

Belgian Events

Contents

Editorial	2
Political news	3
Historical news	4 - 5
Medical news	6
Cultural news	7
Sports news	8
Did You Know?	9
Clubs and Organisations	10
Events	11
Consular news	12 - 13



Justine Henin-Hardenne, current Womens World Champion Tennis



It has already been 4 months since my family and I 're-arrived' in London. Doesn't time fly!

It is with great pleasure that I wish all the readers of *Belgian Events* a very happy and prosperous 2007.

In June of this new year federal elections will be held in our country. I would like to emphasise that every Belgian national aged 18 and over, wherever in the world, has got both the right and duty to cast his or her vote. For those of you who are no longer registered in Belgium, I would suggest you get in touch with the Belgian Embassy as soon as possible for more information on these upcoming elections. This edition of the newsletter also contains some information on the event.

This issue also devotes attention to Belgium's two-year membership of the UN Security Council which started on 1 January, the planned World War I commemorations in Passchendaele and Belgium's tennis heroes. As for the Passchendaele festivities, the Belgian embassy in London is currently studying ways to fittingly celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele. More details will follow in the next editions of the newsletter.

Justine Henin-Hardenne starts the new year as the number one in women's world tennis, the Women's World Champion and as Belgian sports woman of the year. Meanwhile, two of the main characters behind Belgium's tennis success have now committed themselves to promoting British tennis.

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Reactions and contributions by outsiders are welcome

Belgium enters UN Security Council



Since January 1st Belgium is occupying a non-permanent seat on the United Nations' Security Council for the fifth time since the body was founded in 1945.

With 180 of the 192 UN General Assembly votes (back in October), Belgium easily secured its two year seat on the Security Council, along with Indonesia, Italy, South Africa and Panama.

Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht plans to "defend the interests of the world community from a Belgian and European perspective", and plans for Belgium to assume the role of 'conciliator', and offer its expertise in areas like Central Africa.

The five permanent members of the UN's top body – the US, France, Britain, China and the Russian Federation – have the power of veto, while the 10 rotating members do not. The non-permanent seats are filled from regional groupings for two-year stretches. Half of them (5) are replaced every year.

The Belgian Security Council membership runs from January 2007 to December 2008. Belgium will also preside of the Council twice, for a one-month period each time.

Once widely seen as a talking-shop, the Council has had a more active role in recent years, introducing sanctions and authorising the use of force to end conflicts.

Belgium joins UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon



A group of about 400 Belgian military recently joined the United Nations peace keeping force UNIFIL in Southern Lebanon. The Belgian Blue Helmets, stationed near Tebnin, are mainly assigned mine clearing duties, as well as providing medical assistance to the rest of UNIFIL.

History in the soil

In 2005, a team of Belgian archaeologists discovered, beneath a railway embankment that had once cut through the British and German lines during the Battle of Passchendaele, the almost perfectly preserved remains of an officer in the Lancashire Fusiliers. He was still wearing his gas cape, boots and helmet, and his effects included a silver cigarette case and a fountain pen with a gold nib. Then, four months ago, the team found the remains of five Australian soldiers, which they are hoping to identify in collaboration with Australia's Office of War Graves.

Last October, they excavated a claypit in Zonnebeke that was about to be transformed into a brickyard, and discovered a German shelter from September 1917. "From historical maps we had, we thought there might be something there," said Franky Bostyn, the leader of the archaeological group. "What we found was a wooden construction, about six and a half metres long and three metres wide. It had had steel plates, but they had been smashed by the shelling and everything was still under it." The brickyard work had to continue, so the excavation team removed everything they could, including leather belts with cartridges, a wristwatch, cutlery and more.

Bostyn is the curator of the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 in the town of Zonnebeke, of which Passchendaele, as it is now called, is a part. The museum is his brainchild: he was born and raised in Zonnebeke, and as a boy became obsessed with the battlefields. He studied history and archaeology at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) and the Military Academy in Brussels and turned the town's near-abandoned 11th century chateau into a museum about the third and most important battle in the Ypres area, the 100-day struggle to capture the village of Passchendaele. Opened in 2004, and with a staff of just five, the museum has been a massive success.

The museum contains over 3,000 items, including gas masks, uniforms, weapons and one of the world's largest collections of hand grenades, but Bostyn sees it mainly as an introduction to the battlefields. "We want people to learn about the context in here," he says. "And then go out and see for themselves where it all happened." For the 90th anniversary of the battle this year, he is developing a path between

the museum and Tyne Cot cemetery, along the disused rail way crossing. "People will be able to visit the museum and then walk one day of the battle, with pieces of bunkers and information panels along the way. Finally, they will arrive at the cemetery and see the result of what happened." With 12,000 individual graves and a monument for 30,000 missing, Tyne Cot is the largest cemetery for Commonwealth dead in the world. As well as the rare chance of being able to give unknown soldiers an identity and their own marked grave at Tyne Cot, Bostyn says the excavations he oversees are helping expand the knowledge of how the battles in this area occurred.

The biggest discovery has probably been the bunkers, of which over a dozen have been found. The museum contains a complete replica of a British bunker, which gives a fascinating, if horrifying, glimpse into what life was like for those who managed to survive the bloodbath. Soldiers slept side by side in bunks of 15, lying on blankets placed on wire netting with hardly any room between them and the bunk above. Rats roamed freely. Water sank in from the ceiling and seeped up from the floor. They could wash every four days, and there was a bucket for all bodily functions in one corner, the smell of which was absorbed by the wooden walls. "But imagine the alternative," says Bostyn. Above ground, it was like the moon: absolutely everything had been destroyed. There was no shelter at all. At least they were safe here."

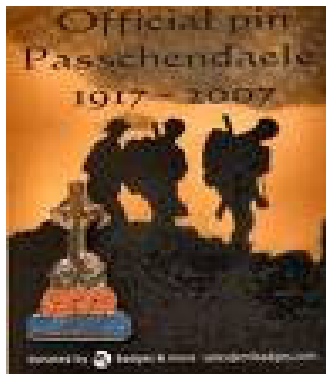
Thanks to the falling cost of travel and the internet, which allows archives to be searched from the comfort of one's own home, there has been a huge increase in interest in both military history and genealogy in the last decade, and more and more people are visiting areas like Passchendaele and discovering what happened here. Bostyn feels it can only be a good thing. "As long as people come," he says, "the dead will be remembered."

With thanks to *The Bulletin, Newsweekly of Europe's capital*

**Memorial Museum Passchendaele
1917**

Ieperstraat 5
Zonnebeke
Tel: 00/32/51/77.04.41

www.passchendaele.be



The Embassy is currently studying ways to fittingly celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele in the UK. More details will follow in the next editions of 'Belgian Events'.

In memory of a Belgian Spitfire Hero



The Lord Mayor and representatives of the Belgian Air Force joined in a ceremony on Tuesday 10 October 2006 at Maurice Raes Close, Norwich, to unveil a plaque in memory of Flight Sergeant Maurice Raes, a Belgian Spitfire pilot who lost his life in Norwich when his plane crashed in June 1942 after striking a balloon cable. He had just successfully escorted British shipping in the North Sea.

Also present were members of Mr Raes' family and local resident Mr Tye who has been campaigning for a road to be named in honour of Flt Sgt Raes.

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Felicity Hartley welcomed guests to the City and Belgian Major General Gerard Van Caelenberge spoke about Mr Raes and his heroism. A plaque was unveiled and at 11.30 am. At that moment a Belgian Air Force F-16 jet made a low level fly past over the new Maurice Raes Close.

It may be of interest to readers that two Belgian Air Force F-16 Squadrons, Nos 349 and 350 keep to this day the names, emblems and traditions of the two RAF Squadrons of the same numbers where a large number of Belgian fighter pilots served during WW2. Several of them had flown in 609 Squadron RAF during the Battle of Britain.

100 years of ITM

In 1906, after having acquired the Congo Free State as his personal possession, King Leopold II set up the “School for Tropical Diseases” in an old villa in Brussels. Two years later, the Belgian government took over the Belgian Congo as well as the “Institute for Tropical Medicine” (ITM).

The school was transferred to Antwerp in 1934. The building at the Nationalestraat was erected close to the “Congo Docks”, so that patients arriving by boat from the tropics could be easily transferred. The new school was named “Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine”, after crown prince Leopold.

After de-colonisation in 1960, the ITM became an autonomous institute under the National Ministry of Education. Its main mission remained the training of young physicians, nurses, veterinary doctors and technicians before venturing to the tropics. When, during the 70s, Belgium became a federal state the ITM became part of the academic landscape of Flanders, while retaining a federal role in training, health care and development cooperation.

Gradually the Institute started training local experts, to take over public health responsibilities in their own country. The Institute also focused increasingly on research of the biological and socio-economic determinants of health, complemented by modern scourges such as HIV and Ebola. However, the classical tropical diseases were not neglected and health systems research became another major subject.

For the past ten years, the ITM has undergone further reforms and has invested heavily in the future, in bricks and equipment as well as in people, ideas and partnerships. In terms of research, the ITM ranks in the top-15 of all universities and academic institutes in Europe and attracts students from all over the world. New campuses have been (re-)built and research laboratories have been completely refurbished. On 22nd November, H.R.H. Princess Astrid officially opened the new campus Rochus.

In collaboration with the Belgian Ministry of Development Cooperation, the ITM has built up a firm partnership programme with 23 institutes and hundreds of scientists in 20 countries in Africa, Asia and South-America. Rather than

remaining a mere centre of excellence, the Institute has become a node in a network of excellence with a common mission: scientific progress to achieve “Health Care for all”.

Based on an article by Bruno Gryseels, Director ITM



CULTURAL NEWS

Renovated Autoworld



'Autoworld', based at the exhibition hall in Brussels' Parc du Cinquantenaire, has just celebrated its 20th birthday with some subtle changes.

The first thing you notice when you enter Belgium's leading car museum is the sense of space. "The idea was to exhibit fewer cars in a better way," says director Claude Lemmens. "We changed the layout so that the public could get closer to them. After all, the interiors of these amazing vehicles are as beautiful as their bodywork."

Lemmens took up the challenge of running Autoworld almost four years ago, after a career in car-related jobs such as managing a press agency covering motor racing in Belgium and working for tire company Pirelli. When he arrived at the museum, he knew immediately that it needed to change. "It was like a cemetery," he says. "A museum has to move with the times or else it dies. We particularly want to reach out to younger people, so we're inviting schools to come and learn about the motor industry – to show them that it's hi-tech, computer-based engineering work and encourage them to think about a career in it."

To further this ambition, the museum has put in six stands devoted to such subjects as engines, electronics and bodywork, with hands-on displays that should appeal to school kids as well as techies. For the general visitor, however, the aesthetics of these magnificent old machines will probably outweigh the science. As such, the museum is going to put in new lighting so we can see them even better and we have audio guides giving more information about the vehicles, because, as Lemmens puts it, "every car here has a story".

One of the great things about the museum is its international flavour, with a range of vehicles from France and Germany, Britain, Russia and the United States. But for me the most intriguing part is that it contains the world's largest number of cars by Belgian manufacturers.

Just inside the entrance is a spectacular 1929 Coupé made by Antwerp-based Minerva, with a superb head radiator cap. There's also the 1921 Minerva in which King Albert I and the royal family used to go for seaside trips to De Panne. Here, too, is a remarkable carved wood and metalwork saloon car created for the Shah of Iran by Fabrique National at Herstal, near Liège, and here only because, although the Shah paid for the car, it was never collected.

One of the more unusual displays is a glass case containing an 85-kilo chocolate replica of a Honda Pocketbike, presented by Callebaut to Belgium's motorcycling monarch, King Albert II, who came to Autoworld for the official celebration. Twenty years ago, as Prince Albert, he was instrumental in securing this location for the museum and encouraging Ghislain Mahy, the owner of the collection, to keep the cars in the country. "He's Autoworld's godfather," Lemmens says.

With thanks to *The Bulletin, Newsweekly of Europe's capital*

Henin-Hardenne at the top again



Last month Justine Henin-Hardenne was named 2006 ITF (International Tennis Federation) Womens World Champion, the most important annual awards designation in professional tennis. This is the second time Justine has received the honour, the first was back in 2003. The award will be presented at the ITF World Champions Dinner on 5 June 2007 in Paris during Roland Garros.

During an interview after the nomination she thanked the ITF for this recognition and said: "This is a great honour. Tennis is played throughout the year, and to finish number one demonstrates a consistency and the ability to perform at high levels for the whole season. This is an accomplishment that I am extremely proud of."

After her victory back in November at the Sony Ericsson Championships in Madrid, Justine regained the world number one position in women's world tennis.

In 2006 she won six titles, reaching 10 finals in her 13 tournaments played. The win in Spain was her 28th tournament victory. The 24-year-old tennis star intends to remain at the tennis top in the coming years.

Meanwhile, former world number one Kim Clijsters has reiterated her intention to retire from professional tennis next season. The 23-year-old recently declined an invitation from the Belgian Olympic Committee to represent our country at the 2008 Olympics.

Belgian coaches off to the U.K.

The Lawn Tennis Association has signed up Belgian tennis coaches Steven Martens and Carl Maes. Both will work full-time in London.

Steven Martens



For the past 19 years Steven Martens has helped to build one of the world's most successful tennis systems in Belgium. Now he is to become the Technical Coordinator of the Lawn Tennis Association. His main responsibility will be for the LTA's new national training centre in the Southwest London suburb of Roehampton. His responsibilities will include the identification of talented players and the improvement of coaching levels.

Carl Maes



Carl Maes, who was captain of the Belgian Fed Cup Team, helped Clijsters become world number one as her personal coach. He already has a tennis school in London. The Lawn Tennis Association has put him in charge of British women's tennis in the hope that the new "Leadership Team" will help instill the will to win into British tennis.

Bond and Belgian

In the latest Bond film, Daniel Craig wears suits designed by the Italian label Brioni with luxury cloth provided by the Brussels-based company *Scabal*. Apart from dressing 007, Scabal's cloth adorns the backs of the likes of Kofi Annan, George W. Bush, Will Smith and Tom Cruise. In fact, Scabal has worked intensively with Hollywood, providing the cloth for movie costumes worn by Marlon Brando, Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro.



And there is more Belgian input in 'Casino Royale'. When Bond sits down for a world-class poker game, it has to be with a world-class deck of cards. And where else to turn but the world's largest playing card manufacturer, a company that can trace its history back almost 200 years? In the small town of Turnhout (North East of Antwerp), the world's capital of playing cards, is *Cartamundi* which provided all the cards and poker chips for the latest Bond movie.



A new airline is born



On 7 November 2006 SN Brussels Airlines and Virgin Express announced the birth of Brussels Airlines, the name of their joint service. Both have already been part of the same company since early 2006. The first Brussels Airlines flight will take to the skies on 25 March 2007. From its home base at Brussels Airport, the airline connects the capital of Europe with over 50 European destinations as well as several intercontinental networks.

The logo, a « b » symbolises both Brussels and Belgium. The new name will be presented across Europe with a campaign starting this month. Until 24 March 2007 flights will be operated under the brand names SN Brussels Airlines and Virgin Express, and on the 25 March the first Brussels Airlines flight will take to the skies.

www.brusselsairlines.com

The Anglo-Belgian Society (ABS) promotes Anglo-Belgian friendship and culture. Membership is not expensive and application forms can be obtained, with all enquiries, from the Hon. Secretary, Ms Anne Gerard, website: www.anglo-belgiansoc.com

The Royal Anglo-Belgian Club (RABC), situated in the heart of London, is an ideal meeting place for Belgians living in or travelling to London, as well as for British with Belgian connections. For more information and application forms, please contact The Secretariat, RABC, 60 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7LF, tel. 020/7235 2121 or fax 020/7245 9470, website: www.rabc.com, e-mail: secretary@rabc.com

The Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce (BLCC) For further information on membership or on any of the events organised by the Chamber, please contact the Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce, Hesslewood Rise, 105 Ferriby Road, Hessle, HU13 0HX, tel. 0870 246 1610, fax. 0870 429 2148, website: www.blcc.co.uk, e-mail: info@blcc.co.uk

The Young Chamber. Contact: Aude Biebuyck, tel. 0870 246 1610. All Belgians welcome to meet in informal atmosphere. website: www.tyc.org.uk, e-mail: info@tyc.org.uk

Orde Van den Prince promotes the unity of the Dutch language and culture, stimulating cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands. Bi-monthly meetings in London. Enquiries: Mr Luc Leclercq, 43 Oakley Road, London N1 3LL, email: luc_leclercq@hotmail.com

Brussels Capital Region, Christian Mouvet, Economic and Commercial Attaché tel. 020/7235 8949, fax 020/7235 8650, e-mail: info@brusselstrade.co.uk

The Walloon Region of Belgium, Didier Denayer, Economic and Commercial Attaché tel. 020/7235 0903, fax 020/7235 0585, e-mail: london@awex.co.uk

Walloon & Flemish Trade Office (Birmingham Branch), Frank Compennolle, Economic & Commercial Counsellor, The White House, 111 New Street, Birmingham B2 4EU tel: 0121 616 1962, e-mail: Birmingham@awex.co.uk

Belgian Tourist Office, Brussels-Wallonia, 217 Marsh Wall, London E14 9FJ, tel. 020 7 5 3 1 0 3 9 1, www.belgiumtheplaceto.be, e-mail: info@belgium-tourism.net



Flanders House, 1A Cavendish Square, London W1G OLD, houses the services of the Representative of the Flemish Government Tel: 020 7299 3592

of Flanders Investment and Trade, Ben De Smit, Economic and Commercial Attaché Tel: 020 7307 7710, e-mail: fitlondon@fitlondon.org

and Tourism Flanders-Brussels

Tel: 020 7307 7730, e-mail: info@visitflanders.co.uk

Export Vlaanderen (Scotland Branch), contact Ishbel McFarlane, Trade Commissioner, Conference House, 152 Morrison Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8EB, tel: 0131 200 6080 e - m a i l E d i n - b u r g h @ f i t a g e n c y . c o m

Vlaamse Club in Londen (VCL), organises activities for Flemish and Dutch-speaking people in the London area, thus creating a meeting place and a network opportunity for the many Flemings in the UK, www.vlaamseclublonden.com, info@vlaamseclublonden.com

Vlamingen in de Wereld, representative in the UK: Mr Johan Serneels, 61A Providence Square, London SE1 2EB, johan.serneels@uk.ing.com

Vlamingen in Surrey organise meetings and events for Flemish people living in the Surrey area. Contact: Brit Deckers-Beckers, Chase Manor, Kingfield Road, Woking, GU22 9AA, tel. 01483/726 760, e-mail: Britbeckers@yahoo.co.uk, website: www.vlamingeninsurrey.co.uk

EVENTS JANUARY - MARCH

Page 11

- 16-17 January Jozef Houben takes part in the London Mime Festival, Royal Festival Hall with 'The art of laughter', 7.45pm
www.rfh.org.uk/mime
- 24 January TYC Evening at Lupo, 50 Dean Street, London W1, from 8pm
- 6 February RABC: First Tuesday drinks at the club for members and guests
- 10 February Dance performance by Caroline Hainaut and Palle Dyrvall at The Place Theatre, London, 8pm
Tel: 020 7121 1100
- 15 February TYC Evening at Samuel Pepys, Stew Lane, 48 Upper Thames Street, London EC4, from 8pm
- 9 Feb – 17 March Dance group 'Ultima Vez 20' with Wim Vandekeybus performing 'Spiegel' at various venues throughout the UK, www.spiegeltour.co.uk



Wim Vandekeybus

- 9-10 February Sadler's Wells, London
13 February Sheffield Lyceum
16-17 February The Lowry, Salford
20-21 February Nottingham Playhouse
24 February Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh
27 February Oxford Playhouse
2 March The Swan, High Wycombe
6-7 March Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton
9 March Lighthouse, Poole
12-13 March Warwick Arts Centre
16-17 March Northern Stage, Newcastle
- 6 March RABC: First Tuesday drinks at the club for members and guests
- 14 March TYC Evening
- 19 March TYC Evening: Belgian Food Night

Federal elections - All Belgians must vote

Right to vote, but compulsory for ALL Belgians from the age of 18

Belgians registered abroad cannot take part in provincial and local elections but the situation is entirely different for the federal elections in spring 2007. Belgians living abroad have the right and duty to cast their vote in federal elections. The law of 18 December 1998 which modified the electoral code, granted all Belgians residing abroad the right to vote for the federal elections. The law of 7 March 2002, which still applies, simplified this procedure by allowing a representative to vote by proxy (M.B./A.M. of 08.05.2002).

Belgians residing in the jurisdiction of the Embassy (ex. holders of a blue identity card)

The above mentioned electoral law is applicable to Belgians from the age of 18 registered in the consular registers of an Embassy or career Consulate. Citizens have a choice out of 5 possibilities to vote.

For more information, please read our information in Dutch or in French on the Embassy's website: www.diplomatie.be/london

Please take note of the letter you received (or will receive) in your mail-box which provides more details on this subject. If you have not received such letter, please contact the Embassy.

Your cooperation is also required, as each voter will have to duly complete the (new) registration form, select a commune and a voting option. Please return this form ASAP – by the end of January at the latest - to the Belgian Embassy in London at the following address:

Embassy of Belgium, 17 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EE, United Kingdom .

Belgians residing in Belgium (holders of a green or an electronic ID card)

Belgians residing in the jurisdiction of the Embassy, who have retained their official address in Belgium without being registered in the consular registers of the Embassy, must vote and have to contact their Belgian commune/gemeente for more information. More information on the importance of the elections, the political parties, the candidates etc, can be found on the following websites:

www.politicalresources.net/belgium.htm

www.belgium.be

Belgian embassies and consulates are not involved in the distribution of electoral lists or names of candidates: please contact the Belgian commune/gemeente where you should register to vote.

Thank you for using your right to vote!

The Belgian Foreign Minister and his staff have worked very hard to make it possible for Belgians living abroad to participate in the federal elections. Associations protecting the interests of Belgians abroad, such as "Vlamingen in de wereld" (V.i.W.) and the "Union francophone des Belges à l'étranger" (UFBE) have also long striven to obtain these voting rights for Belgians residing abroad. Please, use your rights to the full.

The Embassy invites you to carefully read the letter which you received (or will receive soon) in your mail-box and to return it duly completed and signed as soon as possible. All citizens are called to vote.