

INTERNATIONAL TABLING AROUND THE WORLD

Tablers go Dutch: The Aalten Report



Richard and Daphne came to collect Jenny and me at 6.30am, and they drove us to Humberside airport for the 9.50am flight. We were all looking forward to a great weekend in Aalten and meeting our Dutch friends again. There were some other Tablers at the airport and one or two had already decided it was time to practice for a long weekend of beer drinking.

The flight took only 35 minutes instead of the scheduled one hour, but the downside at landing early at Schiphol was that we then had to wait. After passing through passport control we were met by a contingent of Dutch Tablers who drove us to Aalten.

We were taken to a very nice restaurant and served with beers, coffee and lunch. Part way through the Aalten RT88 Chairman, who is a dentist, came in wearing a white coat covered in blood stains. He apologised for being late, claiming he had trouble with a patient who would not stop bleeding and had died in the dentist's chair. I think he thought it a good English joke!

After lunch we were introduced to our hosts for the weekend and taken back to their houses to get ready for the festivities. Our host, Erwin, was the Vice Chairman, and, like his wife, he is a vet. They live a little way out of the Aalten area, in an old farmhouse and keep a few sheep, which Erwin says is because he can't be bothered to mow the lawn!

We chatted for the afternoon then got ready for "meals on wheels": After various courses in various houses, we all met up again at the original bar. It was at this point that two Tablers began to regret starting to drink so early at Humberside airport and were the first to leave the party. What lightweights!

Saturday began with breakfast at the host family's homes and we then all travelled to meet up in Arnhem for coffee and cake followed by a visit to the Netherlands Open Air Museum, (www.openluchtmuseum.nl), punctuated by a restaurant lunch.

Returning to our host's home around 5pm, Jenny and me had the dubious privilege of attempting to act as sheep dogs, when Erwin discovered two lambs had been just born and decided to move his sheep to an indoor barn, as some others were pregnant too. What a laugh this was, and anyone videoing the episode

would have got £250 if they had sent it in to "You've been framed". The sheep would not listen to our shouts. I suppose it must have been a language problem, but were eventually rounded up and put into the barn.

It was not long before we were changing into black tie and off for a wonderful dinner, preceded by champagne and a free bar where glasses were filled before we knew they were empty.

The Aalten RT88 Chairman made a very good speech, which included thanks to the Scarborough contingent for coming over to Holland and for keeping the twinning association alive. He then handed his chain to the incoming Chairman and gave presents to his outgoing Council members. The new Chairman in turn introduced his Council team and the Scarborough RT88 Chairman, Dominic Grunwell, thanked the Dutch for their wonderful hospitality and hoped they would all come back to Scarborough in 2010.

It took some time for the English cabaret team to pluck up "Dutch" courage and go to the changing rooms to get ready for the main event. I had volunteered to be part of the cabaret, first performing "Rule the World" by Take That then, after a quick change, back on stage to perform "Wannabe" by the Spice Girls. It's slightly worrying what pleasure some people get in wearing ladies clothes! Judging by the reception we received, it was clear our rehearsals had resulted in a polished performance. Our first rehearsal comprised 90 minutes of drinking beer and watching the DVDs of Take That and the Spice Girls, then for at least another hour we actually thought about some choreography and dance routines.

The Dutch cabaret entertained with a performance of YMCA by the Village People and a rather bizarre version of the Smurfs.

Drinking, fellowship and dancing followed until about 2am when most of us returned with our host families. However a younger Dutch Tabler called Roy, invited people to go back to his basement which had been converted into a bar, and copious amounts of whiskey were drunk until around 5am.

It was not until we all met again the next morning (Sunday) for brunch that it became obvious which people had carried on partying at Roy's house with a few very serious hangovers and ashen looking faces.

After brunch, there were final speeches from the new Dutch Chairman (Erwin Coonen) and Dominic Grunwell, who gave a gift from us all of placemats with scenes of Scarborough and sticks of Scarborough rock. Dominic included the lines: "My heart wants to stay but my body is telling me otherwise".

Scarborough RT88 have provisionally invited the Dutch back to Scarborough in September 2010 and they all seem very enthusiastic to come. Also, Aalten RT88 will be celebrating their 50th Charter in five years time and they are hoping that Scarborough RT88 and Scarborough 41 Club members can send a big contingent over in March 2013. So get both of these dates in your computerised diaries immediately, so we can give them a great time in Scarborough and then go over to Holland to help them to celebrate the achievement of a 50th Charter.

Excluding flights, I only spent three Euros all weekend as the Dutch insisted on paying in traditional fashion, so you

can have a great weekend in Holland at little cost. Another plus is that you get to kiss all the ladies three times every time you see them.

I'll end by saying that we should be grateful to former members of Scarborough RT for forging our links with Aalten RT. It is difficult to put into words what a great time we have all had this weekend but I am sure that once anyone attends such an event they will be hooked.

