

5. History of the Dutch malacological society

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INTRODUCTION

Compared with the malacological societies in other European countries (France, Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom, Italy) the Nederlandse Malacologische Vereniging (Dutch malacological society) is a very young one. Preliminary discussions about the feasibility of such a society took place towards 1930. These resulted in the founding of the Nederlandsche Malacologische Vereeniging on July 1st, 1934. A circular letter containing the working scheme for the projected society had been sent to potential members throughout the country. It contained the following aims of the society:

1. Preparing a survey of the mollusc fauna (marine and non-marine) of the Netherlands.
2. Analysing the geographical distribution of the Dutch molluscs.
3. Initiating a card-index of fossil species in our country.
4. Collecting data on ecology and life-history of Dutch molluscs.
5. Providing information concerning identification, occurrence, variation, etc. of Dutch molluscs.
6. Exchanging of material (Dutch and foreign) between members.
7. Distributing a simple Correspondentieblad (newsletter) among members, for questions and communications.
8. Making excursions and convening one meeting per annum.

This resulted in the immediate application for membership of 33 persons, amateurs as well as professionals. Since 1934 the member-

ship of the society has steadily grown. By 1940 there were 100 members, and now (1977) the number is about 450.

Parallel with the increase in number, the quality of the malacological interest of the members developed from just collecting and demonstrating shells, to the study of anatomical, physiological, ecological, zoogeographical and palaeontological problems.

The availability of adequate malacological publications, and the information provided by fellow-malacologists and by museums greatly stimulated amateurs and professionals alike. Several members became internationally recognized authorities for special taxonomic groups: Clausiliidae, *Pisidium*, Pteropoda, Loricata, sea slugs and land slugs, Pupillacea, fossil molluscs, etc., whereas the importance of anatomy, embryology, life-history, variation, and genetics of molluscs became more widely recognized.

For people in a small country like the Netherlands the necessity of international contact and collaboration is obvious. Such a contact has been favourably influenced by post-war economical conditions and by improved means of transportation.

In this way the Dutch malacological society gradually became internationally involved, which led to the suggestion, made in Amsterdam during the 25th anniversary of the Dutch society in 1959 when eight foreign malacologists attended, of forming a European Malacological Union. Three years later the Unitas Malacologica Europaea (U.M.E.) was definitely established in London (1962). Several of our members participated in the three-yearly international malacological congresses: England (1962), Denmark (1965), Austria (1968), Switzerland (1971), Italy (1974).

COUNCIL

The founding members elected for the first council of the Dutch society (1934) were Dr. J.Th. Henrard (president), Dr. F.P. Koumans (secretary), C.O. van Regteren Altena (treasurer), L.P. Pouderoyen (vice-president), A. Vlietstra and S.J. Geerts (members). In 1937 a seventh member was added: miss W.S.S. van Benthem Jutting.

There were no rules and no rotation schedule for elections or periodical changing of officers. In 1948 Henrard, a professional botanist of repute (see obituary by Kuiper, 1975), resigned as president. It meant the end of a period of fourteen years under his somewhat paternal leadership, in which time Henrard, with his knowledge, experience and enthusiasm dominated the society.

From a simple, unceremonial "club" the society developed into a



Fig. 1. Dr. J.Th. Henrard (1881-1974), founder of the Nederlandse Malacologische Vereniging, 1934. Photo J.G.J. Kuiper, 1944.

more mature state. Henrard, however, had not moved with the times: in his opinion he remained the founder and central person, a president of his own accord.

His successor, Dr. C.O. van Regteren Altena, president from 1948 to 1968, was curator of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie at Leiden (1952-1973), a malacologist of international fame and a man of great wisdom and charm. Under his leadership the rules of the society (which had been drafted just before World War II, but were temporarily suspended to avoid interference by the German occupation forces) were definitely settled. The structure of the society and its council, and the whole of the operational system became more open to all members. At the same time the possibility for changing council functions by fixing a system of periodical elections was introduced. However, it must be admitted that, unless members of the council resigned on their own initiative, very few changes in the composition took place, most committee members being repeatedly re-elected.

In the somewhat over 40 years of its existence the Dutch malacological society has had only six presidents. Van Regteren Altena was succeeded by Dr. M.R. Honer (1968-1970), Dr. A.C. van Bruggen ad interim (1970-1972), and Prof. Dr. J. Joosse (1972-1976) in this order. Since the autumn of 1976 Dr. S. van der Spoel is president.

Changes usually took place more frequently in the function of secretary and treasurer. Among the most prominent secretaries Dr. F.E. Loosjes, J.G.J. Kuiper and J.J. Bernard must be mentioned.

MEMBERS

From the very beginning the society has been an association of amateurs and professionals, an arrangement which has been maintained throughout its existence.

One of the most successful examples of such a collaboration is the society's publication on fossil shells found on the Dutch beaches and in the estuaries. The material was chiefly collected by amateurs, the scientific work carried out by Van Regteren Altena and later on by A.W. Janssen. The illustrations of the gastropods and scaphopods were made by L.P. Pouderoyen; for the bivalves L. van der Slik is the artist. The atlas of the gastropods and scaphopods is complete; the bivalves are still in course of publication.

Contact between the members is established or maintained not only during the meetings and excursions, and through correspondence. Recently, since 1973, a new form of cooperation has been attempted by courses in anatomy, physiology and identification.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that quite a number of members of the society has produced a doctoral thesis on malacological subjects.

MEETINGS, DEMONSTRATIONS, LECTURES, LOCAL CENTRES

One annual general meeting and a varying number of scientific meetings are regularly held. The annual general meeting during which the reports of secretary, treasurer, librarian, editors of the publications and other non-scientific affairs are dealt with, including the nomination of new council members and new members, takes place early in the year. The other meetings are held alternatively at different dates and in different parts of the country so that residents in the more distant provinces may also attend.

The scientific meetings are either devoted (1) to short talks, usually with demonstrations by the members or (2) to a longer paper by an invited speaker. The majority of the members seem to prefer the former type of scientific meetings. It gives them the opportunity just to talk about the latest additions to their collections, to exchange shells, to ask for information, or to discuss the pros and cons of certain field excursions. When the meeting is held in a museum the curator concerned prepares an exhibition of a taxonomic group or of a recommended collecting region, both types of display being greatly appreciated by the members.

In addition to the formal meetings of the society small branches or centres of local members, mostly amateurs, who privately talk of shells, books, excursions, etc., have been formed in a few cities. These unofficial meetings are held in rotation at the residences of the members.

EXCURSIONS

Every year the society organizes one or more field trips to places of malacological interest (marine, land or freshwater) under the leadership of a locally well-informed member. As these excursions take only one or two days there is little opportunity to go abroad. Generally the field meetings are not as well attended as the scientific meetings.

CORRESPONDENTIEBLAD AND BASTERIA

In the first year of its existence (1934) the society started publishing a mimeographed circular or newsletter (Correspondentieblad) distribut-

ed free among all members and meant to intensify the relations between them. It contains short scientific notes, reports of the council, discussions, questions, information on books, exhibitions and excursion sites, reviews, programs for meetings, instructions for collecting, labelling, identification, exchange offers of shells or books, etc. The first number appeared in October 1934; the latest issue (as per 1st June) is no. 175 of April 1977, the total number of pages *va.* 1300. The *Correspondentieblad* now appears six times a year. It is very popular among the Dutch members. Initially it was edited by the secretary of the society, but soon it became too time-consuming for this officer and separate editors were appointed, who sometimes sat on the executive council. Among the many editors pride of place goes to L.J.M. Butot who published 67 numbers in 14 years in 1957-1970 (cf. Van Bruggen, 1971).

This Dutch *Correspondentieblad* has served as a model for the Circulars of the Conchological Society of Southern Africa (1958), the Conchologists' Newsletter (1961) of the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the *Mitteilungen* (1962) of the *Deutsche Malakozoologische Gesellschaft*.

The second publication of the Dutch Malacological Society is the journal *Basteria*, started in 1936. In its first issue is explained that the name is a homage to the 18th-century Dutch physician and naturalist Dr. Job Baster (1711-1775) of Zierikzee. So far 40 volumes with one supplement (1936-1976) have appeared, totalling more than 3800 pages. The journal is open to any scientific malacological contribution. It appears in six parts per annum, sometimes combined to double numbers. The editorial board consists of two members assisted by an editorial committee. Papers for publication may be submitted in Dutch, English, French or German, with abstracts in another language if desirable. For long articles and profuse illustration a financial contribution from the author is sometimes requested.

Membership of the society does not automatically include subscription to *Basteria*. Membership with, or without, *Basteria* is possible.

For many years (1945-1968) Van Regteren Altena was the chief editor. He had a special capacity for evaluating the scientific merits of a manuscript, for style and idiom, and for the general presentation of the paper, and was a master in smoothing over unfortunate controversies.

From the very beginning most papers in *Basteria* have been of a fairly high scientific standard, although in a number of cases it took quite a lot of negotiating with the author, followed by re-arranging, correcting and re-writing, before the manuscript would meet the required standard. The opinion of readers abroad is on the whole favourable. There are about 160 foreign subscribers, compared with about 330 in

the Netherlands.

On special occasions a jubilee volume or a supplementary volume was produced. The greatest success has been the publication of the serial notes "De fossiele schelpen van de Nederlandse stranden en zeegaten" (The fossil shells of the Dutch beaches and estuaries), in which all the fossil species washed ashore (not from borings!) from Pliocene to Subrecent layers are described and figured. The gastropods and scaphopods were completely published in *Basteria* volumes 18 to 28 (1954-1964) and separately published in book-form in 1965; a reprint of this atlas of fossil shells was issued recently. The publication on the bivalves, starting in volume 26 (1962), is still in progress.

Since 1973 the society has started publishing information leaflets, containing short notices or instructions on some special subject, e.g., techniques of studying fine shell-shingle, literature on Dutch molluscs, malacological terminology, nomenclature, techniques of anatomical preparations (genitalia, radula, etc.).

LIBRARY

Already in its early years the society fostered the idea of a malacological library for the benefit of its members. The first acquisitions were on an exchange basis, the journal *Basteria* being exchanged with other malacological periodicals: *Archiv für Molluskenkunde*, *Journal de Conchyliologie*, *Venus*, *Proceedings of the Malacological Society of London*, *Journal of Conchology*, etc. Through a subvention in 1955 from the *Nederlands Natuur- en Geneeskundig Congres* volumes prior to 1936 of these foreign journals could be bought in order to complete the series.

Important donations by members of the society (e.g., at its silver jubilee in 1959) also helped to build up the library. Preference was given to faunistical and systematic treatises, and to palaeontological monographs.

Accommodation for the library is generously provided by the Institute for Taxonomic Zoology (Zoologisch Museum) of the University of Amsterdam. The curator of the department of Mollusca of that institute is in charge of the library of the society.

Since the publication of the new catalogue of books and periodicals in 1968, and of the reprints in 1969 (both with regular supplements), the library has become better accessible to the members. As a consequence the borrowing of various publications has increased rapidly.

Financially the status of the library has greatly improved since ca. 1970 when more funds were made available to cover the increasing costs for the acquisition of books and for binding. With the unfortu-

nate dissolution of the library of the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland in mind a number of members proposed in 1973 to alter the status of our library by presenting it to an independent foundation so that the society could never inadvertently dispose of it. However, it was decided to let the matter rest for the time being.

Groups of members have occasionally formed reading clubs to which the society's library sends books, periodicals and reprints on loan. Each participant is entitled to keep the literature during one week, before passing it on to the next member. The last person of the club returns the books and magazines to the library in Amsterdam. On the whole the loans were greatly appreciated, but as the composition of the clubs varied, and the number of participants was not constant, most of the circles fizzled out noiselessly.

It is perhaps here the appropriate place to mention the fact that the society does not possess a collection of molluscs. A survey of the private collections of the members has been published by Kuiper (1951, 1952, 1953). After more than twenty years this survey is in need of a revision.

INDEX OF THE MOLLUSCA OF THE NETHERLANDS

In the initial program of the society a recording system for preparing a census of the Dutch molluscs was proposed. However, it did not bear much fruit and was superseded by another scheme, which in its turn was replaced by a third one.

A serious difficulty is the question which distribution units should be adopted. The council recommended the method used by the Institute for Vegetation Research in the Netherlands. This institute divides the national ordnance map 1 : 50,000 into squares of an hour's walk, each square being indicated by a letter and a figure. It was not a great success. Another possibility was the adoption of the boundaries of the municipalities. Although more easily understood than the somewhat artificial squares of the previous system, this was not accepted either on account of the differences in area of the various municipalities, and of the recent tendency of the government to combine these to greater agglomerations. Participation in the work of the European Invertebrate Survey (E.I.S.) has created new possibilities.

During the years a great many valuable records have been accumulated, but a satisfactory evaluation of these data is still an important desideratum. Of foremost importance is a strict vouching system, especially for critical species, by competent specialists.

FINANCE

The finances of the society are entirely dependent on the annual subscriptions of its members and of the subscribers to the journal *Basteria*. It receives no subventions from the State, and only very occasionally from a scientific fund. In spite of a modest raise of the subscription it will be obvious that the task of the treasurer to make both ends meet, is not an easy one, printing costs and postal rates having recently increased considerably. Yet, the members of the council and all others officers of the society (editors of *Basteria* and the *Correspondentieblad*, librarian, despatch bureau of the publications, and several minor functions) work on a voluntary basis.

A certain amount of income is provided by the sale of back numbers of the periodicals *Basteria* and the *Correspondentieblad*, and of the atlas of fossil shells (gastropods and scaphopods).

CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER MALACOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

During the years of its existence, and especially after World War II relations with foreign malacological societies and institutes all over the world increased, a practice chiefly supported by the journal *Basteria*. Several members attended the international congresses, or, on a smaller scale, took part in meetings and field trips of the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland, the Malacological Society of London, the Deutsche Malakozoologische Gesellschaft, the Società Malacologica Italiana or the Société Belge de Malacologie. In their turn some of these paid a visit to the Netherlands, and it is the hope of the Dutch society that all members and guests attending the present international gathering will feel welcome in our country and enjoy the Sixth European Malacological Congress in Amsterdam.

LIST OF PRESIDENTS, SECRETARIES, TREASURERS, EDITORS OF
BASTERIA AND OF THE CORRESPONDENTIEBLAD,
1934-1977

Presidents:

Dr. J.Th. Henrard	1934-1948
Dr. C.O. van Regteren Altena	1948-1968
Dr. M.R. Honer	1968-1970
Dr. A.C. van Bruggen (ad interim)	1970-1972
Prof.Dr. J. Joosse	1972-1976
Dr. S. van der Spoel	1976 to date

Secretaries:

Dr. F.P. Koumans	1934-1942
F.E. Loosjes	1942-1948
J.G.J. Kuiper	1948-1949
Dr. B. Hubert	1949
P.J. van der Feen	1949-1951
J.G.J. Kuiper	1951-1953
A.C. van Bruggen	1954-1956
J.J. Bernard	1956-1960
Dr. J.J. van Aartsen	1960-1967
A.C. van Bruggen	1967-1968
W. Backhuijs	1969-1970
E. Gittenberger	1970-1972
J.G.B. Nieuwenhuis	1972 to date

Treasurers:

Dr. C.O. van Regteren Altena	1934-1940
H.J. van der Maaden	1940-1948
A.W. Arends	1948-1970
A.W. Lacourt	1970-1977
A.S.H. Breure	1977 to date

Editors of *Basteria*:

Dr. J.Th. Henrard	1934-1948
Dr. F.P. Koumans	1934-1945
Dr. C.O. van Regteren Altena	1945-1968
Dr. W.S.S. van Benthem Jutting	1948-1977
Dr. A.C. van Bruggen	1968 to date
Dr. E. Gittenberger	1977 to date

Editors of *Correspondentieblad*:

Dr. F.P. Koumans	1934-1942
F.E. Loosjes	1942-1948
J.G.J. Kuiper	1948-1949
P.J. van der Feen	1949-1951
J.G.J. Kuiper	1951-1953
A.C. van Bruggen	1951-1953
P. Kaas	1954
A.C. van Bruggen	1954-1956
J.J. Bernard	1957
L.J.M. Butot	1957-1970
A.W. Janssen	1970-1971
Mrs. H. Meijer	1970-1971

B.C. Sliggers	1971-1972
W. Backhuijs	1973-1974
A. Verduin	1974 to date
Mrs.Dr. M.I. Gerhardt	1974 to date

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