

AM Visit to Het Loo Palace, Apeldoorn on Monday 24th September 2001

Dr Paul H Rem, Conservator, gave us a warm welcome, introducing the history of the building and the story of its restoration. Formerly a Royal Palace, Het Loo is now a national museum of the House of Orange-Nassau, opening to the public in 1984 after a seven-year restoration programme. The magnificent 17th century

facades, formal baroque gardens and original apartments of William and Mary have been recreated. Additional interior-settings, show how the Palace was furnished and utilised by later generations of the Royal family.

When Prince William III of Orange (1650-1702) became Stadtholder of Gelderland in 1672, he acquired the hunting rights to the region called the Veluwe, where he built a hunting lodge, Het Loo, in 1685. This became a favourite country residence of the Prince and his wife, Mary II. Between 1691 and 1695, after they were crowned King and Queen of England, Het Loo was extended with two lateral pavilions replacing the earlier colonnades linking the central part of the Palace to the service wings. The designs came from Paris, probably from the Academie d'Architecture. It is thought that Daniel Marot became involved only after the main building phase was completed – his influence can be seen in some of the decorative schemes.

The restorations have been based on the 1695 floor plan, a 1713 inventory of the contents, Marot's prints showing designs for the decoration of a number of rooms, and descriptions from contemporary visitors. As none of the original furniture survived (all the property of the House of Orange was sold by the French after the revolution of 1795), the 17th century interiors have been furnished with purchases from auctions and dealers, based on the inventories.

Our tour began in Mary's Chapel, where the original Anglican altar has been removed but the reredos survives. In her library, the bookcases and fireplace have been reconstructed to Marot's original designs. A black japanned armchair c.1690 and a Boulle bureau plat are placed in a central position. The mirrored ceiling is original – it is thought that this room was first intended for porcelain display and only after her death in 1695 became a library to house her books. The library leads into the reconstructed Gallery, the walls of which are covered with green damask, after a design by Marot. Although a typical English feature, picture galleries were not normally included in Dutch houses of this status. There was an interesting set of six elaborately carved chairs here, in chuglam, an Indian silver greywood from Vietnam, part of the Dutch East Indies, dating to c.1700.

The apartments of William and Mary are also on the first floor, arranged on either side of the Great Hall and Main Staircase. Each apartment consisted of an antechamber, a bedroom, a dressing room and one or two closets (fig 1), creating an enfilade around corners. The closets have the best views of the gardens. These apartments are richly furnished, with ebony and gilded furniture, and silk damask hangings. The central feature of William's bedroom is a spectacular state bed of crimson silk damask. Purchased from the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in 1995, the bed was commissioned by Thomas Lord Coningsby around 1697-8 for the state bedroom at Hampton Court in Leominster, Herefordshire¹. Paul Rem argued that it is

quite possible that William's actual bed could have come from England. The bed and some other furniture in the Queen's bedroom also came from England, originally from Nottingham House (Kensington Palace) via Burley-on-the-Hill.

Between 1807-10, the property was refurbished by King Louis, Napoleon's brother. A set of Empire chairs, commissioned by him from Albert Eeltjes (1751-1836) is displayed in the first of a series of rooms dedicated to later members of the family. Furniture in the 18th and 19th century rooms came from other palaces of the House of Orange, while much of the original furniture from the 20th century survives.

Throughout our visit, Paul Rem focused on the decision-making processes that have been involved in converting the Palace into a museum, and emphasised the value of the rich archival resources. His enthusiasm and knowledge of the collection made the visit truly memorable.

Elizabeth Hancock

PM Visit to the Netherlands Open Air Museum, Arnhem, 24th September 2001

We were met by Eric van't Hull, Keeper of Collections who gave an excellent introduction. Founded in 1912 as a private institution, the museum opened in 1918, making it one of the earliest open-air museums. Around 40 buildings from different regions in the northern Netherlands have been reconstructed and furnished, presenting the diverse material culture of a maritime and rural population between c.1800 to 1970.

Before setting off around the grounds, we experienced Holland Rama, described as 'a miraculous, nostalgic



A Fisherman's cottage from Marken at the Openluchtmuseum drawn by William Jeffries

journey into Holland's past.' Lasting 20 minutes, this was a surreal hydraulic time-machine, involving sitting on a moving platform while an array of alternating dioramas, film and reconstruction were revealed. It was hugely theatrical and great fun.

The grounds are extensive, but a tram makes getting around easy. In addition to the furnished houses, farms, mills, shops, a church and an inn, the museum has extensive collections, around 250,000 objects, including agricultural machines, tools, transport items, household goods, furniture, textiles, costume and toys. Some of these are exhibited in the Collection Centre, arranged according to type and function. Current displays include cheese presses, sledges, cradles, spoon boards, biscuit moulds and knitting sticks.

The collection aims to provide an overview of furniture used by the working population such as the grain chests (fig 2 & 7), pea/seed cabinets (fig 3), peat-chests which were often designed in the form of cabinet-desks, wheeled trunks with dome-shaped lids which maybe of colonial origin², Assendelft rush-seated chairs (fig 4)³, klaptafels, box beds (fig 5), and gateleg-tables (fig 6). It is worth noting that the geometrical surface inscriptions and decoration on one of the grain chests (fig 7) is very similar to early Bavarian chests from Wasserburg am Inn (painted red and black)⁴ and those from East Anglia and Dorset⁵. The basement houses a splendid collection of tiles and lead-glazed earthenware pots.

The layout of the site gave an impression of a series of working communities and provided a context for some vernacular furniture types, such as the painted barrel-shaped children's chairs or kinderstoelen, which we were to see on a later visit. This introduction to interiors from Hindeloopen and the Zaan area was particularly useful.