

State of the hop

Flanders' hops industry is in transition as global beer tastes change



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Powered by light

Students from Leuven tech school Group T will race their solar car across Australia

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Hurts so good

Brussels' Klara Festival embraces all things melancholy

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Sorting it out

A pilot programme in Antwerp is trying to make recycling plastics a little less mystifying

Angela Chambers

Flanders prides itself on being a world leader in recycling and waste management, but many households still aren't following the sorting rules, even after nearly 20 years. It costs Belgium around €7 million each year to dispose of the waste the country doesn't recycle.

For newcomers who arrive in Flanders, the recycling programme can seem like more of a confusing burden than a positive path to sustainability. The list of rules and regulations is long and possibly only available in Dutch. And if you make one false move, you'll find your bag still lying on the kerb that evening. To make it worse, locals don't always follow the rules themselves, which makes it harder to get advice from your neighbour. It's understandable that those new to the region are confused about what's seen as a complicated list of restricted items, particularly when it comes to plastics.

Youri Sloutzky works for Fost Plus, the Brussels-based company that manages recycling in Flanders, including plastic bottles, metal containers and drink cartons, or PMD. The rules for sorting, he says, haven't changed since the company began collecting recycling in the mid-1990s. But an average of 15% of PMD collections in Flanders is made up of incorrectly sorted waste – known as residue. This amount reaches 25% in Brussels and a whopping 30% in Antwerp.

Facing a fine

In the past 15 years, PMD residue has almost doubled in the port city, causing Antwerp to begin enforcing stricter rules in May. Now, recycling collectors will place a red sticker on the blue PMD bags if there are three or more incorrect items. Anyone who receives this red sticker should take out the residue and keep it for the following week's general trash collection – or face fines of up to €250 for illegal dumping.

Residents of other Flemish cities are already aware of the red stickers, but Antwerp is only now enacting the policy after seeing the significant increase in residue. In the Brussels-Capital region, the red stickers are used, but "not always systematically," says Sloutzky.

Anyone who lives in Antwerp or Brussels knows this is still a flawed system because those in shared apartment buildings place their waste in one pile for collection, making it difficult to know whose bag has the red sticker. Since 2007, Antwerp has created communication



© Fost Plus

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Freddy Thielemans

The citizens of Brussels-City will in all likelihood have a new mayor before the end of the year, according to what seems to be an orchestrated series of leaks from the corridors of power in the capital, announcing that Freddy Thielemans, now in his 13th year in the job, will step down in the next few months. Thielemans' departure is not a surprise – it was known before the municipal elections of last October that he would not serve out the whole six-year mandate. The timing is slightly surprising, on the other hand, coming as it does less than a year after the elections. His designated successor is fellow French-speaking socialist Yvan Mayeur, chairman of the municipal social aid agency OCMW as well as Samusocial, which looks after the homeless in the city. Thielemans was born in 1944 in Laken. He studied commercial science in Brussels and later taught Germanic languages in various schools in the city. His perfect and accent-free command of Dutch is one of the advantages he has over other French-speaking politicians, in particular his predecessor, the aristocratic liberal François-Xavier de

Donnea. The other is that Thielemans, like his namesake Toots (no relation) is a true Brussels *ketje* – the slang word originally meaning a street urchin, which now signifies anyone born and bred in Brussels. For all his rugby-player looks – an almost fanatical Anglophile, he actually learned to play rugby with the Brussels Barbarians, and represented Belgium in Rugby Union – he's also something of an aesthete. Earlier in his career, he was alderman in charge of what is now known as Bozar, and he's a fan of classical music. He's also a known epicurean, often to be found in one of the numerous fine restaurants dotted around City Hall. The ability to hold his own in even the most rarified conversation in any of several languages, while at the same time portraying himself as a man of the people is perhaps the essence of what being a mayor is all about. Even his political opponents have to admit that Thielemans is a formidable and very effective political operator. When he hangs up his mayoral shawl, be it sooner or later, he may not be lamented, but he will be missed.

News in brief

Patients in general hospitals are being **strapped to their beds** without the order or knowledge of physicians, according to the Flemish government's health-care inspection office. Inspectors visited hospitals between 2010 and 2012 and found patients were at increased risk of injury as a result of being strapped to their beds in breach of existing rules.

David Yansenne, chief of the police zone Brussels North, which includes Schaarbeek, Sint-Joost and Evere, has **died after being injured in a sailing accident** off the coast of Dunkirk in northern France. Yansenne, 53, had been in a coma since the accident two weeks ago in which he sustained a serious head injury. He was transferred to a hospital in Brussels and died without regaining consciousness days later.

The province of Flemish Brabant, home to many an expat in the municipalities surrounding Brussels, has launched a new campaign to **encourage foreigners to take Dutch lessons**. The slogan "Nederlands leren – a piece of cake" will be printed on 75,000 paper bags and 25,000 plastic bags distributed by bakers, grocers and night shops in the Halle-Vilvoorde area, while flyers will be posted in mailboxes in Bertem, Tervuren, Kortenberg and Huldenberg. Courses are organised by Huis Van het Nederlands.

► www.huisvlaamsbrabant.be

According to new figures released by the Foundation Against Cancer, **58% of smokers in Belgium** want to stop. That is an increase of 7% on last year's figures. A majority of them would like the help of a medical professional. The helpline Tabakstop, meanwhile, reported a 40% increase in phone calls in the first half of 2013 compared to the same period in 2012.

The city council of Brussels has **doubled its fines for public urination** and fly-tipping of rubbish. Urination in public now comes with a fine of €100, and fly-tipping of €250 for every cubic metre. Another change in the municipal code: homeowners will no longer have to pay themselves to have graffiti removed from the façade of their home.

Member of the Flemish parliament Sonja Claes (CD&V) has proposed a new system that would require nursing homes to **accept the partners of new residents**, even if the partner does not need the facility. "If one partner requires care, it usually means the couple has to be split up," Claes said. "I want to give homes the possibility of reserving some places for partners who may not need care." The accommodation could, however, reach as high as €50 per day. Nursing homes complain that they already experience a shortage of space.

Anti-mosquito preparations will no longer be allowed on board aircraft departing from Brussels airport, spokesman Jan Van der Cruysse said. Most mosquito repellents contain diethyl-meta-toluamide, known as DEET, which is considered a danger to cabin crew and other passengers. Passengers trying to carry on insect preparations in hand luggage risk having it confiscated at security checks.

The so-called bottleneck – the portion of road and tramway between Louizaplein and Stefaniaplein in Brussels – will see increased police parking patrols from 2 September, with the introduction of a **new ban on goods vehicles** loading and unloading on the pavements. Loading and unloading is now only possible on the roadway between 10.00 and 14.00. Parking in loading

zones is forbidden 24 hours a day. The ban comes after an agreement between the Brussels-Capital Region and the three municipalities concerned: Brussels City, Elsene and Sint-Gillis. In the lead-up to the change, the pavements in the area will be cleaned and planters and new rubbish bins installed.

Nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt will plant **1,455 square metres of new woodland** as a result of a collection of used batteries by music fans attending the Absolutely Free Festival in the C-Mine complex in Genk earlier this month. The money for the project was donated by recycler Bebat after the 8,000 festival-goers handed in 1,030 kilograms of old batteries.

A Flemish researcher working at the university medical centre in Leiden, the Netherlands, has been **accused of academic fraud**. The researcher, a rheumatologist who has not been identified, is accused of falsifying research results over a period of three years. She was immediately dismissed, one published paper has been withdrawn and her university web page was taken down. Her status as a guest lecturer at the University of Antwerp, from where she graduated, is being considered this week.

The two **red pandas born in Planckendael** animal park in June showed their faces to the public for the first time last week. The red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) is about the size of a domestic cat, reddish in colour with a long bushy tail and short legs. Like the giant panda, it chiefly lives off bamboo, though it will also eat eggs, insects and even small mammals. The species, native to the forests of the Himalayas, is considered vulnerable as a result of loss of habitat, with only about 10,000 in the wild.

FLANDERS TODAY

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OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

You can be serious

The parents of the children would themselves have been children, probably, the last time John McEnroe won a Grand Slam title, but they were in no doubt there was something special going on last week in Ghent when the tennis legend with the mercurial temper dropped in on the opening of the Jeronimo children's home. McEnroe happened to be in Flanders for the Optima Open in Knokke, a tennis tournament for "living legends" also featuring Boris Becker and Yannick Noah. McEnroe is undoubtedly the most legendary figure taking part, both because of his performances on the court between the points and because of his career since retiring from competition. McEnroe, one of the most intemperate of players in his prime, has gone on to become one of the most respected commentators in sport.



The takings from the Optima Open will benefit the Jeronimo house, which offers weekend and vacation places to children from difficult family situations. "Jeronimo is a safe nest for children between 2.5 and 18 years, who are missing homeliness and safety in their own homes," explained the project's ambassador, former top

Flemish basketball player Tomas Van der Spiegel. "In the weekends and during the holidays, they'll be taken in and supported on the road to adulthood." "I'm happy to have been here to meet the kids and to give them a good day," McEnroe said. "It's great to see these kids get the chance for a better future."

Sorting it out

In the future, more plastics should become recyclable

► continued from page 1

campaigns with Fost Plus to help inform the public, but so far these efforts haven't been effective.

One solution for urban dwellers may be a pilot project by Fost Plus to place 1,000-litre PMD containers in neighbourhoods that make it easier to see which items are allowed. The openings to deposit the recycling will be in the shape of the recycled item, such as a thin slot for paper and a small, round opening for bottles. There are also easy-to-understand labels that clearly demonstrate what is and isn't allowed in the containers, similar to the glass bottle banks.

"We've tested it in a few municipalities, including the Brussels area, and so far it's been successful," says Sloutzky. This container project has a residue level of 12-15%, which is much better than the blue bag results in Brussels. Sloutzky says there are plans to bring these containers to Antwerp in the coming months. Another recent addition is 600 bins to sort waste and recycling in the airport at Zaventem.

While containers are one way of tackling the issue, another is a standardised label on PMD packages, which will note the shapes that are and aren't recyclable, says Jeroen Gillabel, policy advisor on sustainable materials management for Flemish environmental organisation Bond Beter Leefmilieu.

According to Gillabel, the Dutch grocery store Albert Heijn, which has branches across Flanders, uses sorting labels for its products, but it's sometimes incorrect, so the better option is if Fost Plus creates one system. "A simple yes or no, a 'this type of bottle isn't allowed in the blue bags', would make it much easier," he says.

Flemish laws are moving towards more recycling. Since 1 July, businesses in the region have been



Some "residue" plastics are accepted at Flanders' Containerparks, though most residents find them even less user-friendly than the PMD bags



What goes in your PMD bag is all recycled locally, not shipped to Asia to rot in a mountain of plastic waste

required to sort PMD, and Brussels-based businesses will be required to do the same from next year.

Fost Plus, Bebat (which recycles batteries and torches) and Recupel (the electronics waste collector) are

working on a joint mobile phone app that will tell residents where to take specific forms of recycling.

And when people move to Brussels, they receive a packet with recycling instructions when picking up their identification cards. Sloutzky says Fost Plus is considering ways to offer sorting advice in Dutch classes for new immigrants.

Currently, Fost Plus recycles 40% of all Belgian plastic packaging. Because there are multiple forms of plastic that cannot be put in the blue PMD bags, this is the key type of waste that causes confusion.

PET (polyethylene terephthalate), which is commonly used for transparent bottles containing water and soft drinks, and HDPE (high-density polyethylene), used in non-transparent milk, shampoo and detergent bottles, are the two kinds of plastic Fost Plus currently recycles. Yoghurt and butter containers, as well as meat and vegetable packaging, aren't recycled and are the most common items thrown in the blue bag by mistake.

Costs too high

Fost Plus looked into increasing the plastic it recycles, but concluded that the costs were too high compared with the environmental benefits. "That could change in the future," says Sloutzky. "A big problem is it's difficult to find industries that can use the materials from other forms of plastic."

Under current federal law, Fost Plus only has to recycle 30% of plastic waste, says Gillabel. If the government increased this amount, he believes Fost Plus would have to find ways to adjust their policies.

"It's technically possible to recycle butter and yoghurt containers," says Gillabel. "In the past, they had to invest money in other plastic recycling, and now it's economically viable; so it was exactly the same as where the restricted plastics are now."

Fost Plus notes that many municipal container parks, where residents can go to recycle large or toxic items such as electronics and building materials, take plastic bags and other plastics that it doesn't. But its studies show that most people don't make the effort to recycle in this way, particularly as there is a limit to how often you can enter a container park per year. Sloutzky also admits that container parks sometimes ship their materials to Asia, which means there's no way of knowing whether the recycling is done in a way that doesn't harm human health – or done at all. In Belgium, residue plastics are used to replace fossil fuels in power plants and other industries.

This year, the EU released the Green Paper on plastic waste, which is creating a discussion about what solutions should be considered at a European level.

► www.fostplus.be

RECYCLING BASICS

If your recycling Dutch is rusty, here are the main points mapped out on the leaflets handed out to residents in Flanders. The leaflet also includes the day on which different kinds of waste are picked up. They are not all picked up on the same day.

PMD: These are the blue bags found across Flanders. You buy them at grocery stores and fill them with three main kinds of recycling:

- plastic bottles
- milk and other drink cartons
- aluminium and tin cans

Aluminium and tin includes all soda cans and tin cans – like what your chopped tomatoes and tuna come in – plus pressured and spray cans, like whipped cream and deodorant. You can also throw in aluminium pie plates and metal lids from glass jars and bottles. But DON'T put in aluminium foil.

As mentioned, plastics are the big problem in Flanders. Stick to this rule, and you'll generally be OK: put in plastics with a recyclable symbol where the top is smaller than the bottom. So

yogurt and margarine containers are out, but water, milk, yogurt *drinks*, detergent and shampoo bottles are in. Their lids are also OK, but take them off and throw them in separately. **Hint:** If you crush the bottles, you can fit more in the bag. You are paying for the bags, after all.

Paper and cardboard: Most paper, including newspaper, mail, magazines, books and cardboard boxes (broken down). Make sure it's all in a cardboard box that you can close up.

Glass: Only bottles and jars, and it's best to separate the clear from the coloured. So no mirrors, broken drinking glasses, light bulbs, ceramics or any other kind of glass. Put it in a plastic tub or bag that you can reuse week after week. DON'T put in plastic or tin lids. (Those go in the PMD bag!)

And here's a bit of good news: You don't have to clean the items out. All recyclables have to be empty, but you don't have to rinse them.

Lisa Bradshaw



Avoid the dreaded red sticker!

Investigation into attack by Brussels police

Allegations of homophobia follow assault on gay men at festival

Alan Hope

All police officers should be required to take the available course that teaches them how to deal with the victims of homophobic assault, according to Regenbooghuis (Rainbow House), an umbrella organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) organisations in Brussels. Rainbow House was commenting following allegations by two gay men that they were attacked by police officers following a concert at last week's Brussels Summer Festival.

According to the two men, they were struck by police in response to a comment one of them made. When one of the men tried to film the incident using his phone, it was

taken from him and smashed on the ground. The two men were then imprisoned for 10 hours. Police also allegedly made homophobic remarks. The Brussels prosecutor's office is investigating the charges.

"Any form of homophobic violence is unacceptable," said Brussels mayor Freddy Thielemans in a statement. "Brussels wishes to be an open and tolerant city, where everyone is free to follow their nature. ... I feel confident that the justice system will be able to find out what happened, so that we can take the necessary steps."

This is not the first time officers from the Brussels City-Elsene police zone have been accused of homophobic violence, according to Dirk Maes



© Antoine Motte d'Alfise/Wikimedia

of Rainbow Cops, an association representing LGBT officers within the federal police.

In January this year, the Brussels-Capital Region organised the third series of courses for police officers on how to deal with complaints of homophobic violence. The courses have been well-attended but remain voluntary.

"In that way, we are not getting through to the officers who perhaps need the training the most," Rainbow House said in a statement. The latest incident, the group said, "demonstrates once more that there is a problem of latent homophobia ... and it is not the problem of only particular minority cultures."

Ghent residents protest particulates

The facades of Ghent have been festooned in recent days by simple white sheets slowly turning grey, part of a protest organised by the Ghent Environment Front (GMF) against the state of the city's air quality.

Last week it was revealed that Ghent achieved the worst score in all of Flanders for the levels of fine particulates in the air. Particulates are small particles of solid material emitted by combustion, including vehicle fuel, and remain suspended in the air where they are then breathed in. The particles are implicated in all manner of respiratory disorders, including asthma and bronchitis.

The EU has imposed a limit of 50 micrograms per cubic metre of air – a limit that was exceeded in Ghent 35 times since the beginning of the year. "You don't feel fine particulates, or smell them or see them," explained Bregje van Autreve of GMF. "We will be hanging out symbolic white sheets, so that over the course of three or four weeks



they become black, just as our lungs do under the influence of fine particulates. Then we will deliver the sheets to the city council so they can take action."

Those joining in the protest have hung a white sheet from their front window and will leave it until the action ends on 23 September.

► www.gentsmilieufront.be

Publish university results, says Torfs

A proposal by the new rector of the University of Leuven for secondary schools to publish the university performance figures of their former students has been largely rejected by the educational establishment. Rector Rik Torfs was commenting on the poor performance of first-year students in higher education, which he ascribes to inadequate preparation in secondary school. "Not a good idea," said Raymonda Verdyck, managing director of the community education network of schools, the largest in Flanders. The figures alone "say nothing about the quality of the school," she said. "Stressing the difference between good and bad schools is not the right way to do something about low pass figures."

A ranking based on bare figures would be "dishonest," according to Mieke Van Hecke, the director-general of the Secretariat of Catholic Education. Her organisation is also concerned about poor first-year results, she said. "We are in constant discussions with higher education institutions so that the graduation requirements for secondary schools are in tune with the basic competences required in further education."

Olympic hopeful turns to crowd funding

Bart Swings, a world champion bronze medal holder in speed skating and one of Belgium's hopes for a medal at the Winter Olympics in Sochi next year, has turned to the public for help raising the money he needs to keep training. Together with his manager, he has set up a website outlining his requirements and inviting members of the public to contribute.

Donations are accepted from as little as €1.50 via SMS to €2,500, which gives the donor the right to a VIP ticket for the skating world cup next March in the Netherlands, a T-shirt, cycling jersey and a mention in the programme.

"Because of budget constraints, we're constantly having to puzzle out who can go along to what competitions," explained Swings (pictured) in an interview with *De Standaard*. "At the world championships all-around in Norway, I had no physiotherapist, and there wasn't enough money to take on my technical coach full time. At the highest level of the sport, that's just not OK."

Swings hopes to raise up to €400,000 to pay for necessities like clothing, equipment and travel costs.

► www.steunbartswings.be



© Jos De Maessene/Wikimedia

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

85th

place for Ghent University in an international ranking drawn up by Jiao Tong University in Shanghai, the only Belgian university in the top 100

8

average age of a car on the road in Belgium, up from 6.3 years in 1993. New car registrations have dropped more than 9% since 2008

15,000

people have applied for a LEIF card to allow them to register their own end-of-life conditions since the programme was launched six months ago

85.8%

of websites with the .be domain do not meet minimum accessibility standards for the handicapped, according to the Flemish government's emancipation officer

987,235

ticket inspections carried out by Flemish public transport authority De Lijn in the first half of the year, 8% more than the same period last year. The number of fare-dodgers fell during the period by .02%

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Wanted: W/M

Behind the scenes, Flanders' political parties are assembling the lists for the 2014 elections – or "the mother of all elections" as they are sometimes called because voters get to decide on the Flemish, federal and European parliaments all in one go.

Lists are very important. Every party naturally wants to present its strongest candidates. For the candidates, meanwhile, their careers are on the line: the better their place on a list, the higher the chances of getting elected. A lot of lobbying, therefore, is going on at the moment.

For their lists, party presidents have to balance candidates from different regions, with different backgrounds and skills ... and by gender. By law, the first two candidates have to be one male and one female. This law dates back to 1994 and has contributed greatly to having more women in politics.

It does not make the puzzle any easier, though.

Take the nationalist N-VA. Although the party has some strong female candidates within its ranks, such as Liesbeth Homans and Frieda Brepoels, somehow only men are mentioned to head its lists: Jan Peumans, Bart De Wever, Jan Jambon, Ben Weyts, Siegfried Bracke...

In theory, that should not be a problem, as long as the second candidate on the N-VA lists is female. However, parties are apprehensive about having only men on top of all their lists, as they do not want to scare away women voters. Already, N-VA has been reprimanded for its lack of women candidates, as opponents believe this says something about the party's male-oriented outlook. N-VA vice-president Ben Weyts refutes this, pointing out the large number of female MPs they have. Meanwhile, his party is actively looking for women willing to stand for the elections.

It also works the other way around. In Antwerp province, the socialist SPA has too many women: Monica De Coninck, Yasmine Kherbache, Kathleen Van Brempt, Caroline Gennez, Maya Detiège, Güler Turan. With females topping the lists for the Flemish and federal parliaments, legally the second place on the list must go to a man.

The obvious candidate would have been Patrick Janssens, but the former mayor of Antwerp has retired from politics completely after he lost the local elections last year. The ideal male candidate – someone well known and preferably a resident of the Kempen region – has yet to be found.

Party president Bruno Tobback calls this "a luxury problem". Then again, maybe it says something about the female-oriented outlook of his party.

Hop, skip and jump

Flanders' hops industry is under pressure, as global demands change

Alan Hope

Earlier this month, the International Hop Congress took place for the first time in 20 years in Poperinge, West Flanders. The city is at the centre of one of the two regions in Flanders – the other is the corridor between Asse and Aalst – where the hops industry is concentrated.

Hops are the flowers of the plant *Humulus lupulus*, and their use is almost exclusively in the brewing of beer. They have been used for centuries for their flavour, but they are also a natural preservative. The characteristic bitter taste of most beer is a result of the hops, and brewers experiment with different types and quantities to give beers different flavours.

For the congress, the Flemish hops industry, which counts about 30 producers, published a brochure extolling the virtues of their hops and reminded participants about the special logo granted to beers containing at least 50% Belgian hops. The measures are intended to increase the market for local hop growers – because they are experiencing problems.

Out with the old

From a list of 234 available hop varieties, only one is indigenous to Flanders – the bitter hop called Record. The rest come from elsewhere in Europe and around the world, including New Zealand, South Africa, China and the US. Growers in Poperinge have complained that they lose out to competition from low-wage countries like Poland and the Czech Republic, but labour costs are probably not to blame: The Czech Republic has 11 varieties of hops, including Saaz, one of four classic varieties known as “noble”. Poland has nine varieties of local origin.



Adding hops to the brew at the Westmalle brewery in Antwerp province

The industry in Flanders has transitioned in the last couple of decades from their indigenous, bitter hops to the more popular varieties that dominate the global market. Those varieties originate, though, in other regions and were imported here for planting. “There’s no reason why hop varieties can’t be transplanted here from its place of origin,” says beer connoisseur Pierre Zuber, who owns the Delices & Caprices beer-tasting shop in central Brussels.

“It’s exactly like in wine-making,” he continues. “In principle, it’s possible to transplant whatever variety

into whatever *terroir*, but there’s a difference between being able to do it and producing an interesting result. The devil is in the detail. Clearly some *terroirs* are going to be more or less propitious for particular varieties.”

The question of *terroir*, which refers to the characteristics imparted to a crop by the particular place it is grown, is one that bothers some brewers. One of them is Yvan De Baets, co-founder of Brasserie de la Senne in Brussels, brewer of several beers, including the famed Zinnebir. “We don’t use Belgian hops for one reason only: They grow varieties

from other countries,” he says. “They don’t have local varieties like they used to. If they were to go back to the old local varieties, we would make a beer with them, for sure. We know that Belgian hops are of good quality because we used them in the past. But now we’ve decided to use hops from the country of origin, from their original *terroir*.”

An even bigger problem for Flanders’ hop industry recently is the trend, emanating mainly from the United States, towards a more florid hop style in beers. Taking a lead from the popular IPA (India Pale Ale, brewed in England in the 19th century and

strongly hopped for the long journey to India), craft brewers began adding more hops to their beers and using varieties with more pronounced floral and fruity flavours. European brewers followed suit, including the Flemings.

Last year Duvel launched a limited-edition triple hop beer featuring a “guest hop” – last year Citra from the US, this year the Japanese hop Sorachi Ace. Both offer big, bold – some would say exaggerated – flavours, light-years away from the subtle, balanced and complex flavour profiles of classic Belgian beers, including Duvel. But perfectly in line with modern trends.

“Traditionally, Poperinge’s hop growers have always focused on bitter hops,” explains professor Denis De Keukeleire of Ghent University, a guest at the hop congress. “This changed in recent years, due to the changing interest of brewers in the aroma and flavour of hops. In 2012, Poperinge’s aroma hops accounted for 45% of the crop, while in 2007, 75% of the hops produced in Poperinge were still bitter hops. Thanks to this recent development, local hop growers are now capable of meeting all the requirements that brewers set.”

However, the cultivation of the new hops is expensive, as many, particularly US, varieties are the creation of private companies that demand a licensing fee. Also, like De Baets, some brewers may decide, for reasons of authenticity of *terroir*, that it’s as easy to get the hops they want direct from the source, rather than from Poperinge.

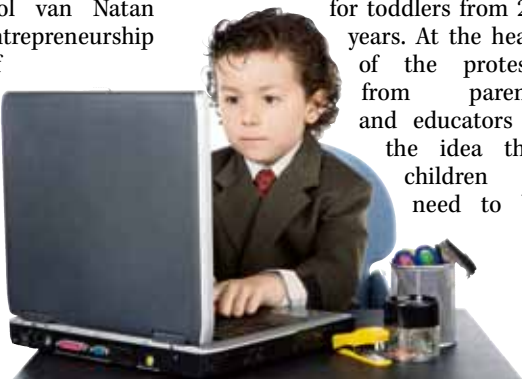
So until the pendulum swings the other way, the hops industry in Flanders is facing troubling times. Though there is hope on the horizon: Bitter hops are already making a bit of a comeback in the US.

Enterprising spirit

A new school in Antwerp will focus on the methods of sound entrepreneurship

Alan Hope

Stirring up controversy this week was the announcement of the arrival of a new school in Antwerp. School van Natan promises to keep entrepreneurship at the centre of its teaching philosophy and has received the backing of the fashion house of the same name, as well as top Flemish economists and industrialist Paul Buysse. But School van



Natan is not a new business school. It’s a primary school for children aged six to 12, with a pre-school for toddlers from 2.5 years. At the heart of the protests from parents and educators is the idea that children need to be

allowed to be children, rather than being moulded from the youngest age into little capitalists. We put the issues to School van Natan’s headmaster Jan De Roo.

Is the Natan School an academy for little capitalists?

It’s a question of the attitude we’d like to teach to children from an early age, in the same way a child might learn a language from an early age. It’s absolutely not the case that we’re hoping to turn out little entrepreneurs. But we do want to teach them to have an enterprising spirit from the outset – solving

problems, thinking independently, working with discipline, that sort of thing.

Are you saying there’s not enough of that spirit in other schools?

That is indeed what we’ve found, that that sense of creativity and enterprise is not present to the extent it should be. I’m not saying other schools don’t do their best, and we certainly don’t intend to criticise anyone, but we want to make it one of our strong points.

You have strong ties to the business world. Is it the intention

to have them involved in the running of the school?

Only to the extent that we want to present the children with concrete examples from the world of business and bring them into contact with the actual reality of everyday work. That is certainly one of our aims. It so happens that we have a number of good business contacts, and we surely want to make use of them – why not? But this is not a sort of junior business school. This is a normal primary school for children in Antwerp.

► www.schoolvannatan.be

THE WEEK
IN BUSINESS

Brewing ▶ Leffe

Leuven-based ABInBev, the world's largest beer group, is launching its best-selling Leffe abbey brand on the German market after successful tests over the last eight years. ABInbev is Germany's second-largest beer group with four breweries and a 9.4 market share.

Construction
▶ Cafasso

The Spanish-led Cafasso Consortium has been awarded the contract to build the new €331 million jail in the centre of Brussels to replace obsolete 19th-century buildings in Sint-Gillis and Vorst. The new facility will have room for 1,190 inmates, and the contract includes the design, building, financing and maintenance of the building.

Fashion
▶ Karl Lagerfeld

The iconic German fashion designer is opening a concept store in Antwerp at the end of October. Group Alain Broekaert, based in Ternat, Flemish Brabant, will distribute and represent the brand in Belgium.

Festivals
▶ Pukkelpop

A September court date has been set for 365 Pukkelpop festival-goers from the 2011 edition, which was cancelled on the first day due to a heavy storm that brought down equipment and tents, killing five people. Festival organisers offered food and drinks tokens for future editions in compensation, an offer that was accepted by most ticket holders. The 365 are claiming a refund of €150 each.

Food
▶ Devos Lemmens

The manufacturer of mayonnaise and other sauces, based in Puurs, Antwerp province, is being acquired by the British CVC Capital Partners as part of its acquisition of a range of the Campbell Soup Company's European activities.

Frietjes ▶ Break Time Solutions

The Brussels-based company has installed the country's only vending machine for fries at the entrance to the Delhaize supermarket on the Gentsesteenweg in the Brussels district of Molenbeek. For €2.50, consumers get 135 grams of fries and one of three sauces of their choice. The fries are deep fried directly in the machine in about 90 seconds. Previous attempts at such a machine in the 1980s failed due to problems with maintenance.

Restaurant and bar owners unable to sell

Oversupply means deep discounts for potential buyers

Alan Hope

Owners of bars and restaurants in Flanders are finding it more difficult to find buyers or tenants, according to industry association Horeca Vlaanderen. Sellers are facing long wait times and are often unable to obtain their asking price.

"The supply is greater than the demand," commented spokesperson Gerrit Budts, as a result of the economic climate and uncertainty over the future of the sector. Owners specifically blame two circumstances that have affected their industry of late: the

smoking ban, now more than two years old, and the introduction of the smart cash register, designed to combat undocumented workers, still rife in the industry.

"A lot of owners simply don't want to have to go through these changes," Budts said. "They look to sell their business, but potential investors can afford to keep them waiting."

At the same time, he said, rental prices remain high and continue to rise, while takings are stagnant or falling. According to the brewing industry – many brewers own a



portfolio of pubs that are run by managers – more and more people are opting to drink at home, while supermarkets encourage the trend by deep discounts on crates of beer.

Of the 7,051 bankruptcies declared across the country in the first seven months of the year, the food and drinks service industry accounted for 1,261, the largest single victim. "A final source of discontent is the banks, which are very reluctant these days to give or extend credit," Budts said. "All of those factors combine to create an imbalance."

Eternit offers charity by popular vote

Eternit, the manufacturer of roofing and building materials based in Kapelle-op-den-Bos, Flemish Brabant, has thrown its corporate giving policy open to the public. The new [evoto.be](http://www.evoto.be) allows members of the public to vote on which of its three chosen charities should receive contributions.

Eternit's philanthropic priority is "sustainable development of woodlands and green spaces, welfare and the life of society". Consequently, the first three candidates for funding are Bos+, Cliniclowns and Spullenhulp.

Bos+ is an independent environmental organisation concerned with the maintenance and expansion of woodlands in Flanders. Spullenhulp is a social economy charity based in Brussels that takes in donated articles and sells them in shops across the capital staffed by the long-term unemployed. Cliniclowns, based in Mortsels, near Antwerp, sends

its clowns to hospitals across Flanders to help raise the spirits of children and others undergoing long-term care.

There is no winner or loser; each charity receives €5,000, and if the charity gets 5,000 votes, it gets another €5,000. If it gets 10,000 votes, it gets €10,000 more, for a possible total of €20,000.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, Bos+ had received nearly 8,200 votes, followed by Cliniclowns at just over 6,850 and Spullenhulp at 5,540.

▶ www.evoto.be



Brussels architect heads Hurricane Sandy team

An international team led by Brussels-based architect Alexander D'Hooghe has been shortlisted to carry out new projects to improve storm preparedness along the north-eastern coast of the United States, the US government announced. D'Hooghe leads a team of experts from the renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Dutch Delta Collective from the Netherlands.

They are taking part in a competition to provide project proposals that would help communities better resist storms like Hurricane Sandy, which hit the area in October last year,

causing more than 200 deaths and wreaking €50 billion of havoc. The US government has approved funding for the Rebuild by Design programme, which will carry out reconstruction work incorporating the ideas of the winning teams.

D'Hooghe is a founding partner of the Organisation for Permanent Modernity, an architects' bureau in Molenbeek. Their work includes a proposal to construct a series of artificial islands off the Flemish coast, as well as the renovation of the slaughterhouse in Anderlecht. D'Hooghe is also director of the Center for Advanced Urbanism at MIT, which also has an office in Brussels.

Outcry over diamond fraud settlement

A decision by the Antwerp prosecutor's office to reach a settlement in what has been described as the biggest diamond fraud case in Belgium's history has provoked criticism from a leading economist and from the man who blew the whistle in the case.

The charges against Omega Diamonds allege that the company cheated the tax authorities of up to €2 billion by using falsified documents to cover up the buying and selling of diamonds, some of which may have come from war zones where trade in the stones – known as blood diamonds – is banned.

Last week the prosecutor's office announced it had made a deal with the company on the payment of back taxes plus a fine of €160 million. In return, the case will be dropped, and the executives involved will face no further legal action.

Jos Vander Velpen, the lawyer

of a man who worked for the company and whose own lawsuit against Omega was connected to the prosecutor's case – a routine occurrence in Belgian criminal cases – said he will not allow the matter to rest with a settlement. Since the action against Omega is now dropped, his client is now faced with a solitary suit against his former employers.

Vander Velpen pointed out that the charges were not only tax evasion but also criminal conspiracy, which he argues takes it out of the sphere of a law allowing tax evaders to "buy off" any prosecution against them. The deal was also criticised by economist Geert Noels, for the way it was hammered out behind closed doors. "The details of the agreement ought to have been made public so that at least the appearance of two-track justice would be removed," he commented. "Then everyone would be able to judge."

Doel reactor closed then re-opened

Reactor number four at the Doel nuclear power generation plant in East Flanders was last week restarted without incident, after it had unexpectedly shut down a day earlier. According to GDF Suez, which owns the plant, an error occurred in a high-voltage station on the site, which automatically triggered the safety procedure.

According to Suez, the shut-down had no impact on electricity supply: Doel 4 provides just over 1,000 megawatts (MW) of power, of the country's total nuclear generation of 6,000 MW.

Meanwhile, a leak at the research reactor BR2 at the study centre for nuclear energy in Mol, Antwerp province, last week has been repaired without any discharge of

radioactive material. At no time was there a danger to public safety or the environment, the centre said. The leak occurred in a secondary cooling system, and the reactor was shut down as a precaution. The only effect was the closure by police of a private roadway leading to the centre, onto which the cooling water escaped. A nearby hockey club was also evacuated.



Cooler car under the sun

Student engineers in Leuven will race their solar car in Australia

Linda A Thompson

This past year, the lives of 17 engineering students from a technical college in Leuven have revolved around one thing: designing and building a sun-powered car in time to compete in the World Solar Challenge in Australia this autumn. In October, they will defy the scorching Australian sun, 43 rival teams from around the world and sustainability naysayers to race their car 3,000 kilometres across the outback, using only sunlight as fuel. The World Solar Challenge, in its 12th edition, wants to stimulate research into sustainable vehicles, and the Punch Powertrain Solar Team is the only Belgian entry. “We’re in it to win,” said student Xu SuiHong. “That’s our aim for this race.” Last week, the students from Group T unveiled their car, the Indupol One, at the Autoworld museum in Brussels. Under a clear sky, the sleek blue and white vehicle slowly cruised out of an inconspicuous-looking black van. With its knee-high, flat surface, six square metres of solar cells covering the deck and Formula One-style cockpit, it looks like a misplaced *Star Wars* prop.

“Hot in there”

After a couple of rounds in front of the stately Jubelpark arch and a handful of curious museum visitors, the car came to a standstill. Seconds later, the hood whizzed open and an exhausted but relieved-looking Aurélie Smeekens climbed out of the tiny cockpit. Indupol One does not have air-conditioning or windows. Smeekens is one of the three team members who will drive the car in Australia. Explaining why her fellow team members weren’t clamouring to take the wheel, Smeekens, the only female student on the project,



Interested onlookers join the press and Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits (left in dark top) to get a look at the Indupol One solar car

laughed: “It gets really hot in there.” As the students crowded around the solar car to pose for pictures like beaming parents, it was tough to tell that they had pulled close to an all-nighter. In true student fashion, members of the marketing team were sorting out concerns until the very last minute – booking plane tickets to Australia and making wireless internet arrangements. “There are always these unexpected glitches,” said Ilias Viaene, noting that he had learned things he never would have in a conventional classroom. “I used to not be very good at organising things,” he smiled. “This has been such a lesson.” This is the fifth time the Leuven engineering college Group T is competing in the world Solar

Challenge, and it’s one of the most high-profile projects on campus. Ranging in ages from 22 to 24, the team members were chosen from a pool of 48 applicants last summer and divided into a technical and marketing department overseen by team manager Mattijs Plettinx. Using innovative aerodynamic, electronic, solar cell and battery technologies, the student engineers worked with materials from Michelin, JIB Design and Melotte to create the solar car. That kind of privileged access was what made the biggest impression on Xu over the past months. “To get in touch with such top technologies as a student was really amazing,” he says. Under the tutelage of celebrity supporters like TV journalist Phara de Aguirre, former astronaut Frank De Winne

and race car driver Vanina Ickx, the team also received pointers on everything from on-camera presence to circuit driving. It’s hard to grasp that 17 fresh-faced, bright-eyed students were really the ones running the show to build the 4.5 metre, 170 kilogram vehicle from start to finish. But the past year was really taxing, said Viaene, who was in charge of PR and logistics. They initially worked office hours, he said, but they had to pull out all the stop as last week’s premiere date edged closer, working into the evening, on weekends and through the summer holiday. “You wake up thinking about the Solar Team, and you go to sleep thinking about the Solar Team,” said Viaene. “My girlfriend often says to me: ‘I don’t want to hear anything more about it.’” Still, the work is hardly over. Starting on 6 October from Darwin in northern Australia, Smeekens will alternate four-hour shifts with two other students to reach Adelaide in the very south, and this for five days straight. The car will be set on cruise control, and a vehicle will trail it at all times. Monitoring the remaining route, the weather conditions and the energy and speed data transmitted by the solar car, the strategy manager inside the vehicle will determine the optimal driving speed. At night, the full team will camp by the road to resume the race the next day. After the race, most of the engineering students plan to stick around to do some travelling Down Under. But then, once back in Flanders, a brutal reality awaits. Team members have to make up all the courses they did not take this year. “And we’ll also have to write our Master’s theses, unfortunately,” Viaene laughed.

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

A full 75% of Flemish young people **suffer from temporary tinnitus**, or ringing in the ears, and one out of five has permanent tinnitus. That is the conclusion of a survey by a student at Antwerp University, who questioned nearly 4,000 concert-goers between 14 and 18 years of age. Only 5% wear ear plugs when they go to concerts or music festivals, and the remaining 95% say they are not concerned about getting permanent tinnitus. Researchers are asking for a campaign directed at youngsters that emphasises the immediate consequences of tinnitus.

The blood vessels in our **eyes constrict considerably because of air pollution**, according to research by Hasselt University and the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (Vito). It is the first time that scientists have proven these effects on young and healthy adults. The constriction, or shrinkage, was three times more extreme than was expected. Constriction of blood vessels increases the risk of high blood pressure, cerebral infarction and cardiovascular diseases, particularly in older people.

Researcher Chris Callewaert of Ghent University is working on a way to **eliminate strong body odour** permanently. Although hygiene plays a part, the odour of armpits is mainly determined by the type of bacteria living there. A strong odour is caused by corynebacteria, while staphylococcus bacteria can neutralise the smell. Simply applying the neutralising bacteria has already resulted in significant improvements, both temporary and permanent.

From 1 September, an academic Bachelor’s degree coupled with teacher training education will suffice to **become a secondary school teacher** in Flanders. Until now, teachers were required to have an academic Master’s diploma. Teachers with an academic Bachelor’s can now give lessons in the first and second years of general humanities (ASO), technical (TSO) and artistic studies (KSO). In professional education (BSO), they can also teach students in the third year. The measure is a step towards addressing the shortage of teachers in the region.

A secondary school student in the last year of general humanities studies (ASO) **costs parents on average €1,278**, according to the Gezinsbond. That is about €900 more than a student in the first year of primary education (€397). The amount can increase significantly if a youngster needs speech, physical or psychological therapy. Gezinsbond would like schools to offer these extra therapy services at no cost to parents.

Q&A

Greenpeace researcher Jan Cappel discovered a rare sub-species of chimpanzee in a Cameroon rainforest threatened by plans for a palm oil plantation

Why did you recently spend three weeks in the southwest of Cameroon?

Greenpeace supports the research of the Dschang University, which is studying the biodiversity in an area of 73,000 hectares that could be converted into a palm oil plantation by the American agro-industrial company Herakles Farms. The company claims that the territory has no distinct ecological value because it mainly consists of degraded forests and farmland.

But you refute this claim?

Our research shows that the largely intact forests provide crucial habitats for endangered animals. As we experienced, it is difficult for people to travel through

this densely forested and hilly territory. Chimpanzees and other primates, however, thrive under the local conditions. We found about 20 nests made by a species of chimpanzee that only lives in this region. This part of the rainforest is also home to other endangered species such as the baboon-like drills, forest elephants and fish species, which only live there.

What does the project mean for the inhabitants of the area?

The forest provides a home and livelihood for about 20,000 people in the area. The people still live off the trees and herbs in addition to farming and hunting. Their way of life is threatened if Herakles Farms continues its development. Furthermore, the residents have

not had adequate consultation over the fate of their land. Herakles Farms has just negotiated with a few of the local chiefs, without involving the whole population.

On its website, Herakles Farms states its commitment to economic and environmental sustainability.

But there have been earlier reports on illegal logging and corruption. The company is also not a member of the international Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). Still, because of the economic advantages, the government of Cameroon is inclined to let the company have its way. We hope our study convinces the government to reconsider. On a larger scale, we are concerned about the increasing



interest by agro-industrial companies in African land. It should be possible to increase productivity on current plantations instead of developing more land.
interview by Andy Furniere



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On the wheel of the Cannibal

Explore the exploits of legendary cyclist Eddy Merckx in a museum or by bike

Andy Furniere

It has already been a festive cycling season, with centenaries of both the Tour of Flanders and the Tour de France. The celebrations continue at the Sportimonium museum in Zemst, Flemish Brabant, which has organised a cycling tour around its new exhibition. The figurehead of the programme is *Brusselaar* Eddy Merckx, globally considered the greatest cyclist of all time.

The Sportimonium, located in at the Hofstade recreation park, holds an enormous collection on Flemish sports patrimony. As Flemings are a dominant presence in the history of cycling, the sport is well represented with jerseys, trophies, bicycles and more. On a new interactive tour, you can explore the highlights of cycling history and the legendary career of Eddy Merckx via a tablet computer.

On your digital trip around the museum, you are confronted with figures that illustrate Merckx's impressive performances. He won 525 races, an achievement that earned him the nickname "the Cannibal". The voice of sports journalist Mark Vanlombeek gives you extensive background information, on, for instance, increased prize purses and the natural stimulants that preceded the use of doping.

Cycle songs

At each installation, you solve a quiz question and play a short game. The programme also includes a jukebox with songs about cycling heroes and a digital archive of quotes, articles, photos and short movies. Particularly fun is a commercial in which Merckx and his wife promote a brand of washing powder.

After you have learned about the triumphs of Merckx and the evolution of cycling, you can admire sculptures of sportsmen by Flemish artist Louis Van Cutsem. This small exhibition runs until 29 August. From 13 September, you'll



Read anecdotes about Merckx and other local cycling greats on specially designated tours through Flemish Brabant

see an exhibition on sports photography. But the project, called *On the Wheel of Eddy Merckx*, also gives you a direct piece of the action – on a bike. Together with the local tourist organisations, the Sportimonium has outlined three cycling routes; two start right there on the Hofstade grounds.

With a map, you can follow the routes via the system of *knooppunten*, or junctions. On your way, you will find 35 signboards with information and anecdotes about local cycling history and its heroes. If you have a smartphone, scan the QR code to learn more – such as about the difficult relationship between Merckx and Guillaume "Lomme" Driessens, one of Flanders'

most successful and colourful team managers ever.

If you have a group of at least eight riders, you can book a former pro-cyclist or local guide to lead your peloton. Among them is Ludo Peeters, a multiple stage-winner in the Tour de France. Perhaps you will also meet the Cannibal himself, biking for fun this time.

On my exploration of the Green Belt route, I didn't spot the arched back of Merckx, but I did pass his home in the small town of Sint-Brixius-Rode. In the past, his bike factory was located here as well. Another highlight is the cycling track Den Reggel at Elewijt, which is open for curious cyclists. In Nieuwenrode, the

bike shop Emrin has existed since 1908 and is now managed by the family's fourth generation. The signboards tell many an anecdote, but don't forget to enjoy the varied landscape or to stop in one of the towns on your route. I recommend Grimbergen, with its beautiful medieval centre and basilica. On the terrace of brasserie 's Gravenmolen, you can replenish your energy level with a special cyclist meal. Another nice resting spot is the national botanic garden in Meise, set in historical castle grounds.

The Vaartland route, meanwhile, takes you to Mechelen, the Hombeek plateau, the Zennegat and the three-river point. The banks of the river Rupel then lead you to the town of Klein-Willebroek. On the Rupel area route, you ride to the Antwerp Cycling Centre in Wilrijk along the rivers Rupel and Scheldt, where you will come across a history in brick-making.

Both the Vaartland and Rupel routes pass the restaurant Casa Grinta of chef Paul Van Bommel, in the centre of Terhagen. Apart from his cooking, Van Bommel can treat you to a tour of his collection of cycling memorabilia. His private museum includes about 500 cycling jerseys, of which more than 300 have been signed, by, among others, Lucien Van Impe, the last Belgian winner of the Tour de France (in 1976).

In the restaurant, you can enjoy lunch or dinner at themed tables decorated with newspaper clippings and cycling photos related to the Tour of Flanders and Eddy Merckx. Two cycling heroes from the region, Yvonne Reynders and Ludo Peeters, are also put in the spotlight. Reynders is a four-times world champion in women's road cycling. If you visit, you will likely find a former or current pro-cyclist at a table near you.

► www.onthewheelofeddymerckx.be

Festival on the edges

The new Gordel Festival reinvents a tradition in the urban belt around Brussels

Alan Hope

The Gordel is no more: welcome to the Gordel Festival. Since 1981, the annual Gordel has brought together residents to take part in walking and cycling tours in *de rand*, or the Flemish municipalities around Brussels. It was imbued with political connotations as it was a celebration of the oft-quoted "Flemish character" of these towns that were more and more home to French and English speakers who work in Brussels.

Occasionally, those who protested the existence of the event would strew the roads with thumb-tacks to puncture tyres and switch around signs to confound walkers.

That is behind us, it is hoped, with the new festival, launched by *de rand* minister Geert Bourgeois and sports minister Philippe Muyters. The slogan of the event is *Bewegen klinkt goed*, or Movement Sounds Good, a nod to

the two main aspects of the festival. "It will be a combination of music and sport, with which we hope to be able to attract a lot of people to the Flemish periphery," says Eddy Frans, director of De Rand, the Flemish agency that organises events to bring together residents living in the periphery. De Rand is organising the festival along with sports agency Bloso and the province of Flemish Brabant.

The changes will be immediately evident. The event kicks off on Friday, 30 August, with a music festival in the provincial park in Huizingen featuring artists who sing wholly or mainly in Dutch, including Senne Guns; Walrus, the band of Yevgueni keyboard player Geert Noppe; Axl Peleman, who goes one better by singing in the Antwerp dialect; and headliners De Nieuwe Snaar, a long-time folk-skiffle-humour combo, in one of their last



appearances.

The event continues the following Sunday, with walking routes through the Zonienwoud east of Brussels and in guest municipality Pepingen, where there's an art walk, mountain bike

parcours and a family cycling route. There are also sporting events galore in Huizingen and the Bloso park in Hofstade and routes for cyclists of between 25km and 55km; hardened cyclists can try their hand at the

115km route, which passes through 17 different municipalities.

There will also be more sedate entertainments, including music and theatre in Kraainem, Huizingen, Sint-Genesius-Rode, Wezembeek-Oppem and Pepingen, and an outside broadcast of the Radio 2 show Muziekcafé in Hofstade.

"The Gordel Festival will build on the strong points of the past, like walking and cycling, but will also venture farther," says Bourgeois. "The Flemish character of the area remains an important aspect, and if we can add to that some excellent musical and tourist discoveries, the success of the new formula will be guaranteed."

Tickets cost €5 and are valid for both days, with reductions for families and associations.

► www.gordelfestival.be

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In safe seclusion

Leave your worries behind in the Orange town of Diest

Andy Furniere

The major attraction of Diest, located at the Demer river in Flemish Brabant, is its *begijnhof*, which forms a medieval mini-village at the edge of town. In the centre, the “Orange” counts of Nassau have also left behind a remarkable heritage, found in the narrow streets, the municipal museum and Sint-Sulpitius church. Don’t leave Diest without trying one of the local beers, lasting legacies of a rich brewing past.

On the evening of 1 September, the *begijnhof* in Diest will be bathed in the light of 4,500 candles placed in the cobblestoned streets. There will also be concerts and free tours of the community, which consists of about 90 houses and convents – community houses with numerous inhabitants. But, I assure you, the *begijnhof* is worth a visit any day of the year.

Stepping inside the imposing entrance gate, it’s easy to imagine the peaceful way of life experienced by the many *begijntjes* who lived here from the 13th to the 18th centuries. *Begijntjes* were members of a sisterhood of religious women, who sought to serve God, but without taking the vows of nuns. In Flanders, 13 *begijnhoven* have been designated as Unesco world heritage. The *begijnhof* in Diest is one of the oldest, established in 1253, and one of the best preserved.

Local products

Inside the small compound of their community, the *begijntjes* must have felt safely secluded from the hustle and bustle of the outside world. It’s no wonder that many artists have moved in here now, to work in private. Most of the ateliers, however, are open in the weekend for the visitors that stroll by. You can get a bite to eat at the Gasthof 1618 and stay the night at the bed and breakfast @Home.

The *begijnhof* also houses the culinary culture centre Xaverius Huis, where chef Felix Alen promotes healthy, creative cooking with regional products.



Diest's marvellous *begijnhof* is candlelit for visitors on the night of 1 September (above); house belonging to Averbode Abbey (below)



Apart from cooking lessons and demonstrations, the Xaverius Huis also organises workshops in wine tasting and flower arranging. The herb garden is open to visitors in the weekends. On every first Sunday of the month, you can visit the culinary library, museum and shop. On this occasion, the centre also serves its specialties: *Diestse cruydtcoeck* (an

herbed pancake), *begijnenkoek* (a cake-like cookie) and *begijnenbollen* (a sugar candy).

If you want to learn about all the details of life at the *begijnhof*, book a tour by guides dressed up as *begijntjes* or as a *nachtwachter*, who used to light the street lamps when night fell in the Middle Ages. The *nachtwachter* also provides a tour

of the historical centre of the town. Leaving the *begijnhof*, you can walk to the centre through Warande Park, which used to be part of the hunting lodge of the counts from the House of Nassau. They ruled the city from 1499 to 1795, when the Dutch republic fell to French revolutionary forces.

The House of Nassau was also the family of the Princes of Orange, who at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 became the kings and queens of the Netherlands.

At the main entrance gate to the park, on Graanmarkt, you find the former residence of the princes of Orange-Nassau, the Hof van Nassau, which was built in 1510. A few streets on, you can spot the Ezeldijk mill, a water mill from 1553.

At the Sint-Sulpitius church on the Grote Markt, pay your respects at the tomb of Prince Philip William of Orange-Nassau, who died in the town in 1618. At his feet stands a small barrel, but don’t open it - it contains his heart and intestines. A portrait of the same prince hangs next to his suit of armour at the municipal museum De Hofstadt. Here you can learn more about the history of Diest as an “Orange City” through a collection of art, utilitarian objects, silverware and furniture. The museum is located in the atmospheric cellars of the town hall.

The museum’s collection includes the painting of “The Annunciation” by Dutch artist Hendrik ter

Bruggen, which is on the Flemish Community’s list of masterpieces. I was most impressed, though, by the two mysterious *horti conclusi* or “enclosed gardens”, a rare art form that first appeared at the convents and *begijnhoven* in the 16th century. An image of the Virgin Mary usually occupies the centre of the “garden”, which is made up of numerous and varying relics and figures. They were meant to provide protection against calamity.

Apart from *begijntjes*, monks of the abbeys of Tongerlo and Averbode frequently stayed in Diest at their refuges, beautiful buildings located in picturesque parts of town. You can now also find refuge in one of them, which has been renovated into hotel The Lodge.

Diest also has its own saint, Sint-Jan Berchmans. Berchmans was a Jesuit scholar in the 17th century and was proclaimed a saint by the Roman Catholic Church 125 years ago. He is a patron saint for youth. His birth house, called the Gulden Maene, is now a chapel in the town centre.

Know your saints

At the edge of the centre, you can admire a collection of more than 150 figures of saints in the Allerheiligen chapel, a local pilgrimage site. They tell the story of more than 700 years of devotion and popular belief. After mounting the steps next to the chapel, you reach another mini-village that relates a completely different tale: the military history of Diest.

On the top of Allerheiligen Hill, you arrive at the walls of the citadel of Diest, built shortly after the independence of Belgium in 1830. Invasions by the Dutch army had confirmed the strategic location of the town at the Demer river. To protect Brussels from future attacks, Diest became a fortress town, with ramparts Fort Leopold and the large citadel – the only citadel preserved in Flanders.

In 1953, the first battalion of the parachute regiments landed at the citadel, where they were based until just three years ago. You can take a guided tour of the buildings and the Pegasus museum, which relates the history and missions of the Belgian parachutists. Fort Leopold can also be visited with a guide. The ramparts now form a beautiful walking area, just like the citadel forest next to the military compound.

► www.toerismediest.be

QUENCHING YOUR THIRST



Fortunately for visitors to Diest, such as journalists thirsty after a day of exploring, the town also has a rich beer tradition. In the 19th century, brewing was the town’s biggest industry. The inscription on a porter’s house of the former Cerckel brewery is a reminder of this past. On the square in front stands a statue of the Beer Taster, a brewery worker holding a cup in front of his eyes. Currently, there is only one brewery in Diest: Loterbol.

A good place to taste the local beers yourself is ‘t Puur Genot behind the town hall. Owner Marc Tulkens, behind the bar of the authentic café for 17 years now, will gladly pour you a Gildenbier, Loterbol, Drossaard or Sint-Jan beer and tell you much more about his home town.



Spot the saint in the Allerheiligen chapel



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 www.tvbrussel.be

Thursday September 12 at 18.30

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The secret garden

High above the streets of Brussels, permaculture “art farms” flourish and buzz

Jacqueline Fletcher

The OKNO collective connects new media and ecology in the heart of the capital, mapping routes of biodiversity, experimenting with urban gardens and rooting up the amazing ecological history of a very urban environment.

Residents living around Vlaamsesteenweg in the centre of Brussels would probably agree that the ugliest blot on their neighbourhood is the multi-storey car park at No 66. Passers-by and tourists would no doubt concur.

What they don't know is that high on the rooftops above the garage, open to the sky and offering a magnificent view of the city, is a permaculture-inspired edible garden. Olive and fruit trees, berries, vegetables, aromatic herbs and flowers bloom in abundance, along with a remarkably large greenhouse and five natural top-bar beehives, all fed by rainwater harvested from surrounding rooftops.

This “Urban-ArtFarm” is the work of Annemie Maes, one of the artists in the OKNO collective working at the intersection of art, technology and ecology. Just over the canal on Koolmijnkaai, on a rooftop outside OKNO's workshop space, lies a smaller garden – the prototype – with two more beehives.

Reclaiming space

To step out onto one of these rooftops is to enter into a different relationship with time. A cool breeze, the rustle of leaves caressed by the wind, a blaze of colours and the soothing buzz of insects seem to suggest that we can relax: Nature is doing its work at its own pace, far removed from our hectic schedules.

These gardens were created as part of the OKNO OpenGreens project, which, according to Maes, allows OKNO and its collaborators to sculpture new kinds of public space and interdisciplinary and site-specific art. Also important, she says, “is the recultivating or reclaiming of urban space”.

As she points out, long before car parks were part of humankind's frame of reference, the Vlaamsesteenweg was the location of the medieval Onze Lieve Vrouw ter Rozen, where nuns cultivated orchards and vegetable gardens. Maes has unearthed maps and documentation from the city archives that clearly show the layout of the location that is now around De Markten.

Here, she says, “we have a type of palimpsest of the city; the foundations of the monastery walls below the car park are mirrored in the edible gardens on the rooftops, adding new layers to the living city that meet the needs of its 21st century residents”. OKNO/OpenGreens artists, who receive funding from the government of Flanders, have spent several years documenting the ecological map of Brussels and developing technology that allows them to monitor the spread of wildlife in urban spaces. The bees are fundamental to the research and the underpinning concept: ecological corridors of biodiversity in urban environments.

The green spaces – parks, gardens and abandoned post-industrial fields – are mapped with the help of technology and translated to databases that are made available for the general public online and through open-source software. OKNO works with scientists and ICT specialists to provide support for bottom-up urban ecology initiatives and, in the process, create a “social sculpture” (a term coined by the German artist Joseph Beuys) through the activities of participating citizens maintaining these green corridors.

OKNO offers workshops and walks in which the public can discover urban wildlife, edible wild plants and take part in monitoring sites and the technologies.

As I talk to Maes, she's busy using beeswax to cover sensors that monitor heat, humidity and levels of carbon dioxide in the hive, as well as the sonic vibrations measuring the bees' activities. Among the beeswax she finds a tiny detached bee head with its tongue clearly visible. Never having seen a bee's tongue before, I was fascinated by her

explanation of how the insect sucks nectar from flowers.

She continues to wax lyrical about her journey of discovery through the natural world since she embarked on the OpenGreens project: the patterns found in nature, such as the honeycomb's hexagon, or the relationship between phyllotaxis, patterns of leaf growth, and the mathematical Fibonacci Sequence.

Maes has taken courses in permaculture and ethno-botany and studies microbes under a strong electro-microscope to determine the health of the soil. “The foraging habits of honey bees are a crucial aspect of mapping the urban OpenGreen Corridors,” she explains. Attempts to chart their flight routes are increasingly facilitating the further development of the green zone in a six-kilometre radius of the hive.

OKNO organises bee-friendly botanical walks for the public around the city's parks, gardens and tree-lined avenues as well as abandoned spaces where wild flowers and herbs facilitate nectar and pollen foraging. Bees can also tell us a great deal about pollution levels and the general health of the environment.

Maes explains that the Urban-ArtFarm is a place where artists and gardeners can research the pros and cons of urban agriculture and explore sustainable ways of living in the city. The OpenGreens database and wiki archives contain a wealth of information and advice on starting an urban permaculture project. It has links to articles and websites on such topics as monitoring soil and atmosphere and harvesting water, plus open source software that can be used with a 3D printer to create a DIY beehive and more.

OKNO is hosting a two-day Permaculture Initiation Workshop on 11-12 September

► www.okno.be

► <http://opengreens.okno.be>

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

American singer, composer and pianist Randy Newman, the biggest name on the bill at Jazz Middelheim, had to **cancel his appearance at the Antwerp festival** last weekend after coming down with a lung infection. The festival was able to replace the 69-year-old Newman at the last minute with local band Hooverphonic, who played with an accompanying orchestra. Tickets were not refunded.

Both Antwerp's Sportpaleis and Lotto Arena have once again made **Billboard's top-10 list** of the highest-grossing concert venues in the world. Sportpaleis is number nine on the list for revenues (\$32,403,768) and number four on the list for attendance for venues holding 15,000 or more. Lotto Arena came in eighth in terms of revenue (\$6,793,932) and seventh in terms of audience numbers for venues with a capacity of 5,000-10,000. Outside of England, they were the only venues in Europe to make the lists.

Flemish director **Caroline Strubbe's new film** *I'm the Same, I'm an Other*, a follow-up to her 2009 film *Lost Persons Area*, has been selected to screen at the Toronto International Film Festival, which takes place from 5-15 September. It will be the world premiere for the film, which continues the story of a special relationship between a Hungarian immigrant and a young Flemish girl.

Book sales in Flanders in the first half of the year are up 3.1% compared to the same period last year, according to figures from the Flemish agency boek.be. Literature and comics made an especially strong showing, both increasing in sales by 14%. Total sales came in around €89 million. The top-selling book of the year was Dan Brown's *Inferno*, followed by De Kiekeboes strip album *135 Code E* and Suske en Wiske strip album *Amoras I*. The figures do not include e-books.

► www.boek.be

Lisa Verbelen, Judith de Jode, Benjamin Moen and Sanne Vanderbruggen won the **TAZ-KBC Youth Theater Prize** for their production *BOG* at the Theater aan Zee festival in Ostend, which wrapped up earlier this month. *BOG* is a mediation on life, from the first moment to the last; the set was built from the former belongings of a deceased neighbour of Moen. The production is “a humanist performance with a rich look at what life is and at what binds us together,” said the jury. The summer festival saw an increase in ticket sales over last year, with 80% of available tickets being sold.



Just a fraction of the OKNO garden atop the Lepage car park on Brussels' Vlaamsesteenweg

Such sweet sorrow

Klara Festival

Marie Dumont

It's party time for the depressed, the gloomy, the heart-broken: For two weeks, they, and the rest of us, will be encouraged to wallow in spleen courtesy of the Klara Festival, which this year revolves around melancholy. Part of the months-long Festival of Flanders, Klara is a lavish affair and a non-misser for anyone with even a remote interest in classical music. It fills the city with world-class, historically informed concerts, cross-disciplinary performances, intimate lunchtime recitals and edgy live music in night clubs. This year's edition, prettily titled "Go Crystal Tears" after a song by Renaissance English composer John Dowland, is the final stage of a three-year cycle exploring the human condition. After "Utopia" and "Spirituality", artistic director Hendrik Storme has devised a programme centring on this bitter-sweet feeling Victor Hugo called "the joy of being sad". An inspiring theme if ever there was one: from Thomas Tallis to Kaija Saariaho, countless composers down the ages have been transmuting their suffering and anguish into pure musical gold and we

listeners deriving a strange and ineffable pleasure from hearing and sharing their private griefs. Dowland naturally looms large on the programme, and not just because this year marks the 450th anniversary of his birth. A Roman catholic exile who called himself *semper dolens* (ever mourning), he epitomised Elizabethan England's love affair with sadness, penning lute songs filled with pungent conceits and aching harmonies. From Peter Pears to Alfred Deller down to Sting, many interpretations of his songs exist, and Klara plans to add a few to the list, including the unorthodox *Dowland Recomposed* by Liesa Van der Aa (pictured), an Antwerp singer and violinist whose diverse influences range from Bach to The Velvet Underground. Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) also has an anniversary this year, and he too had a knack for gloomy yet irresistible music. Not only that, but his *Lachrymae* is directly inspired by Dowland. It will be performed, along with Dowland's original and pieces by Purcell, Muffat and Hindemith, by Ghent-based baroque



© Nathalie Wuytens

ensemble B'Rock. His sublime *Serenade for tenor, horn and string*, meanwhile, will be sung on another night by British tenor Ian Bostridge. Watch out also for Roger Norrington and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in Beethoven, Chopin and Berlioz; Bach polyphony played on four saxes by the B!ndman ensemble; a new project by Flemish actor Josse De Pauw called *Escorial*, which welds texts by Michel de Ghelderode to music by Orlando di Lasso; Mozart's *Requiem* conducted by Jérémie Rohrer; and an evening of Schubert Lieder sung by a vocal quartet whose performances so moved the public in previous years that it is hard to imagine an edition of the festival without them. Then there's *C(h)oeurs*, a new choreography by Ghent iconoclast extraordinaire Alain Platel that splices together Verdi's *Va pensiero*, Wagner's *Pilger-Chor* and other rousing operatic moments. It sits oddly amid the melancholy, as though Platel had lost his way trying to get into the 2011 edition on utopia. But cheer up, that's nothing to cry about.

30 August to 13 September | Across Brussels | www.klarafestival.be

MUSIC FESTIVAL

Feest in het Park

Summer festival season has nearly run its course, but there's still a bit of (semi-)Dionysian revelry to be had. Feest in het Park, an open-air affair boasting an international line-up of over 50 acts, starts this Thursday. The festival's four nights are respectively headlined by British dubstep collective Magnetic Man, blue-eyed-soul singer Jamie Lidell (pictured), raucous Irish-American punk group Flogging Molly and reggae's favourite son (or *second*-favourite depending on your feeling for Ziggy) Julian Marley. There are plenty of local acts to go around too, of course, including Admiral Freebee, The Van Jets and pop trio Puggy. The old school is ably represented by veteran Flemish bluesman Roland van Campenhout and his sidekick Mauro Pawlowski. **Georgio Valentino**



22-25 August | Tenten Donkvijver, Oudenaarde | www.feestinhethpark.be

MORE MUSIC FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Feeërieën: Ancienne Belgique's annual summer festival of free open-air concerts in a fairy-tale setting under the trees features Ignatz, Jan Swerts, Jessica Pratt, Tikiman with Scion, more
AUG 26-30 19.00 at Warande Park
www.abconcerts.be

Leuven

Colora Festival: Open-air festival sponsored by Oxfam featuring a diverse range of music, including El Juntacadaveres, Skangoeroes, Maguaré, Djuwa Ya Congo, more
AUG 23-25 at De Zevensprong, Vital Decosterstraat 67
www.colora.org

Ostend

Polé Polé Beach: The colourful beach party filled with world music, cocktails and summer vibes celebrates its 15th edition with a new location on the beach at Ostend
AUG 23-25 on Klein Strand
www.polepole.be

OUTDOORS

Opening Rivierpark Maasvallei

Maas, Mouze, Meuse. The river that wends its way through France, Belgium and the Netherlands has many names. At the farthest extremity of Limburg province, the Maas traces the natural frontier between Flanders, on the left bank, and the Netherlands, on the right. Its waters also shape and nourish a divine stretch of nature. The Maas Valley River Park invites you to explore this Garden of Eden during an all-day opening event. Make sure you're well rested because this party starts early. Bicycle tours of the Maaslandse Gordel (Maas Belt) launch from the festival headquarters in the village of Rotem at 7.00. Cyclists will cross the river in several places to explore both the Dutch and Flemish sides. There are similarly cross-border nature hikes and rafting expeditions, arts-and-crafts workshops, open-air concerts and loads of delicious local food and drink. Just for the opening event, the park is also offering river crossings via cable car. A spectacular view, no doubt, but it's not for the nervous. **GV**



25 August, 7.00 | Kempenstraat, Rotem | www.demaasvallei.be

MORE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

Across Flanders

Night of the Bat: European initiative to inform, educate and entertain people about the much-feared nocturnal creature, spread out over more than 45 locations, including guided nature walks for all ages
AUG 23-24 across Flanders
www.nachtvandeveleermuis.be

Middelkerke

Experience the coast: Nature conservation organisation Natuurpunt takes you on a tour of the Warande dune grasslands, with their flowering orchids, rabbits and amphibian pool
AUG 25 10.30-12.30 from the water tower, Logierlaan
www.natuurpunt.be

FESTIVAL

Waregem Koerse Feesten

Every year at the end of August, tens of thousands of visitors convene in Waregem's city centre for a full week of parties, concerts and the main event, the *koers*, or course (or horse racing). This is when the citizens of this quaint West Flemish town can let their hair down – or, more likely, wear it up under an oversized fancy hat. This event has grown since 1847 into one of Flanders' major sporting events. The quintessentially Flemish street fair kicks off on Thursday evening with a launch party on the main market square. We're

talking food (fries and donuts – yum!), drink (beer, of course), games and street performers. Kids have something to look forward to in the form of the cuddly toy toss from the balcony of the old town hall. The day's festivities end with a choir concert, but don't worry, the market fair continues throughout the week. There's also the Palm Parkies concert series at Baron Casier Park and loads of other activities across town every day of the week. **GV**



22-28 August | Gemeenteplein & Gaverbeek Hippodrome, Waregem

► www.waregemkoersefeesten.be

MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Het Theaterfestival 2013: Kaaitheater and Bronks host this annual festival of 15 of the most interesting plays of the previous season to come out of Flanders and the Netherlands, including Josse De Pauw and Kris Defoort in *An Old Monk*, Abattoir Fermé's *A Brief History of Hell* and tg Stan's English-language *Nora*

AUG 29-SEP 7 at Kaaitheater, Kaaistudio's & Bronks

► www.theaterfestival.be

Knokke

Vuurwerkfestival: Free international fireworks festival at the coast featuring displays by teams from Spain, China & Italy

AUG 23, 25 & 27 22.00-22.30 at Strand Duinbergen, Directeur-Generaal Willemspark 1

► www.ckknokke-heist.be

Lovendegem (East Flanders)

Boombalfestival: Folk festival in an idyllic rural setting just outside of Ghent, featuring concerts by singer-songwriters and folk musicians local and international, plus folk dancing, bonfires and more

AUG 22-25 at Boterhoek 8

► www.boombalfestival.be

CLASSICAL

Weg van Klassiek

The third edition of this classical music festival takes you on a road trip through the picturesque Pajottenland and Zenne valley. Performances are spread over three days and several venues – churches, castles, farms and forest. Although these Flemish Brabant towns are just outside the capital, they are light years away from its modern hurly-burly. Indeed, Weg van Klassiek is also a journey back in time, to the Flanders of yestercenury. Day one highlights the region's spiritual sanctuaries Affligem

Abbey and Wambeek Church. Day two remembers its temporal authorities with concerts among the ruins of Liedekerke Castle and the surrounding wood. Closing day is for the commoners who till the soil (and those who make beer from its yield). Essene's Blakmeershoeve and Ankerhof host local farmer-folk concerts, while the town church becomes the site of a rare encounter between popular, jazz and early music. **GV**



23-25 August | Across Flemish Brabant | ► www.wegvanklassiek.be

MORE CLASSICAL MUSIC THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Reading Shakespeare: Flemish actor Jan Declair reads excerpts from Shakespeare as well as from his own plays and poetry in the intimacy of Rubens' painting studio, with musical accompaniment by Kris Verhelst, who performs the English keyboard repertoire from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book

AUG 24, 26 & 27 22.15 at Rubens House, Wapper 9

► www.rubenshuis.be

Brussels

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment: Berlioz specialist Sir Roger Norrington conducts the London orchestra's rendition of *Symphonie fantastique*, plus Beethoven and Chopin

AUG 30 20.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23

► www.bozar.be

Hingene (Antwerp province)

Bornem Festival: An homage to the recently deceased Flemish conductor and world-renowned clarinettist Walter Boeykens, featuring the Walter Boeykens Ensemble and a new work by pianist Lies Colman

AUG 25 20.00 at Ursel Castle, Wolfgang d'Urselstraat 9

► www.terdilt.be

DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

Four Years of Kissinger

Old Renault dealership, Antwerp

When you drop the name "Kissinger" in Antwerp, nobody thinks of the American diplomat. Instead, they will immediately assume that legendary party planner Gregorio "Gory" Willems is up to something new. The man is known for his avant-garde, underground parties in unusual locations all over the city – from the military hospital to Antwerp Bowling. After successful events in Antwerp, Gory has even taken his Kissinger party concept

to New York and Berlin.

To mark four years of Kissinger, the former Renault dealership is the place to be on Saturday, 31 August. And if you've ever been to a Kissinger night, you know what to expect. Or rather, you know to expect the unexpected. In Gory's own words: "a night of glamtrash, madness and cult, inspired by the likes of filmmakers David Lynch and Stanley Kubrick."

There are three rooms, each with its own theme and music, peopled

by all local synth bands and DJs, most of them from Antwerp. The Monte Carlo Rally is all about '80s flash, with rock anthems and covers by The Riffs, electro and noise by Radical G, vinyl spun by DJ Groove Merchant and an '80s video show by Top Pop VJ.

Join the folks in the Alpine Garage, meanwhile, for "90s bomb", with a mysterious special surprise act, DJ Low and Steve Cop. And in the R5 Turbo Room, you'll hear more "current music madness" with



Nastynag, house and techno by the young duo Arno Lemons vs Orwell and more minimal techno by Charlotte DC. More acts are being added as we speak, but even with this partial line-up, this event is going to sell out. So buy now. It's €13 in advance or €18 at the door if you want to risk waiting that long.

► www.kissinger.be

BITE

Robyn Boyle

De Valleihoeve ★★☆☆

In 2002, when East Flemish farmers Herman Devaere and Annick Van Caester started growing strawberries and whipping their cows’ milk into ice cream, they probably knew they were on to something good. That their farm-fresh products shop would be *this* successful, however, was yet unthinkable.

When my partner and I visit their beautifully renovated 18th-century farmhouse one sun-drenched Sunday afternoon, there’s not a single seat left on the shady terrace. So instead, we plop ourselves down in the grass, among countless rows of bicycles, to sit a spell before heading inside to see what’s on offer.

Today’s specialties are *platte kaastaart* (cheesecake) with strawberries and tiramisu cake, and we see plenty of people enjoying both of these with a cup of coffee. But it’s the case filled with ice cream in all kinds of colours and flavours that I’m most interested in: vanilla, strawberry, chocolate, *speculoos*, stracciatella, mocha, rum with raisins, forest berry and lemon sorbet.

My partner takes a scoop of lemon sorbet, while I opt for the more classic chocolate. They are completely different yet both manage to be divine. My thick and creamy chocolate ice cream has a very natural flavour, not overly sweet and a wonderful texture. But I have to admit that the light and tangy, almost icy, lemon sorbet is really refreshing on this hot day.

It’s apparently not too warm for a group of local teenagers, who are playing a round of “farmers golf” in the adjoining

field. Modelled after traditional golf, the originally Dutch game is more family-friendly as it involves trying to get a football-sized ball into a series of 10 holes using a large wooden club.

De Valleihoeve organises Farmers golf for groups, in addition to renting out retro scooters for joy rides through the Flemish Ardennes and providing information on the best local biking and walking trails.

When the weather is looking less favourable, there’s plenty of seating inside the recently renovated coach house to have a drink and a bite to eat. All year round, De Valleihoeve sells milk, cheesecake and made-to-order ice cream cakes and yule logs for special occasions. There’s also a constant supply of potatoes and even Jonagold apple wine.

On a seasonal basis (see their website for more specifics), you can also buy strawberry jam, onions, *witloof*, cabbage, leeks, celeriac and freshly laid free-range eggs.

You don’t necessarily need to come to Zingem to enjoy farm-fresh ice cream: Flanders is teeming with similar establishments. And thanks to the Flemish government’s new strategic action plan to support organic agriculture through the Flemish Information Centre for Agri- and Horticulture (Vilt), a community called the Veldverkenners has bundled many of them into a handy, province-specific list, which you can find at www.veldverkenners.be/tip-waar-naartoe-voor-hoeve-ijs.



- ➔ Rooigemstraat 15, Zingem; 09.383.63.43
- 🕒 Mon-Wed 14.00-19.00, Sat-Sun 10.00-21.00 (hours change in the autumn)
- 📍 Charming old farmstead in the Flemish Ardennes serving up homemade ice cream and other desserts

► www.valleihoeve.be

TALKING SPORTS

Leo Cendrowicz

A washout in Moscow

Although they came to Moscow with few medal hopes, it is still disappointing to see the Belgian squad leave the World Athletics Championships empty handed.

Of course, the championships offer far fewer opportunities than, say, the Olympics for a local star to shine. Indeed, two years ago, when Brussels-born Kevin Borlée secured Belgium’s only podium finish at the championships in Daegu, South Korea, it was just the fourth in the event since it began in 1991 (all have been bronze).

This time Borlée was once again in the fray and offered our best chance in Moscow. Alongside his twin brother Jonathan, a third Borlée, Dylan, and Will Oyowé, his team finished fifth in the men’s 400m relay race, just like two years ago.

The other big hopes for Moscow

came from women, but none came nearly close enough: in the 100m hurdles, Anne Zagré failed to qualify for the final, while Sara Aerts pulled out after an injury proved too much. In the 5,000m, Almensch Belete just missed out on a place in the final.

Athletics now turns to Brussels and the season-ending meet for the Diamond League on 5 September, where local talent might put on a better show in the King Baudouin Stadium. However, the main draw at the event, also known as the Ivo Van Damme Memorial, will be Usain Bolt, the double Olympic and world champion, in both the 100 and 200m.

Elsewhere, there is more cheer to be had from hockey: Boom is currently hosting the European Hockey Championships – KingFilip opened the event In his first public

appearance since his crowning. The Red Lions men’s side duly obliged by shocking the German Olympic champions with a 2-1 defeat. The women’s team, the Red Panthers, also caught the mood, beating Belarus 5-1 (*pictured*).

Neither side is a favourite for the finals this weekend, but who really knows?

Also worth mentioning is Belgium’s continuing surge in football. On the opening weekend of England’s Premier League, three Red Devils players shone: Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet saved a penalty as the Reds won against Stoke; Christian Benteke scored twice as Aston Villa came from behind to stun Arsenal; and Kevin De Bruyne was all over the pitch as Chelsea won against Hull. “What was in the water in Belgium in about 1989-91?” quipped the BBC.



The last word...

Wish I was there

“I go on holiday one week a year, but after three days I get bored stiff and long to take a flight back home.”

CD&V politician Jozef Dauwe has 59 different posts, 52 of them unpaid, making him the busiest politician in the country, according to the Court of Auditors

Say it with shoes

“Here in Flanders, it seems to be the work of students. Possibly as a symbol for graduation? And it seems to take place most often in a sort of drunken haze.”

A city of Ghent spokesperson on the phenomenon known as “shoefiti”, when a pair of sneakers is flung over electrical wires

Bittersweet

“If your music is happy, that doesn’t mean your lyrics have to be happy. There’s room for a bit of irony and darkness in the lyrics because life is a comedy filled with drama. You laugh, you cry, and you laugh all over again.”

Brussels-based singer Paul Van Haver, better known as Stromae, who released a new album last week

Ready for action

“As a West Fleming I hardly dare to say it, but I’ve been on holiday for three whole weeks. And I’ve come back fighting fit.”

Flemish minister Geert Bourgeois recharged his batteries in the Austrian Alps and Greece

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

The Flemish Unesco Commission has projects here but also all over the world, supporting young women researchers, working on peace initiatives and assisting in drought areas. We talk to the director to find out how the region prioritises its projects

News

Brussels Summer University is coming up, and it’s not as big a commitment as it sounds. It’s one day of talks by many of the city’s movers and shakers on recommendations formulated by the multi-lingual Citizens’ Forum of Brussels on a number of topics, including education, urban growth, diversity and youth. Talks are multi-lingual, too, and open to the public. We’ll tell you what to expect

Arts

Flemish author Johan de Boose is getting great reviews for his book *Gaius*, a no-holds-barred look at the excesses of the Roman empire. Our books correspondent Rebecca Benoot talks to the writer about the history behind the fiction