



BIMCC Newsletter N°14, September 2002

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Dear Map Friends,

Our Autumn Issue contains a number of significant events organised by the BIMCC, firstly our Excursion to the private collection of Mr Bohrmann in Hasselt on Saturday morning, 12 October; as places are limited, we would suggest early registration. Apart from this collection, there are other also interesting places of local interest to visit during the afternoon. Our major event is our December Conference "Mare Nostrum – Maps of the Mediterranean", at 9.30 on Saturday, 14 December at College St Michel, Brussels; our event co-incides with the Mechelen International Antiquarian Book Fair. Full details on P19.

The First Paris Map Fair, to be held in the prestigious Hotel Ambassador, on Saturday 16 November 2002, preceded by an auction preview of maps, atlases and views at 6, Rue de la Grange-Bataliere, is organised by our Sponsors, Miss Beatrice Loeb-Laroque and Paulus Swaen. BIMCC will have a manned stand at this Fair.

Members are active on various fronts; Marcel Watelet spoke on "Les Sources Cartographiques : leur histoires, leur fabrication, leur lecture" in Mariemont, Belgium, at its Conference on Cartography on 28 September 2002. Our frequent contributor, Johan Vanvolsem lectures on cartographers and surveyors, during the Halle, Belgium, Cultural Week, on Tuesday, 1 October at 20.00. Finally, Rene Tebel, of the University of Vienna, will speak at the Warburg Institute in London, on the "Significance of the ship image in early modern maps from the 10th to the 17th C" on 1 May 2003. Further details in Events.

Nearer home, Brecht Devroe, son of our Sponsor, Filip Devroe, of Gent, has opened his new Map Gallery in 35 Rue St Jean-Janstraat, near the Brussels Grand Place. Brecht has a fine selection of prints, maps and rare books from all over the world.

This Newsletter contains a wide range of articles, in line with many of your wishes, as expressed in your replies to our Questionnaire. The incisive article on Mercator by Rodney Shirley, who spoke at our Conference two years ago, shows the range of Cartographic activity in the Netherlands region during the 16th C, a fact reflected in Jan Willem van den Brandhof's article on Page 3. Finally, thanks again to those assiduous members who completed our Questionnaire.

Brendan Sinnott, *Editor*



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Two New Map Books and One Exhibition

by Jan Willem van den Brandhof, MA

Two Dutch Provinces – Drenthe and Friesland – recently offered fascinating glimpses into their cartographic past and enriched the world of the map collector with two new books which, regrettably for BIMCC members, are already becoming collectors' items.

Drenthe published an atlas with manuscript maps recently discovered in French archives. The atlas, *De Franse kaarten van Drenthe en de noordelijke kust* [ISBN #90-806727-1-8], provides a detailed overview of those parts of Drenthe which had not been mapped by earlier cartographers. Drenthe, after all, was in those days a province not known for important or strategically placed cities. Even today it is more known for its bicycle paths and Observatory than its historic past. The maps were clearly drawn for military purposes and lack the decorative elements so appreciated in 17th century maps. However, with their distinctive colours for areas with agricultural and farming lands, grasslands, hayfields, moors, drifting sands or *sable mouvant*, *bois forêts*, *bois feuillage*, *bois sapin*, *bois taillis*, *broussailles*, *bruyère*, *bruyère humide*, *bruyère et pâturage*, *tourbière*, *sarrasin*; they provide charm and details not found on earlier maps while offering valuable insights for to-day's archeologists, historical geographers and urban and rural planners. Every map is traceable to the *Ingénieur Géographe* responsible for the fieldwork and commented on - in detail - by historians familiar with the area charted.

The decision to chart the Province of Drenthe and the coastlines of Friesland and Groningen came from the highest level, from the same man who "*estimait qu'une carte détaillée est une arme de guerre*": Napoleon Bonaparte. Interestingly, work was started on the area directly by the sea, a clear indication of the prevailing priorities at the time, i.e., 1811. Napoleon feared an English/Russian invasion and commissioned the *Corps Impérial des Ingénieurs Géographes* to chart and draw 25

maps of Drenthe proper and 15 maps of the Friesian and Groninger coasts. The *Ingénieurs Géographes* completed their fieldwork in 1813, two years before the Battle of Waterloo. After Waterloo the maps were stored and forgotten by the *Ministère de la Guerre* at the *Château de Vincennes* together with similar maps of the German coastline made during the same period.

Professor Koeman found the unique set of maps on one of his trips to Vincennes and discovered to his surprise equally detailed maps of the German coastline in the same drawer. The discovery of the German maps was a truly serendipitous event as they were filed under the same heading as the Drenthe maps. It is to be hoped that German cartography enthusiasts will muster equal zeal and interest in this part of their history as the *Drentse Historical Society* and also publish "their" French maps in due time.

The maps certainly merit interest and publication; all are drawn on a scale of 1:20.000 and measure 100 by 50 centimeters, showing in detail the countryside with its villages, churches, windmills, road signs, ditches, locks, dikes and the ramparts of the forts and fortifications in towns like Harlingen and Delfzijl.

The mapmakers of the Friesian and Groninger coastlines concentrated more on the ease with which invaders could establish beachheads rather than on the difficulties confronting a hostile flotilla when navigating these very tidal waters between the shore and the Friesian islands. Their maps are void of the depth markings so characteristic for the Waghenaer and Van Keulen sea maps of 'T Wadt, the Noordzee and the North Sea Islands. Only major shallows and tidal in- and outlets as *Het Wieringer Gad*, *Het Friesche Gad* and *Het Groninger Diep* are shown.

The first copy of *De Franse kaarten van Drenthe en de noordelijke kust* was presented



at the conclusion of an interesting symposium in Assen to his Excellency Relus ter Beek, High Commissioner of H.M. the Queen for Drenthe Province. Ter Beek avowed to be an avid map collector himself, concentrating his efforts on maps from his hometown, Coevorden. During the symposium the exhibition at the *Ryksargyf* was announced, prompting your correspondent to next plan a visit to the Friesian capital.

Friesland presented part of its rich history at its *Ryksargyf*, a modern building housing a superb collection of manuscript and printed maps from the 15th century through the first half of the 19th century. The exhibition ran from early December 2001 through January 2002 and the organizers had the fortunate courage to publish a well documented map book containing copies of all the maps on display: *Hoogtepunten van de Friese cartografie* [ISBN #9-789033 012273] which - at the time of writing - can still be obtained at the *Noord Nederlandsche Boekhandel* [tel. 058-2123827].

The exhibition proper showed wood block maps side by side with prints from copper and steel plates recording thousand years of struggle against the water; of land reclamation, of economic prosperity and commercial decline and, above all, of pride in the Friesian heritage. In a roundabout manner the exhibition also detailed the widespread "recycling" of copper plates in the 16th and 17th century. A 1578 plate from Gerardus de Jode was good enough for his son - Cornelis - in 1593 for his "version" of *Frisia antiquissimae*. The 1600 engraving from Joannem van Deutecum served 16 years later Petrus Kaerius for his "*Nieuwe beschrijvinge van oost en west vrieslāt*" and was still in good enough a shape for Claes Jansz. Visscher when he purchased and published the Van Deutecum/Kaerius plate in 1624. A 1628 plate by the same Claes Jansz. [*Tabulae Frisiae, Groninghe et territory Embdensis*] was 90 years later still in use in the print shop of Petrus Schenk junior. If imitation (and copying) is the most sincere form of flattery, then the *Ryksargyf* certainly can be

proud of its collection.

The exhibition chronicled nine centuries of dike building and land reclamations. The work of local surveyors like Johannes Sems, Adrianus Metius and Bernardus Schotanus à Sterringa was eagerly sought and used by the early map makers from Antwerp and Amsterdam. Only Jacob van Deventer surveyed and drew his



A fine map of Friesland by Mercator, a contemporary of van Deventer and his constant competitor

own maps. Particularly interesting was his 1545 map of Het Bildt with the islands of Terschelling and Ameland as these are not often depicted on such a large scale. But, then again, Jacob van Deventer was and still is unsurpassed as a surveyor as he amply demonstrated with his accurate surveys of four other provinces (Brabant, Gelderland, Holland and Zeeland) and his large collection of plus 223 city maps.

Boldly coloured wood block maps from



Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* and Philip Galle's *Epitome* editions of the oblong Ortelius atlases vied for attention with city maps from the hands of the Hoogenberg brothers. The latter were particularly interesting as most of the sixteenth century features recorded by them still can be seen to-day. The work of Friesian cartographers was also on display: Pierius Winsemius' beautifully decorated 1622 map (*Frisia Occidentalis*) was a delight to look at and rightly inspired Claes Jansz. Visscher when cutting his already discussed *Tabula Frisiae* six with its border decorations comprising the eleven Frisian cities and costumed inhabitants. Another map in its own right was the 1704 manuscript *Slachtedyk* map from Pieter Idserdts Portier showing a gracefully meandering dike running to and from fifteen towns and villages, all delicately drawn with sharply etched profiles and their corresponding coats of arms. Beauty won't make the pot boil, but the organizers had recognized the beauty when they saw it and

sold facsimile prints of the Idserdts' map for the quite reasonable sum of €7,50.

A final treat – at least for this collector - was the original copperplate of one of the many “grieterijen” or withy-lands displayed next to the page featuring the print. One can only look with admiration at an original copper plate, it is not possible to even start guessing the time, efforts and skills required to achieve the perfection which their engravers achieved with so precious few tools.

The exhibition certainly merited the “detour” all the way from tiny Luxembourg and your correspondent considers himself the fortunate owner of two new map books which, with their limited print runs and in view of the level of collectors' interest they generated, subtly underline the age-old caveat for any collector worth his salt that “the time for buying is disproportionate to the time available for enjoying and treasuring a prized possession”.

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The *Castiglioni World Map* is a large nautical map dated 1525, drawn on four sheets of vellum joined together to make up a single 815 X 2140 mm sheet, originally titled *Carta del navigare universalissima et diligentissima*: ‘the most universal and accurate navigational map’. The map is considered to be of great historical and cartographic interest in that it gives visual and documentary support to the theories of the curvature of the Earth, displaying the world immediately after the discoveries made by Magellan and Pigafetta, during their circumnavigation of the globe. The map was donated by the Emperor Charles V to Baldassarre Castiglioni, apostolic nuncio in Spain. It then remained property of the Castiglioni family in Mantua until the year 2000, when the Italian State acquired it in order to destine it to the Estense Library of Modena, which already houses an important cartographic collection. Il Bulino edizioni d'arte proposes, under the patronage of the Ministry of Arts and Culture and the Estense Library, a **facsimile edition** of the *Castiglioni World Map*. The original sized reproduction of the navigation map is numbered and certified, and comes in a specially made presentation box, complete with commentary.

The CASTIGLIONI WORLD MAP facsimile will be on display during the BIMCC Conference
“**Mare Nostrum - Maps of the Mediterranean**” on December 14th 2002 in Brussels
(see Programme in this Issue)

We will be at your disposal for inquiries and orders:

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LOOKS AT BOOKS (I)

MERCATOR: THE MAN WHO MAPPED THE PLANET

By Nicholas Crane, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 2002. Pp. xiii + 348; 16 colour plates and 22 black-and-white illustrations in the text. ISBN 0 297 64665 6. Price £20

Contemporary and present-day map historians acknowledge Gerard Mercator to be the outstanding cartographer of his century and beyond. He towers above all other early map-makers. But somewhat surprisingly up to now there has been no full biography of him in English. This is amply remedied by Nicholas Crane's detailed and perceptive study.

Born in 1512, Mercator lived a full life until his death in 1594, aged 82. He rarely moved outside a turbulent area of the Low Countries embracing Rupelmonde, Louvain, Antwerp, and Duisburg. Orphaned while still in his 'teens, Mercator was benefacted by his uncle, who saw him through the rigors of late medieval philosophical studies at Louvain university followed by geography at nearby Mechelin. As Crane says: "Leaving Louvain as a wavering philosopher, he would return as a committed geographer." Perhaps at this time Mercator's tendency to reclusivity took root although he seems to have established close contacts with the most progressive mathematicians in the Low Countries: Monachus, the instrument-maker Van der Heyden and, particularly, Gemma Frisius, Mercator's tutor in mathematics.

As if in anticipation of his life as a fully fledged cartographer Mercator now immersed himself in the skills and practices of mathematics applied to heavenly bodies or astronomy, practical surveying through triangulation, the art of globe and instrument-making, and in preparing a manual of italic lettering. At this stage, his output was slight but was already of the highest quality: celestial and terrestrial globes, a world map after Oronce Fine and wall maps of the Holy Land (6 sheets) and Flanders (9 sheets). Then in the early 1540s when Mercator was just 30 there was a pause in his life. Almost certainly this was associated with the waves of

religious wars and civil unrest that swept across the Low Countries: Lutherism versus the Catholicism of the Holy Roman Empire. Mercator was discreet in his religious commitments but for seven anxious months he was imprisoned as a suspect heretic. On release in September 1543 his life had to begin again, and he finally found relative freedom in moving to the town of Duisburg in the duchy of Jülich-Cleves-Berg.

Over the next years Mercator worked steadily on three major projects: his masterly wall maps of Europe (1554), the British Isles (1564) and the World (1569). Crane subscribes to the view that it was probably a draft map of Britain by the Catholic Scot John Elder that was transmitted to Mercator for him to engrave, which he did "...with great diligence, fidelity, dexterity and perfection". However, of greater influence than any other work was Mercator's large map of the world on 21 sheets which was published five years later. Its novel projection allowed mariners to read off a constant bearing by means of a straight line. Although slow to be adopted generally it was a concept of immense value, and Mercator's projection is still widely used today.

Mercator was now almost 60 and started to work on a huge life-project: to describe the whole world first as it was known to the ancients, and then by means of a thoroughly researched and systematic set of modern maps. The first part bore fruit in 1578 with his studious edition of the *Geographia* of Claudius Ptolemy; the second took 20 years longer to complete and was not finished until after Mercator's death in 1594. The third part of Mercator's *Atlas* did not appear until 1595, concurrent with the complete publication posthumously of his great work. It bore the expressive title (originally in Latin): 'Atlas, or cosmographical



reflections on the creation of the World and the formation of its parts'.

One of Mercator's next-generation contemporaries said of him: "For his behaviour and manner of life, he had a quiet and meek spirit, and was of great integrity and sincerity of heart, a lover of peace, both public and private, and an honourer of his superiors; a lover of his neighbours, and a great favourite of study and learning, preferring other men before him."

Nicholas Crane has solidly researched all these aspects of Mercator's life and many other contemporary facets--the politics of the time, the slow and uncertain unfolding of geographical knowledge, the sixteenth-century map trade, relationships with other savants such as John Dee in England and Abraham Ortelius in Antwerp, and Mercator's theological works. There is a great deal of information packed inside this relatively small book, no pseudo-psychoanalysis and not much padding. End notes and a bibliographical listing occupy over 45 pages.

My main criticism is, I suppose, of publication economics. There are some nice illustrations in the book but they are inadequate to accompany a significant biography of such an important map-maker. Mercator's world map of 1538 is a tiny image 8.5 cm by 13 cm; his world map of 1569 is a murky reproduction compared to, for instance, the similarly sized one in Fite and Freeman's *The World Encompassed* of 1952. Only a portion of Mercator's Holy Land map is shown (and this, I suspect, is taken from a later edition by C J Visscher) and there are no illustrations whatsoever of his Flanders or British Isles wall maps. Detailed verbal descriptions in the text become tedious without a visual picture.

I have never, so far, reviewed a book and suggested that its price is too cheap. But I do so here, and believe that the publishers have erred in pricing Crane's Mercator at only £20. The grand work *Gérard Mercator Cosmographie* (Fonds Mercator Paribas, 1999) perhaps went too far in its sumptuousness but a scholarly yet readable work of this calibre deserves

better illustrative support. Nevertheless all map lovers and map historians should not fail to buy and enjoy reading Nicholas Crane's work. I hope that they do.

Rodney Shirley



Photo : Micheline Kumps

This statue by Raoul Biront was inaugurated a year ago in the Mercator Lane, in Leuven. A bronze replica 20,7 cm high and weighing 3,1 kg is obtainable from the artist at Mercatorpad 8/101, B-3000 Leuven (Tel/Fax ++32-(0)16/20.19.66 or mobile 0472/41.39.45), for 200 € – special price for BIMCC Members.



LOOKS AT BOOKS (II)

Cartographie de la France et du monde de la Renaissance au Siècle des lumières

(The cartography of France and of the World, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment). By Monique Pelletier. Paris : Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2001. ISBN 2-7177-2176-2. Pp. 108, 35 b/w and 16 colour ill., 24 x 16.5 cm, 15,20 € (paper).

The four articles contained in this booklet are based on presentations given by the former (now Honorary) Director of the Map Library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Monique Pelletier. The author is, of course, well-known to our readers since she was a Speaker at our second International Conference in December, 2000, and her numerous publications featured prominently in our Study Session « Books on Maps » in February, 2001.

The first article is on mapping in Renaissance France, with a closer look at the personalities and the work of cartographers who have been influenced by Flemish and German scientists of their time and who, in turn, inspired later mapmakers in the Low Countries. This sustained exchange of cartographical concepts between France and the Low Countries is evident in the works of Oronce Fine, Guillaume Postel, Jean Jolivet, to name only these. Striking examples of this interchange are the cordiform and bi-cordiform presentations of the world, and Monique Pelletier gave us many more examples of this phenomenon of cultural cross-fertilization in her presentation in 2000.

The next chapter gives an overview of the globes held in public collections in France. Well over 170 specimens are listed, among which 13 of the 16th century (including the painted « green globe », attributed to Waldseemüller, ca 1506), 36 from Dutch map and globe makers of the 17th century (Blaeu, Hondius, van Langren), and 119 terrestrial and celestial globes of the 18th century, largely of French manufacture ; plus, of course, the famous giant globes by Coronelli measuring 3.85 m in diameter, offered in the 1680's to King Louis XIV¹). Much interesting background information is given on the concepts of globes and their makers.

Military cartography of France is the subject of the next chapter. As of the 17th century, royal

authority based its power on the fortified sites of the Kingdom. Specific military atlases were prepared by the King's engineers, with particular attention to strategic aspects of the terrain and the strengths and weaknesses of own and enemy fortifications. This naturally led to the drawing up of battle scenes in which the King's armies were victorious, but assumed a more rational character when general surveys, including of overseas possessions, were undertaken in the 18th century. Naudin, Masse, Berthier, Bourcet and Montannel, not so well known to many of us, are the main actors on this scene.

In the last chapter, devoted to scientific cartography in the Age of Enlightenment, the author evokes the creation of the « Académie des Sciences » in 1666 and draws a striking portrait of the Cassini dynasty under whose direction outstanding progress in the surveying of France was made, culminating in the famous Carte de Cassini in 181 sheets (cf BIMCC Newsletter N° 10, p. 8). The science of cartography in France was further advanced by Guillaume Delisle (1675-1726), disciple of Jean-Dominique Cassini (I), by Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697-1782), Philippe Buache (1700-1773), Jacques-Nicolas Bellin (1703-1772), best known for his numerous sea charts, and Jean-Baptiste d'Après de Manneville (1707-1780), to name only the more commonly known cartographers who lastingly influenced European map making in the following century which saw the emergence of 'modern' cartography.

Wulf Bodenstein

¹). These globes can be examined in all their splendour on a CD-ROM issued by the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1999, *Les Globes de Louis XIV – La Terre et le Ciel par Vincenzo Coronelli*, go to www.bnf.fr for further details.