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Gust the gorilla and his keeper Samson were Antwerp Zoo celebrities

KATHA The memory of a city

The Antwerp Zoo archives have just opened up to the public, providing fascinating glimpses into both animal and human pasts

Alan Hope

The FelixArchief describes itself as "The memory of a city". Since June, it's not only the memory of the human inhabitants of a port city, but also of its animals.

The FelixArchief is Antwerp's city archive, intended to store all official documents of the city administration. Along the way, it also took receipt of other archives bequeathed by companies, associations and private individuals and families. So much so, that the archive is now one of the main repositories for information for people seeking to trace their family histories.

The name is derived from the archives' location in the former Sint-Felix warehouse, built in 1860 and originally intended for storing bulk commodities, such as cotton, coffee and grain. By the 1970s, as the business of the port drifted northwards, the building fell into disuse, and in 1976 it was placed on a list of classified buildings. Ten years ago it was finally designated as the new home for the city archives.

Now it houses some 20 kilometres of shelved documents, and its newest acquisition is the archives of the Antwerp Zoo – open to the public for the very first time.

There's a roomy reading-room on the ground floor of the building, equipped with banks of computers and shelves of reference works. That looks out on what appears to be an internal street, complete with cobblestones. 'Actually it's a fire-break ordered by the city authorities to be constructed in 1861, just a year after the warehouse opened, when it was almost destroyed by fire.'

Most of the zoo documents are in the stacks and have to be ordered, either in person at the reception desk or, to save time, online in advance. In the storage rooms, kept at a constant 17 degrees for papers and 10-12 degrees for photos, and wrapped in acid-free paper in acid-free archive boxes, is the main collection.

Most pieces can be ordered for consultation in the reading room. However, I'm guided by archive

Continued on page 3



Business

Seeing movies for free has never been so easy. Ian Mundell tells us why film piracy is such big business in Flanders and what the industry is doing to fight back.

Arts

It's a music festival, it's a fashion line: Pukkelpop launches its first clothing designs for hipsters who want to keep that youthful spirit close all year long

Active

It's hard to say goodbye, but we've come to the end of our summer coast series. De Panne is right at the border of France and marks some distinctively French influences, as well as an enduring ability to preserve its natural beauty

Baggage handlers bring airport to standstill

Workers being "squeezed like lemons" claim unions

Alan Hope

Flight departures from Brussels Airport were thrown into chaos on Monday after staff at Aviapartner, which handles baggage for several airlines, announced a 24-hour strike. In the course of the morning, personnel from Flightcare, another handling company, also downed tools. As *Flanders Today* went to press, talks between unions and management appeared blocked, with flightcare refusing to come to the table at all.

Unions claim workers are being put under intolerable pressure since staff

numbers were cut. The work that used to be done by five people now has to be done by only three, they said. Union spokesman Rik Vermeersch criticised the policy of the two companies as "anti-social". Flightcare was involved in social bullying, he said. "This could all be sorted out in 10 minutes if the management paid attention to the needs of staff. They are squeezing workers like lemons."

The strike was announced at 19.30 on Sunday evening and led to delays and cancellations on Monday morning. Last

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Museumnacht

Following the first "museum night" held in Berlin in 1997, the idea of nocturnal openings has spread to 120 cities across the world. The aim is to kill off the idea of dusty museums by opening institutions after hours and organising readings, art events and cheap drinks to keep everyone amused.

Antwerp's museum night this Saturday involves 15 places in the city centre that are holding their doors open from early evening until after midnight. This year's theme is "hidden treasures," which gives curators a chance to dig out forgotten works from the museums' basements.

The FotoMuseum has unearthed a stack of several hundred provocative photographs by the French fashion photographer Guy Bourdin. You can admire these works, some of them never exhibited before, while wandering around with a cocktail in your hand.

The Antwerp museum of contemporary art, MuHKA, has also been digging around to see what they can turn up. The biggest find is a 1993 installation by the Antwerp artist Guillaume Bijl which has been gathering dust for the past 12 years. Called

TV – Quizdecor, it represents a television quiz show complete with a shiny new (well, now 12-year old) car for the lucky winner. After checking out the re-discovered piece, you can head to the rooftop terrace to eat oysters and listen to Dj Midijayski among a cool art crowd.

Over at the Vleeshuis museum, they also have a hidden treasure to show off: a replica clavichord based on a lost model. They have scheduled concerts every 30 minutes on the keyboard featuring music from a recently discovered manuscript dating from the early 17th century.

Fashion museum MoMu, meanwhile, is encouraging people to visit the inspiring Véronique Branquinho exhibition before it finally closes the following day. Visitors can wander through a fairy-tale décor while sipping wine and listening to cool music.

Museumnacht runs from 19.00 to 1.00 on 16 August. Tickets cost €6 for all 15 museums, but young people under 19 don't pay a cent.

online

www.museumnacht.be

Antwerp Tourism/Bern Rombout



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FACE OF FLANDERS



Chris Van Den Wyngaert

The eyes of the world will be on one prominent Flemish woman later this year, as a folk singer sits in judgement of a poet. But Radovan Karadzic is not just a poet – he's a psychiatrist, a former political leader and an alleged war criminal. And Chris Van Den Wyngaert is no longer a folk singer but a professor of criminal law at Antwerp University and a judge at the United Nation's International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

The trial will be presided by the Dutch Judge Alphonse Orie, with Judge Van Den Wyngaert and Judge Bakone Justice Moloto of South Africa assisting.

Born in 1952 in Antwerp, Van Den Wyngaert graduated with a law degree from the Free University of Brussels (VUB) in 1974. But instead of going straight to work, she went on to the Brussels Conservatory, where she graduated again after studying guitar. At the same time, she was making a name for herself as a singer, performing with, among others, Feree Gringard, who was famous for such titles as "My Crucified Jesus" and "Ring, Ring, I've Got to Sing".

Van Den Wyngaert at that time went simply by the surname Wyngaert. She made an album called *Chris Wyngaert*, which I was unable to find, but there is one track on the VRT internet radio archives – a sprightly song called "Dat kan de mens" – where you hear a young woman barely in her 20s with a typically crystal-clear folkie voice. Elsewhere online, she is named in the massive Bob Dylan database as one of the many artists to cover a Dylan song – a Dutch version of "It Ain't Me, Babe".

Keen to know why she gave up the folk life, I requested an interview with Van Den Wyngaert but was denied. The tribunal keeps its judges away from the press as much as possible, so we may never know what led to her decision to go on to pick up a PhD in law at the VUB, then become professor at Antwerp at the age of only 33.

In the 1980s she became a visiting fellow at the Centre for European Legal Studies at Cambridge and a visiting professor at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. Her first major position as a judge was with the International Court of Justice in a case in which Belgium and Congo were opposed over the question of immunity of ministers from prosecution. Though that case found for the politician in question – Congo's foreign minister Abdoulaye Yerodia – Van Den Wyngaert wrote a dissenting opinion in which she stated that criminals ought not to benefit from diplomatic immunity in serious cases.

She now has the opportunity to put that principle into practice, after sitting as a judge *ad litem* at the ICTY from 2003 until she was appointed as a permanent judge in 2005. Since then she has balanced her two careers as judge and professor, continuing to add to her impressive list of publications on subjects like extradition for political offences and comparative criminal law systems in the EU.

However, students of course module MREC0500-A at Antwerp next year should be warned: the professor may be otherwise occupied. The trial of Radovan Karadzic hasn't yet been given a starting date, but when it does begin, it will be the second-biggest the ICTY has seen, and the highest-profile that Judge Van Den Wyngaert has ever had to handle.

Alan Hope

online

www.un.org/icty

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



vluchtmisdrijf

You should have set off earlier, and now you're going to be late. You spent a bit too long over that one beer; okay it was two but only two. You have to pick up your wife from the station / the plumber will be waiting to get in / the crèche is closing soon. You decide to phone ahead to say you're on your way. Then you feel the car judder: must be one of those pesky speed bumps. A glance in the mirror – is that a bike on the road? You drive on, and you've become a hit-and-run driver. More than 10,000 drivers are convicted each year in Belgium of *vluchtmisdrijf* – "flight crime". Mostly it's a matter of *bliskschade* – "tin-damage" or damage to the bodywork. A thousand cases concern victims who have been seriously injured and a score losing their lives as a result of hit and run.

Some of these accidents are caused by drivers who don't immediately realise what they've done, as in my opener. *We kunnen het allemaal doen* – we can all do it; *in een paniekreactie doorrijden na een ongeval* – in a panic reaction drive on after an accident. The law takes this into account: *Een bestuurder die bij een verkeersongeluk is betrokken en wegrijdt, krijgt 24 uur tijd om zich bij de politie te melden* – A driver that is involved in a traffic accident and drives on has 24 hours to give himself up to the police. Then the accident is not considered as a *vluchtmisdrijf*.

If you don't hand yourself in, you run the risk of up to four years in prison – and the chances of being caught are great. Recently near Heusden-Zolder a woman was knocked from her bike by a speeding car and died. The next day the driver took his car to a garage to have his cracked windscreen replaced. Luckily, *de garagist verwittigde de politie* – the garage worker informed the police. The young man denied any connection with the death, but *Na een korte ondervraging ging de bestuurder door de knieën* – After a brief interrogation, the driver buckled ("went through the knees").

As for the typical hit-and-run driver, according to one police chief it's impossible to put together an identikit picture: *Rijk en arm, jong en oud, slim en minder slim* – rich and poor, young and old, clever and less clever. *De daders van een vluchtmisdrijf zijn een dwarsdoorsnede van onze samenleving* – the perpetrators of hit-and-run crime are a cross-section of our society.

The police chief sees this crime as an expression of a collective lack of decency: *We leven hoe langer in een egoïstische maatschappij* – We are living in an increasingly egoistic society. *Dat manifesteert zich ook in het verkeer* – This also manifests itself in the traffic.

Leen Dayers was the young woman who was killed. Her scout troop delayed their departure for their summer camp so that they could say farewell to their leader. She was 20.

Alistair MacLean

online

www.touring.be

FEATURE

Zoo archives open

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consultant Giovanna Visini through the airy, open spaces of the former warehouse, all cast-iron columns and hardwood floors, to view some of the most interesting pieces from the zoo archive.

The most striking are the selection of photos. Many demonstrate how fashionable the zoo used to be as a place to see and be seen. In earlier times, there was a fully functioning bandstand, with concerts on Sundays and holidays. One of the rules of the park was that domestic servants and other young women without chaperones were expelled from the zoo two hours before concerts began – presumably to prevent them from endangering their own morals and/or those of others.

In order to maintain the social standing of the zoo, anyone wearing work-clothes was forbidden entry. At one point, the management toyed with the idea of banning walking sticks because gentlemen were using them to poke the animals through the bars of their cages. The idea was short-lived, however, as no self-respecting gentleman of the time would be caught dead in public without his stick. The welfare of the animals would only become of paramount importance some time later.

The Antwerp Zoo was opened in 1843 after politician Frans Loos, later to become one of the city's most influential mayors, went on a trip to Amsterdam and witnessed the wonder of Artis, the Dutch city's famous zoo and set of natural history museums. He decided there and then that Antwerp must have something at least as impressive.

The beginnings were modest: the original director, Jacques Kets, was first and foremost a taxidermist, and initially the majority of the creatures on show were stuffed. Kets most notably stuffed the horse of William of Orange, which died at the battle of Waterloo. The zoo

then became the Royal Zoological Society in 1844 and funded itself by selling shares.

The archive contains many reminders of how trade in animals in those days was very different from how it now is. There's a letter from a lion-tamer asking if the zoo has any spare lions for sale. There's no record of the reply, but the request was not at all a strange one for the times.

There's also a letter from the zoo to the Bird & Livestock Stores, with addresses in Harrogate and Hull in England, looking for prices of birds, parrots and small mammals. One of the big advantages of the zoo's position in Antwerp, Visini points out, is not only the proximity to the port, but the fact that it's practically on top of the railway station.

Not that things always went according to plan: in 1868 a tiger was about to be packed up to be shipped off to the London Zoo, when he escaped, jumped over a wall and went on the rampage in the city. One man and a horse were killed before then-director Jacques Vekemans tracked the beast down and shot him.

Some animals became celebrities, such as Gust the gorilla, shown on our front cover with his personal keeper Samson, a double-act that never failed to draw the crowds. Gust died in the 1980s at the age of 33 of lead poisoning from his habit of licking the bars of his cage.

Another local celebrity was Jefke – a human this time – who came to Antwerp in 1845 aged about 10, on a boat from the Congo, accompanying a shipment of birds. He stayed in the zoo, worked with the animals and was eventually made porter. Jefke even got married in the zoo, and his daughter went off to China to become a concubine of the Emperor.

online

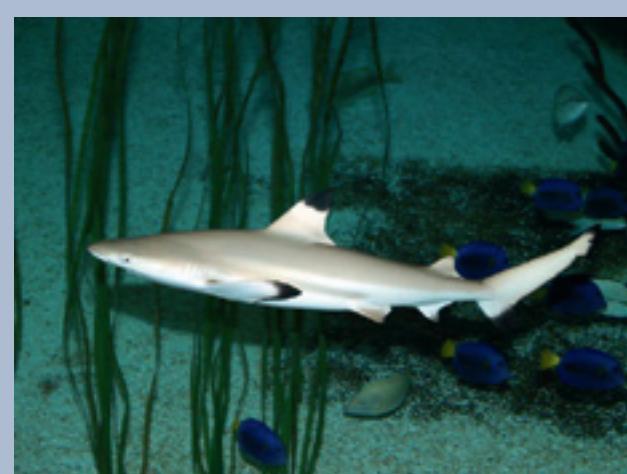
www.felixarchief.be



Above, an elephant gets a pedicure at Antwerp Zoo, while below, one of the zoo's donkeys poses for sculptor Rembrandt Bugatti. The Italian artist lived in Antwerp from 1907 to 1914 and worked with the zoo animals nearly every day



From the mountains to the sea



Antwerp zoo has acquired two new Blacktip reef sharks, saving them from the soup bowl

One of the Antwerp Zoo's signature features was recently given a facelift. The panoramic bridge known as the Berg (mountain) was constructed at the end of the 1800s and was one of the first uses of reinforced concrete. It's a rather fanciful *trompe l'oeil* rock edifice, intended to present less of a border between man and beast.

Now 1,400 square metres of rocky surface has been renovated, reinforced with a state-of-the-art plastic compound developed in association with the University of Ghent. And in keeping with the Romantic 19th-century look of the structure, the new "rocks" have all been treated by artists to look as real as possible, the surface sculpted with a mortar coat and painted in the most authentic rock-tones.

The surrounding pathways have also been renewed. The total cost was €1.1 million, with contributions from city and province, as well as from the public planning office of the Flemish government – the entire Zoo grounds are a classified monument and, hence, eligible for funding.

Meanwhile, the saltwater aquarium has also been renovated – the load-bearing surface strengthened with carbon fibre and smaller tanks enlarged and sometimes joined. The aquarium holds up to 200,000 litres of water, which is brought four to six times a year from the Bay of Biscay, supplemented by water from the Oosterschelde.

The Antwerp Zoo's aquarium is home not only to domestic species like cod, turbot and pollack, but also to two new Blacktip reef sharks, whose numbers have been declining because their fins are a popular ingredient in shark-fin soup. The Blacktip shark is unusual for being able to jump clean out of the water – a talent known as "breaching" – and for giving birth to live young after a gestation period of up to 16 months.

online

www.zooantwerpen.be



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Holidaymakers stranded as strike hits

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weekend was the last major departure weekend of the holiday period, and while the strike missed the busiest times on Friday and Saturday, it still led to delays for flights to Madrid, Lyon and Manchester, and cancelled flights to Rome, Copenhagen and Heathrow.

Most arrivals landed normally, although some flights were re-routed. Once on the ground, however, they were not being handled – as well as baggage, Aviapartner also operates services like pushback and towing, ramp handling and cleaning. “Aircraft are coming into Zaventem, but they can’t be handled, so they stand around not being used,” said airport spokesman Jan Van der Cruyse.

Brussels Airlines denied reports that no flights were taking off. The airline called in volunteers from among its staff to help out, and kept delays down to a maximum of one hour, a spokesman said.

The airport was operating check-in and shuttle services for passengers booked on flights that were re-routed to other airports, including Liège, Charleroi and Amsterdam. “We hope



Baggage handlers Aviapartner threw passengers for a loop at Brussels Airport this week

to get things cleared up as soon as there’s an outcome to the talks,” said Van der Cruyse.

The Flemish Travel Agencies Union (VVR) called the actions “vengeful” as they only affected people who had saved all year to go on holiday. The VVR has taken legal action in previous cases of industrial action at the airport, but that is not an option at present.

Passengers were being advised to stay at home and check with their travel agent or airline without coming to Zaventem. Departures and arrivals were listed on the airport’s website, and passengers were given a telephone number to check for further information.

Charter organisers Thomas Cook, Pegase and Neckermann were operating out of Liège. The company was running a bus from Zaventem but said passengers could also go direct to Liège. Jetair began flying normally from Zaventem, as it does not use Aviapartner, but was later affected by the Flightcare decision and by the logjam at the airport in general.

FIFTH COLUMN



Our sporty politicians

There is nothing unusual about politicians showing up at big sporting events. After all, everyone enjoys basking in the glory of fabulous athletes, even prime ministers. Being a lover of sports has never harmed any politicians popularity, either.

Former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene was only too aware of this. His first years as prime minister, Dehaene wasn’t terribly popular; he was a rather technical politician, nicknamed “the plumber” and known for tight budgetary policies, as well as a sloppy appearance and a certain bluntness. When he took office in 1992, even the Palace hesitated over the question of whether this man was fit to represent the country.

Dehaene overcame all of these disadvantages. A turning point was 1994, when a British veto blocked him from becoming president of the EU. Dehaene shook off a potential image as “loser” brilliantly: by allowing television cameras into his living room during a match of the national football team. The scene of Dehaene and his wife Celie shouting at, swearing out and cheering on the Red Devils has since become iconic.

At that moment, the prime minister looked nothing like a high-ranking politician. In fact, most people will tell you he reminded them of the character Onslow in the British TV series *Keeping Up Appearances*.

After that, Dehaene was never a loser again. He may have been sloppy and blunt, but he was one of us. He turned out to be one of the most popular prime ministers ever.

His successor, Guy Verhofstadt, was a lot more stylish, but when it came to sports, he too chose one that was far from elitist: cycling. Verhofstadt befriended Eddy Merckx, our greatest sports hero ever, and was spotted mountain biking with Olympic medallist Filip Meirhaeghe. When one day Verhofstadt broke a wrist in a cycling accident, the whole nation sympathised. Ah yes, he was one of us!

Meanwhile, Yves Leterme, a member of the opposition at that time, would sometimes hiss between his teeth that liberals like Verhofstadt only showed up for major cycling events – like the Tour de France or the Tour of Flanders – when the television cameras were present, too. Leterme, on the other hand, went to cycling races every weekend, as his teenage son was an aspirant racer. This made him one of the crowd – just how we like our politicians. Leterme is not only a cycling fan, he likes his football, too. His favourite team, Standard Liège, is an odd choice geographically, but it has helped to soften up his image as Flemish hardliner. Right now, Leterme is taking his daughter, Julie, to the Olympic Games in Beijing. It is a private trip, the prime minister stresses, not one as the leader of this nation. After all, you don’t want to stand out too much from the rest of us.

Anja Otte

Anja Otte is a freelance Flemish journalist whose work regularly appears in *De Standaard*

Swallows could save Doel houses

The long-running battle to stop the demolition of houses in the town of Doel by Antwerp harbour took a strange new turn this week after the residents’ group Doel 2020 filed a complaint with the Nature and Woodland agency, claiming the demolition would destroy the nests of house martins, a protected species.

Doel, ornithologists agree, is one of the few places left in Flanders where the house martin (*Delichon urbicum*) still build their characteristic nests under eaves, made of saliva and dirt combined into a strong and resistant mortar. The birds, a species of swallow, are protected by law. About 80 nests have been counted in Doel this summer.

“Under the eaves of the houses they wanted to pull down there are swallows’ nests,” says Jan Creve of

Doel 2020. “According to the law, that simply means the demolition cannot go ahead.”

In fact, only one of the 13 houses scheduled to be demolished this week has an occupied nest. The Nature and Woodland agency visited the town on Monday and ordered the building not to be touched. Meanwhile, members and supporters of Doel 2020 carried out what Creve called “a cheerful demonstration” with musicians and barbecue to prevent workers from carrying out the demolition of the other 12 houses.

Doel is scheduled to disappear completely to make way for the expansion of the left bank of Antwerp harbour. Protestors argue that there are no concrete plans for expansion in that area, making demolition unnecessary.



Will the common house martin save a town from extinction?

Record number of stalking complaints

Police last year registered a record number of complaints of stalking – 25,782 reports, almost six times as many as in 2000. Police said the increase was due largely to public awareness of the crime and a greater readiness to come forward. Electronic means of stalking, such as SMS and email, have also contributed to the increase.

According to research carried out at the Catholic University of Leuven, in 80% of cases the stalker is a man, though the number of female stalkers is rising. The majority of victims are women – in most cases the ex-partner of the stalker – although colleagues, neighbours and love rivals are also common victims. In a few exceptional cases, the victim is not known to the stalker and is chosen apparently at random. It is reported, however, that an estimated half of all cases do not come to the notice of police.

Stalking has been against the law in Belgium since 1998, and Belgian law is stricter than in many other countries. A single occurrence is enough to register a complaint, for instance, whereas in some jurisdictions it is necessary to establish a pattern of repeated stalking behaviour. The maximum sentence, albeit rarely encountered, is two years. One hundred officers have taken a special course in dealing with the victims of stalking – a training that will eventually go nationwide.



The marine park Sea Life in Blankenberge last week received the smallest seal it has ever housed – a creature measuring only 70 centimetres and weighing in at six kilograms. The pup, estimated to be about three weeks old, was trapped at the Kallo lock on the Scheldt. He is suffering from exhaustion, a lung infection and mouth wounds. Last month, the centre took in Stevie, a seal found blind and exhausted by Sea Life in Norfolk, England, and brought to Blankenberge, where facilities are roomier for a three-year-old animal.

"No question of danger" from nuclear waste barrels

Almost 100 barrels of nuclear waste that have undergone some light damage present "no threat to man or the environment", according to the director of Belgoprocess, the agency responsible based in Dessel.

Belgium has a total of 16,300 barrels of medium-grade radioactive waste from nuclear power plants, hospitals and laboratories, as well as waste from an old reprocessing plant which closed in the 1970s. Of those, 97 barrels were discovered to be slightly damaged at a recent inspection. However, in none of the cases has radioactive material been able to leak from the vessels.

In addition to the middle-grade waste, Belgium also stores 35,277 barrels of low-grade waste, and about 650 barrels of high-grade, the most dangerous.

The inspection was carried out by remote-control camera in May this year and revealed some barrels had begun to rust around welds, while others showed signs of bulging at the bitumen-sealed lids. Overall, the agency said, there were no differences noticed compared to a previous inspection. At a more detailed inspection at another location, however, six new cases of rust were discovered. The rust



only shows up in barrels used early in the life of the agency, when chromed steel was used. Later storage was switched to stainless steel.

No radioactive material was detected,

and none of the vats has leaked, said Belgoprocess director Walter Bogaerts, who also lectures in corrosion technology at Leuven university.

Belgica mussels given clean bill of health

Belgium's only available crop of mussels has been declared clean by two independent laboratories, after being withdrawn from the market by the federal food safety agency two weeks ago.

The Belgica mussels, produced off the coast of Nieuwpoort, were suspected of being contaminated with diarrheic shellfish poisoning (DSP), a toxin carried by algae which causes short-lived nausea and diarrhoea. The food safety agency launched an investigation into why warnings were only given on 1 August after the toxin was discovered on 22 July. Only 1.5 tonnes of the mussels were recalled, as the remainder, 6 tonnes, had already been eaten.

Now the company affected, Reynaert-Versluys, has had reports back from two labs in Flanders and the Netherlands, both of which show mussels from a later harvest to be clean. According to co-owner Willy Versluys, that proves the earlier batch were also unaffected. But the food safety agency said sea currents could explain the change in the mussels' condition.

In Zeeland, meanwhile, sales of mussels have increased again after a sudden dip related to coverage of the Belgica case. Zeeland mussels are not affected by the DSP infestation or by the recall, but sales took a hit as a result of customer caution, Dutch mussel traders said.

Belgian payments system "watertight" against Wi-Fi fraud

Belgium's system of point-of-sale payments – Bancontact and Mister Cash – is "watertight" against the sort of large-scale fraud recently uncovered in the United States, in which thieves engaged in the practice known as "wardriving" to steal payment-card details.

Wardriving consists of driving around in the neighbourhood of shops and businesses and trying to log in to unsecured wireless networks, then steal payment-card details. Those details can be used to buy goods or withdraw money in other locations. In the US case, details of some 40,000 cards were stolen from major retailers including Barnes & Noble and OfficeMax.

According to a spokesman for the Brussels-based Atos Worldline, which administers the payment system in

Belgium, that sort of practice would not be possible here, as businesses that use electronic payments are not allowed to store any details on their own computers, and thieves have no access to the heavily-encrypted Atos system.

Nevertheless, cardholders are advised to keep track of their cards when using payment systems to avoid the possibility of their being cloned. Cases have also come to light of ATMs being doctored to clone cards or to steal them outright. In addition, because Belgian ISPs set download limits on broadband internet traffic, customers could end up paying a surcharge if their unsecured wireless connection is discovered by wardrivers, who also use the technique to pirate films and music files.

NEWS FLASH



Two men from Belarus who were arrested at Brussels airport last week could be members of the gang responsible for a wave of **thefts from parked cars** that has plagued the airport since June. The men were caught in the act and admitted to police that they are in the country to steal registration documents for use in the international trade in stolen cars. They were particularly interested in BMWs and Mercedes.

The Art Museum-on-Sea (KaZ) in Ostend has asked Flemish culture minister Bert Anciaux to help the town purchase an **important work by James Ensor** from the collection of the late Yves Saint Laurent. The work is due to go to auction at Christie's in Paris, probably in February 2009. "De bedroefde pierrot" ("The Dejected Pierrot") was painted in 1892 during the decade that is generally considered to be the artist's high point.

Representatives of the Farmers' Union in Limburg have filed a complaint with police against the army, for failing to tackle the **unrestricted growth of thistles** on a disused airbase at Brustem, near Sint-Truiden. The base closed in 1993, and various parts are destined for a business park and a training centre. For the time being, however, large areas are infested with thistles, which, by law, the owner of a piece of ground is obliged to eradicate. Instead, the plants are now seeding and spreading the intractable weed to farmland in the area. Union representative Philippe Martin said that the police complaint was a "signal" and encouraged others to follow suit.

A 30-year-old man from Georgia caught **riding an Antwerp tram without a ticket** turned out to be a convicted criminal wanted for failing to turn up for prison to serve a six-month sentence for burglary. The man had no ticket and no ID and was taken to the police station, where his identity was discovered.

Flemish foreign minister Geert Bourgeois said he would officially make a request to his colleague Bert Anciaux, minister for sport, to express the government's displeasure at a ruling in Beijing that only flags of the 205 officially invited nations may be displayed, both during the opening ceremony and from the crowd at all sporting events. Bourgeois said that the **Flemish lion was the symbol** of a constitutionally recognised region and not a sign of propaganda, which is banned by the Olympic statutes. The decision by Beijing is aimed at preventing protests by supporters of Tibetan independence but has also provoked the anger of Scots and Welsh.

A 58-year-old man who died in Westende last week was the first fatality involved in an **accident with the coast tram** this year and the 18th since the year 2000. In all, 74 accidents involving injuries have taken place during that time, in which the tram service has covered about 3.4 million kilometres.

HMS Fearless



Fire broke out last week on board HMS Fearless, the Royal Navy assault and training ship now being broken up in Ghent harbour. The ship's own fire service, together with Ghent fire fighters, soon brought the blaze under control. The vessel, built in Belfast in 1963, was retired in 2002, and was at that point the oldest ship in the service. Fearless saw service in the Falklands war and was later used as a training ship at the Royal College, Dartmouth.

Five thousand on the beach for the environment

A call for up to 30,000 people to come to the beach at Ostend to take part in a new film-clip for environmental action, directed by Flemish filmmaker Nic Balthazar, attracted only 5,000 people on Sunday. The action, in conjunction with Friends of the Earth, was intended to raise awareness of the problem of climate change.

Weeks before, Balthazar, director of *Ben-X*, made the rounds of radio and TV, calling for 30,000 volunteers to take part in what he called "human bannerizing" – to spell out slogans on the sand, "in a sort of Korean choreography, a human LCD screen," he told an interviewer.

Between rain inland and the televised football match Belgium-China, only 5,000 turned up, but the demonstration went ahead, with Balthazar directing operations from a crane overhead and celebrity DJs entertaining participants on the beach below. "With the people who are here, we have plenty to make all the letters," Balthazar said. "It's unbelievably beautiful."

The industry strikes back

Anti-piracy campaigns aim to educate the public about the real losses of stealing cinema

Ian Mundell

If you've been to a Kinepolis cinema recently, you will have seen a trailer before the feature warning about the penalties if you try to record what is about to appear on the screen. This is part of a campaign by the multiplex chain to crack down on film piracy, with the threat that anyone caught "camcording" will be handed over immediately to the local police.

"Today maybe 70-80% of customers in our theatres have a high-end digital camera in their pockets, in their phone," explains Bob Claeys, the Kinepolis Group's new anti-piracy officer. "People have them, they use them, but they are not aware that they are doing something wrong. So we want to explain to people that they can't record in the theatre and say that, if they do, this will be the consequence."

Not only is there the ignominy of ending your Friday night in the back of a police van, but, under Belgian law, infringement of copyright can be punished by a fine of €550 to €550,000 or three months to three years in prison.

Federation (BAF). "Camcorders are not only after the image but also the sound and the subtitles."

Recent films pirated from Belgian cinemas include *King Kong*, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, *The Simpsons Movie* and *Asterix at the Olympic Games*. So it's not just Hollywood films. "We see a lot of Flemish titles because the Flemish film industry has grown a lot, and the movies are becoming really popular," says Jeurissen.

In July, police broke up an internet "release group" specialising in local films, sharing titles such as *Vermist*, *Firmin*, and *Ben X*. "Flemish TV series are also subject to piracy," Jeurissen adds. "All the big series, like *Flikken* and *Matroesjka's*, you can find them all on the net."

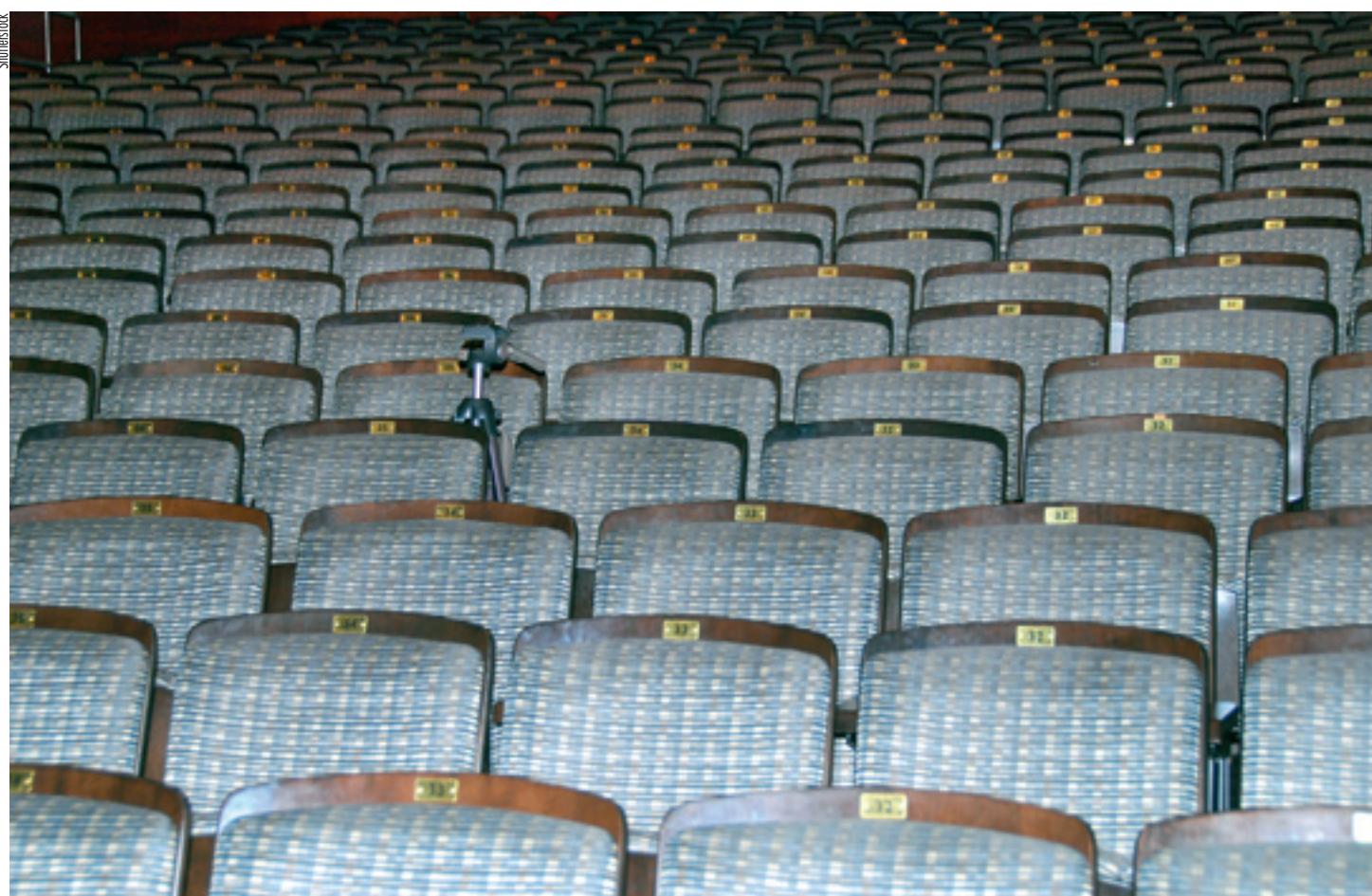
Based on international figures, BAF estimates that the Belgian market loses €30 million a year thanks to film piracy. Most comes out of DVD sales rather than cinema tickets, but Kinepolis is still keen to take action. "We no longer want to be in a situation where we feel that things are happening in our theatres, and we are closing our eyes

people who profit from piracy. "We don't go after a 15-year-old boy who illegally downloads a movie once," Jeurissen explains. "We go after the people who make money out of this. That can also be a 15-year-old boy, making DVDs of all kinds of movies and selling them for a euro apiece in school. Or it can be someone in a big company who is known for having the latest DVDs for three or four euros."

Video shops that rent or sell pirate discs are particularly troublesome. "That's a big problem in the larger cities, especially in Brussels," Jeurissen says. It is here that BAF has had its most spectacular success, with a video shop owner convicted last April to six months in jail, a fine of €11,000, plus €1 million in damages, and a 10-year ban on operating a similar business.

People selling DVDs in bars, markets or over the internet have also been caught and fined; the record for a single damage claim so far was more than €400,000.

While these convictions are important, Jeurissen shares Claeys' view that raising awareness is key, particularly among



Hard to see, hard to catch: Film piracy is rampant in Flanders

It's hard to believe, but mobile phones and pocket digital cameras can produce a good enough copy of a film to be circulated on the internet. International figures suggest that 90% of all the copies circulating online within two weeks of a film's release originated from camcording in cinemas.

Until a couple of years ago, Hollywood released its films in the United States well before the rest of the world. Now films go global quickly, and since Belgium is frequently chosen for European premieres, it has become an attractive target for pirates. "Another reason is that Belgium is a bilingual country," explains Elke Jeurissen, spokesperson for the Belgian Anti-Piracy

to them," Claeys explains.

As well as the warning trailer, the Kinepolis initiative includes an SMS hotline for people to report camcording in the cinema, plus staff training about how to spot and deal with potential pirates. And there is a €500 reward for Kinepolis staff who catch and prevent a camcording.

Since its launch in May, there have been no messages to the hotline and no arrests, but this is in line with Claeys' expectations. "I hope that the fact that we show the trailer will have an effect, and that will be enough to stop ordinary people from recording," he says.

Meanwhile BAF is busy prosecuting the

the young. "It's really a matter of educating them, of trying to tell them that there is a real impact on the industry, that there is money being lost," she says. "It's not only Tom Cruise, who is rich enough in their minds, but it is also the guy carrying the cable of the cameraman who will be affected by piracy, especially in the local film industry."

online

www.anti-piracy.be

BUSINESS FLASH



Shutterstock

Corsendonk

Turnhout-based brewery Corsendonk is about to launch its only self-brewed beer on the Chinese market, in a continuation of the company's export strategy. Exports of the beer, also called Corsendonk – named after the 14th-century abbey in Old Turnhout – have risen 15% over the last year. The majority of the company's beers are produced in Purnode, China, a large and growing beer market, imported 114.6 million litres in 2006.

Dexia

Dexia is to pump €300 million into its American subsidiary FSA, at the same time pulling it out of a number of sectors which, the bank said, do not conform to Dexia's risk profile. Uncertainty over FSA's activities had caused a drop in Dexia's share price, and the bank saw net earnings for the second quarter fall by 32%. FSA will now concentrate on its core business: credit assurance for local authorities in the US.

VVR

The Flemish Travel Agents' Union (VVR) last week declared the sector "more lively than ever" despite a year in which two agencies had their licences withdrawn, three went bankrupt and 15 closed down voluntarily. But 17 new agencies started up, bringing the net loss lower than expected. The Flemish sector is not under threat from higher fuel prices or from the rise in internet bookings, a VVR spokesman said.

Belgacom

The country's monopoly provider of fixed-line telephone services announced last week that it will be raising some tariffs by as much as 4% starting in October. ADSL, digital TV and landline-to-mobile calls will remain the same, but phone rentals will go up, as will special services like alarm calls, caller ID and voice mail. Inland and foreign call rates went up by 3% on 1 July.

Telenet

The Mechelen-based telecom company last week revised its earnings forecast for 2008 by 2%, from a 6-8% increase in EBITDA to an 8-10% increase. The company's first-half results were actually up 11% on the same period in 2007, to €242.4 million on turnover of €492.5 million. The company has picked up 181,000 new subscribers, meanwhile, for digital TV, telephone and broadband internet, with more than one in five opting for the triple package.

Fortis

Organisations representing small shareholders have combined forces to push for an extraordinary general meeting as soon as possible to deal with the failures of management over the bank insurer's takeover of ABN Amro and the subsequent fall in share price. Test-Aankoop, Deminor and the Netherlands-based Union of Shareholders (VEB) are looking to overcome the company's resistance. Meanwhile, politicians and shareholders were last week outraged by news that Herman Verwilst, who took over as CEO when Jean-Paul Votron resigned over the share-price debacle, will be entitled to a golden handshake of about €5 million – four times more than his predecessor – at a time when many shareholders have lost fortunes because of the ABN Amro repercussions.

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FASHION

Dressed to rock

The Pukkelpop festival breaks into fashion with its first-ever clothing line

Marc Maes

If Lily Allen, Gwen Stefani and Pharrell Williams have their own clothing lines, why shouldn't Pukkelpop?" Why not, indeed. Flemish designer Raf Maes has headed up this new development in the history of the youthful rock festival that sees its 23rd edition this week at the Kiewit festival site near Hasselt.

"We wanted to create a unique clothing collection for the festival," explains Maes. "Not the everyday type of T-shirt with a quick logo print, but a line of specially designed sweatshirts, shirts and tank tops, fabricated in a limited edition."

The festival started out in 1985 on a football field with 3,000 attendees. Last year, it attracted 130,000 revellers for its blend of popular alt and pop rock bands. Maes, who has been working with the Pukkelpop for 17 years, combined his professional skills with his love for the festival. He gathered illustrative materials from Pukkelpop's innovative graphics company, Josworld, which designed the posters, flyers, website and other visuals. "The collection is based on these elements, and we produced embroideries and all over prints," says Maes. "A special Pukkelpop custom size label on the neck seam and a logo on each shirt's right bottom seam make for attractive details."

The collection mixes subdued greys and blacks with bright splashes of blues and greens. The Pukkelpop logo and monster icons are scattered about. The price tags range from around €28 for tank tops to up to €65 for hoodies. Rather steep prices for young festival-goers, but, to keep in line with the festival's ecological and social image, Maes decided to have the collection produced under fair-trade conditions.

"The organisation of the festival absolutely didn't want to have the clothing manufactured in cheap labour countries like India or China," he explains. "We opted for Portugal because we were offered the guarantee of fair-trade production alongside good quality and strict deadlines. We were prepared to pay extra for all this."

The collection consists of 10 items and marks the launch in Belgium of the hip on-line clothes shop FreshCotton. Pukkelpop is their first dedicated Belgian festival wear – in



the Netherlands, the retail site is selling swag for the techno festival 5 Days Off.

The designs are on sale during the Pukkelpop festival and through the FreshCotton website. "Reactions are extremely positive," says Maes. "The Pukkelpop crew is very enthusiastic; they didn't know what we were coming up with because we didn't show them any of the designs in advance."

Pukkelpop organiser Chokri Mahassine is delighted with

the festival's new clothing collection. "I think it's important to supply quality merchandising produced by a professional team that is close to our target audience. By opting for fair trade, we set an example. That's our mission," he says.

If sales are brisk, expect more designs and expanded merchandise this time next year.

The Pukkelpop Festival is 14-16 August. Tickets are still available at www.pukkelpop.be

"The organisation of the festival absolutely didn't want to have the clothing manufactured in cheap labour countries"

online
www.freshcotton.be



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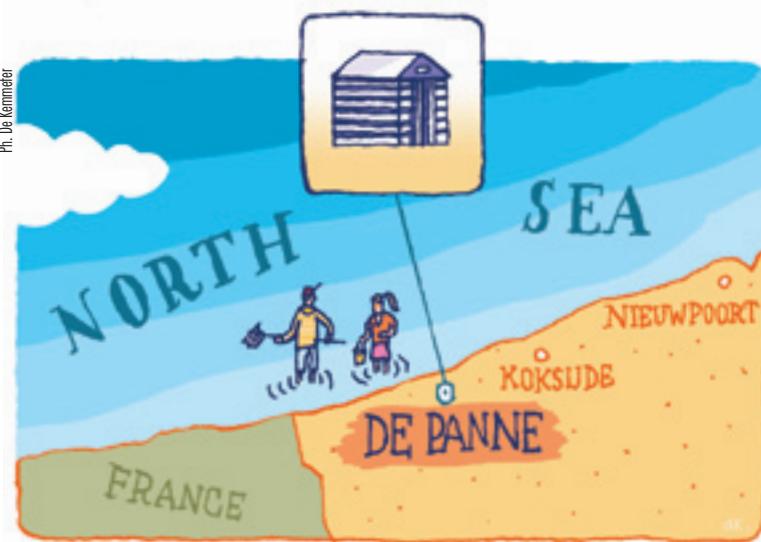
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Steven Tate

Humble but charming, De Panne lies at the end of the line – railway-wise, at least. Near the French border, this West Flanders town of a little more than 10,000 is less flashy than Ostend and lacks the touristic cachet of Bruges. But the allure of De Panne keeps visitors coming back every summer – last year's total was 80,000 for the school holiday season.

“Actieve Natuur” is the unofficial motto for the town, as the Flemish government has taken care to preserve its natural treasures. De Panne's name actually comes from the Flemish word for the dip between sand dunes, extremely fitting as it lies between Westhoek, Cabour and Oosthoek – dunes that are also nature reserves.

Established in 1957, the 340-hectare **Westhoek** is one of the oldest nature reserves in Flanders, nestled between the North Sea, the French-Belgian border and De Panne. Its 11 kilometres of footpaths wind through the landscapes, allowing visitors to view nature up close without disturbing it.

Spanning 80 hectares, the **Cabour** dunes, or Garzebekeveld, are the remains of a 5,500-year-old sea wall, making them the oldest of the Belgian coast. The Cabour dunes are also home to many fossils. Although not as open to visitors as Westhoek, guided tours are scheduled often. But the **Oosthoek** is the most varied of the reserves. It contains wooded areas with an impressive array of trees and lush shrubbery and pathways

for strolling or hiking.

At the edge of Oosthoek, nature lovers can take further advantage of **De Nachtegaal**, an educational centre that acquaints visitors with the sea and the coast. This “gateway to the wilderness” has permanent exhibitions, including information on sea-life, explanations

of the different habitats (wet beach versus dry beach, for example) and the bio-diversity of the dunes. A nature garden also allows the curious to discover more plant life up close while strolling around the pond in the centre. A special children's path allows kiddies to do the same. The centre also schedules

is also an homage to De Panne's roots: 19th-century fisherman **Pier Kloeffe** has become a symbol of De Panne's centuries' long fishing tradition – thus a statue of him stands in the dunes. He even has his own beer named after him: **Gouden Pier Kloeffe**. A dark blond beer with a fruity aftertaste,

Around 1830, wealthy land-owner Pieter Bortier inherited approximately 650 hectares in the area and opened the first “Pavillon des Bains”, a place for the English and local upper crust to socialise and luxuriate. This kicked off De Panne's reign as a resort town known for its baths – which is



De Panne is famed for its massive number of beautiful windswept dunes and grasses

Where to stay

Strandpark on Nieuwpoortlaan

In the middle of 25,000 square meters of private dunes by the sea, this affordable holiday village offers self-catering bungalows and studios. Just leave Fido at home: no pets allowed.

Hotel Le Fox on Walckiersstraat

Home to the Michelin-starred restaurant mentioned above, this four-star hotel offers gastronomic packages that make this worth splurging the extra euros.

Hotel Mon Bijou on Zeelaan

A great place if you want to be in the centre of the action, it's right in the heart of De Panne. Pleasant, functional, three-star hotel with affordable rates. After all: you don't go to the Belgian coast to stay in your room, do you?

nature walks regularly for those who need a proper introduction to various flora and fauna.

While other cities build tourist attractions to bring in visitors, De Panne merely preserves what it has to keep them coming. The Dumont quarter, named after architects Albert Dumont and his son Alexis, has over 500 cottages dating back from the late 19th century to the start of the First World War. The area is an heirloom from the age when De Panne first blossomed into a tourist destination for the middle classes and, as such, is protected as a heritage site.

The statue that is the town's answer to Brussels' Manneken Pis

Golden Pier Kloeffe is sold in many establishments throughout De Panne. On this, Pier Kloeffe beats the Belgian mascot: after all, who would want to drink a beer called “Golden Manneken Pis”?

But De Panne's history goes back much farther than Pier Kloeffe's day. People were living in the region as far back as five centuries BC, though it wasn't until 1782 that, under the Austrian empire, the area rose in prominence – thanks to Kaiser Jozef II's interest in turning it into a major fishing concern. Prominent residents of nearby Veurne settled the area for him and called it Sint-Jozefdorp. The name was later changed to Kerkepanne before finally becoming what we know it as today.

fortunate: despite its long tradition of fishing, it wasn't until the 20th century that plans for a harbour were finally drawn up. But, due to the decline in the fishing industry, they never came to fruition.

De Panne maintained its posh allure well into the 1900s: King Albert I even took up residence for a bit in De Panne during the First World War, and the French names on restaurants and homes hark back to a time when international visitors flocked in droves there to restore themselves.

But, like most coastal towns, De Panne well realised that catering to the luxury niche would not keep the city afloat financially. With the expansion of purchasing power of the middle class, appeal-

ing to families eager for some sea, surf and (cross your fingers) sun seemed a better bet for the city. Not that the town completely eschews upscale appeal: De Panne boasts a 2-star Michelin restaurant, **Le Fox**, which takes local fish and shellfish and transforms them into sublime creations.

But the majority of tourists seem to go for less rarefied attractions, like **land yachting**, a sport actually invented by Flemish scientists and entrepreneurs. The coast at De Panne had made it difficult for building a harbour: its flatness was an obstacle. But this disadvantage was turned into a plus in the early 20th century by sportsmen looking to combine sailing with land sports. You've seen them: a kayak-looking contraption with one wheel in front, two wheels in back and a sail powered by the wind.

With the exception of breaks due to two World Wars, the sport has grown with each successive year. The **Landelijke Zeilwagenfederatie** of De Panne not only organises competitions but also gives classes for those wishing to master the sport.

online
www.depanne.be

Courtesy Le Fox



Clockwise from top left: Master chef Stephane Buyens presents the "Summer Passion" menu at De Panne's only Michelin-starred restaurant, **Le Fox**; The beautifully situated **Nachtegaal** visitor's centre answers all your FAQs about sand and sea life; the city's **Dumont** quarter is a protected national heritage site; Nineteenth-century fisherman Pier Kloeffe would probably be surprised to find a statue in his honour – not to mention a dark blonde beer boasting his name, brewed from an old seaman's recipe and only to be found in De Panne



On the go in De Panne

For horseback riders, De Panne boasts a wealth of opportunities to saddle up. Both **'t Merlin-**

shof on Veurnestraat and **Te Paard Aan Zee** on Smekaertstraat give lessons year-round for

the novice rider, and the latter also organises rides for seasoned equestrians. Both companies have

stables available for those wishing to house their own horses, but **Te Paard Aan Zee** has a hotel, **De Drie Vijvers**, located on an idyllic pond. You can get packages that include hotel stay and horse riding.

Areas to ride horses include the **Westkust Riding Trails**, a 42-kilometre network of paths along the coasts of De Panne and Koksijde. These scenic bridle trails run along the Westhoek, Houtsaege, Noord, Doorn and Plaats dunes.

For cyclists, De Panne is heaven on wheels: an **86-kilometer bike path** runs from the town to Knokke-Heist, itself part of an international cycling route that spans 6,000 kilometres through the seven countries around the North Sea.

Those with less stamina can still take advantages of various bike routes around the city, including four major paths: the **Cobergheroute**, which travels through the polder landscape from the Westhoek; the **Moerenroute**, which goes through both farmland and picturesque villages; the wide-

open **Lange Lisroute** that runs between Nieuwpoort and Veurne; and the **Veurne-Ambachtroute**, full of meadows, ancient architecture and waterways. The NMBS Belgian Railways rents bicycles for tourists who have no wheels of their own.

Children are not forgotten in De Panne, thanks to **Plopsaland**. This theme park, a stone's throw from the train station, gives Euro-Disney a run for its euros: mascots in costumes of Flemish characters such as Samson & Gert, Piet Piraat and Bumba entertain the toddlers, while older, more adventurous youth can ride the carousels, duck-shaped boats and swinging buckets.

Plopsaland is the one place where De Panne's proximity to France is most evident. Even if you don't notice on the street that French license plates are as common as Belgium's red-and-white, inside Plopsaland, you're more likely to hear a child being scolded *en Français* than *in Nederlands* by a mom at the end of her tether.



Horseback riding is big in De Panne, with its 42-kilometres of equestrian trails

SPORTS

Batter up

It's on the decline world-wide, but baseball in Flanders is thriving and starting to deliver world-class talent

Leander Schaerlaeckens

The smattering of kids on the big, grassy field in one of Brussels' many green pockets finish their lunches and immediately organise an impromptu game of baseball. They're part of the Brussels Kangaroos summer baseball camp, and they're American, Belgian and everything in between. But they all speak the language of baseball.

These kids' excitement for the complicated game requiring so much practice and skill is genuine, and they're concerned about playing the sport properly.

The Flemish Baseball and Softball League has grown steadily since its founding in 1936 and now has about 2,000 members – no small feat for a sport that's on the decline world-wide. "Fewer and fewer kids play, even in America," explains John Miller, head coach of the Kangaroos. "So we try to promote the sport as a whole, not just our club."

In Belgium, The flagship adult first division has been dominated by Antwerp-based teams since its early days, courtesy of Japanese sailors who started playing in the Antwerp harbour in the 1920s and turned local bystanders on to the sport. As the cradle of Belgian baseball, Antwerp is still its epicentre today. The city is home to 11 of Flanders' 21 baseball and softball clubs. Only once in the past 25 years was the national championship won by a team outside of Antwerp.

The first division is reflective of the sport's accessibility. Over the years its players have included a wrecking-ball operator, top executives for multinational corporations and many dock workers who have passed baseball on through the generations. The only thing most of them have in common is baseball.

But their minority is such that it fosters a close-knit community nonetheless. Most of the coaches and board members used to play for their respective clubs when they were younger, and now their children play, too. This arrangement has ensured continued know-how and enthusiasm, keeping the sport alive and vibrant. And Flemish baseball has learned the hard way that continuity is pivotal.

Seizing upon the interest in baseball created by the Japanese sailors more than 80 years ago, several American companies in Antwerp started baseball clubs

as part of their roster of employee activities. One Mr Bini, an American board member of Bell Telephone, demonstrated the sport to his workers with a broom (the bat), stacks of newspapers (bases) and a tennis ball. The club took

importance of profit margins and internationalisation was growing." Not wanting to sink money or time into sports clubs, many companies got rid of them altogether, and the clubs had to carry on independently, if at all. Dille, a retired

Simultaneously, there was a fall in membership, which led to further financial problems. "What followed were lots of ideas but very little financial expertise, which is when everything went awry," says Dille. "The survival of Flemish

government, which had failed to check the federation's books for a number of years. This meant that the government would have been partially responsible for any potential bankruptcy. "We were able to take advantage of that liability to convince the government to give us some breathing room," Dille said. Outstanding payments to the government were deferred, and Flemish baseball was saved.

Yet the long-term picture is still cloudy for the federation. "It's hard to have a solid, driven plan because of the quick succession of [Flemish] sports ministers," Dille said. "And we still have too few contacts with big companies to ensure significant sponsorship." Further subsidy will disappear from the Belgian Olympic Committee since baseball will be eliminated from the Olympic calendar after the Beijing games.

Most first-division clubs operate on a budget of about €50,000 annually, but many still find the cash to attract players from the United States to beef up their squads, serve as youth coaches and promote the sport. But finding the right match for your club is challenging. "The recruiting process is unscientific," Miller admits. "Players and teams usually meet online. Among the many winners we've recruited, we also managed to buy airline tickets and food for a 50-year-old, pot-smoking coach who still lived with his parents; a .221-hitting shortstop with addictions to anti-depressants and porn and a psychotic flame-thrower who trashed my apartment."

The Merksem Greys, the defending champions, were even more unlucky this year. Their two American ringers bailed within 48 hours after arriving on airline tickets paid for by the club.

Getting your sport on the local commune's radar is equally demanding, says Tom Lorrentop, a 29-year old pitcher for Hoboken and the Belgian national team, a coach of the junior national team and full-time coordinator for the Flemish league. "When you try to found a club, finding a field and working with the commune is always very difficult," he explains. "If they even have space, they'd rather build a football-pitch. Even if it's the 26th football pitch, they'd rather see 120 kids using that field

In the 1920s, an American board member of Bell Telephone demonstrated the sport to his workers with a broom (the bat), stacks of newspapers (bases) and a tennis ball

off, became a Belgian powerhouse, and is now known as the Hoboken Pioneers.

Not long after, General Motors and several of the Japanese firms whose ships docked in Antwerp formed teams for Bell to play against – and a league was born.

The first international game against the Dutch soon followed. Between 1934 and 1939, the countries played each other a dozen times, splitting the wins evenly. The Dutch asked that a Belgian federation be formed to organise a proper national team, instead of glorified factory teams, and the Belgians complied.

But the company-team setup survived throughout the 1970s when, according to Johan Dille, former secretary and chairman of the national team, "Companies started distancing themselves from the sports clubs because the

middle-manager for Knorr, notes that the majority of the clubs' leaders quit, "which led to a shortage of people with know-how."

Then the Flemish government was created. Subsidy regulations were changed and became complicated, which led to a gap in the baseball federation's income.

baseball was in peril."

By the time Dille assumed office as secretary in 1997, he was confronted with a debt of roughly half of the €75,000 annual budget. "It was one big mess," said Fred van Gulik, an American who was manager of the national team at the time.

But Dille and his fellow board members managed to get the budget back on track and cleared the debt within two years by lending money from the clubs and driving up membership. They were helped by some negligence on the part of the Flemish



Belgian-American John Miller coaches and catches in Brussels



Baseball teams from all over Belgium face off on the Brussels Kangaroos' home turf in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe

contract by a Major League Baseball team, the New York Mets (see sidebar).

Three young players from the Kangaroos system are also attracting Major League attention. Left-handed pitcher Harold Gerard, 17, is considered one of the five best young pitchers in Europe.

Like Flemish baseball, the three will have to grow and mature to fulfil their substantial promise. But unlike many generations before them, the necessary infrastructure and knowledge is available. These Belgians have become a part of baseball. And baseball, according to Miller, "is becoming a part of Belgium."

online

www.baseballsoftball.be
www.kbbsf.be

In the 1970s, the Royal Belgian Baseball/Softball Federation was introduced, making the national team a separate entity from both the Flemish Baseball and Softball League and the Walloon league, which formed in 1988.

then take a somewhat bigger risk."

When you finally secure a patch of grass (or a discarded soccer-pitch), it's hard to get subsidy to build the infrastructure. "A backstop and dugout are extremely important for security reasons," notes Lorrentop "but the commune usually prefers to invest in floodlights for the football club or a coaches' bus for the basketball club. Baseball is a very low priority."

In fact, that goes for all of the smaller sports in Flanders. "The rugby federation down the hall has exactly the same problem," he continues. "You have to know

somebody somewhere who'll do you a favour – someone who's willing to put some effort into your sport."

Gulik echoes this view. "Baseball is still a minority sport in Belgium. Clubs live off clubhouse income. Let's be realistic: who wants to sponsor teams these days that hardly make the newspaper or television?"

Despite the odds, Flemish baseball is starting to emerge internationally and is delivering world-class talent. Last month, Thomas de Wolf, another Hoboken product, became the first Belgian ever to be signed to a minor-league



On the dotted line: Thomas de Wolf signs his contract, flanked by his mom and the New York Mets scout who discovered him

A major accomplishment

The big league signs its first Belgian

On 1 July, the New York Mets signed Thomas de Wolf to a minor-league contract. He's the first Belgian to achieve such recognition from Major League Baseball. The 18-year old outfielder will play in the Dominican Republic winter league as of October. He will then join the Gulf Coast League Mets in the Rookie League next summer. That's about six levels below Major League, which can be gained through subsequent promotions.

"I started when I was four after a friend from school introduced me to baseball," says de Wolf, who plays for the Hoboken Pioneers. His countrymen don't usually comprehend the magnitude of his signing. "I always have to explain it in terms of football. That I start at a low level and have to work my way up. I hope to make it to the Major League."

He'll have to work hard. Only one in nine minor leaguers makes it to the Major League. If de Wolf doesn't make it, he'll return to Belgium to resume the degree in home-building he has to abandon one year shy of graduation.

Although de Wolf is the first Belgian to sign a professional contract with a Major League Baseball team, he is not the first to get a nibble. About a decade ago, Ken Pot, a burly 17-year old catcher from Antwerp, participated in an instructional camp for the Toronto Blue Jays, who were then owned by a Belgian company. Upon his return, he failed three steroid tests, was never signed and has now quit baseball altogether.

Classical & New Music**Brussels**

Atelier de la Dolce Vita
Liefdadigheidstraat 37a; 02.223.46.75,
www.atelierdolcevita.be
AUG 16 17.00 Kryptos String Quartet

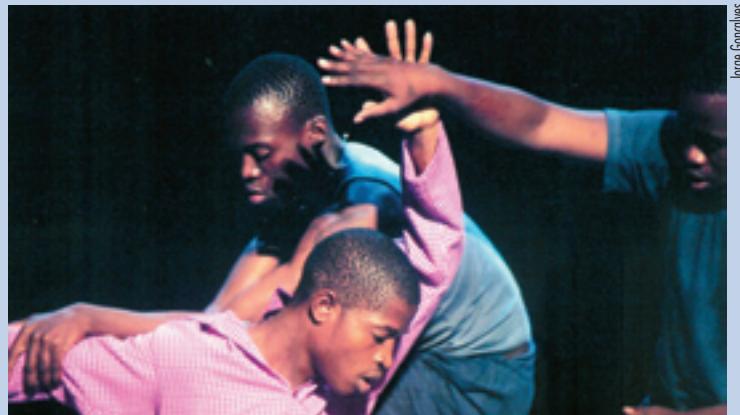
Miniemenkirk
Miniemstraat 62; 02.511.93.84, www.
minimes.net
AUG 13 12.15 Marina Eckhardt,
mandolin; Ad van Sleuwen, piano;
Beethoven, Hummel (part of Midis/
Minimes Festival)

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
Concerts at 12.15 (part of Midis/
Minimes Festival):
AUG 14 Jean-Louis Maton,
percussions: Volans, Taira, Gobert
AUG 18 Els Faems, piano: Liszt **AUG**
19 Adriaan Jacobs, piano: Ravel,
Fauré **AUG 20** Philippe Ivanov piano:
Debussy, Ravel **AUG 21** Yu-Fen
Chang, piano: Villa-Lobos, Granados,
Ginastera

Saint Michael and St Gudula
Cathedral
Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.217.83.45
AUG 15 10.00 Capella Sanctorum
Michaelis & Gudulæ conducted by
Kurt Bikkembergs: Sebastiaan Van
Steenberge's Missa Ik Zag Cecilia
Komen. 16.00 Jozef Sluys, organ;
Olivier Berten, baritone: Corneil's Salve
Regina, Van Den Kerckhoven's Missa
Duplex, de Cabezón's Magnificat, Bach's
Meine Seele erhebt den Herren, Correa
de Arauxo
AUG 17 10.00 Amicantus (Heusden-
Zolder) vocal ensemble conducted by Jef
Put: Monteverdi's Messa A Quattro Voci

Jazz & blues**Brussels**

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Until **AUG 16** 20.30 The Zhulus New
Orleans Band
AUG 19-23 20.30 The Toine Thys

Get your tickets now for...**Shuffle #3**

30-31 August and 5-6 September, Kaaithéater and other venues in
Brussels. Tickets from 02.201.59.59 or www.kaaithéater.be

Brussels' Kaaithéater launches its new season with two festive weekends of international dance and theatre at its own venues, plus Rosas Performances Space and even a secret outdoor location. Spending an entire weekend here will give you a taste of current trends in modern dance, plus entertain your socks off. Some of the best work comes right out of Brussels: Norwegian choreographer Heine R Avdal's Brussels-based dance troupe deepblue performs his latest piece, *drop a line*, which involves an olfactory artist and special sets that differ with each performance. Thomas Hauert's company ZOO, meanwhile, presents his 2002 show *Há Mais*, together with Mozambican choreographer Panaibra Gabriel's *Mafalala2* (photo). And don't miss *La petite musette, casquée*, in which performance artist Merlin Spie sits on a set covered entirely in pear syrup. Shuffle #3 is set up to allow you to attend a few performances per day, and three of them are free. This is one of those festivals that successfully mixes quality and form appreciated by dance and experimental theatre aficionados with enough pizzazz to impress those a bit less familiar.

Organ Trio

Antwerp

Cafe Mambo
Vlaamsestraat 3
Wednesdays until AUG 27 21.00
Marcelo Moncada Quartet

Deurne

Openluchttheater Rivierenhof
Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192,
www.openluchttheater.be
AUG 15 20.30 Ruben Hoeke + Voodoo
Boogie

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul**Brussels**

Fuse
Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
AUG 16 23.00 Johnny D, Jerome
Sydenham

Antwerp

Buster
Kaastrui 1; 03.232.51.53
AUG 16 22.00 Eva Auad

De Kleine Wereld

Vlaamsestraat 25
AUG 16 20.00 El Tronco

Deurne

Openluchttheater Rivierenhof
Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192,
www.openluchttheater.be
Concerts at 20.30:
AUG 14 De Nieuwe Snaar + Hannelore
Bedert **AUG 16** Stan Van Samang **AUG**
19 Adriaan Van den Hoof + Piv Huvluv
AUG 20-21 Gabriel Rios with Jef Neve
and Kobe Proesmans + Selah Sue

Lier

Donkhoeve
Galgeveld 17; 03.488.20.15, www.
donkvrienden.be
AUG 16 20.00 Donkfeesten with Eline
De Munck and Boogie Boy

World, folk**Brussels**

Live Music Café

Anspachlaan 90-92; www.live-music-
cafe.be

Until AUG 21 22.00 Dju-Bebe
Until AUG 27 22.00 Puchó (Cuba)
Until AUG 30 22.00 Kalema and K-Tribe

Visual arts**Brussels**

Atomium
Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72, www.
atomium.be

Until OCT 19 Expo 58: Between
Utopia and Reality, documents, plans,
objects, films, photographs and scale
models of Expo 58

Until OCT 19 Lucien De Roeck's Star,
design of the famous symbol of Expo 58

Until OCT 19 The Pavilion of
Temporary Happiness, built from
33,000 drink crates to house screenings
and exhibitions about World Fairs (near
the Atomium on Louis Steensplein)

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80, www.
stripmuseum.be

Until NOV 16 Smurf for All, All
for Smurf, original drawings and
documents celebrating the famous
characters created 50 years ago by
Belgian comic strip artist Pierre
Culliford, known as Peyo

Belvue Museum

Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25, www.
belvue.be

Until AUG 31 Today's China,
contemporary Chinese art (free
entrance)

Until SEP 14 Magritte and Mariën, My
Accomplices: sketches photographs
and correspondence between Jacqueline
Nonkels, Marcel Mariën, René and
Georgette Magritte, as well as an
accompanying collection of Surrealist
works, including poetry and literature

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33

Until AUG 30 Chapitre II, book
bindings by Florent Rousseau

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.
bozar.be

Until AUG 24 Architecture in the
Pictures/Flanders Architectural Yearbook,
photographs of 37 projects offering an
overview of architectural developments in
Flanders in 2006 and 2007

Until SEP 14 It's Not Only Rock
'n' Roll, Baby!, works by musicians,
including Alan Vega, Brian Eno, Laurie
Anderson, Patti Smith, Pete Doherty
and Yoko Ono

Until SEP 21 Sioux in Paradise,
sculptures, installations, video, models
and drawings by Johan Muyle

Until SEP 21 Mapas abiertos (Opening
maps), overview of contemporary
Caribbean, Central and South-
American photography (part of
Summer of Photography)

CIVA

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71, www.civa.
be

Until SEP 19 Documents on the
gardens designed by René Pechère and
Jacques Boulanger-François for Expo 58

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50

Until SEP 30 Profiel, textile creations
by Isabelle Marquet

Until DEC 30 Van New Look tot
Expo 58, women's fashion from the
time of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair,
with evening gowns, wedding dresses,
cocktail dresses, suits, coats and
accessories

Czech Centre

Troonstraat 60; 02.213.94.30

Until SEP 5 Illustrations and
installations by Czech artist Kveta
Pacovská

**De Elektriciteitscentrale European
Centre for Contemporary Art**

Sint-Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.31

Until SEP 28 Fables, photographs by
Karen Knorr

De Loge Architectuur museum

Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65

Until SEP 28 Belgie/Belgique 58,
architectural and decorative forms at
the time of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair,
with drawings, photographs, models,
posters and furniture

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60

Until AUG 17 De Nieuwe Oogst (The
New Harvest), contemporary Flemish
design

Erasmus House

Kapittelstraat 31; 02.521.13.83

Until SEP 16 Anatomie van de
Ijdelenheden (Anatomy of the Vanities),
the museum's 75th anniversary show,
with works by Hieronymus Bosch,
Jan Fabre, Hans Holbein, Marie-Jo
Lafontaine, Aïda Kazarian and Quinten
Metsys

Espace Photographique Contretype

Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20

Until SEP 21 Voyage Out, photographs
by Chantal Maes

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80, www.
fondationpourlarchitecture.be

Until AUG 17 Gevers Design:
Inventaris van een uitvinder (Inventory
of an inventor), retrospective of work
by Belgian designer Christophe Gevers
(1928-2007)

Huis der Hertogen van Brabant

Grote Markt 19; 02.540.85.10

Until AUG 31 An exhibition of over
200 works by Salvador Dali, to mark the
20th anniversary of his death

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70

Until AUG 16 N'oublie pas (Do Not
Forget), drawings by Virginie de
Limbourg

Until AUG 16 Ceramics by Pilar
Zurimendi

Until SEP 26 White Noise, ceramics by
Caroline Andrin and ten guest artists

Jacques Franck Cultural Centre

Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20

Until AUG 24 Mer: agitée à peu agitée,
photographs by Jacques Debacker (part
of the Summer of Photography)

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63

Until OCT 5 One Family, photographs
by Vardi Kahana

La Maison de la Bande Dessinée

Keizerinlaan 1; 02.502.94.68

Until SEP 7 Over 150 original drawings
published in the Belgian weekly Spirou
(founded in 1938), by Jijé, Franquin,
Morris, Will, Tillieux, Peyo and Roba,
among others

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32

Until AUG 24 Les Enfants d'Abraham
(Abraham's children), photographs
on Christians, Muslims and Jews by
Magnum photographer Abbas (part of
Summer of Photography)

Until AUG 24 Vodou/Vodounon,
photographs by Jean-Dominique
Burton

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22

Until AUG 31 The Belle Epoque,
sculpture by Alexandre Charpentier
and the museum's collection of posters
by Toulouse-Lautrec, among other
fin-de-siècle works

Royal Army Museum

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33

Until NOV 30 A Paintbrush in the
Barrel, World War One paintings,
drawings and etchings by soldiers

Royal Library

Kunstberg; 02.519.58.73

Until AUG 23 Eugène Ysaÿe, exhibition
on the Belgian violinist and composer,
with photographs, letters and
instruments

INTERVIEW

Frans Jacobs

Professor Frans Jacobs heads the University of Ghent's Beekeeping Information Centre, providing support to 5,000 beekeepers in Flanders who care for 55,000 colonies. He talks about the dangers of the dwindling honeybee population

How true is the frequently quoted statement that "if the bee disappeared from the surface of the globe, then man would only have four years of life left"?

There is certainly an element of truth in the concept. Worldwide, bees hold second place in the ranking of most important "farm" animals – below cattle but above pigs and poultry. Nearly all of this relates to their contribution as pollinators. Pollination can be as important in crop production as water and fertiliser. It has been calculated that one-third of our food depends directly or indirectly on insect pollination. This is especially true for cross-pollinating fruit trees, most of which rely to a great extent on bees. So, if bees disappeared, we would definitely be in serious trouble.

What is the status of the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) in Flanders?

It's no exaggeration to describe it as a threatened species. Between 30 and 40% of Flemish bee colonies were wiped out last winter. There are many reasons, but the prime one is *Varroa destructor*. This is a red-brown parasitic mite. It was originally confined to the Asian honeybee, but, in the early 1960s, it jumped to the European variety. Those were imported into Java, which was completely defenceless against the mite. From Java, *Varroa* has spread throughout virtually the whole world, arriving in Belgium in 1984.

What does the *Varroa* mite do to bees?

The mites feed on both adult bees and brood. Individual infested bees show debilitating signs such as shorter lifespan, weight loss, shrunken and deformed wings and reduced natural resistance to infections. Infested colonies eventually collapse, hence the term Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD.

Can beekeepers fight back to try and protect their valuable colonies?

"Varroacides" are chemicals to kill mites or at least reduce their numbers. These are applied in feed or directly on adult bees as fumigants or in the form of contact strips. At the University of Ghent we are very busy testing new chemicals on the market and educating Flemish beekeepers on the correct cocktail of treatments to control *Varroa*. Another method is based on good bee husbandry to reduce the mite population through physical means, such as trapping, removing and destroying the mites. In practice, a combination of both methods is being implemented. It's important that we do not merely rely on chemical pesticides but also make use of natural substances and biological methods. In the meantime we hope that *Varroa*-tolerant bees will arise.

What do you think of the theory that radiation from mobile phones is interfering with bees' navigation systems, preventing them from finding their way back to their hives?



This theory was first postulated by Dr Jochen Kuhn from Landau University, but I am not convinced by it. The research was limited and involved placing equipment emitting very strong radio waves within half a metre of a beehive. It wasn't a realistic situation. In my opinion, mobile phones do not have a major influence on bee colonies.

What about air pollution as a threat to bees?

That's certainly a more plausible threat. A study by Jose Fuentes of the University of Virginia suggests that the heavily polluted air of cities is destroying the fresh scents of flowers before they have had a chance to spread into the surround-

ing environment. In other words, the lack of scent might mean that bees cannot find the flowers and, hence, the nectar needed for food.

Polluted air, parasitic mites, collapsing colonies...what can we do to help Flemish honeybees?

You can become a beekeeper! Beekeeping is a hugely enjoyable hobby – and you get to eat your own honey. The Flemish Beekeepers Association (Koninklijke Vlaamse Imkersbond) runs educational bee farms where people can learn how to keep bees. Alternatively, you could offer to put one of their members' beehives in your garden.

Anything a bit less demanding?

Actually beekeeping isn't that demanding! It doesn't take much of your time. However, another positive contribution to the welfare of bees is to grow bee-friendly plants that will encourage honeybees to visit your garden or terrace. Bees like daisy-shaped flowers such as asters and sunflowers; tall plants like hollyhocks, larkspur and foxgloves; and mints and other flowering herbs. If you plant trees, consider pollen-rich species like willow and lime.

Are local councils doing enough to encourage bees?

Many towns and villages in Flanders are now planting roundabouts and roadsides with flowers that attract bees. If your local roundabout is still a sterile patch of grass, why not contact those responsible? At the same time, ask them to use less herbicide along the roadside verges so that wild flowers have a greater chance to thrive and attract bees.

Would you recommend Flemish honey?

Absolutely. Local honey is prepared by local beekeepers. This keeps food transport miles down and helps the beekeeper cover the cost of beekeeping. Local honey does not contain additives to extend shelf life, and its taste will reflect local flora. It's excellent.

Interview by Denzil Walton

online
www.konvib.be
www.honeybee.be

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

No Maddie here

"If she has been kidnapped, the chances are slim that the kidnapper would just walk around with her."

Alain Remue
 Director of the Missing Persons Unit on 135 "sightings" of Madeleine McCann in Belgium

King & country

"The expression of republican opinions is tantamount to questioning the function of the monarch, which is forbidden for the military."

Pieter de Crem
 Minister of Defence on free speech

Sitting pretty

"I'm vain. I even crashed into a car once because I was busy looking in a shop window to see how good I looked sitting on my bike."

Helmut Lotti
 in *De Gentenaar*

KlaraFestival **InBev** **Brewing Kathos**
Cricket FlaxMuseum **Boterhammen**
inhetPark **Brouwerij Slaghmuylder**
next week in Flanders Today