

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/18697> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Beulakker, Eerde Hendrik Geert Taeke Maria

Title: Onderscheid moet er zijn : pleziervaren in Nederland, een cultuurgeschiedenis

Date: 2012-04-04

ALL PEOPLE ARE EQUAL, BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

Pleasure boating in the Netherlands, a cultural history

SUMMARY

Two questions set the course for my research into the Dutch pleasure boating.

1. How could an elite pastime like water sport develop into mass recreation?
2. How do the economical, cultural and nautical elite with their historical claim to 'good taste', manage to make themselves distinguishable from ordinary pleasure boaters?

The following summary outlines the four eras of the historical development of the water sport, describes the seven corks on which the popularisation of the water sport floats, and gives a brief account of the results of the research into status, taste and distinction.

Four eras

Part I: 1622-1846. This period commenced with the establishment of the first marina and ended with the foundation of the country's first water sport club. The first marina dates from 1622 and consisted of a walkway on piles along the banks of the IJ river in Amsterdam and supplied a mooring for forty-one pleasure yachts. It was no coincidence that Amsterdam received the first marina. In the water-bound and flourishing city of merchants a number of citizens had amassed large fortunes and some of them had an exclusive pleasure yacht built. The so-called *hekjacht*, evolved from the warship, with colourful decorations, one or two masts, leeboards, and an opulent interior. It was like a 'prince's palace'; for the stadholders preferred to travel like 'princes' in their large, luxurious yachts, which gave rise to envy in some merchants. Exhibiting personal success and wealth was a known human trait back then as well. In 'Holland' and Friesland there has been water recreation since time immemorial: skating, fishing, swimming, rowing, punting, yacht-racing. There was only a fine line between 'commercial sailing' and 'pleasure sailing'. Apart from the pleasure yachts, boats in the Low Countries were always commercial vessels, regardless of whether it concerned freight transport, passenger transport or recreation.

In 1660 Charles II, the new king of England, who was on his way from Breda to London, was presented with a pleasure yacht by the mayor of Amsterdam, Cornelis van Vlooswijck. It was meant to strengthen the friendship with England, but undoubtedly also to promote Dutch shipbuilding. The result was that English shipbuilders also began to build pleasure yachts and a number of European monarchs ordered a yacht from Amsterdam.

Part II: 1846-1900. In 1846 a new era in water sport began. In that year, at the instigation of Prince Hendrik, the second son of King Willem II, the Royal Dutch Yacht Club was founded in Rotterdam. The members, who joined by invitation, belonged to the

upper echelons of society. Rowing races had been popular with a number of gentleman enthusiasts in Rotterdam for a number of decennia, but the appearance of a new water sport club attracted a new elite and the races received a formal status.

Prince Hendrik strove for a national network of Yacht Clubs with the main objective of breathing new life into the bold seafaring spirit of the previous Golden Century.

Paradoxically it had the opposite effect. In 1847 Amsterdam founded its own sailing and rowing club out of dissatisfaction with the Rotterdam club, and a year later the Frisians followed with the sailing club Oostergoo. Initiatives in other water-rich cities resulted in around twenty more water sport clubs by the end of the century. This was the period in which the Netherlands too began to industrialise: steam engines, steamships, railways, factories, bicycles, automobiles, electricity, population growth, urbanization and impoverishment were the characteristics.

In England the phenomenon of 'sport' was born in the form of football, rugby, golf, horse racing and cycle racing. When the chic Yacht Club in Rotterdam went bankrupt shortly after the death of its chairman and regular financial backer Prince Hendrik, rowing and sailing were in the process of becoming sports, and the concerns were no longer the bold seafaring spirit of the past, but fair play, competition, physical and mental training, relaxation and pleasure. And whereas in the first instance water sports, together with tennis and golf, remained elite sports, around 1900 other sports such as football and cycle racing became popular among the working classes. Sport was no longer the exclusive domain of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, the upper classes began to see sport as a remedy against idleness and drunkenness; as an integral part of the drive for civilisation.

Part III: 1900-1945. This was a phase of development characterised by the building of manageable and relatively cheap boats such as the wherry, the canoe, the open sailing boat and the cabin sailing boat. The growing enthusiasm for affordable self-built vessels went hand in hand with this. Rowing and sailing widened from being competitive events into making group tours, sometimes of several days, which as a result attracted new enthusiasts. Small shipyards began to mass-produce boats for the first time.

In 1912 the magazine 'De Watersport' appears for the first time. The initiator was W. Teupken, a doctor from The Hague who was a dedicated motorboat enthusiast. The magazine was a milestone. Up until then the general sport magazines had covered water sports. In 1905 the ANWB (the Dutch road-users organisation) had been the first to give regular space to pleasure sailing in the 'On the Water' section of its magazine 'Kampioen'. This had been as a direct result of the introduction of the internal combustion engine. After 1900 the first boats with a (petrol) engine appeared on the water. The 'fast machine' was a shining symbol of the technical developments and it attracted new groups to the water sport. The opinion was even uttered that this was the end of primitive sailing.

Motor boating attracted a new type to water sport and resulted in a new sort of club: the motorboat club (Dutch Motorboat Club, 1907). Finally an alternative for rowing and sailing had appeared. And with it new opportunities to be distinguishable on the water. The motor cruiser proved that water sport could be modern and look to the future; that will say: comfortable, without involving blisters on the hands and hanging at an angle. And who enjoyed our splendid waterscape more than the quietly chugging motor-boater?

During the First World War closed borders forced the Dutch to spend their free time in their own country. As a result water sport flourished for the first couple of years. In December 1915 a four-day water sport congress was organised by 'de Koninklijke' (KNZ&RV) of Amsterdam. It was the result of the growing dissatisfaction of the ordinary pleasure sailor with the power of the water sport establishment and the disproportionate attention paid to (international) sailing races. The congress programme consisted of poorly-attended talks and lectures, but well-attended dinners and dances. The list of participants was crammed with dignitaries. This prompted a journalist for 'De Nederlandsche Sport' to write that those who attended the water sport congress 'produced a lot of hot air, even though the main burners were missing'. In fact the four stately days marked the split between the old guard and popular pleasure boating. When at the end of 1920 the Frisian hairdresser Bulthuis introduced the self-built *BM'er* with its plank construction for around 100 guilders, and at the same time the champion of the water sport, H.C.A. van Kampen, became influential as editor-in-chief of the magazine the 'Waterkampioen', water sport was quickly on its way to becoming widely popular.

Part IV: 1945-2011. This period, encompassing the baby boom generation, saw the last phase of the popularisation of pleasure boating. After the destruction of World War II the Netherlands crawled falteringly out of economic and social misery, and the water sport clubs too managed to revive themselves.

In 1950 there were roughly 20,000 cabin boats in the Netherlands, by 1975 the number had grown to 140,000. The number of water sport clubs also increased dramatically. It is not surprising that this seven-fold increase gave cause for concern. For example there were far too few marinas, and it was feared that the waterways would become overfull and that the huge numbers of boats would cause irreparable damage to the countryside. This meant that the government would have to become involved in water sport and after the mid-1950s a stream of bills, reports and policy documents gradually started to flow. In Friesland a number of local councils joined forces and established the recreation body De Marrekrite.

In 1959 the first Pioneer boat built by Ricus van de Stadt was launched. This was a nine metre cabin sailing boat which 'dragged the water sport out of the stone age'. For the Pioneer was mass-produced, entirely built of fibreglass and with strikingly round lines. It

was a flat-bottomed boat and unusually the keel and the balanced rudder were separated. The sailing qualities of the yacht were astonishing.

With the expansion of pleasure-boating the water sport industry grew accordingly. New boatyards, water sport shops and marinas opened. Consumers could choose from complete do-it-yourself boat plans, laminate building kits, steel or fibreglass hulls (either technically ready for the water or not) and of course fully-finished mass-produced yachts. After the economic recession at the end of the 80s Bouw van Wijk in Woubrugge brought the first motor sloops onto the market, followed some years later by cheap factory-built sailing boats from Germany and France. These discount builders shocked and outraged the traditional boat-builders.

Van Wijk's motor-sloops and the yacht manufacturers Bavaria and Bénèteau created a new generation of water sport enthusiasts; most of which were sailing consumers without a nautical past. The step from the car to the motor-sloop was small; the difference between the highway and the waterway lay only in the different ignition key. Add to this the fact that, thanks to gps, orientation on board could be done by a child and the potential range was extended en masse to include the IJssel Lake, the waterways of Zeeland and the North Sea.

Not surprisingly the old guard regarded this new pleasure boating with suspicion. Elite groups have never been especially keen on the masses.

Seven corks on which pleasure boating floats

1. Pleasure instead of fear

In 1852, after three steam-driven pumping-stations had been working for a good three years, the Harlem Lake became a polder-drained land ready to be made suitable for habitation. The notorious lake had increasingly threatened Amsterdam with dyke failures and the plans to drain it were from the 16th century. However, the amount of water was considered too great for windmills to deal with. Only after the invention of steam technology could the Harlem Lake be tamed. The newly-acquired land was a technical wonder, and it placed an exclamation mark at the end of centuries of development towards complete control over the water. Indeed, when the first pleasure yachts appeared in Amsterdam, land reclamation and pumping water with windmills was already a standard part of economic life in the Republic. Every piece of reclaimed land was celebrated as a victory for ingenuity. The confidence that water can be caged lies at the root of pleasure boating.

2. Suitable waterways

The water-rich Netherlands might have been designed for pleasure boating. That Friesland is the jewel in the crown as water sport province is undisputed. Sufficient, varied and safe navigable water is a condition for pleasure boating to thrive. Besides Friesland, during the last half a century the IJssel Lake, The Wadden Sea and the Zeeland delta have been taken over by the pleasure boaters.

3. Water sport clubs

The founding of water sport clubs was a new phenomenon in the Netherlands in the middle of the nineteenth century. Before then it was mainly innkeepers who organised sailing races, for which they awarded prizes, in order to boost their turnover. Sailing races grew out of a mixture of economic advantage, traditional water events, mutual rivalry and pleasure. Skippers competed with each other to be the first to arrive at the market with their goods. Or on the return journey, to be the first one to reach the inn. During a fête, annual fair or public festival sailing races were often part of the programme. In order to draw up rules and to decide conflicts the local innkeeper preferred to make use of a committee, consisting of a group of men of authority who also understood boat racing.

When the Koninklijke Nederlandsche Yacht Club was founded in Rotterdam in 1846 a new era began for rowing and sailing races. All the clubs which were soon to follow, both in 'Holland' and in Friesland, took it upon themselves to organise boat races and developed divisions in classes, rules and regulations, programmes and prizes.

From the beginning water sport clubs were however also meeting places. Later they also dedicated themselves to producing propaganda, protecting interests, introducing new boat classes and organising sailing tours.

4. The engine

Nowadays there is an engine installed in every cabin sailing boat and an outboard motor hangs behind every open boat. You have to search in the fringes of the water sport in order to find places where muscle and wind power are still the sources of energy; such as rowing and sailing races, canoeing and wind and kite-surfing. It is no exaggeration to say that the internal combustion engine has been the ultimate catalyst for mass pleasure boating. When after 1900 the petrol engine quickly began to replace the steam engines in yachts, the Dutch fans of this new spectacular innovation were convinced that especially their home country with its many bridges, city canals, ditches, canals and rivers, was ideal for boat tours, and that ultimately the 'fast machine' would replace the 'slow sail'. Nowadays we know that during a trip every sailor uses the engine for more hours than he uses the sails. Whether we like it or not, we are all incurable car-drivers who are addicted to the ignition key. It is not for nothing that the motor-sloop is such a success. On a sunny day even hydrophobia cannot prevent a person from stepping into a sloop and chugging about for an hour.

5. The mass-produced yacht

Every boat, whether it is a one hundred-year-old *boeier*, a steel motor cruiser from the 70s or a new mass-produced polyester boat, has ties with the cultural heritage both of the time in which it was built and to a distant past. The first pleasure yachts in Amsterdam were luxurious and fast versions of the working boats of after 1600, when

boatbuilding in 'Holland' had developed to great heights compared with the rest of Europe. In the century that followed the freight *boeier*, influenced by the successful *fluit*, evolved into the pleasure yacht. Now with a cabin construction above decks for sleeping comfort. As early as the seventeenth century Frisian boatyards also built yachts which were suitable for both freight and pleasure tours.

It is striking that for two centuries yachts changed very little. The Frisian yacht designer and racing sailor Folkert N. van Loon (1775-1840) complained about the conservatism of boat-builders and the, in his opinion, much too slow boats. Van Loon swore by empirical investigation. By measuring, calculating and then standardising instead of relying on 'the experienced eye', whereby you just had to wait and see how the ship performed in the water. For him fishes, and particularly pikes, were the blueprints for a good yacht. For, he said, in the pike the form is defined by the function, which is to say that speed is more important than beauty.

Six years after the death of Van Loon the newly-founded Rotterdam Yacht Club organised its first races on the river Maas. The competitors and the spectators in the banks were amazed to see an American centreboard boat amongst the yachts. The strange flat, unpretentious, plain little boat with its centreboard left the typical Dutch walnut-shaped vessels with leeboards and gaffs in its wake. It would be another forty years before a centreboard boat would glide down the slipway of the innovative boatyard Het Jacht in Amsterdam.

The yacht designer and builder Ricus van de Stadt has already been mentioned. His pike-shaped Pioneer would certainly have appealed to Folkert van Loon. By this time, after World War II, tank testing had been introduced – an indispensable technique for combining science and boat building. Of no less influence was the fact that the Pioneer was a fibreglass boat, which because of the high initial development costs had to be mass-produced. The industrialised mass-production and robots on an assembly line were an acknowledgement of the automobile industry. In the new millennium the German boat-builder Bavaria ultimately succeeded in producing a new boat every hour.

6. Affluence

Prosperity was, and is, a necessary precondition for pleasure boating. The pleasure yachts in booming Amsterdam four centuries ago, were built by the order of wealthy merchants. In the present period of economic recession we realise once again that a boat is a luxury item, which quickly takes a back seat compared to the basic needs.

From 1950 to 1975 the Netherlands experienced a 'Golden quarter century'. Incomes rose as never before, sometimes by ten per cent a year, while inflation remained comparatively low. After the considerable dip in the 80s the economy made a remarkable recovery and the internet era began. The memory of the oil crisis, the Club of

Rome's report and other sombre predictions seemed to have been wiped out. In The Hague a broad-based coalition government came to power and the free market was unconditionally embraced. In the last twenty years forty thousand sloops took to the water, cheap imported boats flooded onto the IJssel Lake and Dutch boatyards built large numbers of exclusive yachts. This growth only slowed down in 2008 with the credit crunch. Prosperity is the mainstay of widely practised pleasure boating.

7. A hedonistic lifestyle

Together with the Marshall Plan, by which between 1948 and 1954 the United States supplied the Netherlands with more than a billion dollars, consumerism arrived in the form of amazing new products, supported by marketing and advertising, including the slogan 'You too can be like us!'.

It has been said that in the fifties of the last century the 'consumer' also emerged in The Netherlands. Besides televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, mopeds and transistor radios the new products were Hollywood films, rock 'n roll, jazz, cheap off-the-peg clothes like jeans, jackets, T-shirts and sneakers, Brylcreem and cigarettes. It is striking that it was the working-class youth who first copied the consumer style of the American way of life and that Americanisation happened from the bottom up.

It goes without saying that not everybody was happy with this new consumerism. In the 'higher circles' the mass culture, the showy consumerism and the vulgar amusement were seen as a fall in morals. This was also true of the American influence on the water sport, which involved racing with a maximum of horse-power and noise, waterskiing and later the appearance of water scooters.

After 1965 The Netherlands modernised at high speed. The class distinctions faded, unemployment benefits and other social measures were introduced, the pill became available, sectarianism dissolved and a general secularisation was unstoppable. Middle-class teenagers also grew accustomed to consumerism and a hedonistic lifestyle. Even their parents jealously viewed the freedom and the informal social conventions of their growing children. This new lifestyle also legitimised pleasure for pleasure's sake. Free time was now earmarked as the time in which to have fun.

The great success of the motor-sloop has already been mentioned. This practical leisure time accessory with its comfortable seats and soft cushions, with a cool box and a table for the drinks and the snacks, was created with a view to relaxing with family and friends for a few hours. 'I'll take one of those', I overheard a couple say to the salesman at the HISWA boat show.

Good taste as a means of distinction

Water sport has a good pedigree. Nobility, patricians, and later the bourgeoisie were for a long time the levels of society who could allow themselves the luxury of a yacht. For this reason owning a pleasure yacht was in particular the ultimate distinguishing symbol of nobility and good taste.

But water sport popularised and expanded into pleasure boating. Between the wars a new social class appeared on the water and in the water sport clubs: the lower middle class. As a consequence the yacht lost some of its exclusivity. The second wave of pleasure boaters came with the baby boom generation during the two prosperous decades after 1950. At this time the educated working man entered the world of the water sport. After the recovery from the economic recession in the 80s the newest generation of boats cast off: the polyester 'clinker-built' motor-sloop and the low-budget yacht. Probably never before in the history of the water sport had new enthusiasts been so strongly regarded as an invasion of barbaric hordes. How should the established nautical elite with its feeling for romanticism, love of tradition and fixed ideas about beauty react?

In the 60s and 70s of the previous century the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1939-2002) did inspirational research into the relationship between cultural taste and social class. He pointed out that for century after century 'good taste' in European societies was considered by all social classes to be an inborn characteristic of the elite. It was a characteristic whose main function was to promote social distinction; that is to say to perpetuate the social distance from the up-and-coming bourgeoisie. In connection with this Bourdieu used the term 'capital'; not just in the economic sense but also for the accumulation within families of cultural knowledge, power and standing.

As modern pleasure boating in The Netherlands is rooted in the upper echelons of society in the second half of the nineteenth century and remained an elite sport with the accompanying traditions for a comparatively long time, the question arose in me to what extent 'good taste' still plays a role as a means of distinction on the water. In other words, is at the present time the possession of economic capital (income, possessions), cultural capital (education) and nautical capital (sailing experience) still used to create a distance from the boating masses?

The results of the research in chapter 12 show that this is still undoubtedly the case. There are a variety of ways to make oneself distinguishable from the rest. For, it transpires, sailors distinguish themselves both from each other and from motor boaters, the boat in which one sails is an outstanding means of distinction, the water sport club to which one belongs partly determines the social and nautical status. Below are a few examples.

1. Sailors and motor boaters

A lot of sailors feel superior to motor boaters within the water sport. In their eyes motor boating is of a lower order than sailing. Sailors also distinguish themselves from motor boaters because they earn more and are more highly educated. Most of the academics in the water sport are the owners of round and flat-bottomed sailing boats and pointed classic yachts.

Education, newspaper preference, and the choice of motor or sailing boat go together. Sailors read quality papers like the NRC, the Volkskrant or Trouw, motor boat owners read tabloids such as De Telegraaf or the Algemeen Dagblad.

2. The yacht as a means of distinction

Pleasure boaters subscribe to the statement that 'the social differences in society are easily observable on the water in summer'. They also agree with the statement that 'a yacht which has been built by a leading boatyard to someone's personal specifications, receives the most appreciation on the water'. Sailors and motor boaters are also in agreement about the statement that 'there are people whose yacht indicates that they possess real good taste'.

3. Water sport clubs and social prestige

Water sport clubs differ widely from each other when it comes to the education, income and the selection of their members. The majority of the members of WV Dok- en Scheepsbouw (Sixhaven), WV Gouda, the Doerakclub and the Pikmeerkruiserclub have a low level of education. In contrast more than eighty per cent of the members of the Kustzeilers, the Wadvvaarders and ZV Oostergoo have a higher education or university background.

The members of the Nederlandse Vereniging van Toerzeilers (Dutch Association of Touring Sailors) earn significantly less than the members of the Nederlandse Vereniging van Kustzeilers (Dutch Association of Coastal Sailors). The Koninklijke Zeilvereniging (Royal Sailing Association) Oostergoo contains the greatest number of high-earners – more than a quarter of them earn more than 150,000 euros a year. The Koninklijke Nederlandse Motorboot Club (Royal Dutch Motor Boat Club), the members of which are mostly (ex) businessmen, comes close to this.

A number of associations with a long tradition of social prestige still employ, either explicitly or not, the age-old ballot system as a means of selection for admission. It is noteworthy that the Koninklijke Zeilvereniging Oostergoo has managed to retain its status as a male-only club.

