

The Roman “Zwammerdam” Ships: Sharing Heritage

door Tom Hazenberg

Uitgesproken op 20 en 21 November 2017 in het LVR-Landesmuseum Bonn tijdens het symposium Bürgerschaftliches Engagement am Limes, georganiseerd door Der Bund, Heimat und Umwelt in Deutschland. Een project i.h.k.v. het Europese Jaar van het Cultureel Erfgoed 2018.

“I like to congratulate you, as organising parties with this initiative. To organize a congress on possibly the most important aspect of the nomination of the LGL: the people, the women, men and children in our and future times who can profit from this impressive historical monument. In the next lecture I would like to show how six Roman ship can contribute to a better world. An example of Engagement along the LGL. And of sharing heritage. But please. let me first introduce myself, so you know who is talking to you.

My name is Tom Hazenberg, Dutch archaeologist and entrepreneur. My company is mainly busy with Archaeological Heritage Management projects, concerning archaeological research and protection previous to a building project. During a project I always try to realize some visualisation on the archaeological discoveries in the new building, parking or public space.

One example for this is here in Germany. In Hildesheim we established in the Arneken Galerie an historical exhibition all over the shopping mall. With real finds, large prints with historical persons and a quest for children: a good result for us, the archaeologists, but also good for the shopkeepers, because of the extra attention.

After diverse projects I've learned an important lesson: sometimes you have to push to get a project started and failure lies in wait. But sometimes an archaeological project lands softly and a project starts immediately. Why? What's the secret? Well, after 20 years I possibly found the answer to this question. Too late, you can say. But maybe in time to use this on the new WHS Limes. The secret lies in finding good partners. This sounds simple, but we all know: these are hard to find? And how can we find good partners for an archaeological project?

When the archaeology or the heritage contributes to fulfil wishes of other people. These people will be your partner in good and in bad. And that's what a serious project needs. Partners in good and in bad.

But how can I as archaeologist contribute to others welfare, to others profit? How can I contribute to a better world? In this matter UNESCO itself offers a useful guideline. UNESCO cherish heritage not only to protect the heritage itself but also as medium to connect people and stimulate understanding each other. One of the themes in the UNESCO goals is “Learning to Live Together”. Especially the concepts “of supporting people in understanding each other (and working together to build lasting peace)” and the endeavour to accomplish “just and inclusive societies”. Especially in this theme we as archaeologists can put all our knowledge, experience and ambition. With the LGL as a beautiful and powerful instrument. Doing so we serve archaeology and society as a whole. Along the Rhine in the Netherlands and in Nordrhein-Westfalen. And if we succeed we can reach people in a much wider area.

Operation “Zwammerdam Ships”

So that's the theory. Does it work in the real world? I want to show you how we try to let six Roman ship contribute to make the lives of other people a little better. Therefore, I'll take you back to the early 1970's. To a small village along the Rhine, called Zwammerdam. As you all know, the Northern border of the Roman Empire runs along the river Rhine across the Netherlands. So the Netherlands are partly owner of the huge Frontiers of the Roman Empire with 20 forts, Roman roads, villages, graveyards and even some cities and sanctuaries, completely buried and good preserved in typical Dutch lowland soil.

Special features along the Rhine are the flat-bottomed barges. In February 1972 the first ship of this type is proper excavated in de village of Zwammerdam. This discovery also has royal attention as the late Queen Juliana visited the excavation. During the next decades dozens of

these ships were excavated in the former Roman rivers in the Netherlands, but also here in Germany and in the south of France. But this range of discoveries has started with the six famous ships of Zwammerdam. So, Peter Marsden, the famous British archaeologist, named this type of inland ships after the place of discovery: Type 'ZWAMMERDAM'

Sharing Heritage

Now you know the Roman ships, we will return to the core of this congress. How can we use this discovery in our societal goals? How can we share this heritage? The Roman ships of Zwammerdam were discovered during the building activities of the estate of a healthcare institute. Ipse de Bruggen, the organisation that owns the estate in Zwammerdam, offers special care to the disabled. It supports clients in leading their own lives and participating in society. During the 1970s the estate was structured to guarantee the clients' peace and quiet. Due to new medical insights and growing individualism, ideas have now changed regarding the relationship between clients and the rest of society. This development made Ipse de Bruggen decide to realise more interaction between clients and visitors on the estate, while aiming at a more open connection to the village of Zwammerdam.

And what are our ambitions, the ambitions of the Limesnetwork. Probably you know that – as many archaeological sites - not a single stone of the future WHS Roman Limes is visible and it is hard to explain the historical impact to the public. At this moment the Dutch are trying to rebuild a part of the limes in a variety of ways. In the village of Zwammerdam, we – the limes-network – we want to show the place where these famous ships were found.

The ambitions of both the *limes* network and Ipse de Bruggen resulted in a joint venture in Zwammerdam. The Province of South Holland offered a grant to support this co-operation. So, the first deal we have made with the health care institute, was the establishment of a first-class Limes Visitor Centre. It is called NIGRVM PVLLVM, to the Roman Fort, also discovered on the estate. Opened in 2016 it has already welcomed some 1000's visitors during the two summer seasons. And is it partly run by the clients and by volunteers, people who formerly worked on the Estate. A big, small success following the aims of UNESCO World Heritage. So, we shared this heritage, with benefits all.

Restoration and Museum

I told you about the discovered ship remains of Zwammerdam. What happened to the ships? Where are they? These remains are still existing, preserved in PEG (poly-ethylene-glycol), but in parts, on shelves but also in containers. Over 40 years waiting for their exhibition. Finally, last year we brought them to the city of discovery and the city of Museumpark Archeon: city of Alphen aan den Rijn. That where a new project begins. In this project I've found a new partner: Museumpark Archeon. They are a big Archaeological Park with 300.000 visitors yearly. The aim of this Zwammerdam-project is to restore and rebuild this complete Zwammerdam ship collection. So, the public can see and experience the greatest, original Roman monuments of the Dutch Limes.

I could tell you a lot about this project. But due to the theme of this session I will limit myself to the chances and challenges of this project. The project includes the Restoration of

- 6 complete Roman ships (December 2017 – 2022)
- in Museum Park Archeon (300.000 visitors yearly, 5 kilometres of Zwammerdam)
- restoration visible for the public (attraction in Archeon)
- restoration will be executed by local workers (controlled by specialists and scientific board)
- with internships for student technic, communication, archaeology, restoration
- work experience / re-integration / new Dutchmen
- and of course volunteers

We will really invite all people of the region to join us in the Roman Restoration Wharf, which is built in the Roman Bathhouse of Archeon. We will invite schools, sport clubs, cultural clubs but also companies and serviceclubs like Rotarians and Lions from all over Alphen aan de Rijn and its wide region. We expect that the impact of this Limes heritage collection will have a huge impact to the people of Alphen aan den Rijn. The ships and the limes will not be the exclusive area of the few, but will give de people of Alphen a new field in which they can stimulate social cohesion and pride on their own history and region. They will restore their own ship-collection. We just help them. That is why in Dutch the project is named: "*Heel*

Alphen bouwt mee aan de Zwammerdam 2". With all the recent publicity, the Zwammerdam Ships gain on popularity. In December we will open the Roman Restoration Wharf and we start with the restoration of the first ship, Zwammerdam 2. We expect to welcome the first citizen-helpers a few month later.

And we restore the ships for this new museum: The National Roman Maritime Museum. This means a huge expansion of Museumpark Archeon. The Roman ship collection will play the main role in the presentation of *Life, work and trade in the Dutch Delta in Roman times*. The new Museum is chosen as one of the future UNESCO WHS Limes Visitor hubs. The opening is scheduled in 2020, one year before the recognition of Limes as WHS.

The restoration is also financially supported by the province of Zuid-Holland. The latest support came from the Economic Development Board of Alphen aan den Rijn. Because of the way we try to let the ship contribute to society. Let's watch the promo.

- Save an important archaeological WHS Collection
- Show an important archaeological collection
- Improve Museumpark Archeon
- Strengthen tourism in Alphen aan den Rijn, Groen Hart
- Strengthen tourism WHS Roman Limes
- Citymarketing Alphen aan den Rijn as regional logistic centre (Heineken transport)
- Employment growth
- Internships / Education
- Local cohesion: people of Alphen restore their own heritage

At this way we hope to serve the UNESCO goals, by finding partners in 'Learning to live together' by sharing our Limes heritage. On one place, in Zwammerdam, by letting disabled profit from the Visitor Centre on the place of discovery of the ships. And in Museumpark Archeon by restoring together the authentic Roman ships and enriching the region with a new national museum. We've had already results. But we aim for more. This conference means a great stimulus for us. And I hope on a next occasion we can exchange more experiences.

Thank you.