

## Where is the Round Robin?

Poperinge's Talbot House is searching for a very special document from 1921

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## Global education

Flemish education minister Pascal Smet wants more Flemish students to study abroad

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## Monumental event

Flanders is hosting a "best of" for Open Monument Day's 25th anniversary this Sunday

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# Birthday suit

### Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts celebrates 350 years

Christophe Verbiest

The Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, one of the world's first art schools, is celebrating its 350th year with Happy Birthday Dear Academie, a bonanza of exhibitions and activities. Its world famous Fashion Department, itself turning 50 this year, takes centre stage.

Though the word "academy" had been floating through history – from Plato to Da Vinci – for centuries, the first academy in the sense of "art school" was established in Florence in 1563. Exactly 100 years later, Antwerp was just the fourth city in the world to create an academy. It was meant to give a boost to the city's slackening arts scene: Rubens had died in 1640, Anthony Van Dyck in 1641, and the output of Jacob Jordaens' studio was mainly mass production. In the beginning, the academy was largely a drawing school and only open in the evening. "If you wanted to paint, you still needed to become an apprentice in a master's studio," explains Katharina Van Cauteren, co-curator of the exhibition *Happy Birthday Dear*

*Academie* at the MAS Museum, "because drawing was seen as an art – the expression of a person's mind – while painting was seen as a handicraft: You needed to mix pigments, add oil and so on. Moreover, colours were seen as sensual and, therefore, as something shady that tempts the eye but not the mind".

**"That has been the tragedy of the academy: For too long, it remained a very staid institution"**

It was not until the 18th – and even more so in the 19th – century that the curriculum expanded. Aside from Jordaens, there are no teachers from those first centuries whose names are familiar to anyone outside of specialised art historians. To find famous

students, too, we have to wait until the 19th century, and the likes of Charles Verlat or romanticist Gustave Wappers. In their time, they were well-respected painters.

"For a very long time, the academy promoted an ideal of beauty. To do so, art was made following distinct conventions," says Van Cauteren. "This left almost no room for progressive impulses. I exaggerate a bit, but that has been the tragedy of the academy: For too long, it remained a very staid institution. Only at the end of the 19th century, with the *avant-garde* arriving in Antwerp, did things start to change."

Still, conservatism haunted the corridors. Van Cauteren: "Generally, only after finishing your studies at the academy, could you really do what you wanted." She gives the example of contemporary painter Fred Bervoets, who attended the school in the 1960s. "He has said that during class he did what he was expected to do as quickly as possible, and afterwards made work that was close to his heart."

The famous Art Nouveau architect Henry Van de Velde also slogged his way through the conventions of the late 19th

## FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope

## Frank Van Massenhove



It's taken more than 500 days for the federal government to appoint a new boss of the rail authority NMBS – about the same time it took them to form the last government.

The new CEO of the NMBS is Frank Van Massenhove, until now the senior civil servant at the federal ministry of social affairs. He replaces two former bosses: Marc Descheermaecker as CEO of the NMBS and Jannie Haek at the top of NMBS Holding. Their two jobs are now fused into one under the plan to turn the authority from a three-part to a two-part structure. The current boss of infrastructure, Luc Lallemand, remains in place. Haek and Descheermaecker were found other jobs: Haek at the National Lottery and Descheermaecker as chairman of Brussels Airport.

The announcement of Van Massenhove's appointment came on Sunday afternoon and was met by a wave of congratulations on social media unlike the announcement of any other top government job. That may be due to relief that the post has finally been filled but some is doubtless due to Van Massenhove's widely appreciated personal and professional qualities.

Van Massenhove, 58, was born in Jabbeke, West Flanders, and studied law at Ghent University. His apprenticeship in politics was as an adviser to labour ministers Roger De Wulf and Leona Detiège, both socialists, then to Ghent mayor Frank Beke, also a socialist. Van Massenhove then served as cabinet chief to another socialist, Frank Vandenbroucke, at social affairs and pensions, before becoming the chairman of the management committee of the social affairs ministry in 2002. There he has built up a formidable reputation as a manager who not only carries out the mandate of the minister but also secures the full support of the civil servants under him. Employees are allowed to work from home, and they get to evaluate their superiors. Not for nothing was he named manager of the year in 2007.

Among the other announcements at the weekend was the appointment of Stefaan De Clerck, former justice minister and chairman of CD&V, as chairman of Belgacom. The new appointments will sign contracts setting their maximum annual salary at €290,000.

## News in brief

The federal government will not take part in **any action against Syria** without a clear mandate from the United Nations, defence minister Pieter De Crem said last week. The UN would also need to provide clear evidence of the Syrian regime's involvement in a chemical weapons attack last month, he said. André Flahaut, speaker of the federal parliament, last week refused to recall members from holiday to debate the issue. The local council of the Brussels district of Schaerbeek, meanwhile, has asked teachers of Islamic religion in schools to be on the lookout for young men who may be convinced to travel to Syria to fight. The mayor of Vilvoorde, Flemish Brabant, reported that another 10 men from his town have travelled to Syria, including five minors.

Unions representing cabin crew at Brussels Airlines plan to issue a **notice of strike** after talks with management broke down last week. The issue revolves around work schedules, which unions claim are too heavy, leading to safety concerns.

The Federation of **Moroccan Associations opened a new school** this week in the Antwerp district of Borgerhout, with 70 pupils enrolled. About 80% of the students are of Moroccan descent, with the rest coming from Africa, Afghanistan and Portugal. "Everyone is welcome," said the school's director, Mohamed Chakkar. The school offers pre-school and the first year of primary school and employs three teachers, two Flemish and one of Moroccan descent.

A number of items found in the wreckage of an **explosion last week in Roeselare**, West Flanders, which destroyed a house and killed the occupant, has led investigators to suspect foul play. Items have been taken as evidence, and the results of

an autopsy are awaited. Ten other houses in the vicinity were also damaged in the blast.

Opposition parties Open VLD and Groen have called on the **government of Flanders to be more transparent** after a journalist for the VRT revealed last week that government offices regularly refuse to release audit documents drawn up under the administration's own law on open government. The VRT were unable to obtain nine audits carried out over the last five years at first request, although five of those were later provided after a decision by the government's appeal office.

A company in Kalken, East Flanders, has issued a job ad looking for **young engineers who failed their exams** the first time around but passed on re-sits. According to Vincent De Cooman, managing director of Wittenstein, a machine-parts manufacturer, those students have learned how to press on through adversity without giving up. Those who succeed the second time around are "not so much book-smart as street-smart," De Cooman told VTM news.

A leading member of the organisation **Sharia4Belgium has been arrested** after posting threats against a pre-school teacher on the internet, the Antwerp prosecutor's office said. The threats were made against a member of staff of the Blokkendoos pre-school in Antwerp, which was forced to close in early June following protests by parents against allegations – later found to be false – of sexual abuse of children. The school opened its doors again last week under the new name of Creatopia.

Animal rights organisation Gaia has called for an **enquiry into**

**safety at the Waregem Koers** steeplechase in West Flanders, after a horse fell and had to be put down – something that also happened last year. Tyquaveron, a six-year-old French stallion, suffered a fracture to the upper foreleg. His rider suffered a concussion and spent the night in hospital.

Three years after it was introduced, **the alcohol lock has been installed** for the first time, in the car of a Ghent man convicted of drunk driving. The Alcolock only allows the car to be driven after the driver has passed a breathalyser test. To avoid cheating, the driver can be asked for another test at random moments during the journey. The lock costs €3,700 in the first year, paid by the driver. In countries where it is already in use, cases of repeat offending have fallen by up to 90%.

Supermarket chain Match has withdrawn stocks of rocket salad and lamb's lettuce from the shelves, after a man in Leuven last week discovered a **live frog in a package of salad**. The animal was described as "three to four centimetres long, brown-green and very active". The chain will now ask its supplier in France to carry out an enquiry.

The crew of a cargo **ship that has been blocked in Antwerp** harbour for the last four months because of a dispute over pay from their bankrupt US company (*Offside, last week*) learned that they will receive all pay owed to them. The Chinese crew members will, however, have to remain on board the ship for another two to three months. Two others whose contracts expired two months ago were last week allowed to return home.

## FLANDERS TODAY



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Hans De Loore

## OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

## Police put on the spot

It may not be the crime of the century, but it's certainly become a huge mystery – not so much about whodunnit or how; more a question of why.

Last week, nine provincial football clubs in and around Zottegem, East Flanders, received an unwelcome visit from vandals, who cut out and took away the penalty and centre spots from all of their pitches. The nine teams, including KSV Zottegem, VC Ressegem and KFC Herzele, were all looking forward to the start of the new season at the weekend. That first match went ahead in all cases, but not before some serious damage had been done.

At KFC Herzele, the exception to the rule, the thieves had also stolen the four corner flags. "One of our players stumbled into the hole, causing him a minor injury," club chairman Fabrice Heymans told *Het Laatste Nieuws*. "We called the police to make a complaint, but they didn't even take the trouble to come by."

"This is not a joke," added Geert Borloo, club secretary of VC Ressegem. The club will now have to remove a larger section of turf to replace the relatively small piece (about 30cm diameter) dug out by the thieves, so that the surface lies perfectly. "We're going to have our



"It should be around here somewhere..."

work cut out for us to repair it."

Who could possibly be responsible for such a bizarre series of thefts is a mystery worthy of Hercule Poirot. Chairman Heymans offered one suggestion for narrowing down the list of suspects: "Maybe it was a collector of penalty spots ... and centre spots."

# Birthday suit

## From Van Gogh to Fabre, the academy has hosted some of the world's most famous artists

► continued from page 1

century, "neatly finishing his studies at the academy," she continues. "He would turn in his grave if he knew that he is now described as one of the important former students."

Other famous alumni are painter Emile Claus (class of 1874), English painter Ford Madox Brown (circa 1840), sculptor Panamarenko (1960), comic artist Willy Vandersteen (1935), painter Georges Vantongerloo (1909) and pop musician Daan Stuyven (circa 1992), who studied graphic design.

The list of now-reputed artists who started at the academy but didn't finish is as long. Luc Tuymans and Jan Fabre are probably the most famous among the Flemish alumni, but, long before them, Vincent Van Gogh stopped over at the academy for a few months, before continuing his way to France.

As part of the reform of higher education in Flanders in the mid-1990s, the academy became part of the Artesis University College (which this year has merged with another school to create the Artesis Plantijn University College). The academy offers a Master's degree and PhD studies.

Students of course receive plenty of practical courses and hands-on training, but an often heard criticism



The Royal Academy offers a number of disciplines, from photography to sculpture to graphic design

of this reform is that aspiring artists also have to be art theorists. "That's the academisation of the training," says Van Cauteren, "an appropriate word since, in a sense, it's the ultimate realisation of the 16th and 17th century idea behind an academy: Making art is an intellectual, mental process."

Rather than a tedious chronological series of highlights from former students, the big exhibition in the MAS is built in four sections, each

focussing on one question ("Is art a science?", "Does Antwerp art exist?", "Does art have to be beautiful?" and "Can art be learned?").

The third section contains the Golden Wall: a huge wall coated with gold foil. Hung there, side by side, are more than 100 paintings by former students, mimicking a 17th-century art room. "It's a subjective choice," says Van Cauteren. "The wall becomes an artwork in itself, a reinterpretation of 350 years of the

academy."

And take note: two days a week, current students of the academy will



Classical exteriors give way to modern accommodations inside the academy

be drawing a live model as part of the exhibition. Who knows, maybe you'll get a taste for doing it yourself.

## 8 SEPTEMBER TO 26 JANUARY

### Happy Birthday Dear Academie

MAS and other venues across Antwerp

► [www.happybirthdaydearacademie.be](http://www.happybirthdaydearacademie.be)

# Before and after six

## How a fashion department came to define an entire academy

The 350th birthday of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp coincides with the 50th birthday of its fashion department – though students around the world don't think of it as a department as much as an academy in itself. It's commonly known, in fact, as the Antwerpse Modeacademie, or the Antwerp Fashion Academy.

Though it's now also part of the Artesis Plantijn University College, it hasn't lost an ounce of its international appeal, which has been growing for the past 25 years. The history of the fashion department is on view from 8 September in the city's Fashion Museum (MoMu).

The establishment of the fashion department was a bumpy ride, says Karen Van Godtsenhoven, co-curator of *50 Years Antwerp Fashion Department*. "After the Second World War, attention for the applied



Fashion Department graduates learn the finer points of design and construction but also how to get through the pressure of a catwalk show

incorporate it in an academy of the arts? He answered that fashion is always a sign of the times."

Van Godtsenhoven is often asked if she considers fashion as art. "For me, it's not a very relevant question."

The fashion department evolved from the department of fashion drawing. Van Godtsenhoven explains. "So the training has always been very graphic-oriented. That's the influence of the first director of the department, Mary Prijot. In developing a collection, students have to document the process with drawings. These are more artistic than technical. That way students develop a graphic signature. They're more an artist than someone who creates patterns."

The so-called "Antwerp Six" mark a caesura in the history of the Fashion Department. Six now-famous designers – Dirk Bikkembergs, Ann Demeulemeester, Walter Van Beirendonck, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Van Saene and Marina Yee – graduated at the beginning of the

1980s. They were spread out over two different classes, but they formed a tight group, trying to break away from the – in their opinion – too academic training.

"Afterwards some of them claimed that it was a plus that the training was so conservative," says Van Godtsenhoven. "It gave them a chance to rebel every single day." (In 1982, Linda Loppa took over the department from Prijot and made room for a more *avant-garde* approach.)

The Six didn't get high marks when they graduated, and Flanders – let alone the rest of Europe – took no notice of them. It was a few years later, in 1986, that they took their wares to the London Fashion Fair, showing as a group and winning favour from fashion critics and buyers alike. They became, quite literally, an overnight sensation.

And they made the school famous worldwide. "Together with institutes in London and Tokyo, this department is the highest-regarded fashion school in the world," says Van Godtsenhoven. Twice a year, MoMu is hosting an overview of the designs created at the Fashion Department by the school's alumni during their studies. You'll also find 12 iconic designs by former students set atop towers of containers spread throughout the city.

It will be difficult not to notice that

Antwerp has a heart for fashion.

And it all germinated at the Fashion Department. **cv**

**"Loads of visitors have the desire to touch the clothes ... they would never do that in an art museum"**

arts grew, and in 1963, the academy opened a fashion department. We show a video in which Mark Macken, the director of the academy at that point, says that his plan was met with a lot of resistance. Fashion was seen as commercial, so why

The difference in the head of the general public, though, is very clear at MoMu. "Loads of visitors have the desire to touch the clothes, which they shouldn't do since the fabrics are very precious. They would never do that in an art museum."

## 8 SEPTEMBER TO 16 FEBRUARY

### 50 Years Fashion Department

Fashion Museum, Nationalestraat 28, Antwerp

► [www.momu.be](http://www.momu.be)

# A million kids go back to school

## Term starts with concerns over male teachers and low opinion of minister

Alan Hope

More than one million children in Flanders started school this week, 2,500 more than last year. The new school term started amid the on-going concerns over capacity and new problems involving the lack of male teachers, home-schooling and reforms in secondary education. Only 15% of teachers in primary schools are men because, according to a study conducted by three university colleges, teaching in primary schools is considered to be a job for women. The situation is unlikely to improve soon: Although the number of young people signing up for teacher training is on the rise, they are still overwhelmingly female. Flemish education minister Pascal Smet, meanwhile, started this academic year with the news that only 3.9% of teachers would give him top marks for his performance in the job, according to a poll carried out by *Knack* magazine. Reacting in an interview at the weekend, Smet said he would "rather be considered



an effective minister than a popular one". (See our interview with Smet on p9)

In other Back to School news this week:

- The government will legislate quality standards for children who are home-schooled, after research

showed that 35 out of 59 cases showed unsatisfactory results. Starting this year, home-schooled children will be made to sit exams at ages 11 and 15. Private schools, including religious schools, will also have to meet requirements for the teaching of evolution and sex education.

- Parents want to see more healthy and sustainable food choices in school menus, and 65% would be prepared to pay more for better quality, according to a survey by school canteen managers Scolarest and IVOX.

- Children with exceptional talent for football and tennis will now be able to go to a regular school, with flexibility for training and competition, instead of having to attend a top sport school. Other sports will follow later.

- The city of Antwerp has employed 81 new teachers from the Netherlands, half for jobs in primary schools and half for secondary classes. Three out of four have moved to Flanders for the jobs. The city will hold a further recruiting day for teachers in October. Antwerp estimates it will need an additional 3,500 teachers by 2020 – more than teacher training in the region can provide.

# Brussels is traffic-jam capital of the world

Nowhere in the world do drivers spend more time sitting in traffic than in Brussels and Antwerp, according to a survey carried out by the traffic information platform Inrix. Brussels with 85.4 hours and Antwerp with 76.7 hours a year are in the top two places. The cities rounding out the top five are Los Angeles, Milan and London. Belgium as a whole is the worst

country on the list, with 59.7 hours a year of tailbacks, an increase on the last figures published by Inrix in April. The Netherlands comes second with 46.1 hours, down from 52 hours in April.

The reasons, according to traffic scientist Isaak Yperman of the Leuven-based Transport & Mobility centre, are several. "The ring roads around Antwerp and Brussels



gather together an extreme quantity of traffic along a relatively short distance," he told the VRT. "Brussels attracts a great many commuters who live outside the city."

The two cities also see a great deal of freight traffic because of the port of Antwerp and Brussels' central position on the northern European road network.

# Computer system sends out wrong ambulances

A new computer system is failing to send the closest ambulance crew to emergency scenes. The CAD-Astrid communications system appears to be using incorrect or outdated map information to make decisions on which station should send a crew to an emergency.

"We've lost one-third of our calls," said emergency doctor Dirk Wynsberghe of the Sint-Lucas Hospital in Bruges. "The system seems to indicate the whole area around the hospital is zone 20 and assumes our ambulance can only go

20 km/h." The system then orders an ambulance from another location, leading to potentially serious delays for patients.

West Flanders governor Carl Decaluwe has complained to the federal health ministry. "I find it unacceptable that ... the government is not in a position to calculate timing, while an ordinary citizen with a TomTom could do the same thing perfectly," he said. The problem will also be brought up at a meeting of Flemish governors this week.

# Train punctuality figures questioned

The number of trains arriving on time at their destination is 10% lower in reality than the figures published by rail infrastructure authority Infrabel indicate, according to consumer organisation Test-Aankoop.

Earlier last month, Infrabel published the figures for the first six months of the year – the worst in the organisation's history. Just under 86% of all trains arrived on time – a term which, according to Infrabel allows for a late arrival of up to six minutes.

Test-Aankoop monitored the arrival of 489 trains nationwide from January to May. The trains all either started or finished in Brussels and were restricted to the morning and evening rush hours. According to their results, the true figures are 10% worse than Infrabel says:

equivalent to a success rate of about 77.3%, or very nearly one train in four arriving late.

Infrabel criticised the validity of the study, pointing out that their own figures are based on 3,500 trains operating all day every day.

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

0.94

men for every woman in Brussels, compared to a national average of 1.04 men per woman. In other words, while there are slightly more men in the country, there are many more women in the capital

01/19

the new designation for the runway at Brussels Airport formerly known as 02/20, changed because of the shift in the earth's magnetic field over the years. Airport runways are named for their bearings

35,000

young people in Flanders, most aged 11-12, are the victims of bullying and harassment every week, according to a study by Ghent University

€66 million

cost of renovations to the Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, which started last week and are due to take three years

78,000

visitors to the reading room of the Royal Library in Brussels last year, more than twice as many as for 2009. The reading room is used by many students in the run-up to exams

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

### Naughty

"I dare N-VA to put on its billboards: 'Republic of Flanders: now!' They won't. You will not hear the word 'separatism' in their campaign. I bet you crate of champagne that in 2014, they will slink off with their separatist tail between their legs." Those were the words of liberal politician Herman De Croo last week. N-VA is Flanders' most popular party by far. It is generally believed that in the 2014 elections, the party will score over 30% of the vote. Some party members even dream of 40%, which would come down to an absolute majority in Flanders. For years, N-VA has stated that the 2014 federal elections will be followed by a "big moment" – if not a big bang. The party no longer believes in the kind of state reform this country has known for decades, with endless negotiations between Dutch and French speakers.

To N-VA, 2014 is the time for a "total, unprecedented confrontation" to achieve confederalism, with Flanders becoming responsible for finances and social security, which are now part of the competences of the federal government. Without an agreement on that, N-VA will not enter the federal government. To its opponents, the N-VA stance will come down to a new stalemate such as after the 2010 elections, when the country remained without a federal government for over a year. They believe that this is not what this country needs in such economically difficult times as these.

Last weekend, though, Siegfried Bracke (N-VA), the TV journalist turned politician, laid out a totally new strategy for N-VA. "Even without an agreement on confederalism, N-VA will enter a federal government. The social-economic situation is too pressing not to."

Observers immediately noticed that the N-VA had "turned". However, N-VA is not a party that turns. Resolve in institutional matters is its hallmark, its *raison d'être* even. So the response was immediate: Party president Bart De Wever said that Bracke was "a bit naughty" and that he had spoken out of turn. The following day, Bracke apologised to his party.

However, De Wever also called Bracke's view a "strategically good option". And despite the many denials within N-VA ranks, some people believe that what Bracke said is exactly what will happen after the elections. The reason is obvious: if N-VA hangs on to its "big bang" beliefs, it has no allies left and risks being relegated to the opposition. Meanwhile, Herman De Croo remains pretty confident and awaits his crate of champagne.

# Six ways to save

## The Flemish government introduces new energy requirements for new-build houses

Alan Hope

**A**nyone thinking of building a new house in Flanders after next January can look forward to extra costs of about €5,000, thanks to new energy requirements. The good news is that the additional investment is guaranteed to pay for itself over time.

The requirements introduced by Flemish energy minister Freya Van den Bossche are based on a European directive on sustainable energy. They offer the owners of new constructions a choice of six ways to supply their homes with sustainable energy: solar panels, solar boiler, heat pump, biomass, large-scale projects and district heating schemes.

The last of those – projects where a number of homes are connected to a main heat source such as a factory and then receive their heating via a network of underground pipes – is common in Scandinavia, parts of Eastern Europe and increasingly in the Netherlands. But not in Flanders. So it's not really a choice at the moment, though it may be in the

future. The required minimum amount of renewable energy depends on the option selected: Biomass and heat pumps, which draw warmth from deep underground, should provide 85% of the home's total energy needs. Solar panels need to provide seven kilowatt-hours of power for every square metre of floor space in the house; a solar boiler should have a photovoltaic surface of 0.2 square metres for every square metre of floor space; and participation in a large-scale communal project for renewable energy should involve an investment of at least €20 for every square metre.

For a home of about 150 square metres, the various options are likely to cost owners around €5,000 in extra costs at the outset, with prices ranging from €3,000 for participation in a communal project to as much as €15,000 for a heat pump, depending on local factors. However, the costs are certain to be recouped from the lower energy bills that will result,



After an initial outlay, measures such as this solar boiler should result in lower energy bills for householders

according to Van den Bossche's department.

"We always make a calculation and only then introduce a new measure, roughly once every two years," says Dieter Stylen of the energy ministry. "Only when current technology is able to deliver savings greater than the initial cost will we introduce stricter norms."

At the same time, the government

is raising the bar for general energy requirements. The existing maximum of E70 for new houses – the number is calculated as an index of energy performance in areas such as insulation of walls, roof, floors and windows, with lower numbers signifying better energy efficiency – will come down to E50 in January. The intention is to lower that figure again to E40 in 2016, eventually coming

down to E30 in 2021.

As well as homes, the new requirements cover offices and schools, which are allowed to combine two or more of the six options to achieve a quota of renewable energy. Constructions involving more than one home, such as apartment blocks, may choose between the regime for houses and that for offices.

Last week, Van den Bossche also announced a new premium for landlords renting smaller properties to encourage them to insulate. While in Flanders last year more than 70,000 home-owners were granted an insulation premium of €6 per square metre, rental tenants, many of whom are on a low income, were unable to benefit because landlords are unwilling to make the investment when the return goes to the tenant. The new measure allows up to €23 per square metre of the floor space of the property, as well as a tax break of 30% of the cost.

► [www.energiesparen.be](http://www.energiesparen.be)

# In search of history

## Talbot House offers reward for lost document ahead of centenary celebrations

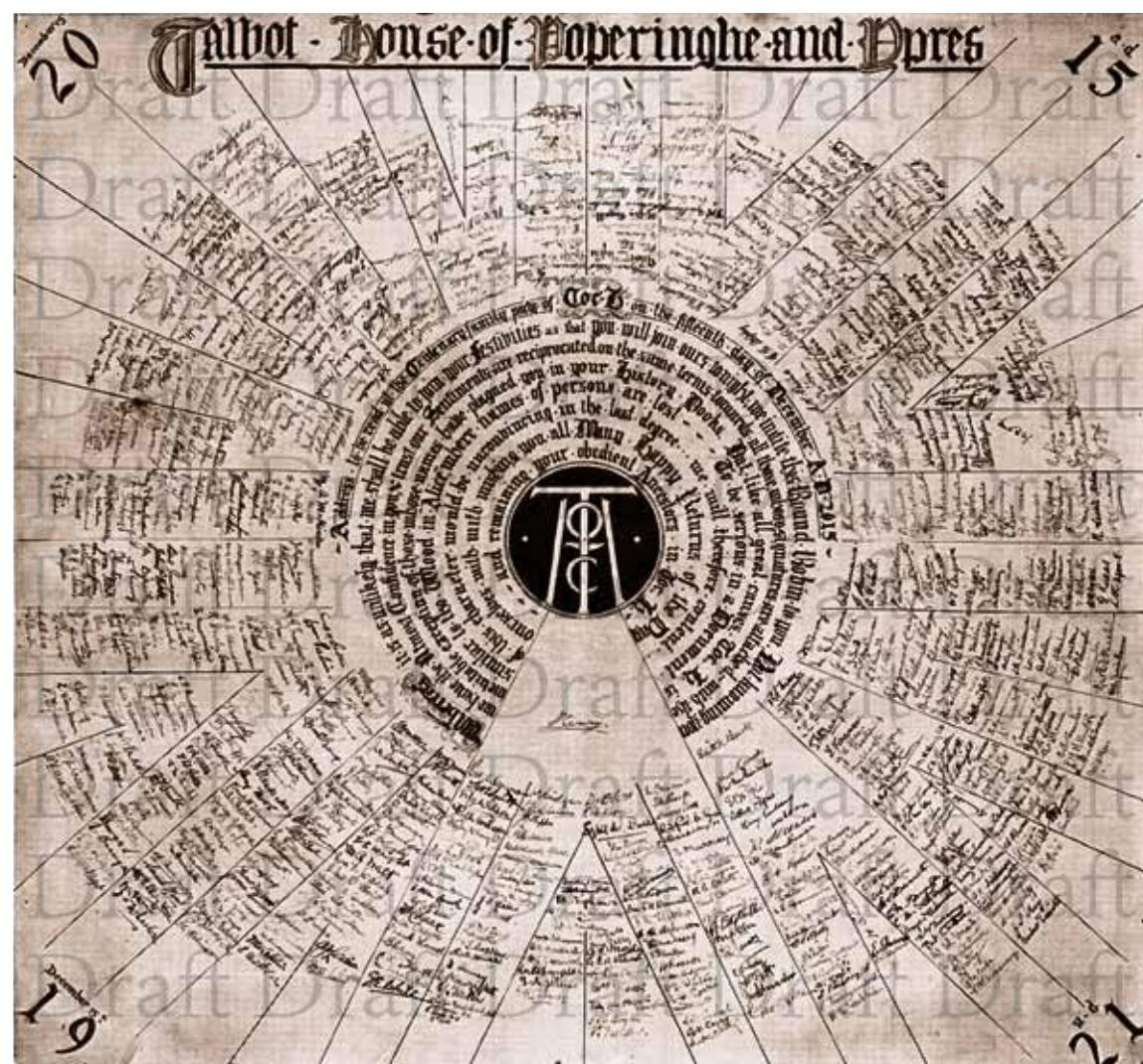
Denzil Walton

In December 1915, two British army chaplains – the Reverends Phillip "Tubby" Clayton and Neville Talbot – opened a soldiers' rest and recreation centre in Poperinge, West Flanders. Talbot House was styled as an "everyman's club", where all soldiers were welcome, regardless of rank, to enjoy rare moments of peace and entertainment.

Six years later, on 15 December, 1921, at the now-demolished Grosvenor House in Park Lane, London, a gathering was held to remember absent friends and toast the sixth anniversary of Talbot House. A birthday card was signed by all present – including Prince Henry, representing the Prince of Wales, who was at that time abroad. But it was a birthday card with a difference – and a message for future generations. It took the form of a "round robin", and the intention was that the text on the document would be read aloud on the centenary of the opening of Talbot House – 15 December, 2015.

Unfortunately, the original document has gone AWOL. It was last seen in the archives of the London headquarters of Toc H – the international organisation named after the abbreviation for Talbot House. Nearly a century on, Talbot House needs your help. Do you know where the original might be?

"It's quite a sizeable document – about 60 x 60 centimetres – and is probably on thick paper, but could be rolled up or even folded," says Talbot House manager Raf



Craenhals. Talbot House is so keen to retrieve this unique document that it is offering a reward of €1,000 to the person who finds it and hands

it in.

"Talbot House will be going ahead with the centennial celebrations on 15 December, 2015," says Craenhals.

"It would be great if we could have the original Round Robin document at our celebrations."

Anyone with any information that

### Round and round

If you're getting dizzy trying to read the circular text in the illustration here, the inscription reads:

"Address to be read at the Centenary family party of Toc H on the fifteenth day of December, A.D. 2015: Whereas it is as unlikely that we shall be able to join your festivities as that you will join ours tonight, we indite this Round Robin to you. Not knowing you, we have the utmost confidence in you, and trust that our sentiments are reciprocated on the same terms towards all those whose signatures are attached – with the inevitable exception of those whose names have plagued you in your history books. But like all great causes, Toc H is similar to the wood in 'Alice' where names of persons are lost. To be serious in a document of this character would be unconvincing in the last degree. We will therefore content ourselves with wishing you all many Happy Returns of the Day and remaining your obedient ancestors in Toc H."

could help retrieve the document is asked to contact Talbot House.

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# Ministers approve beach and dyke projects

## Coastal protection to go hand in hand with recreation and tourism

Alan Hope

Flemish urban planning minister Philippe Muyters and nature minister Joke Schauvliege have approved 10 projects proposed by West Flanders province for their "Beach and Dyke" programme. The projects aim to ensure that necessary coastal protection works are carried out, as well as offering additional opportunities to water sports clubs and cafes and restaurants along the coast.

The works are part of the government's Master Plan on Coastal Safety, a plan to protect Flanders – and in particular the polder hinterland of West Flanders – from any rise in sea level due to global climate change.

Flanders, after the Netherlands, is the most vulnerable region in Europe in terms of flooding, with 15% of the total surface area less than five metres above sea level. One in three people in West Flanders lives in the low-lying polder area. In the period from 1970 to 2010, the sea level rose by 103mm in Ostend, 115mm in Nieuwpoort and 133mm



Beach, dunes and built-up seafront at De Panne

in Zeebrugge. In 2007, the UN's International Panel on Climate Change estimated that global sea levels would rise by 18 to 59cm over the course of the 21st century. The new plan places a priority on the execution of Master Plan works, while allowing the installation of "temporary or permanent constructions for commercial and recreational equipment accessible

to the public, in specific places along the coast". Those include such installations as beach pavilions, terraces and stages for special events. Among the spots named in the projects are the beach by the casino in Knokke, with more space for winter events; the King Beach in Blankenberge and the casino in Middelkerke.

"These provincial projects offer

new development opportunities for tourism and water sports, while taking into account the important natural worth of the Flemish coast," Muyters said. "Above all, they provide us with the concrete possibilities for raising our coastal protection measures to a higher level."

Muyters and Schauvliege also last week jointly welcomed the formation of a new co-operation system that allows the Flemish government to complete all phases of uncontested appropriation of land. In the past, Flanders was by law required to turn certain phases of the procedure over to the federal government, which led to delays in some areas of up to five years. In future, the entire procedure will be covered by an agreement between the Flemish service for real estate matters (VDVA) and the Flemish land agency VLM.

"This cooperation will bundle the expertise of the VDVA and the VLM to ensure the faster progress of investment projects," Schauvliege said.

## Amadeus restaurants latest to buy off fraud trial

The Amadeus ribs restaurant chain is the latest prominent company to be named in the tax authorities' on-going food service tax fraud case that is being allowed to avoid prosecution in return for a cash settlement. Amadeus has restaurants in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, employing 120 staff in total. Its owners, the brothers Peter-Jan and Reinoud Van Iseghem, were accused of evading taxes by failing to declare the income from customers who paid cash and did not require a receipt. No value has been placed publicly on the extent of the fraud;

the brothers have agreed to pay a settlement of €6.2 million rather than face criminal action. Tax authorities have revealed that accused parties in 6,677 cases last year were allowed to pay a settlement instead of facing court action. Critics of the investigation argue that those with enough money are able to avoid a criminal record and in fact use the proceeds of their crime to avoid the consequences. The only benefits to society in return, they argue, are income for the public purse and a reduction of the pressure on the courts.

## Job Student of Year selected

Wout Peeters has been named Job Student of the Year by Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed and human resources group ADMB. The 18-year-old worked this year for JES car wash in Essen, Antwerp province, where, according to owner Stef Kerstens, he made himself "indispensable". The business was set up three years ago, and Peeters has been there from the start, welcoming customers, hosing down cars and setting them on the conveyor. Peeters begins studying chemistry this month. He was awarded a prize of one month's salary and a smartphone, handed over by Unizo director-general Karel Van Eetvelt.



Job student Wout Peeters (left) and Karel Van Eetvelt of Unizo

## Test-Aankoop calls smartphone insurance "downright bad"

Eight out of 10 insurance contracts sold to purchasers of new smartphones are of low to "downright bad" quality, according to a study by consumer organisation Test-Aankoop.

At issue is insurance against theft, defects and breakage sold in addition to the regular warranty. Test-Aankoop found that customers were rarely informed about what was covered and that they had never before seen so many breaches

of insurance law. "The coverage is often extremely limited, and contracts may contain unlawful clauses or conditions that are open to interpretation," the organisation said. "As a result, the premium may be far out of proportion to the risks covered." The organisation said it would take up the matter with federal consumer affairs minister Johan Vande Lanotte.

## Vandenhaute leaves Woestijnvis

Wouter Vandenhaute has cut all ties with Woestijnvis, the TV production house he founded in 1997. He remains CEO of De Vijver, the holding company he co-owns with partner Erik Watté, Corelio (publishers of *Flanders Today*) and SBS (TV channels VIER and VIJF). The move is seen as creating a barrier between Woestijnvis and

SBS so that the former can return to creating productions on behalf of the public broadcaster VRT, where it started out and achieved its greatest successes. With Vandenhaute gone from Woestijnvis, the production house is less likely to be influenced directly or indirectly by the interests of competitors VIER and VIJF.

## New laws from 1 September

Changes in the law that came into force on 1 September are mainly economic.

- The minimum pension goes up by 1.25%. Pensions older than five years go up by 2%. The benefits paid to the handicapped and the income guarantee for the elderly also go up by 2%.
- The child allowance for a first or only child is reduced for all children born before 1997. The supplement

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Air ▶ Egis

French airport management company Egis has won the contract to operate Ostend and Antwerp airports for the next 25 years. The company has plans to redevelop Antwerp's airport along the lines of the successful London City model.

### Energy ▶ Mermaid

The development of offshore wind park Mermaid has been given a boost by an agreement between Electrabel, Mermaid's 35% shareholder, and competing consortium Northwestern II, led by supermarket group Colruyt, to split the building costs and future revenues.

### Lighting ▶ Econation

The Ghent-based supplier of ecological daylight equipment has signed contracts for €10 million in China to supply their light-dispersing roof domes to industrial buildings and warehouses.

### Railways ▶ Fyra

The debacle of the high-speed Fyra train project that was to connect Brussels to Amsterdam has led national railway company NMBS to seek some €20 million in damages from train producer AnsaldoBreda. The hearings are to be held in the court of Utrecht in the Netherlands.

### Steel ▶ Bekaert

The steel wire specialist Bekaert, based in Zwevegem, West Flanders, and one of Flanders' largest industrial groups, has hired the British Matthew Taylor to succeed Bert De Graeve, who becomes chairman of the group.

### Textiles ▶ Beaulieu

The West Flanders-based textile group has acquired the textile fibres activities of the Italian Meraklon company. The move allows Beaulieu to further develop as a leading supplier to nappy producers in Europe.

### Tourism

#### ▶ Brussels Airport

Toerisme Vlaanderen has signed a partnership agreement with Brussels Airport to develop joint promotion activities to attract additional visitors and congresses to Flanders.

### Venues

#### ▶ Sportpaleis

Antwerp's Sportpaleis is finalising its €22 million renovation programme that has boosted the concert hall's capacity from 18,400 to 23,000. The renovation of the façade is expected to begin early next year.

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## THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Researchers at the University Hospital in Leuven, in collaboration with international centres, have developed an efficient **treatment for intestinal disorders such as Crohn's disease**. Vedolizumab is a new medicine to prevent lymphocytes, a kind of white blood cell, from causing infections in patients' intestines. The current treatment for these disorders doesn't work for about one in five patients and loses its effectiveness after a while in 30% of other cases. Vedolizumab also doesn't increase the risk of brain disorders, unlike present treatments, which block lymphocytes. The medicine should be on the European market by next year.

Enrollment in **chemistry and lab technology studies** at universities and colleges has increased immensely this year across Flanders. Karel de Grote University College in Antwerp recorded 69% more registrations for chemistry studies and 94% for lab technologies studies compared to the same time last year. The assets of the chemistry sector are job security, which the sector has emphasised in the media, and the gross average wages of €3,700 per month.

The hospital of Our Lady in Aalst has treated **the first Belgian heart patient with gene therapy**, as part of an international study. Cardiologists restored the activity of a crucial protein that makes heart muscles contract and relax. Surgeons make a small incision in the groin or wrist and pass a flexible catheter to the heart. The therapy is currently being tested on 200 patients in 50 centres worldwide, including three centres in Belgium. Previous research showed a reduced necessity to hospitalise patients, to implant an artificial heart or to perform a heart transplant.

The number of Flemish **students enrolling in teaching programmes** is back up. At most university colleges, there has been a considerable rise in the number of registration compared to last year, with the Bachelor's degree for teaching in primary education attracting about 20% more students. Experts believe this is partly a reaction to media reports on the shortage of teachers, which has convinced many of the job security.

Next year's First World War commemorations are causing a surge in the demand for **training related to war tourism** in the Ieper region. Flemish agency for entrepreneurial training Syntra reports the growing popularity of courses for guides and owners of small-scale accommodations like B&Bs. **Andy Furniere**

# Education without borders

## Pascal Smet wants to get Flanders' students moving around the world

Alan Hope

By 2020, one in three graduates from higher education will have had some overseas experience – that's the goal of a new action plan for "academic mobility" recently approved by the government of Flanders. The programme, called Brains on the Move, goes further than the EU's ambitious plans to reach 20% of students.

**T**he world is globalising," says Pascal Smet. "Whether you're for it or against it, it's a fact you can't get around."

That's why the Flemish education minister has introduced a plan for academic mobility – getting students to go outside of Flanders for part of their education, whether it's elsewhere in Europe or across the globe in China.

"International mobility in work and education is going to be extremely important in the evolution of this new global society. That mobility is very important when you train a young person, when you try to develop in them a strong personality, when you provide them with skills and knowledge." The goal is that by 2020 at least one in three students should have some foreign experience, "in the broadest sense of the term," he says. "That could be Erasmus, or internships or something else entirely." The experience will help prepare them, the minister says, for the real world that's to follow. "There's a strong possibility they'll make international contacts later in a work environment or come across other cultures. There's a good chance they might go work in another country or find a foreign partner or work for a company that has an international identity, even if they themselves never leave Flanders. So that international experience is crucially important in preparing a young person for the future."

Not only should the multi-year plan ensure that one in three graduates has some international experience by the end of their studies, it also includes a provision that 33% of those students should come from a less-advantaged background. "Everyone in society should be able to benefit." He's also not content to restrict the students to Europe. "We think the whole world should be

an option. That's why we've signed scholarship agreements with, for instance, China and Morocco and shortly also with Brazil. That way we create more opportunities for our people here in Flanders."

The mobility programme, though, works both ways: It will increase the numbers of foreign students coming to study in Flanders. "That's one of the reasons we'll be going to Brazil in the autumn

**"In China, we noticed that, because our universities are relatively well-priced, people have the impression they're not very good"**

vacation. They have a programme to ensure that a large number of young Brazilians go off to study in other countries. And that's something we need to be part of. People who come to study here get to know the country, and maybe later on, they'll be open to doing business with you."

One of the main questions relating to academic mobility involves the recognition of diplomas: If a foreign student holds a national diploma of completion of secondary education, for example, does that diploma have the same value as a similar qualification here? Recognition takes place at two levels: formal equivalence, which says that one diploma is of the same level as another, and complete equivalence, where not only the level of the diploma but the content of the training is the same. In the vast majority of cases, formal equivalence is sufficient.

The government plans to do two things: speed up the recognition procedure for diplomas by giving the job to panels of experts rather than the voluntary groups who carry out the investigations at present; and attach a fee to the procedure. The prices will range from €90 for a recognition of formal equivalence to €300 for complete

recognition of a doctorate, rising to €500 for the fast-track option. Certain groups will be exempt from payment such as those on low incomes, the unemployed seeking work through the VDAB and those going through an integration process.

"On top of that, we will also ensure the procedure is faster," says Smet. "In principle, all the steps should be completed within three months."

The changes to the procedure have been welcomed by Brussels' Minorities Forum. "We're pleased to see that the recognition of diplomas can still be free of charge," director Naima Charkaoui said. "The more highly educated migrant has the most difficulty in finding a job at the right level. We regularly see cases of doctors or engineers forced to work as cleaners or taxi drivers."

According to recent figures, half of all migrants from outside the EU are currently working at a level below their qualifications.

Students coming here to study, however, will soon be charged more for tuition. Paradoxically, it will make Flemish schools more appealing internationally, according to Smet. "We noticed when we visited China that, because our universities are open to everyone and are relatively well-priced, they have the impression that they're not very good. That's why the universities and I have agreed that we should raise registration fees for citizens of countries outside the European Economic Area. We think that will make us more appealing and help us to become better known."

Finally, another aim of the mobility programme will be to encourage more Flemish students to study outside Europe. At present, Spain remains the most popular destination for an Erasmus period, followed by Germany, France and the Netherlands. Other parts of the world lag far behind.

"There's a language barrier, of course, which is why it's so important for us to introduce more English into our education system," Smet says. "But part of our plan does include encouragement for them to spend some time in places like China, Hong Kong and other countries. And if they can grow up here using more English and later on have a better command of English, that will make it a lot easier for them."

# 25 years of Open Mon

Join the heritage parties across Flanders and Brussels as the regions celebrate their past

Andy Furniere

This Sunday, 8 September, a festive Open Monument Day celebrates 25 years of Flemish heritage with a “best of” edition. The weekend after, the capital shows off social spots where you can have fun and relax during its Heritage Days. We guide you through the current programmes, plus look back and ahead with Kristl Strubbe, director of Herita, Flanders heritage agency

For this jubilee edition, Herita has selected the “best of” the previous 24 years of Open Monument Day. On the programme are exclusive places, successes from the past, exemplary restorations and successful conversions of monuments. In total, 196 Flemish cities and municipalities will open the doors of about 650 monuments and organise more than 440 activities.

## Monuments

For this occasion, guides take you around the hidden spots of the **Cathedral of Our Lady** in Antwerp, up the ancient stairs to the dark attics. Afterwards, you can admire masterpieces by the likes of Rubens. A very different experience is the **St Theodardus Mining Cathedral** in Beringen, Limburg province. Dating from 1943, the complex was a prestige project for the mine directors, which is apparent when you look at the mosaics, marble altars and crystal windows. There'll be an exhibition on religious life in the mines.

In Kanne, also Limburg province, guides will lead you through a maze of passages in **marl caves**. Starting around the 15th century, workers excavated marl blocks in the caves to build churches and castles for

several hundred years. Visitors can also discover murals in the caves, which are now used for growing mushrooms.

Over in Voeren, the detached area of Limburg province, there is a unique chance to take a guided tour of the **Commandery of the Teutonic Order**. The castle complex formed the headquarters of the Teutonic

to eat in a dining room decorated in Egyptian style, with panels that are exact copies of Egyptian examples – such as the zodiac on the ceiling. The Egyptian influence is just as obvious at the **Domain de Spoelberch** in Haacht, Flemish Brabant, where you can enter a pyramid in the castle park. Other highlights are the orangery, temple,

“We are gradually changing the dusty image of heritage”

Knights, who ruled over the area from the 13th to the 18th century. The farm at the complex has been a trout hatchery since 1885.

Another distinctive military building is the **Fort Liefkenshoek**, in Beveren, East Flanders, built in the 16th century to protect Antwerp and its harbour. Later, it was a quarantine station, marine base and holiday site for the military. Apart from an experience centre, there also is a new hands-on centre for children.

At **Moeland Castle** in Sint-Niklaas, East Flanders, the knight de Schoutheete de Tervarent used

cave, obelisk and the collection of rare trees and exotic plants.

At the **Institute of the Ursulinen** in Sint-Katelijne-Waver, Antwerp province, interior decorators were inspired by the former Belgian colony of Congo when they designed the unique Kongo room in the 1920s. The international school also houses an elegant winter garden where visitors to the girls living there were received. The park is also worth a walk. Joos Clemmen, a cotton baron from Ghent, had a passion for China. In the house of **Hôtel Arnold Vanderhaeghen**, he installed



Furniture designer Pieter De Bruyne's Blue Room is a homage to German writer Goethe

a Chinese parlour with a wall covering in painted Chinese silk. The museum's Maurice Maeterlinck Cabinet is dedicated to the **Gentenaar** Nobel Prize winner. There are several breweries on the programme, like **De Hoorn** in Leuven. Last year, a few young **Leuvenaars** brought this brewery from 1923 back to life after decades of inactivity. Even older and still going strong is the **Distillery Van Damme** in Oosterzele, East Flanders. The last active agricultural distillery in the Benelux region, established in 1862, still works using a steam engine from 1890. The **Torek toy factory** in Deinze, East Flanders, which opened after the First World War, went bankrupt

## To see and be seen in Brussels

In the capital region, the festivities on 14 and 15 September revolve around the theme of “Brussels, m’s-tu vu?” (Brussels, have you seen me?). On the programme are fashionable places “to see and be seen” like cafes, restaurants, cinemas, concert halls, theatres, parks and squares. At many of the monuments, people still love to show off their best clothes, to walk, have a drink on a terrace or watch a premiere.

Among numerous guided walks is the **Anspach Sunset Boulevard** tour that starts in front of the Plaza hotel. Guides take you along the boulevards in the city centre to discover the Hollywood of Brussels: mythical cinemas, theatres and cabarets that have in some cases been demolished or converted now.

One of the cinemas currently being restored is the exuberantly decorated **Aegidium cinema** from 1905 in the commune of Sint-Gillis. Shells, palm leaves, geometric friezes, slender columns, horseshoe arches and mirrors recreate an oriental world in the unique Moorish room.

A truly hidden gem is **Théâtre Molière**, at the corner of the Porte de Namur gallery, where the non-profit Muziekpubliek now



Inside the residence of the governor of the National Bank of Belgium, which you can see during Brussels' Heritage Days

organises daily concerts and courses in world music.

In the commune of Elsene, **Restaurant Les Foudres** cherishes its history as a

winery. Rows of giant oak barrels form the backdrop in the restaurant and there is a charming garden-orchard. The pastry shop **Les Caprices du Bailli**, also in Elsene, is a rare shop in Brussels that has preserved its original front and furniture. Entering through the Art Nouveau-style door, you are teleported back to the cosy atmosphere of around 1900.

On the Oude Graanmarkt, in the city centre, you can visit the **former headquarters of Val Saint-Lambert crystal glassworks**, where the Dutch-language cultural centre De Markten now organises events. Don't miss the Mirror Room on the first floor, where bevelled mirrors reflected the shine of exhibited crystalware.

In Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe, the **Malou castle** is one of the rare 18th-century country residences that remains in Brussels. Its garden park has many picturesque footpaths and a large romantic lake. It's a good time to visit, because the castle will undergo major renovation work from next month.

► [www.visitbrussels.be](http://www.visitbrussels.be)

# ument Days



© Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed/Kris Vandevoist

sports or business events. Nearby in Wevelgem, a craftsman from **Blacksmith Vanmaercke** will give demonstrations and volunteers will relate the history of this authentic workshop.

For the 150th anniversary of the **Rijksgevangenis** at Dendermonde, East Flanders, its staff will give tours inside the walls of the prison. If you want to see how the judicial system works, you are welcome at the **Court** of Oudenaarde, where fake court sessions are held.

At the **atelier flat** of Jozef Peeters in Antwerp and the **house of Pieter De Bruyne** in Aalst, East Flanders, you step into the world of creative minds. Peeters has painted his ceilings and walls with geometric colour planes, making it look like a three-dimensional painting. At the house of furniture designer De Bruyne, the Blue Room refers to a similar space in the house of the German writer Goethe in Weimar.

Among the many monuments at the coast, the **lighthouse Lange Nelle** in Ostend literally sticks out from the rest. Lange Nelle is 65 metres high, has 324 steps and has been guiding fishermen into the harbour since 1949. The small **Majutte House** at Blankenberge is more down-to-earth. The house of fisherman Pé Majutte gives you a good idea how fishermen lived in bygone times.

## Activities

Families will certainly enjoy the **Quest for Lady Petronella** in Bruges, which acquaints you with the aristocratic owners and gardeners of prestigious houses in

the city and countryside. The best way to get from Casselbergh House to the Rooigem Castle is on a bike. At the **Horst Castle** in Holsbeek, Flemish Brabant, children learn the proper manners and dancing style of the Middle Ages, while they can act in a theatre play at **Beauvoorde Castle** in Veurne, West Flanders. Ghent has organised six thematic walking tours, including one around the **Rabot quarter** – a neighbourhood that is part of an urban renewal project. Kids can learn how medieval monks wrote during a **workshop at the Sint-Pieters Abbey**. Also in Ghent, scientists at the Rommelaerecomplex give youngsters an insight into the “language of life”: our DNA. At the **Atelier André** in Aalst, close to the house of Pieter De Bruyne, artist André Van Schuylenbergh uses De Bruyne's ideas to inspire children's creativity.

Among the large offer of tours at the coast is a walk around the **Belle Epoque quarter** in Ostend. Guide Johan Geuvens will show you around his Villa Zaza and take you to an old hidden cinema in the area.

Also at the coast, in Koksijde, you can join in the party atmosphere at the restored **boat hotel Normandie**. The non-profit Historical Vessels, from Mechelen, shows you ships like de Ouderhoek and Den Oeschaert. With small boats, you can make trips on the Leuven-Mechelen canal. Near the **Museum aan de Stroom** (MAS) in Antwerp, guides will take you on an exploration at high



The restored boat hotel De Normandie in Koksijde



Open Monument Day is a rare opportunity to see behind the scenes of the prison in Dendermonde

altitude if you want to visit the 17 **harbour cranes** – the world's largest museum collection of historical cranes. It's perhaps not for those with vertigo, as you climb a ladder to an altitude of around 30 metres.

► [www.openmonumenten.be](http://www.openmonumenten.be)

in 1971 and has stood empty since then. An exhibition with authentic quadricycles and original documents gives an overview of its history. Unlike Torck, **power station Transfo** in Zwevegem, West Flanders, has recently been restored. The plant, built a century ago, has been converted into a space for cultural, touristic,

## Q&A

**Kristi Strubbe, director of heritage conservation organisation Herita, on the history and future of Open Monument Day in Flanders**

### How did Open Monument Day get started?

France organised the first “Open Days” in 1984. Because of its immediate success, other European countries quickly followed suit. Our country was the fifth to set up the event, in 1989, before the European Union became involved. Today, 50 European countries open the doors of their monuments every year.

### What are the core goals of the annual event?

It helps to secure a broad basis for

heritage care throughout the whole year, by making people aware of the need to maintain monuments and by attracting investments. We are gradually changing the dusty image of heritage.

### How has the event evolved over a quarter of a century?

The heritage that can be discovered has become more diverse throughout the years and we are devoting ever more attention to monuments that are threatened by demolition or which have just been restored.



The offer of activities has also been broadened, to reach more families and youngsters.

### How do you involve youngsters?

Through competitions like Flash Back and Un(der)cover. For the photo project Flash Back, we invite youngsters between 12 and 18 to send us creative photos of monuments. Ten artists between 18 and 26 years old get the chance to set up a project in, about or around a monument of their choice for the Un(der)cover initiative. The works are presented

on site during Open Monument Day.

### Will the event continue in the future?

In 2015, we will launch an updated version of Open Monument Day. We have to further expand the offer of fun activities for youngsters, families and groups of friends by focusing more on social activities with a high fun factor. Another ambition is to improve the partnerships with the organisations in our sector, with the ultimate goal of making every day of the year like Open Monument Day.

## AND THE WINNER IS...

C-Mine has won the annual Flemish Monument Prize, awarded by heritage minister Geert Bourgeois for its good management and restoration using innovative techniques.

C-Mine is the former mining site at Winterslag, Genk. In 1917, it was the first site in Limburg where coal was hauled from the under the surface. The *grandeur*

of the buildings illustrates the ambitions of the mining directors. Twenty-five years after closing, it has been converted to a site where culture, tourism, education, creative economy and design are united.

The other nominees for the award were the St Dionysius church in Sint-Denijs-Westrem, East Flanders, designed by the Maaltebrugge artist studio Bressers-Blanchaert; Ostend's



© Kris Vandevoist

De Grote Post, a former post office that has recently reopened as a cultural centre; and Villa Elza in Wenduine, part of a twin villa on the sea dyke and one of the last remaining Belle Epoque holiday houses at the coast.

The winner was chosen from 21 candidates by the Royal Commission for Monuments and Landscapes and receives €15,000. The three other laureates will receive €2,500 each.



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# On guard

## Ghent brotherhood gets ready to celebrate 400 years of fencing

Toon Lambrechts

This might be one of Ghent's best-kept secrets. Every day in the attic of the Lakenhalle, the Cloth Hall next to the belfry, members of a fencing club with the grand name of the Royal and Knightly St Michael's Guild take up their arms to train. And this year they have something special to celebrate: their 400th birthday.

Gymnasiums are rarely noted for their aesthetics. They're designed to be functional and provide athletes with the infrastructure they need. The training hall of the Royal and Knightly St Michael's Guild fencing club – also called the Confrérie, or the Brotherhood – is another matter. A door next to the tower of Ghent's belfry on Emile Brauplein leads via a staircase to the medieval building's attics. The armour in the hall sets the tone. This place breathes history.

In the training hall, the staccato sound of steel on steel fills the air. The trainer – the *maître*, or master, as he is known – is teaching his pupil the finesse of the epee, one of the three weapons used in fencing. But the setting is amazing. The roof beams of the Cloth Hall, an oak structure built in the 15th century, are impressive. On the wall are portraits of characters from the club's rich history, with a prominent place reserved for Albrecht and Isabella, the Austrian monarchs who ruled the region in the late 17th century.

### Staying put

Their presence is not accidental: They were the ones who agreed to the foundation of the guild in 1613 and gave the club the privilege of using the Cloth Hall attic for "*ten eeuwigen dage*", meaning forever. Their 400 years of continued existence makes the Brotherhood the oldest fencing club in the world. The title of the oldest sports club in Belgium goes to the crossbowmen of St George's Guild in Bruges, founded in the early 1300s, but still, 400 years is something to celebrate. The guild will be doing so with, among other things, an exhibition about the rich



Members of the guild in action in their spectacular 15th-century headquarters

heritage the club has collected over the years.

Kristiaan De Witte, the guild's conservator, proudly shows me the room where the exhibition opens to the public next week. The expo is still under construction, and here and there pieces are lying on the floor, such as a gigantic broadsword that seems like it would be impossible to handle. But the showpieces are there already in their display cases, each with its own story. Besides cups and silverware there are guild logbooks and fencing manuals, the oldest dating from the 16th century. In one of the cases is a devil mask, worn during processions, and a sharp-pointed epee used in duels. Both pieces play a role in a recent edition of Suske and Wiske, Flanders' most popular comic series.

De Witte points to a framed document on the wall, a text dated 1626, gracefully written with a seal underneath. It is a copy of the document in which Albrecht and Isabella gave the Confrérie its privileges. "The Brotherhood was one of the four military guilds of Ghent, together with the crossbowmen, archers and *krombusschutters* (a kind of primitive musket)," De Witte explains.

"These guilds were responsible for the defence of the city of Ghent and were in fact a kind of elite corps within the city guard. Anyone who wanted to join had to be a man, an inhabitant of Ghent and a Catholic. And rich, because the maintenance of the hall required a lot of resources, and their parties were pretty decadent. We even found an invoice in the archive for the rental of a pineapple. For renting it, not to eat, but just to show off."

Also in the room stands a long table with chairs alongside, where the board of the Confrérie assembles. Although board is not the correct name: Here it is called the *eed* and the president is the *euverdeken*, both names inherited from 400 years of tradition.

The largest display is reserved for the most iconic pieces: a flag, a second devil mask and a gold chain. De Witte explains: "The chain is called the *Koningsbreuk* (King's Fracture). It is worn by the King of the Guild, the best fencer using all three weapons. For each new king, the chain is broken and a new link is added, hence the name. Just look at the paintings on the wall." Indeed, the series of portraits of the previous Kings show them all wearing the

same necklace, though the length varies.

De Witte invites me to sign the guest book. The first guests in the book date from the 1930s, and the book is not yet full. "In the past, fencing was an elitist sport, strongly linked to the military. These times have passed, but we still use a specific procedure for new adult members to ensure that we get motivated fencers in our club."

Four hundred years of history is something special, of course, but what about the guild's current sporting achievements? They're equally prosperous, it turns out: "On both sabre and epee we are at the top in Belgium, and several of our fencers compete at international level." St Michael's is not just a club with a rich history behind it: Its future also looks bright.

This is the month of celebration for the Confrérie. On Saturday the exhibition on the club's history opens to the public, on 28 September the annual Battle for the King competition takes place, and the next day there will be a celebratory mass at Sint-Niklaas church.

► [www.confrerie.be](http://www.confrerie.be)



The royal document granting the guild the everlasting right to use the Cloth Hall



A devil mask is just one of the intriguing items from the guild's history on show during its quadricentennial celebrations

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

If Brussels' concert hall Ancienne Belgique has its way, the abandoned American Theater on Heizel will become the capital's newest cultural centre, with stages for multiple disciplines, rehearsal spaces and meeting rooms. They have presented a business plan to government bodies and hope to announce by the end of the year if funding for the project is available. The iconic round building near the Atomium was built by American architect Edward Durell Stone to serve as the American pavilion at the World's Fair in 1958 and was home to Flemish broadcaster VRT until last year. To introduce the building to a new audience, AB is staging concerts there on 20 and 21 September.

► [www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)

Antwerp's Museum of Fine Arts suffered a fire last week, which damaged the roof. The museum has been closed since 2011 for renovations, and the cause of the fire is related to construction, said fire officials. Flames were spotted at about 2.00 on 29 August, and firefighters were able to get the fire under control relatively quickly. Damage was limited to the roof, and no artworks were in danger, said museum authorities.

The Antwerp-based folk rock band New Rising Sun has won Ancienne Belgique's protest song competition. The contest was in support of the global ONE Campaign to end poverty and preventable diseases. The winning song, "Sad Sad World", will be featured on the ONE website, alongside the band's cover of Bob Dylan's "Hurricane". The band featured at the AB's Feeëriën festival in Brussels last week, where they debuted the song for the public.

► [www.one.org/protestsongs](http://www.one.org/protestsongs)

The Kinepolis cinema chain, based in Ghent, saw a profit of €14.3 million in the first half of this year, down 4.1% from the same period last year. The chain, which operates in Belgium, Spain, France, Switzerland and Poland, partially blamed the dip on a decrease of 11% in ticket sales. The decrease was due to extreme winter weather, the economic crisis and a lack of Flemish films released this year, according to the company.

T&T Fireworks of Lummen, Limburg province, won the recent Belgian championship fireworks competition, held on the beach at Ostend. T&T, which came second last year, won with a spectacle set to rock tunes. Eight businesses entered the competition, which features a spectacle once a week throughout July and the first weeks of August. T&T will now provide fireworks for Ostend during the National Day celebrations next 21 July.

Getting you through the world

# Design September

Georgio Valentino

The fine arts are a known quantity in Brussels, home to dozens of internationally recognised museums and galleries. What you might not know is that the capital is also a hotbed of the functional arts: architecture, furniture, textiles and industrial design.

Although less glamorous, designers are far more influential in our lives than their high-art counterparts. Good art might have an effect on us, but good design helps us get on in the world long after we leave the museum.

Design September is a great opportunity to learn more about these unsung heroes of modern life. The seventh edition of the annual month-long festival features exhibitions, lectures, pop-up shops and open houses in every corner of the capital. In all, 120 events are on the programme.

The guest of honour is Jean-François D'Or, the 38-year-old *Brusselaar*

who was named this year's Belgian Designer of the Year. The La Cambre alumnus launched his own industrial design label, Loudordesign, in 2003. His signature is logical, unfussy form. D'Or's designs are straightforward from a manufacturing perspective and blissfully functional on the consumption end.

Brussels' Mode and Design Centre (MAD) curates the special four-part exhibition MAD(e) in Brussels. All month long, the self-sufficient manufacturing collective C-Fabriek, industrial consultancy Triaxes, the textile department at La Cambre and students from Lausanne's ECAL University of Art and Design engage in an artistic and professional dialogue that covers all aspects of design, from concept to finished product and beyond.

Another highlight is the SOFT! exhibition, presented for two weeks in the Anderlecht headquarters of Belgium's textile, wood and furniture union Fedustria. Ten young textile



designers, each specialising in a different aspect of the medium, show off their work. You'll see innovations in wall covering, carpeting, weaving, knitwear and patterns.

Several brands and artists open their doors to give the public a glimpse of how design is done.

her Sint-Gillis studio, where she crafts all her footwear by hand. The ceramicists at alternative porcelain workshop Porcepolis, meanwhile, show you how they push the boundaries of their medium.

Design isn't just for grown-ups either. Webshop Kids Design is setting up a pop-up store in the trendy Delicatessen boutique for the entire month (*pictured*). Here parents can buy furniture, toys and decoration made with children in mind. These pieces, which bear global brands, are safe and durable yet playful enough to appeal to the imagination.

Lots of international partners are on hand to show off their wares during Design September. Hong Kong designers present at the Egg, Polish poster artists exhibit at Bozar, and a Portuguese team colonises the narrow, ancient streets of the Marollen district. Hungary, Spain, England and the Czech Republic are also represented.

5-30 September

Across Brussels

► [www.designseptember.be](http://www.designseptember.be)

## FOOD & DRINK

### Belgian Beer Weekend

The Belgian Brewers, one of the oldest professional associations in the world, is again hosting this multi-faceted weekend dedicated to the art of brewing. For the 15th year, Brussels' magnificent Grote Markt will be transformed into a giant open-air watering hole, a place for connoisseurs and novices alike to come together to sniff, sip, taste and generally show appreciation for this country's rich and complex beer culture. Those out for a binger had best look elsewhere, for this weekend is a serious affair that includes a celebration of the patron saint of brewers, a solemn inauguration of the beer stands and a procession of historical brewery carts and beer wagons. **Robyn Boyle**



6-8 September | Grote Markt, Brussels | ► [www.belgianbrewers.be](http://www.belgianbrewers.be)

## MORE FOOD & DRINK THIS WEEK

### Antwerp

**Bollekespicknick:** Family picnic in the park across from Brewery De Koninck, with Van Tricht cheese sandwiches, perfectly tapped *bollekess*, live music and a Bollekes Run  
**SEP 8 11.00 at Albert Park, Harmoniestraat**  
► [www.dekoninck.be](http://www.dekoninck.be)

### Denderleeuw

**Beer Festival & Garden Party:** Annual event at one of Flanders' best beer restaurants, featuring tastings of more than 300 beers  
**SEP 7 15.00 & SEP 8 11.00 at De Heeren van Liedekerke, Kasteelstraat 33**  
► [www.heerenvanliedekerke.be/en](http://www.heerenvanliedekerke.be/en)

### Poperinge

**Hophoogdag:** September is hop harvesting month, which means Poperinge is abuzz with activities like bus tours to the fields and to St Bernardus Brewery for a taste of the local beers and a regional dish  
**SEP 5-7 across Poperinge**  
► [www.toerismepoperinge.be](http://www.toerismepoperinge.be)

## CONCERT

### Stromae

A video making the rounds on the internet earlier this summer depicted Brussels hip-hop artist Stromae stumbling along the streets of the city in an apparent drunken stupor. Turns out it was a publicity stunt, and one with serious influence. The video went viral, giving the young man with a Flemish mum and a Congolese dad the perfect opportunity to announce the arrival of his new album, *Racine Carrée*. With the first two concerts in his beloved hometown sold out in no time, Stromae has added an additional date. Move quickly for these tickets as well, because the singer-songwriter of beat-filled tracks like "Formidable" and "Alors on danse" knows how to throw a smashing party. **RB**

GET TICKETS NOW



6 April, 2014 | Vorst Nationaal, Brussels | ► [www.vorstnationaal.be](http://www.vorstnationaal.be)

## MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

### Antwerp

**Bai Kamara Jr:** Brussels singer-songwriter with West African roots, a warm and intimate voice and songs that blend pop, blues and jazz  
**SEP 5 20.15 at CO Nova, Schijfstraat 105**  
► [www.nova-kiel.be](http://www.nova-kiel.be)

### Brussels

**Strand Of Oaks:** American nostalgia in the form of pure folk music in the vein of Bob Seger and Neil Young  
**SEP 6 20.00 at Botanique, Koningsstraat 236**  
► [www.botanique.be](http://www.botanique.be)

### Ghent

**Hooded Fang:** Theatrical Canadian indie rock band that mixes '60s pop with garage punk  
**SEP 7 20.00 at Charlatan, Vlasmarkt 6**  
► [www.charlatan.be](http://www.charlatan.be)

## VISUAL ARTS

### Michaël Borremans

"I bring certain images to life. I could do the same with the medium of photography or digital techniques, but I simply find painting more interesting. A painting is not just an image; it's an object with a rich personality. And due to its historical aspect, one cannot possibly deal with it in an uninhibited manner... I'm trying to shock, but not with sex or violence. I just make very beautiful paintings." The works of internationally renowned Flemish artist Michaël Borremans are indeed seductive: intense, moody and often pensive. His technique draws on 18th-century art as well as the works of Impressionists Manet and Degas. Catch his most recent solo exhibition, which includes a selection of atmospheric paintings, drawings and film, before it moves on to its next stops in Tokyo and Dallas. **Robyn Boyle**



Until 12 October | Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp

► [www.zeno-x.com](http://www.zeno-x.com)

### MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

#### Ghent

**Gideon Kiefer: Science conceals madness:** Drawings by the Flemish artist in which doctors and nurses conduct bizarre experiments on unsuspecting patients

Until OCT 6 at **Museum Dr Guislain**, Jozef Guislainstraat 43

► [www.museumdrguislain.be](http://www.museumdrguislain.be)

#### Leuven

**Devoted: Photos by Jan Locus:** The Flemish photographer's 15-year journey through the rites and devotion associated with Christianity

Until SEP 28 at **KADOC-KU Leuven**, Vlamingenstraat 39

► [www.kadoc.kuleuven.be](http://www.kadoc.kuleuven.be)

#### Lier

**Temporal Habitat:** Large interactive installation by New York artist Thomas Broadbent

Until SEP 15 at **Voorkamer**, Heilige Geeststraat 7

► [www.voorkamer.be](http://www.voorkamer.be)

## FAMILY

### Thomas the Tank Engine

Kids are just crazy about Thomas the Tank Engine, the impossibly cute, cheeky, blue train from the popular British children's book series and spin-off TV cartoon show. What if you told them Thomas is coming to Flanders? And not some plastic toy train, either, but the real thing. Thomas and his friends, including the Fat Controller, will pull into the historic steam train centre in Maldegem, East Flanders, for two full days of activities. Come ride with Thomas, have your photo taken with him, learn about his friends, build your own railway or hang out in the movie corner. It's an adventure for the whole family (in Dutch, reservations required). **RB**



7-8 September, 10.00-18.00

► [www.thomas-de-stoomlocomotief.be](http://www.thomas-de-stoomlocomotief.be)

| Het Stoomcentrum, Stationsplein 8, Maldegem

### MORE FAMILY ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

#### Brussels

**Muntpunt:** Opening weekend festivities for the Flemish information centre and ultra-modern library, featuring a picnic, music and petanque on the square, plus storytelling and reading corners

SEP 6-8 at **Muntpunt, Munt 6**

► [www.muntpunt.be](http://www.muntpunt.be)

#### Ghent

**Fietsival:** Festival all about the bicycle, with street theatre and performances on wheels, arts and crafts workshops, unicycle riding, leg massages, "pimp your bike" sessions and the chance to win a bike

SEP 8 14.00-18.00 at **Dracunaplein**

► [www.facebook.com/Fietsival](http://www.facebook.com/Fietsival)

#### Hechtel (Limburg province)

**Sanicole Airshow:** International show of aircraft, including old-timers, jets, gliders and parachutists. Talks and workshops by pilots and an air show of spectacular manoeuvres by the French Air Force

SEP 13-15 at **Aeroclub Sanicole, Kamperbaan 165**

► [www.sanicole.com](http://www.sanicole.com)

Katrien Lindemans

### DUSK TIL DAWN

### Rooftop Party

Until 14 September

We all know the hanging gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. But did you know Brussels has its very own hanging gardens too? They are hidden on the roof of Parking 58, a well-known carpark tower in the city centre, appreciated for its great views of the city's skyline.

For the next 10 days, the gardens are open every Saturday from 14.00. They combine two of the latest summer trends: rooftop terraces and apero drinking. Clever! Take the elevator to the top floor of Parking 58, located at Bisschopstraat 1, and enjoy beats and drinks until midnight. The gardens have been something of an overnight success, so they tend to get crowded on sunny days. When the rooftop has reached its maximum capacity of 500, you'll have to wait for someone to come down before you can go up. But trust me, the view and ambiance make up for it. Green grass carpets on the

floor, a stunning view, a cocktail bar, great music and, if you're there at the right time, a beautiful sunset, too. On top of that, entry is entirely free.

When the bells chime midnight, there's no need to go home. There's an after-party at Mister Wong, a great club about a hundred metres down the road. The entrance fee is €5. Another neighbourhood option for a fun night out after Parking 58 is a trip to Café Roskam, where the Brussels DJ Rim-K will be spinning his electronic dance records all night on 14 September. That party starts at 22.00.

There's a Bitchy Butch event at Café Le Biberium on the same night, a gay party attracting a very hip crowd. Be there by 23.00 for electro-pop by Lavender Wolf (Berlin) and Pamphy Ta Mère (Brussels). Tickets cost €8.

► [www.lesjardinssuspendus.be](http://www.lesjardinssuspendus.be)



© Francois Sarte Photography

## BITE

## De Bio-Dynamische Bakkerij

★★★☆

When you're in a city like Antwerp, there are options aplenty for good lunch spots. When the sun peeks out from behind the clouds, however, you'll find your choices narrowed down to a select few "good lunch spots with outdoor seating". And that's how a friend and I end up at this lovely little café with an incredibly long name. De Biologische Dynamische Bakkerij (The Organic Dynamic Bakery, if you will) has three locations in the centre of the city, two of which are owned by Chilean-Belgian entrepreneur Carlos Maldonado. But only one – in the Mechelsesteenweg – boasts a charming, leafy terrace at its back.

To get there, we walk through the front bakery area and past a long glass case filled with assorted pies and pastries, many of which are proudly marked "sugar-free". All the baking, we find out, is in fact done at another address, an organic bakery and natural food shop in Amsterdam called 't Zonnemeer.

I make a mental note to save room for dessert and continue heading towards the back of the charming dining room area, furnished with exactly the kind of French country-style tables I would love to have in my own home.

It's an odd hour for lunch, late afternoon, but our amiable server agrees to make us anything on the menu. So we take our time looking it over before finally deciding on two warm sandwiches from the suggestions board – and one plain omelette for my friend's son.

In the 10 minutes that we wait for our dishes, my dining buddies happily sip from their glasses of apple-pear juice



(from organic farm De Drie Wilgen in nearby Nijlen), while I cup a cappuccino in my hands and soak up the late summer sun.

The three plates arrive together with a basket of thickly sliced organic brown bread encrusted with sunflower seeds. The omelette is as simple as one would expect: thin and golden and not overly cooked.

Both my friend's veggie burger and my baguette with bacon come served on warm, crusty bread with a side of ketchup. Hers is a thick patty made from pumpkin, topped with tangy sun-dried tomato pesto, creamy feta and a few slices of courgette, which could have used a little more cooking time. All in all, though, the burger is well presented, tasty

and filled with good-quality, healthy ingredients. The same goes for my warm baguette, albeit a bit less healthy due to several juicy bacon strips and blobs of melted cheese. But inside there's also courgette, tomato, crunchy white onion and some creamy vinaigrette. After a few shakes of the salt shaker, I proceed to devour the whole thing.

Finally it's time to return to the pastry case at the front, where we pick out a slice of rhubarb crumble and a chocolate-dipped hazelnut-spelt cookie. Spelt being one of the most "nutritious" of all grains, I consider this little treat guilt-free. We finish off with a hot chocolate topped with whipped cream, a latte and a cappuccino, all made with care.

The bill amounts to a very fair €45 and comes with a helpful set of directions for the best parks to visit in the neighbourhood.

► Mechelsesteenweg 78, Antwerp; 03.248.78.00  
(also Volkstraat 17 & Cadixstraat 55)  
🕒 8.00-19.00 Mon-Sat; 9.00-18.00 Sun  
💶 Mains: €5-€14  
ℹ Organic breakfast and lunch café with an idyllic walled garden and loads of charm

## TALKING SPORTS

## Skating and hockey deliver summer surprise

Leo Cendrowicz

With summer drawing to a close, sport is offering some surprise consolations. The most notable is in hockey, where Belgium stormed into their first European Championships final, only to be denied the trophy in a 3-1 defeat to Olympic gold medallists Germany. These are unprecedented heights by the Red Lions, whose performance during the week-long tournament, held at the Hockey Arena in Boom, seemed to stun even the most ardent local fans. After beating Germany 2-1 in their opening group match, Belgium then hammered the Czech Republic 4-0 and drew with Spain 2-2, before rolling over England 3-2 in the semi-finals. In the final, and facing Germany – who they had already defeated in their opening group game – the Lions seemed destined for their first major trophy. Certainly,

the crowd believed it, raising the roof when Tom Boon pierced the German rearguard to put his side 1-0 up. But that only served to awaken the German beast, which knocked three goals in with no replies.

Still, it marks a steady trajectory for the Lions from their semi-final position in the 2011 tournament: winning hockey's second-tier trophy, the Champions Challenge, the same year, finishing fifth in their first ever Champions Trophy appearance last year, and qualifying for next year's World Cup for only the fifth time.

One sport where Belgium is raking in trophies is speed skating, where Bart Swings (*pictured on the right*) claimed an impressive four golds and a bronze at the World Championships in Ostend. But having helped dominate the sport

and set a world record, the 22-year-old from Herent, near Leuven, is now set to shift his focus to ice skating. It could well lead to a rare Belgian chance in the Winter Olympics.

And so to football, where the new season also brings good news. Anderlecht have qualified for the Champions League, and have drawn a relatively easy group, with Benfica, PSG and Olympiakos. And three Belgian clubs have qualified for the Europa League group stage: cup winners KRC Genk, Zulte Waregem and Standard Liège.

But the biggest football story is next week: Belgium's double-header World Cup qualifier, against Scotland at Hampden Park on Friday, and Croatia in Zagreb the following Wednesday. Results in these games would really help us forget that summer is over.

## The last word...

## Hard to please

"It was warm, very dry and sunny. But there were no records broken. You don't need to go far back in time to find better."

VRT weatherman Frank Deboosere was only mildly impressed by the summer

## Taking the plunge

"It was the first time, and so of course there were nerves. I slept fine the night before, which was a surprise."

Ihsane Chioua Lekhli became the first person with an immigrant background to present VRT's flagship political debate programme *De zevende dag*

## Family business

"The advantage is that we all get holidays at the same time."

The two parents and three offspring of the Gheysen family from Sint-Eloois-Winkel, West Flanders, are all schoolteachers

## Bright outlook

"I'm really keen to go back to school!" Seven-year-old Steffie from Kortrijk took part in a cancer research campaign and, a year after a tumour was diagnosed, is well enough to go back to school

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY

## Cover story

We've dropped hints in the past about the major presence of Munt Punt when it finally opens: Well, the time has come. We'll be there to be a first-hand witness to events this weekend when the Flemish information centre and library opens in the heart of downtown Brussels

## Science

Working in a national park would not be such a bad thing, and now a few more scientists will get that chance, as Ecotron+ launches in the Hoge Kempen of Limburg. The centre will focus on research for the greatest environmental challenge of our time: climate change. We'll tell you how they'll carry out their work and why they're doing it in the park

## Tourism

Leave it to Ghent to come up with a new, quirky gimmick in city tourism. City Running leads you around the city, pointing out all the sights like any other tour – but while you're jogging. Our correspondent dons his running shoes to keep up with the latest craze in city-tripping



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