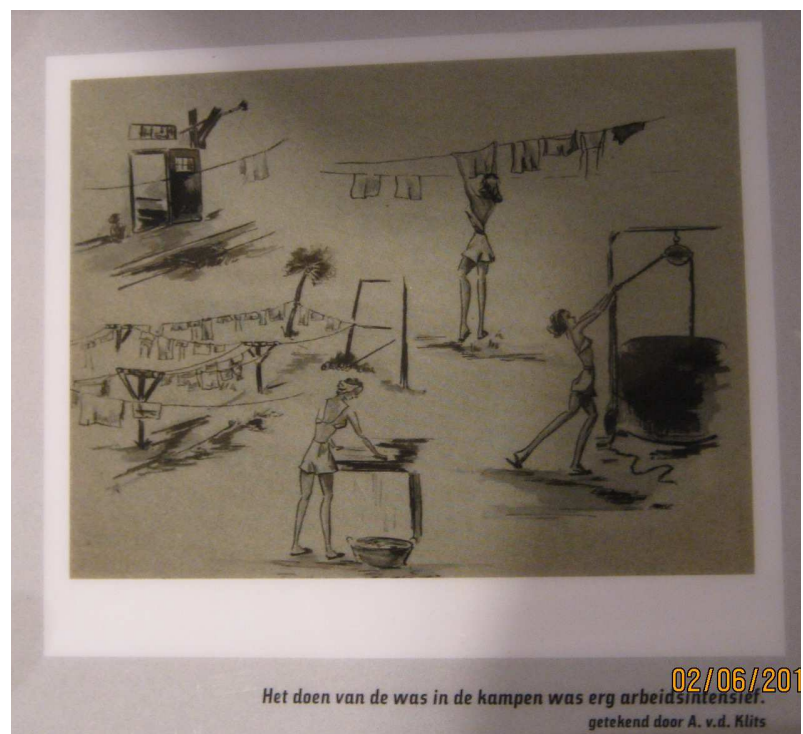


EJOS committee; Adriaan Lemmens, Ivo Pabbruwe, Menno Uiterdijk & Kate Draper.

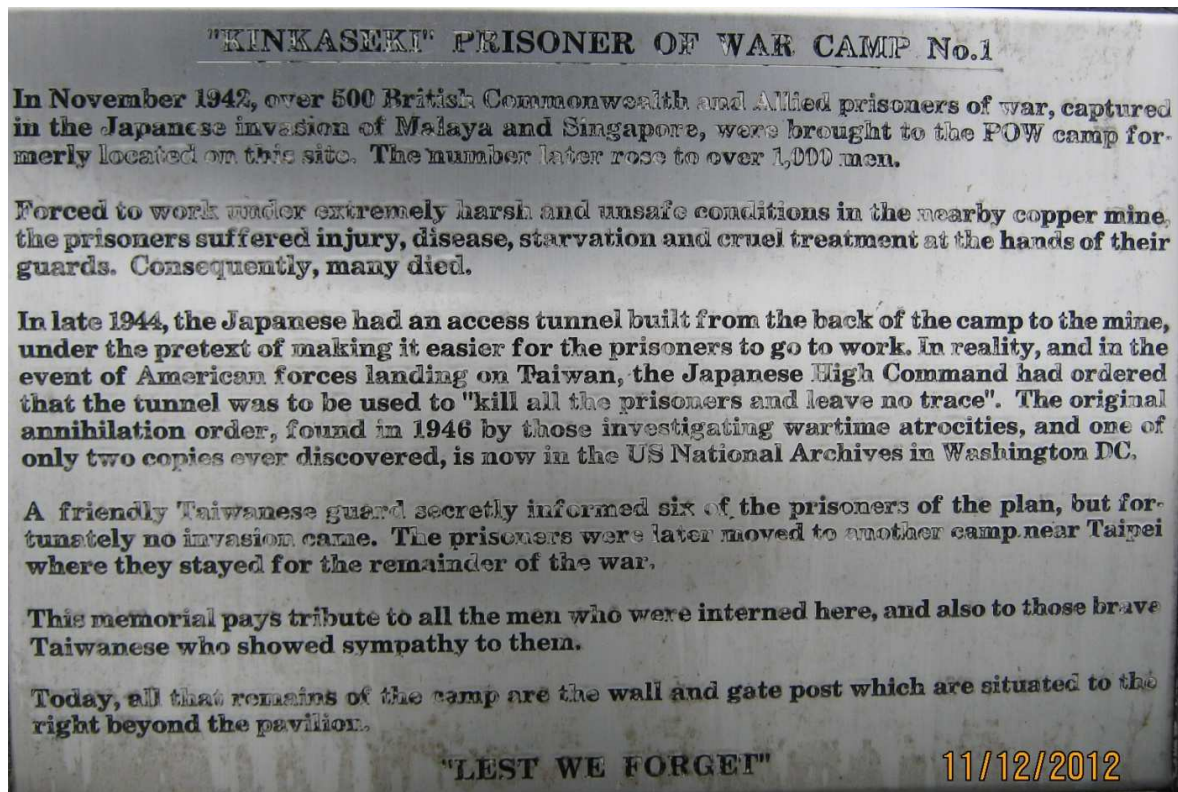


School class, SOERABJA. 1920.

Washing in the Camp was a very laborious exercise. drawing by A.v/d Klits.



**Het doen van de was in de kampen was erg arbeidsintensief.
getekend door A. v. d. Klits**



Monument plaque in Taiwan. Note; especially read the middle section. Note the 3-rd paragraph.

NOTE; Secretary of State M. van Rijn in The Netherlands and Honorary Consul in NZ René T.M. van Rijn are no family.

DE INDISCHE KWESTIE:
erkenning
EXCUSES
compensatie
OORLOGSSCHADE
& backpay salarissen

STOP HET NEGEREN!

PROGRAMMA
STILLE TOCHT

Datum 19 maart 2013
Tijd 14:00 uur verzamelen
Locatie Vredespaleis, Den Haag
Vertrek Stille Tocht 14:30 uur
Aankomst 15:15 uur, Het Plein, Den Haag
Overhandiging Petitie vanaf 15:30 uur
Aanmelden ikloopmee.ip@gmail.com

KEEP THEM ROLLING

19 MAR 2013. Silent march to government house in The Hague with the petition & 10,000 signatures.
Escorted by some WWII vehicles.

1 The Netherlands apologies for Indonesia executions.

Thursday 12 September 2013

The Dutch ambassador to Indonesia has made a formal apology for all the summary executions carried out by the Dutch army between 1945 and 1947 in the former Dutch Indies. The apology is part of a settlement made between the Netherlands and widows from South Sulawesi, whose men were executed without trial by Dutch soldiers in 1946 and 1947. The widows can also claim compensation for their husbands' deaths. The widows themselves were not at the cultural centre in Jakarta to hear the apology because they are too old and sick to travel, NOS television said. The ambassador will travel later to Sulawesi to meet the women in person. The Dutch military interventions in Indonesia, or Dutch Indies as it was known then, followed the proclamation of the independent Republic of Indonesia in 1945 and lasted until the country formally gained independence in 1949 after a bloody struggle. Thousands of Indonesian independence fighters were executed by the Dutch. At the end of 2011, the Netherlands finally formally apologised for the massacre of hundreds of men and boys in the Javanese village of Rawagede in 1947. Those widows, too, have been given compensation. DutchNews.nl

2 Vanaf 3 Oktober 2013 in de bioscoop!

Buitenkampers is de nieuwste documentaire van regisseur Hetty Naaijken-Retel Helmrich die enkele jaren geleden de succesvolle film **Contractpensions- Djangan Loepah!** maakte. Het is de eerste keer dat over deze voor velen onbekende periode uit de vaderlandse geschiedenis een film is gemaakt. De tweede en derde generatie van Indische Nederlanders is in meer en mindere mate beïnvloed door het grote zwijgen van hun ouders en grootouders over

deze dramatische periode in hun leven. In **Buitenkampers**, waarin de openhartige interviews worden afgewisseld met bijzonder archiefmateriaal en prachtige sfeerbeelden uit Indië, wordt dit zwijgen na meer dan 70 jaar doorbroken.

3 Survivor Tjitse v/d Muur, 84, once said;

My Mum was killed in the Bersiap time, because her children were in the Dutch Army. His oldest brother was in a guerrilla group in Papua New Guinea, and decapitated.

I was interned for 3 ½ yrs by the Japanese in a concentration Camp. Spent 1 1/2 yr on the Pakan Baru railway building. He still suffers from injuries.

4 Broome war hero Gus Winckel dies aged 100.

20 August, 2013. By Robert Mailer and Ben Collins

The Dutch military pilot famous in Broome for taking a plane's machine gun in his hands and shooting down one of the Japanese fighters laying waste to the town has died aged 100.

Captain Gus Winckel had been transporting Dutch refugees as Japanese forces rapidly invaded what was then the Dutch East Indies during World War II in 1942. Stopping in Broome to refuel, his plane was amongst the 22 others caught by surprise attack by nine Japanese Zeroes making a long range raid from a recently captured airfield in East Timor.

But while the Zeroes started their attack on the flying boats in Broome's Roebuck Bay, killing tens of Dutch refugees including over 20 children, Winckel was able to get his passengers to safety on Broome's airfield. Knowing his plane was a sitting duck, Gus Winckel removed one of the mounted machine guns and positioned himself at a safe distance and waited for the Japanese fighters to turn their attention to the airfield.

“ And luckily, one of them came very, very close to me and I gave him a long burst. And also, I shot him down. I wish I shot a few more down. I hit another one who had to dump in the sea” Mr Windckel said when visiting Broome for the 60th anniversary of the air raid in 2002.

Broome is not the only Australian town that fondly remembers Gus Winckel. Following the Broome air raid, Mr Winckel was based out of Moruya in New South Wales from where he flew patrols of eastern Australia. It was on one of these patrols that Gus Winckel is credited with sinking a Japanese submarine. Today a statue of Gus Winckel stands in Moruya to remember his bravery and that of the other airmen who fought in WWII.

Gus Winckel was awarded the Dutch Gold Cross for his wartime efforts.

Gus Winckel died on the 17th August 2013 from complications following a broken hip from a fall six weeks earlier. He was aged nearly 101 and is sadly missed by his 92 year old wife Yvonne and sons Shayne, Jean-Paul, Micheal and many in the Broome community and beyond who remember his bravery.

5 De goede oude tijd, is de tijd dat het onze voorouders zo slecht ging.

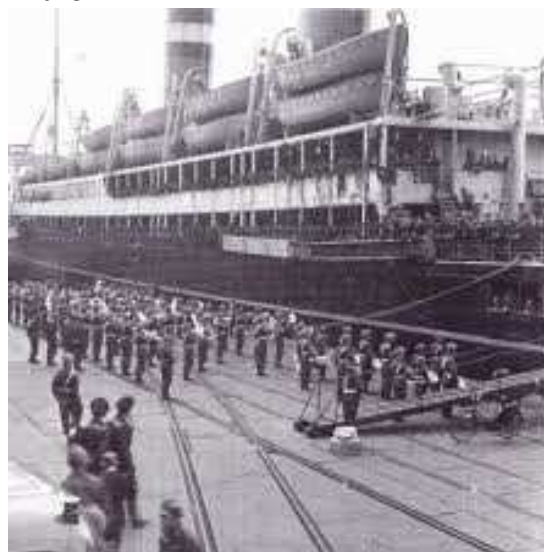
Beschrijving 'Nooit meer buigen' is het waargebeurde levensverhaal van 'Ruby' H. 'Misschien komt het wel heel anders uit dan we denken, maar hoe dan ook, waarderen zullen we het leven dan!' schreef ze hoopvol in 1945 in haar oorlogsdagboek in het 'Jappenkamp' waar ze toen geïnterneerd was en waaruit geciteerd wordt. Ze had toen niet kunnen vermoeden hoe haar leven uiteindelijk zou lopen en ze zal de tragedies in haar leven ook niet gewaardeerd hebben. Uiteindelijk verliest ze al haar herinneringen aan de enige tegenstander in haar lange, bewogen leven waar ze wel bang voor was.

Titel: Nooit meer buigen. Auteur: Marielle Saegaert. Taal: Nederlands. Aantal pagina's:



296. Pitgever: Free Musteteers. Publicatiedatum: 2012-12-13. ISBN/ISBN13: 9789048426904. Intern nummer:23821350

6 Evacuatie naar Nederland van uit Indie



Door [Dinkie Boutkan van der Sluis](#), geplaatst op 5 Augustus 2013 om 18.48

Van ons mooie schip, de Klipfontein, vertrokken wij met een goederentrein naar Attaca, een plaatsje in Egypte, wat meer naar binnen lag. De reis was lang en overall alleen maar zand, kilometers zand. Het was erg heet, maar wij genoten. Eindelijk op iets dat niet bewoog, je lichaam deinde nog steeds heen en weer. De

wagons waren open en je kon er alleen maar staan, een heerlijk warm windje. Ineens een groot tentenkamp en ook allemaal barakken met een heel hoog groot hek eromheen. Kwam ons bekend voor, maar in plaats van Jappen stonden er Engelsen en Amerikanen het grote kamp te bewaken. En overal zag je blanke gevangenen met gestreepte pakken aan. Niemand begreep er iets van. Wij moesten uitstappen en gingen het kamp in. Er schoten heel veel gestreepte mannen op ons af, die ons heel eerbiedig begeleidden naar de grote tenten. Ze spraken een taal die ik niet verstond. "Het zijn Duitsers", zei mijn moeder. "Duitse krijgsgevangenen en ze moeten ons helpen". Mijn moeder had tenslotte in Berlijn op kostschool gezeten. Zodra zij met een van hen een gesprek begon, rende er een bewaker op haar af en begon tegen de Duitser te snauwen. Wij schrokken en liepen stil achter de man aan naar de enorme tent. Binnen in de tent was ineens luilekkerland, overal tafels met heel aardige Engelse vrouwen en etenswaar. Ongelooflijk wat je daar allemaal kon halen. Wij gingen aan een tafel zitten en konden daarna van alles gaan pakken, zoveel als je wilde. Nu, dat gebeurde dan ook. Er werd gewaarschuwd door al die moeders: "Eet niet te veel, je bent het niet gewend", maar te vergeefs. Ook in deze reuzetent een afdeling speeltuin met schommels, draaimolens waar je in kon gaan zitten. Dit alles werd bediend door dezelfde mannen in hun streepjespakken. Verder nog een vrolijke band, die allemaal Amerikaanse muziek speelde, gespeeld door dezelfde gevangenen. Wilde jij schommelen, dan kwam zo'n man je duwen, geweldig, als hondjes liepen ze achter ons aan. De omgekeerde wereld. Veel kinderen begonnen dan ook flink te commanderen, tot het misselijke toe. Nadat wij ons aan van alles tegoed hadden gedaan, werd je opgeroepen en moest je mee naar een andere afdeling van de grote tent. Daar werd je finaal in de warme kleren gestoken, sokken, warm ondergoed, een jas, truien, schoenen en nog veel en veel meer. Dekens kreeg je ook. Tot op de dag van vandaag heb ik zo'n zuiver wollen Attaca-deken bewaard, mijn kinderen kennen hem ook. Met ieder een grote plunjezak met spullen, koffers er ook bij, gingen wij met donker (om 6 uur is het daar donker) doodmoe en velen ook doodziek van het vele eten, met de trein terug naar het schip. De scheepsarts, mijn pleegvader aan boord, heeft

dagen doodzieke mensen moeten helpen. De kampmaagjes waren aan zo'n hoeveelheid eten niet gewend. Er zijn twee kinderen overleden, zo gevaarlijk was het. Jaren hebben wij genoten van de winterjas en alle heerlijke warme kleding. Dit was mijn eerste kennismaking met de koude en de laatste voor een aantal jaren met de warmte. Dinkie

7

The Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant is leaking into the Pacific.

Strontium-90 leaking into our ocean will accumulate in the bones of fish and in the bones of people, who eat the contaminated fish. The National Geographic reported the leaking water levels of Strontium-90 and Cesium-137. Exposure brings on radiation sickness, including nausea and lower white blood-cell count, which affects the immune system.

8

Commemoration

In 1988 a national 'Indies Monument' (Dutch: Indisch Monument) was erected in The Hague, Netherlands, to commemorate the victims of both the Japanese occupation and Indonesian National Revolution. Originally there were 22 dedicated cemeteries in Indonesia, laid out between 1946 and 1952. Earth from these 22 war cemeteries was collected in an urn and was integrated into the Dutch National Monument (Amsterdam) on the Dam Square. At the request of the Indonesian government, the number of war cemeteries was reduced to 7. These cemeteries, *Menteng Pulo* and *Ancol (Jakarta)*, *Pandu (Bandung)*, *Leuwigaja (Cimahi)*, *Candi* and *Kalibanteng (Semarang)*, *Kembang Kuning (Surabaya)*, are all located on Java and managed and maintained by the Dutch War Graves Foundation. The bodies of European and Indo-European victims of the *Bersiap* atrocities that were retrieved from individual- and mass graves elsewhere on Java are mostly buried in these war cemeteries.

9

INDISCH PLATFORM Newsbrief, OCT 2013.

"Indische Kwestie". State Secretary M. van Rijn takes the situation seriously.

Yvonne Keuls has officially complained concerning to an interview Forum by Holtman. The then young boy Kesilir claimed that Camp life was a nice time/period of his life.

SJE (JES); Even Chili questioned the U.N. the Japanese position concerning victims of WWII. At the U.N. meeting the Dutch Ambassador requests history schoolbooks to include the Japanese invading Asia & the Pacific during WWII in his speech.

10

An American Veteran of Foreign Wars; "I want the apology and I want the Japanese people to know what happened," said Lester Tenney, 80, of La Jolia, Calif., his voice breaking with emotion. He said many Japanese today don't know what happened a half-century ago, and the slave labour camps aren't mentioned in Japanese school books. "For 50 yrs they've done nothing. There has been no apology," he added. Tenney wrote a book, "My Hitch in Hell," about his experiences, was one of 24,475 Americans captured and interned by the Japanese in WWII. Many were forced into slave labour camps in the mines and industrial plants on Japan's mainland, where they were beaten and fed sparse rations. He was forced to work in a coal mine and was among the 16,000 who made it home. He wants an apology and \$20,000 to each survivor. (so do we)

11 **SALAMAT DATANG. De VOC, Verenigde-Oostindische-Compagnie.**

Presentator van Andere Tijden vroeg zich af of De Gouden Eeuw, waarin de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) floreerde, wel zo'n voorbeeldperiode is geweest. Zijn overpeinzing leidde uiteindelijk tot het megaproject De Gouden Eeuw „Ik ben historicus, maar het project was voor mij een ware ontdekkingsreis door de tijd. De 17e eeuw was een zinderende tijd, met Nederland zeventig jaar lang als middelpunt van de wereld. Handel, kunst en wetenschap kwamen tot grote

bloei, waarbij de VOC fungeerde als economische motor”, aldus Goedkoop. Hij merkte dat in het buitenland nog altijd vol bewondering wordt gesproken over de Hollandse Gouden Eeuw, maar hij ontdekte ook de boze keerzijde. „De VOC was een staat in de staat en heerste met ijzeren vuist”, zegt Goedkoop, die in Indonesië op zoek ging naar de erfenis van Jan Pieterszoon Coen, de grondlegger van de VOC. „Hij was een formidabel organisator, maar om zijn doelen te bereiken voerde hij in de Oost een waar schrikbewind”, vertelt Goedkoop, die op de eilandengroep Banda, dertien generaties na het bloedbad, een nazaat sprak van een van de slachtoffers.

Een grote bloeiperiode met alle grote namen van die tijd, zoals Michiel de Ruyter, Rembrandt van Rijn, Joost van den Vondel en John van Oldenbarnevelt. Goedkoop: „De dynamiek spatte er vanaf, de Amsterdamse grachtengordel werd aangelegd, de VOC ontwikkelde zich tot de eerste multinational ter wereld en de welvaart steeg tot ongekennde hoogte. We proberen ook een link te leggen tussen verleden en heden via thema's als de verstedelijking, immigratie, globalisering en de beurs."



DALEN door GERARD SMIT

The committee wish you all a nice Christmas time with family and friends and wish you a happy NEW YEAR.



Subs 2013-14. If you have paid according to our administration you will not have a remittance advice.

EJOS AGM in the Birkenhead RSA last MAY 18, 2013. Hans van Ess speech.

Minutes of 2013 AGM:

Item	Details
1	Numbers counted for lunch Welcome: • Evacuation procedure • Toilet location • Honorary Consul of The Netherlands Rene van Rijn not yet arrived
2	Those we have lost: • A minute silence was observed for those who we have lost recently and in the past. • Ivo mentioned the names of those we have lost since our last EJOS AGM; Franz Zieleman, Jopie 't Hart, Wilhelmina Pausma's former partner
3	2012 Minutes passed Motioned: Adrian Lemmens Seconded: Willy Pollard-van den Berg
4	Ivo's Speech • Menno read SJE (JES) Petition 222. • Hans van Ess spoke about meeting with a friend in Hawaii Theme: Funny stories from Dutch-East-Indies Ivo – camera lens story. Air raid, hidden under steps at school. Adrian – A miniature copy of the statue of a 10yr old boy taken from parents to work during the war. The actual statue is in Bronbeek, The Netherlands. Golden Spitfire clip awarded to leaders in Dutch-East-Indies who got money together for squadrons for the queen. Hanger out of bamboo, painted, made in camp. Has written story which can be read through Indies newsletter.
5	Treasurer Report from Ian Ross: This is the 5th year for which I have presented the Financial Statements. The 31st

	March 2009 Income & Expenditure Statement was the last occasion when SJE Donations were included in the Subscription figure. Since then the Donations for SJE and the payments to them have been shown separately. Subscriptions continue to fall due to resignations but they are still sufficient to cover normal Expenditure. This years Income was \$774.56 greater than its Expenditure. In the latter part of 2012 Ivo became aware that a Solidarity Conference was to be held in Taipei and asked the Executive if he could attend. Approval was given and I verbally advised Ivo the cost could be covered from Fighting Fund Donations which the previous Treasurer had shown as \$4069.10 for 8/7/2006. As you will see from this years Statement the actual cost was \$3775.29. The 2014 Subscriptions are steadily flowing in and a total of \$1290.00 has been banked up to yesterday. Motioned: Jon Toxopeaus Seconded: Adrian Lemmens
6	Committee election: To remain as is currently. Accepted by all. Motioned: Elmiere de Courcy Lys Seconded: Hans van Ess
7	\$50 donation to Red Cross: accepted by all.
8	John Toxopeus: spoke regarding theme. Spitfire funds.
9	General Business: • Elmiere de Courcy Lys spoke to thank committee, thank Ian Ross, Ivo for being all round inspiration and encourage people talk and pass on knowledge to younger generation. • Adrian Lemmens – Borneo story. Ship voyage. Adrian came across his namesake who had been an engineer on the ship. The Jenson. • Paper Memorial Monument with 14,000 people lost during the war in Indonesia. Can look up names if you know of people lost. • ANZAC memorial – good attendance, very packed. • John Toxopeus – spoke about his story he’s written about his life in a Japanese men/boys camp. Encouraged people to put thoughts and memories down on paper as it comes in to your mind. Available to read online, Alexander Turnbull library has a copy. Ivo will have electronic copy. Sending a copy to the Dutch mill in Foxton. • Ivo has films to give out. • Honorary Consul of The Netherlands René T.M. van Rijn joined us at the Indonesian Lunch. Also Yvonne Winckel joined us for lunch.(wife of Gus “Broome”
10	Meeting closed

ATTENDANCE.

Members:

Nellie Postums-van Dooren	Yvonne Winckel	Sue Cheong
Gijsberta Townsend- van Dooren	Kate Draper	Bernard Leonard
Jacobus Urselmann	Adrian Lemmens	Marga Leonard
Elmiere de Courcy-Lys	Klaas Borgers	Hannie Reydon
Riek de Wit	Riek de Wit	Gerrit Sluiters
Willy Pollard-van den Berg	Ben Bruinier	Coby Sluiters

Lily de Courcy Lys
Kees van de Berg
Ian Ross
Ceile O'Driscoll
Menno Uiterdijk
Ivo Pabbruwe

Neta Bruinier
John Stufkens
John Triezenberg
Lies Triezenberg

Dennis Pollard
Rudy van Velthoven

Hans van Ess
John Toxopeus
Gerda Uiterdijk
Hans Dorbeck

Non members

Rudi de Jong
Corrie Monison
Albert Ruijne

Renee van Rijn
Dolf Hoekstra
Inge Ruijne

Alice Henning
Penny Hoekstra

Apologies:

Margaret Bijl
Hanneke Beets
Marijke Ponse-Gayman
Henk Bange
Corrie van Werkum
Helen Harrison
Nina Vink
Claire Fanssen-Drion

Cath Ryff-Soesman
Jane Carden-Over de Linden
Edith Toewater-Ponse
Willemmina Pausma
Anneke Zielman
Hans Zuur
Elly Hoefhamer-Harders
A.Hoek-Blaauw

Johan de Hoog
Peter Vink
Corrie Beets
Frouwke Buysers
Maud Lodge-Osborn
Willemijn Zuur
Rudy Storm
Rob Burn



Petition presentation in The Hague. 19 MAR 2013.

Transport

dragged out of the house and taken away

Hi, I am Willem Nijholt. I was seven years old when the war started in the Dutch East-Indies and I lived on the isle of Madura. My father served in the K.N.I.L. – the Dutch East-Indies Army – and the Japanese soon took him prisoner. My mother, brother, sister and myself were put on a boat to Java, where we ended up in the overcrowded camp 'De Wijk' in the town of Malang. After a while we were put on transport again and travelled in a boiling hot freight-train to Karangpanas, near Semarang. A number of people suffocated in the heat.

After this transport we arrived in the camp completely exhausted. A Japanese guard there tore the photographs from our photo album, as if he wanted to rob us from our entire past.

When my brother Jan turned ten, he had to go to the men's camp. My mother, sister and I had to go to camp Lampersari. This time we had to walk the entire night. I had no shoes anymore, so I had to walk barefoot the whole way.

In December 1945, my mother, brother, sister and I went on the first transport back to the Netherlands. I cherish the trip to the ship as the most beautiful memory of the war. We drove in a truck to the ship, when darkness fell. When we came down a hill, the port came into sight and at that very moment all the lights in the port went on. From now on everything will be different, I thought.

See also Archive > B.45
> B.56

02/06/2013

Photo taken in the Indonesian exhibition Haags Gemeente Museum.