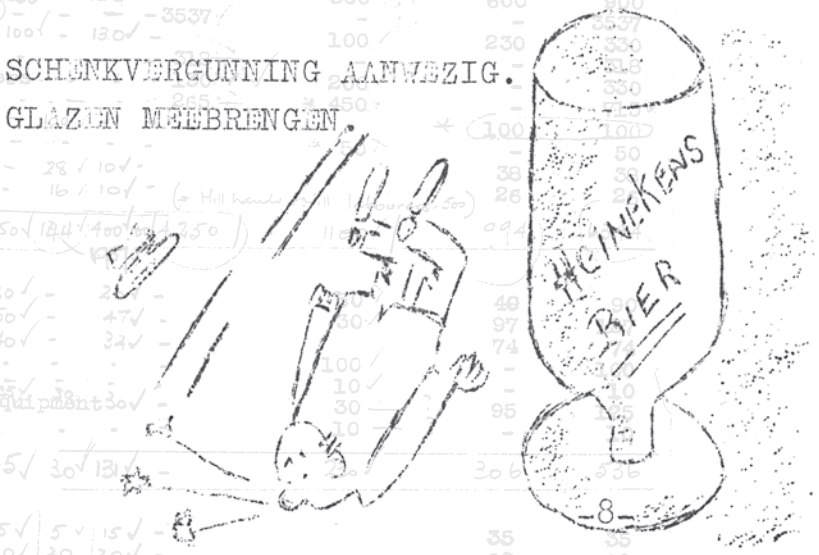
SECTION FOUR: MERCANTILE

Nonja Peters

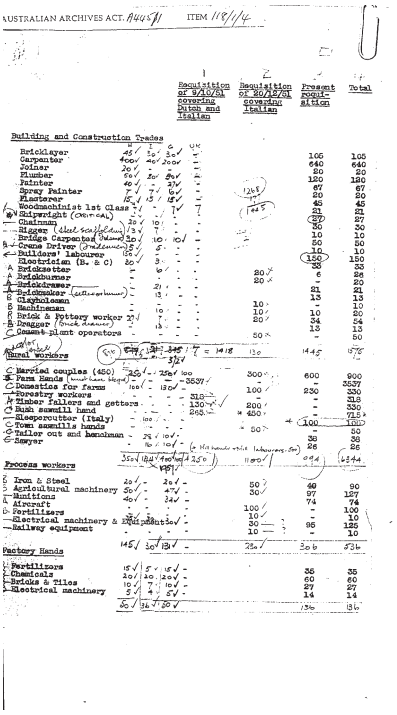
Mercantile is introduced as the last of the four themes promoted in this book. However, it is in fact relevant to all themes invoked to describe the 400 year Dutch connection to Western Australia - maritime, military, migration and mercantile.



The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines mercantile: 'as of or relating to the business of buying and selling products to earn money and of or relating to trade or merchants'.[1] The maritime trading pursuits of the VOC gave birth to Dutch mercantilism and the two centuries of incredible wealth that subsequently followed. The Mercantile focus in this chapter relates to the history of recruitment of the Dutch for the Australian labour market in the immediate post WWII period, by a Commonwealth Government pursuing trades skills to develop its economy. It associates the disproportionately larger number of Dutch (compared to many other ethnic groups) who became self-employed, to how they positioned themselves in the commercial life of Western Australia (WA).

Research on immigrant entrepreneurship carried out in Europe, the United States of America (USA), Canada and Britain (UK) has shown that immigrant enterprise has played an important role in the economic progress of a variety of immigrant groups in host environments. Research also reveals that in Australia , immigrants - as in other host environments in the present day and in the past - are over-represented among the self-employed. However, there are distinct differences in the proportion of the self-employed amongst the various immigrant groups. In Western Australia during the peak of postwar migration 1951-1981, the Dutch, along with the Greeks and Italians, had the highest self-employed profiles of all other ethnic groups. The conceptual approaches that originated from attempting to explain the over representation in business of particular ethnic groups, variously attributed the emergent differentials to a group's culture, structural barriers, ecological factors, global economic factors, situational influences, the opportunity structure, the need to be upwardly mobile, or combinations thereof.[2] My research with Greek, Italian, Dutch and Vietnamese self-employed, also noted the importance of the individual in the decison making process.

In this Section, my own chapter sets the scene for the vignettes by Rietveld, Woerlee and Ward, Plug and Wieman that follow later. Their focus is starting up and running a business in a host environment with a particular skills set. As such, their stories convey the cultural, personal and social price – the risks, pain, adventure, passion and hard work, challenges and benefits that entailed 'making it in postwar Australia' as a self-employed migrant. The chapter by Arnold Stroobach traces the impact of Dutch mercantilism in Australia in the 21st century.


AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES ACT. NAA.445/1 ITEM 118/1/4

	1 Requisition of 9/10/51 covering Dutch and Italian	2 Requisition of 20/12/51 covering Italian	Present requisition	Total
Building and Construction Trades				
Bricklayer			105	105
Carpenter			640	640
Painter			80	80
Plumber			120	120
Spray Painter			87	87
Plasterer			80	80
Woodmachinist 1st Class			45	45
Shipwright (Overall)			21	21
Chainman			87	87
Rigger (steel erection)			30	30
Bridge Carpenter (Timber)			10	10
Crane Driver (Ambulance)			50	50
Bulldozer Operator			10	10
Bulldozer labourer			150	150
Electrician (B. & C)			28	28
Bricklayer				
Bricklayer		20	6	26
Bricklayer		20	-	20
Bricklayer (Ambulance)			21	21
Bricklayer			13	13
Electrician		10	-	10
Machinist		10	10	20
Brick & Pottery worker		20	24	44
Dragger (Dock Labourer)			13	13
Cement plant operators		50	-	50
Rural workers		130	145	275
Married couples (450)		300	600	900
Farm Hands		-	-	3537
Domestics for farms		100	230	330
Forestry workers		-	-	318
Timber fellers and getters		200	-	330
Bush sawmill hand		450	-	715
Sleepercutter (Italy)			100	150
Town sawmills hands		50	-	50
Valley cut and handsman		-	38	38
Sawyer		-	26	26
Process workers				
Iron & Steel		50	90	90
Agricultural machinery		30	97	127
Munitions		-	74	74
Aircraft		100	-	100
Fertilizers		10	-	10
Electrical machinery & Equipment		30	95	125
Railway equipment		10	-	10
Factory Hands				
Fertilizers			35	35
Chemicals			60	60
Bricks & Tiles			27	27
Electrical machinery			14	14

Figure 1
Commonwealth Government of Australia requisition document showing the type of Dutch immigrants recruited by Australia in 1950. NAA.445/1, Item 118/1/4 Courtesy: NAA.

ENDNOTES

1 http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mercantile

2 Peters, N., 'Mixed Embeddedness: Does it really explain immigrant enterprise?' *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, Vol.8, Nos 1- 2. 2002

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

DUTCH LABOUR IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Nonja Peters

Figure 1
'Limburgia', the Family Ottenhof's grocery store c 1960s. Courtesy: Nell Ottenhof.

INTRODUCTION

The rate and content of migration to Australia correlates closely with its economic history. Migrants have therefore always been an integral part of the workforce planning and also reflect the country's changing fortunes. Post WWII, during the 1950s and 1960s, Dutch migrants recruited for their trades skills and their strong work ethic were among the most wanted employees by Australian employers.

Income statistics indicate that the Dutch have made a good living here, and that is also how they assess their migration. Dutch males were well thought of as house builders, painters, tool-makers and business people. First generation Dutch women are lauded as first-rate homemakers, as dressmakers, beauticians, market gardeners, cleaners, nurses aids and less frequently office workers.

Australian Bureau of Statistics Censuses from the 1980s to 2000 show the Dutch, along with Greeks and Italians had the highest self-employment profile of all European migrants to emigrate to WA after WWII. They were located in businesses that ranged from market stalls to multi-million dollar corporations. These entrepreneurs were noted as viewing their entry into the self-employed sector as being either a source of economic survival or a source of economic advancement.

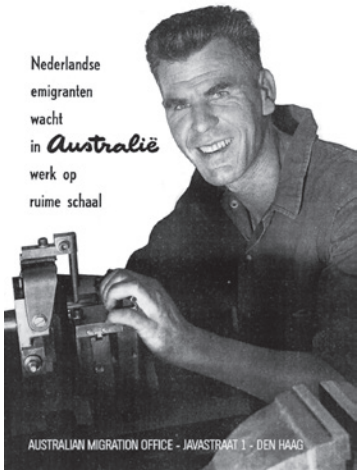


Figure 2
Australian Propaganda - seeking Dutch skilled Trades. Courtesy: Australian Migration Office, NL.

First generation Dutch tradespersons were prominent as self-employed contractors. Their concentration in trades-related industries was a result of the Australian Government's selection procedures pre-migration. The location of the second generation in sales-related occupations or businesses was a function of a booming economy, and also of parents being more inclined to send their children into the overabundant labour market at 15, rather than into an apprenticeship or higher education. Many of the second generation attended night-school to gain specific skill sets to improve their job opportunities.

In terms of 'big business' they were/are most prominent in shipbuilding - the foremost ones being *ASI Ships*, established by the Verboon Brothers and *Austal,* established by John Rothwell. Dutch professionals are currently also employed in management positions as architects, engineers, accountants, health professionals, as well as in local government, town planning, entertainment and academia. The Netherlands-born have in addition made a name for themselves in fine arts such as painting, sculpture, textiles, installations and photography.

Table Three
Birthplace By Labour Market Status Western Australia 1991 - Males

Country	Employer %	% Self-Employed	Employees %	Unpaid Helper %	Unemployed %	Total Employed	Total %
Australia	7.2	11.9	67.5	0.5	12.8	289493	546603
Vietnam	4.8	8.0	50.3	1.3	35.7	2692	4264
Netherlands	10.5	18.4	60.2	0.3	10.9	4128	6222
Greece	14.2	17.2	55.8	0.8	12.1	1151	1858
Italy	15.1	18.8	56.1	0.7	9.3	9161	14570
Yugoslavia	6.5	13.8	64.5	0.4	14.7	4213	6828
Poland	4.0	15.6	55.1	0.3	24.9	1712	3594
Malaysia	8.3	7.7	68.5	0.4	15.2	4167	7642
Germany	7.3	15.7	62.4	0.6	14.1	3580	4945
UK & Ireland	5.2	11.9	68.8	0.2	13.8	76265	108826
Other	6.3	10.2	67.5	0.3	15.8	47383	71976
Undefined	4.6	9.2	63.5	0.8	21.8	1517	16381
Total	7.8	11.1	67.2	0.4	13.5	445424	793709

Source ABS 1991 Census for WA.

Table Four
Birthplace By Labour Market Status Western Australia 1991 - Females

Country	Employer %	% Self-Employed	Employees %	Unpaid Helper %	Unemployed	Total Employed	Total %
Australia	4.7	7.8	75.8	1.4	10.2	211540	550896
Vietnam	5.3	9.2	40.2	2.2	42.9	1907	3951
Netherlands	4.4	13.2	69.6	3.0	7.7	2220	5527
Greece	11.2	18.1	59.0	2.7	8.9	525	1690
Italy	10.6	15.9	64.3	3.3	6.3	3814	12301
Yugoslavia	5.0	11.0	70.9	1.2	11.8	2429	5814
Poland	2.8	7.8	63.9	1.9	23.6	1213	3516
Malaysia	4.1	5.9	74.2	1.1	14.6	3475	8395
Germany	6.8	10.9	69.3	1.3	11.7	2308	5217
UK & Ireland	3.8	7.6	64.8	1.0	10.1	51540	108490
Other	4.1	7.2	72.9	1.1	14.6	33430	72413
Undefined	4.0	6.4	71.9	1.2	16.5	951	14906
Total	4.6	7.9	75.2	1.3	10.9	315442	793116

Source ABS 1991 Census for WA.

The focus of this chapter is the period from 1947 to 1970, when one of the main criteria for the Commonwealth Government's deliberate enticement of emigrants to Australia was to overcome crucial labour shortages in heavy industry, the burgeoning building and construction sectors and public utilities and to restore essential services to pre-war levels and maintain the war-boosted economy. Those most sought after by Australia, and in order of preference, were persons with trade skills, semi-skilled machine operatives

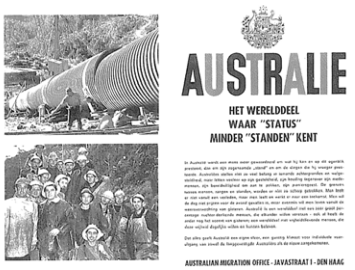


Figure 3
Immigration propaganda - Australian Government in collaboration with the Government of the Netherlands.
Courtesy: Australian Migration Office, NL.

Figure 4
Dutch Butcher c 1950s.
Courtesy: van der Klashorst Family.

Figure 5
Collie Ice Delivery business. c1950s.
Courtesy: Rikki Schaafsma.

and other vocational skills, followed by unskilled labour - although these were not always the skill sets which relinquishing governments wanted to lose. It was at the time much harder to gain entry to Australia as a person with higher educational qualifications and a great deal of professional closure stopped many academics, doctors, lawyers and architects from finding employment, until they had completed an Australian accredited degree.[1]

In line with immigration recruitment procedures, over forty per cent of those Dutch males selected to come to Western Australia between December 1951 and February 1955, were classified as craftsmen, in contrast to only 18 per cent of the local workforce.[2] The trades that figured most among arrivals included carpenters, fitters, painters, electricians, tool makers and bakers. A low 13 per cent were tertiary workers (in contrast to 31 per cent of the local workforce). The rest were semi-skilled operatives.[3] The largest number of Dutch metal tradesmen - toolmakers - were employed mainly by large engineering firms, particularly 'Chamberlains Tractors Pty Ltd', which produced farm machinery. Dutch un-and semi-skilled operatives were also employed as labourers by the company constructing the Kwinana Oil Refinery, and after that at the refinery itself.

In contrast to other migrant groups, the greater marketability of Dutch trades skills resulted in a rapid dispersal of tradesmen throughout the Australian organisational structure. The Dutch, like most first generation migrant's trades skills were especially important because they were being inserted into the Australian labour market, that was in any case experiencing a dearth of skilled workers, without apprenticeship costs.[4] This was thus an added advantage for Australia.

However, since selection did not hold the promise of a particular job,[5] when immigrants set foot in Australia their most immediate concern was to get a job. The official procedure for assisted migrants was to be assigned work by the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) in accordance with the Government's placement priorities. All migrant reception centres had a CES Office. Conversely, the unassisted were free to procure a job of their choice. Most migrants commenced the process of looking for a job with a visit to the nearest employment office in the state where they had disembarked.

On arrival, the skilled - trades faced an additional requirement. In spite of the satisfactory assessment of Dutch trades training by the Eltham Mission, once the foreign-trained tradesmen arrived here the Australia unions insisted they prove conclusively that their 'training and ability' was on a par with local standards, via a test set by the Local Trades Committee.[6] Migrants lacking English language capacity often failed these tests many times, even with the aid of a translator - supplied at a cost to the migrant. The stress was relieved somewhat when they discovered they could work under an Australian tradesman, until their English was of a sufficient standard to pass the test. This was also the way many painters and plasterers acquired their papers and union membership.

On the other hand, Dutch bakers were sent for testing to two bakehouses. Failure by Dutch bakers to gain recognition in their trade was mainly due to the vastly different baking methods in the two countries. In fact, Dutch bakers found it easier to gain recognition in Australia as pastry cooks than as bakers. Many Dutch became independent tradesmen to avoid these onerous procedures. Even so Dutch trade recognition was high compared to many other immigrant groups. In WA, 34 per cent of the Dutch metal tradesmen who applied for recognition between January 1950 and March 1955 were successful, compared to 32 per cent of the British and only 20 per cent of the Italian.[7] The first post-war Dutch migrants to enter WA, also found union power repressive.

Figure 6
Wieman doormaker. Courtesy: Wieman Family.

Many Dutch migrants whom I interviewed from the cohort of immediate post-war arrivals, believed that Australian trade unions deliberately kept alive an image of 'the employer as the natural exploiter of the labouring man,' to enable them to maintain a negative relationship between employer and employees. Consequently many Dutch joined the union anyway, because they felt they had no option. This was especially the case in WA, where a preference clause operated in the building industry which effectively meant that preference was given to workers with union membership.[8] Dutch religions who were ideologically against union membership, negotiated with the unions to have their fees paid to a charity, thus enabling them to work on union sites. This was certainly the method for members of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (Free Reformed Church) in Albany.

Regardless of the tendency for the Dutch to find work in their own specific occupations, they also showed an inclination to seize any better opportunities offered by other occupations. Sales was a particularly popular choice, especially among the unskilled. This was primarily because sales, insurance or real estate (being the most popular) , offered greater financial rewards than most other types of work. Also those professional Dutch, who were excluded from working in their profession in Australia, were however able to find employment in sales and small business. As a consequence the Dutch in Australia most often found the employment they wanted.[9] The extent to which selection worked towards positive readjustment for the Dutch, is perhaps best noted by the fact that the Netherlands-born had higher than average incomes, whilst those from Italy and Greece maintained the lowest.[10]

Figure 7
Mrs van Welie selling home-grown vegies to Mrs Gielens – late 1950s.
Courtesy: van Welie Family.

Employers placed great value on Dutch employees because they were 'ambitious, hard workers, who were keen to do overtime, to save enough money to buy or build a home, or to become self-employed.' Dutch researchers noted that 17 per cent of prospective Dutch emigrants had specified that 'to become self-employed', was the principal motivation for their emigration. Another sixty per cent 'hoped' to become self-employed.[11] The philosophical basis for the desire to be self-employed, was linked to the traditional Dutch ideology that revered the entrepreneur and placed business ownership high on the hierarchy of acceptable career paths.[12]

Researchers also found the Dutch were keen to work hard, long days and sought employment which offered the opportunity to earn large bonuses and overtime money, in order to speed up the process of becoming independent tradespersons or shopkeepers.[13] Information supplied to Dutch emigration officers by prospective emigrants, lead to them to speculate that at least 50 per cent of Dutch immigrants would become independent tradesmen or shopkeepers. [14] However, employment satisfaction, a full employment

Table One
Birthplace by Occupation Western Australia Census 1961 and 1976 - Males.

BP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Aust												
1961	6.39	7.82	9.24	6.09	19.6	1.99	8.67	34.8	3.38	1.20.	.65	149 321
1976	9.67	8.66	8.81	6.20	13.4	1.71	7.46	34.6	3.80	.97	5.02	211 153
Greece												
1961	.85	10.17	.42	11.08	21.2	1.28	4.71	39.5	8.99	.....	1.71	1 867
1976	2.38	10.00	3.80	8.33	5.05	1.07	6.72	52.0	7.61	.05	3.03	1 680
Italy												
1961	.41	4.18	.31	2.84	19.3	5.59	4.58	58.8	2.60	.05	1.28	12 216
1976	2.68	6.27	2.31	4.09	9.7	1.29	7.14	59.9	4.15	.01	2.42	12 642
Netherlands												
1961	5.17	6.2	3.89	5.30	8.16	.82	9.03	54.2	5.35	.60	1.14	4 616
1976	10.80	10.41	5.36	5.50	5.69	1.22	7.19	46.4	4.65	.66	2.04	4 812

Source: ABS Census Data for WA - 1961 and 1976.

Table One and Two Birthplace by Occupation Code: 1 = Professional and Technical; 2 = Administration, Executive & Management; 3 = Clerical; 4 = Sales; 5 = Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters etc.; 6 = Miners, Quarrymen and related; 7 = Transport and Communication; 8 = Labourer, Production Worker & Tradesperson; 9 = Service, Sport & Recreation; 10 = Armed Services; 11 = Inadequately described; 12 = Total Employed Workforce.

Table Two
Birthplace by Occupation, Western Australia - 1961 and 1976 - Females.

BP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Aust.												
1961	16.3	4.04	31.7	16.08	4.71	.....	2.53	5.74	17.26	.09	1.52	47,987
1976	15.3	2.56	31.3	11.97	8.95	.02	2.39	4.02	15.18	.08	8.24	1110,107
Greece												
1961	1.03	8.24	2.06	24.05	17.5 25.1	.....	.34	23.4	18.21	.....	5.15	291
1976	1.87	2.41	12.8	18.65		.....	.....	29.7	21.47	.....	8.05	745
Italy												
1961	2.40	4.44	6.56	12.60	8.25	.....	.38	35.9	26.90	.....	3.57	1 539
1976	2.24	2.04	16.0	12.49	10.7	.....	.53	20.5	24.89	.....	10.7	4 507
Netherlands												
1961	11.2	4.54	18.7	22.84	1.16	.....	.87	10.3	27.58	.....	2.12	1 033
1976	14.3	3.39	24.5	12.93	5.28	.....	2.74	5.87	21.58	.10	9.37	1 856

Source: ABS Census Data for WA - 1961 and 1976.

economy and three decades of boom, kept most first generation Dutch employed rather than self-employed, although this changed as their less skilled children entered the workforce.[15]

Since the 1950s when the bulk of Dutch migrants arrived in Western Australia, there has been a steady growth in their participation in the self-employed sector. Despite their slow start, by 1991 when approximately 10 per cent of Australia-born males and 8 per cent females were self-employed, the rate among Dutch males at 18.2 per cent (females 13.0 per cent) was only slightly less then that of the Italians at 18.8, who had the highest self-employed profile of all the ethnic groups [see Table One]. The majority of these were second generation Dutch – those who arrived as children in the 1950s and 1960s. In contrast to their parents, because the second generation had most of their schooling in Australia, they had two sets of networks to utilise in business – their migrant networks and also local peer group networks – which gave them a competitive advantage in business.

HOW THE DUTCH WENT ABOUT ENTERING THE BUSINESS SECTOR

The following extracts from oral history interviews which I conducted for my PhD on migrant entrepreneurship, show how the Dutch went about entering the self-employed sector in Western Australia. There are of course a myriad of further examples that are unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter.

A number of the tradesmen in the first generation sample I interviewed, became sub-contractors in the building and construction industry almost as soon as they had arrived in Australia, despite a lack of capital. Most of this group set about it in much the same way as John:

> I arrived here with only £4. I only worked for a boss for three months. I could see how much money he was making so I put

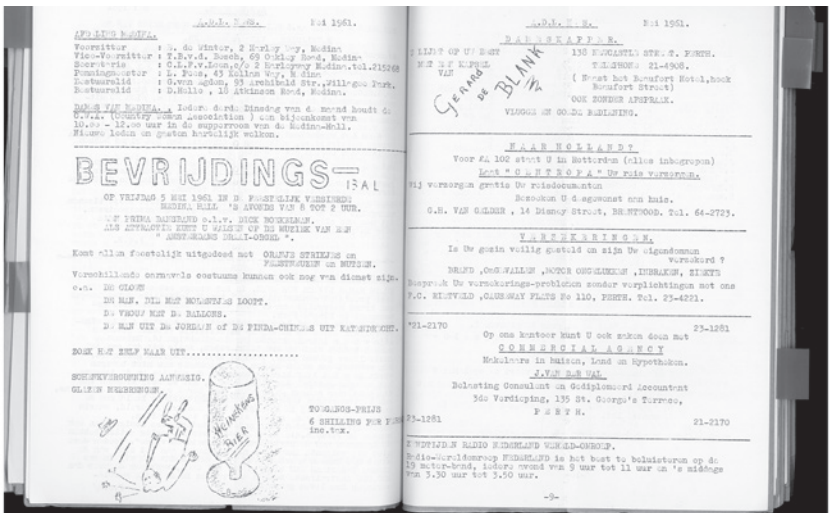


Figure 8
Nonja and Nancy Peters running the Greenmount grocery store while their parents were on holiday in the Netherlands, 1974. Courtesy: Peters Family Collection.

Figure 9
Toodyay Café
The Peters and Maasen families established and ran this store together for 18 months from 1951 -1953. Courtesy: Peters Collection.

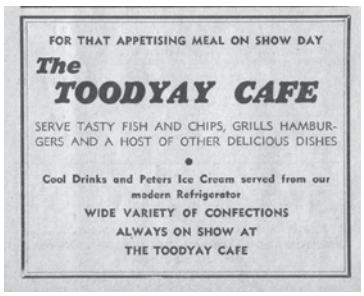


Figure 10
Toodyay Café advertisement in the local Toodyay paper c1952.

Figure 11
ADL News letter Business adverts: Courtesy: Peters Family Collection.

Figure 12
Tutts Broodjes Winkel CBD Perth newspaper advertisement, c1960s.

> an add in the paper - 'Painter Wants Work', P.O. Box No. I went to see the people that contacted me - personally. Bought a 1928 Ford Model A and away I went. During the 1950s building boom I employed 15 people. I worked for builders around the metropolitan area and up north...and made lots of money. [16]

Many sole tradesmen moved back and forth between subcontracting and employment throughout the course of their working lives, depending upon where the greatest financial rewards were available at a given time.

As noted before, the reasons and ways into the business sector varied. My father affords an example of how self-employment appealed to the unskilled. A musician in the Netherlands, he started work in Australia as a steward in the prestigious Claremont Sailing Club. He left that position to work in the Silks Department (fabric and textiles) in the basement at *Boans* Department Store in Murray Street, Perth. However, he was advised to leave that job, by the doctor on the *MS Maetsuyker,* a ship that plied between the NEI and Fremantle until the hand over of sovereignty from NL to Indonesia in December 1949, because the artificial lighting was disorienting him. Therefore, eighteen months after arrival in 1951, we moved to Toodyay, a country town about 90 kilometres from Perth, where he was employed as manager of the Toodyay Club. A few months later, my parents and another Dutch couple – Jan and Tanya Maasen – started a café in the town from scratch. They hired a premise, and the men made the tables and chairs for the café, but hired refrigerators. They sold hamburgers, grills, fish and chips, steak and eggs and so forth. The local next door gave them lessons in how to cook a steak - Australian style – and as a result, the café was full to capacity, especially on weekends after the local footy match and for late suppers. Local primary school children loved the Dutch style chips in cone shaped paper wraps, that the women prepared especially for them at lunchtime.

When we moved to Northam in 1953, another rural Wheatbelt town about 30 kilometres from Toodyay, Dad ran the local *Malvern Star* bike store, then sold *Watkins* products door-to-door, and finally sold Insurance for Colonial Mutual Life (CML). In 1966 he left insurance to run the 'one-stop shop' which he and my mother had purchased freehold in Glen Forest, selling groceries and greengrocery – it also functioned as a liquor store (Gallon License) and newsagency with a paper delivery round. Three family members also joined him in the business. He purchased two more delicatessens - one on Greenmount and another in Cottesloe. In this way, a family business culture developed under our father's leadership. My three siblings now all operate businesses, which include a Honda franchise, Office furniture, office outfit factory, a lighting business and a country grocery and delicatessen store. I am the odd-one-out, although my late husband started married life in 1968, building wheat silos at farms throughout WA. However, I write about migrants in business and worked in and sold the family businesses when my father passed away.

Figure 13
Noordeman Engineering Firm.
Courtesy: Noordeman Family.

Bert Creemers (deceased), who arrived in Australia in 1955, had a similar story to tell. He recalls:

> When I first arrived here I started off making margarine for Meadow Lea, then I was a brickies labourer working up in the bush. When that fell through I started as a bread vendor and even had my own bread round. I also sold Mr Whippy ice creams over the weekends to make extra money. The baker had me establish many 'Bread Rounds' as I was good at attracting customers. Once established, the boss would put someone else to work on that round while I set about starting another one. I decided I might be better off with a milk round and became a milk vendor but I wasn't really suited to night work — I needed my sleep — and I had a bad car accident. Following my rehabilitation from the accident, I started work as a truck driver carting fresh skins and bales of wool, that is until there was a strike on the wharf and we all [employees] were 'turfed out'. Shortly after, I met a friend who had made it to insurance supervisor and he got me involved selling insurance. [17]

Figure 14
Spandbroek Business Albany c1967.
Courtesy: Spanbroek Family.

For the last 18 months before his return to the Netherlands, Bert sold insurance for 'Associated National', which he described as the 'daughter company' of a Netherlands Firm established in 1845. Bert later gained a real estate license.

Immediately on arrival here in 1950, Peter Noordeman, a trained diesel mechanic, found a job as a travelling field services mechanic in his area of expertise. This entailed servicing the tractors of farmers around the Wheatbelt area. In 1966 he decided to go it alone, and he established a business in the backyard of his home. Many of his clients employed him in this new role. However, he did not start expanding until 1980 when his son joined the firm. They bought a property in Welshpool and erected a custom-made building. In 2014, Noordeman Diesel Pty, Ltd, Welshpool, was still going strong under the leadership of his son. The second generation sons or daughters of migrants who have a local education and networks, are often the catalyst for taking first generation firms into the corporate level.

Dirk Verboon, a Netherlands trained marine engineer, found his way back into his trade of boat building more by chance than design. He notes:

> ...When dad came to visit me [from NL] in the early 1960s and he became bored, he decided to build a boat. He grabbed my wife to go and buy him the needed materials because he couldn't speak English and because my brother and I said we were too busy delivering bread. When he had finished that one we (Dirk and brother Nick) sold it and we started getting contracts for more boats. We ended up building quite a few in a yard in Osborne Park. We had a number of Dutchmen working with us. To start with we all kept our day jobs and built boats at night. It became so lucrative that my brother and

Figure 15
Dad Verboon - while on a holiday to see his sons in Western Australia - became the catalyst that led to the establishment of ASI Ships. Courtesy: Dick Verboon.

> I started a company and shifted the business to a property in Naval Base with a large slipway. The other Dutchies also left their other jobs and worked for us full time.

The Australian Ship Building Industries Ltd (ASI) that developed from these humble family beginnings, eventually had the capacity to build all types of sophisticated 'small ships' to any world classification (Lloyds, ABS and DET Norske Veritas) (ASI Prospectus 1985). ASI and Austal (Ships) – an even bigger shipbuilding Corporation established by John Rothwell – hold the status of the largest businesses established by Dutch migrants in WA.

First generation Dutch males from upper-middle class backgrounds often entered the business sector, because in Australia they were free to attempt new endeavours unfettered by their family's working tradition. Ric Smits, an accountant from an upper-middle class background, explains:

> I went to university for a couple of years. I studied for a job in the Indonesian Civil Service, but after a year with the troubles in Indonesia and my rejection for military service - a requirement for the job I shifted to Law. However, I couldn't settle in it and shifted to economics and accountancy. But you also have to do years and years as an assistant and do exams every three years. I started as an assistant accountant. However, when a recession hit as the youngest I was retrenched. It was the time of migration and my neighbour had migrated to Canada so we migrated to Australia in 1951. I started with an accountancy firm in Perth but it was the same it was going to take years to become a fully-fledged accountant. I would have to do all the exams again. The pay was £11 per week and for that you had to have decent clothes, cigarettes car and all sorts of things. At the same time a farmhand in the Wheatbelt earned £9 per week all found, house the lot. And there you could do what you wanted. We took the farmhand job in Bruce Rock. Then shifted to a similar job in Donnybrook. I had an argument there with the farmer, and within 24 hours I arranged with the CES for a job with a saw mill. We shifted to a mill house in Northcliffe. The running water the CES talked about came straight from the sky - there was no water laid onto the house. We stayed there until we could afford to buy an abandoned group settlement farm with an old dilapidated farmhouse on it - I had always wanted to go farming. You couldn't do that in Holland, you couldn't change from one profession to the other. The social structure was fixed. You couldn't study at university and then become a bulldozer driver even if you earned more...that way.

For men like Ric Smits, self-employment in Australia endowed them with a greater degree of personal and working autonomy than they would ever have had in the Netherlands. Researchers distinguish between *innovating* and *conservative* migration. The former is 'when a person migrates as a

means of achieving the new, the latter when a person migrates to retain what they have had - they move geographically to remain where they are in all other respects.[18] Smits and the other examples in this chapter fit the *innovating* category. A number of Dutch who also fitted this category, gave the impression that they were the 'black sheep' of their families and that it had been a relief for both sides when they emigrated. For example, Henry, who had been an administrator and time-and-motion researcher in the Netherlands and had hated it, was able to become a truck driver in Australia, which he loved. This would not have been possible in the Netherlands of the 1950s. He would have been expected to uphold the family status with an appropriate job. The employment reality for Dutch females differed entirely.

Figure 16
Kitchen Staff at Holden Camp.
Courtesy: van Welie Family.

DUTCH WOMEN AND THE WORKFORCE

In Australia most married Dutch women were enveloped in domestic life and the production of children, in much the same way as they had done in the Netherlands. Despite having attained suffrage, the working wife was still uncommon and women remained subservient socially, legally and domestically.[19] These inequalities were most clearly exemplified in the strict division of labour: men earned the family's living so that the women would not have to work outside the house. As late as 1968, the Netherlands still had the lowest rate of working wives and the largest number of male-dominated jobs of all the European Community Countries (ECC).[20] Dutch women's labour market participation in Australia - around 18 per cent in the mid 1950s - differed little from that in the Netherlands. This was also the ideology in post-war Australia. At close of war, the women who had been employed by the war effort were expected to go home and have lots of babies, who would eventually bolster the labour market. The childcare set up during the war to support women's war work in employment, mysteriously disappeared.

Women who did want to work, were thus constrained by the lack of kinship support and a disenchantment with the quality of available childcare.[21] The size of many Dutch families would have also been a contributing factor to women's 'stay-at-home' status. The majority of Dutch women in business were, therefore, usually partners in a family firm.

The position of the second generation women, differed little from the first. The majority still sought self-fulfilment as wives and mothers. By 1961 their workplace participation, Australia-wide, had only increased to 20.4 per cent. A quarter of these were seamstresses or clothing factory workers, a similar number were clerk-typists and the remainder worked as shop assistants, domestics or cleaners. A small percentage were nurses and teachers.[22] Many younger Dutch acquired commercial and other skills at night school while also working at a day job. A small percentage gained university degrees - some after marriage in the mid-1970s, when the Whitlam Government supported free university education. I am one of these women. However, I had also worked in the family businesses when my father became too ill. After his death I sold his three businesses to secure enough finances to purchase a

Figure 17
Floraco Flower grower.
Courtesy: Rene de Kok.

house and car outright for my mother, who lived on for another thirty years as a widow. One second generation women I interviewed had a very successful recruitment agency, but the majority were running businesses from home, as the childcare situation had not improved and they were involved in some form of hairdressing, beauty therapy or dressmaking.

EDUCATION

Very few post-war Dutch had higher education qualifications. A university education was more likely among the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) Dutch, evacuated to WA for rehabilitation from internment camps. For example Dirk Drok, an evacuee from the NEI who arrived here in 1945, had enough credits from his NEI education to enable him to enrol in 1947 at the University of Western Australia (UWA) to study languages. An Australian family, who had befriended Dirk's younger brother while he was being educated at Wesley College in the pre-war period - when the family still lived in Java - had been willing to sponsor the Droks as migrants, which enabled them to stay in Australia. (see the Drok vignette and story on www.daaag.org)

The trend towards a dearth of tertiary qualifications among the Dutch continued into the next generation. Aldridge provides as an example, the 230 person-strong eastern states *Hervormde Kerk* congregation, that as late as 1991, had not a single member who had or was attending a university.[23] The third generation, thus children born to second generation Dutch, are finally changing these statistics. The second and third generation Dutch are found in all levels of the Australian workforce, including the professional fields. There is another more recent category of Dutch in Australia, which exists at the 'top end of town'. These are the Dutch Multinationals that have established themselves in Australia, who bring out Dutch professionals for specific periods of time - as expatriates (see Stroobach chapter).

To conclude, I would say that the Dutch and their progeny who stayed have made a major contribution to the Australian economy. There are of course a plethora more stories and personal experiences that have yet to be told and this chapter provides only a brief overview of Dutch employment in WA. More can be found on the 'Dutch Australians At A Glance' website www.daaag.org. Perhaps you too have a personal story which you would like to add to the website?[24]

ENDNOTES

1 Peters, N., *Trading Places: Greek, Italian, Dutch and Vietnamese Enterprise in Western Australia*, PhD thesis, University of Western Australia (WA), 2000; 2002: Peters, N, Mixed Embeddedness: Does it really explain immigrant enterprise? *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, May; Peters, N., '*The Dutch migration to Australia: sixty years on*' in M. Schrovner and M van Faassen (eds) It's Time to Burn the Wooden Shoes in *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*, 2010: Year 7, No. 2; 2011: Selling a dream - expectation versus reality – post-war Dutch and other migration to Australia 1945 – 1970, *AEMI Journal* Volume 8, pp. 49-63; Bottomley, G., *From Another Place, Migration and the Politics of Culture*, Oakleigh, Vic, 1992; Bottomley, G., 'Culture, Ethnicity, and the Politics/Poetics of representation', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, Vol 28.no.2,pp.208-23.

2 Appleyard, R.T., The Economic Absorption of Dutch and Italian Immigrants into Western Australia 1947 to 1955, *R.E.M.P. Bulletin*, 1956, Vol.4. No.3, 45-54, 51;

3 Beijer, G., *Characteristics of Overseas Immigrants*, The Hague, 1961.

4 Hempel, J.A., 'Dutch Migrants in Queensland', Canberra : Australian National University, 1960, 38, both noted that the type of migrant wishing to come to Australia sometimes changed. For example during the mid 1950s there was a decrease in the proportion of Dutch farmers, tradesmen and professionals and a relative increase in farm labourers, clerical, semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

5 Appleyard, R.T. 'The Economic Absoption of Dutch and Italian Immigrants into Western Australia 1947 to 1955'. *R.E.M.P. Bulletin*, Vol.4. No.3, 1956, 91.

6 Peters, 2000.

7 Appleyard 1956 also noted that of the 154 Dutch persons who had applied for electricians certificates, 74 (48 per cent) passed the test. Metal tradesmen comprised a disproportionately large number of the Dutch tradesmen in WA and Queensland Dutch.

8 Johnson, R. (ed.), *Immigrants in Western Australia,* Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 1979, 88.

9 This was additionally confirmed by the high percentage (74 per cent) of Dutch migrants who reported having had no employment problems after arriving. The fact that 85 per cent of the Beijer et al. sample were content with their work against 66 per cent of the those not working in their area, led him to conclude that employment in one's own occupational field was an important stabilising factor in the resettlement process, and that work satisfaction was related to it (see also Hempel, 1960, 23; & Appleyard, 1956).

10 See ABS Census for Population and Housing cross-classifieds, occupation by birthplace for 1976.

11 Beijer, G. Frijda, N.H. Hofstede, B.P & Wentholt, R, and Hoftstee, E.W., *Some Remarks on Selective Migration*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952.

12 Beijer, G. Frijda, N.H. Hofstede, B.P & Wentholt, R. 1961. *Characteristics of Overseas Immigrants*. The Hague: Government Printing and Publishing Office. Beijer et al noted that the desire to be self-employed was strongest among the 45 years and older among whom nearly 75 per cent desired to be self-employed. Moreover, they claimed the desire to be self-employed was strongest in prospective Dutch emigrants among whom personal ambition was uppermost. Beijer et al noted that of the among those who cited self-employment as the principal motive for emigrating that: seven per cent had achieved this within two years and that 30 per cent of these had been self-employed in the Netherlands - although not always in the same occupation. Around 37 per cent were in the building-trades (carpenters, plasterers, brick layers, painters); the others range from rag-and-bone-man to bee keeper (the sample contained no agrarians, 1961, 288.)

13 Hempel 1960; Appleyard 1956; Zubrzycki 1964; Julien, R. '*The Dutch in Tasmania : An Exploration of Ethnicity and Immigrant Adaptation*'. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Department of Sociology. Faculty of Arts: University of Tasmania., 1989..

14 Appleyard 1956, 88.

15 Cahill, D., 'Lift the low sky: Are Dutch Australians Assimilationist or Accommodationists' in: N. Peters, *The Dutch Down Under 1606-2006,* Perth, 2006, 218.

16 Peters 2000.

17 Bert Creemers interview, 1992.

18 Hofstede. B.P. *Thwarted Exodus*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1964: 192 cites Petersen.

19 Oudijk, C. 'The Netherlands:In the Unions, the Parties, the Streets and the Bedrooms'. In Robin Morgan (ed.) *Sisterhood is Global* : New York.

'The Netherlands:In the Unions, the Parties, the Streets and the Bedrooms'. In Robin Morgan (ed.) *Sisterhood is Global*, New York, 1984: According to Oudijk, in 1960 there were still only 6.8 per cent married women in the Dutch workforce compared to 27 per cent in Britain.

20 Huggett, F. E., *The Modern Netherlands,* New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971, 70.

21 Some young Dutch children were forced to take younger sick siblings to see a doctor while their mothers were at work.

22 Beltz, C. 1964. Dutch Migration to Australia, 1946-1961. Unpublished Thesis. Canberra: Australian National University, 196; Zubrzycki, J. *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley: A Sociological study of immigrants in the Brown Coal Industry in Australia,* Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1964 , 99; Hempel, 1960, 41. Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data, birthplace by Occupation for 1981 show that Dutch females had moved away from clerical and domestic jobs, 34.5 per cent were involved in community services.

23 Waldinger, R, Ward, R, & Aldrich, H. 1990. *Ethnic Entrepreneurs*. London: Sage Series on *Race and Ethnic Relations* Vol.1. 151.

24 Dutch Australians At A Glance: Acknowledging the Past, Preserving the Present and Future, *AEMI Journal* 2010, Volume 7, pp. 42-49.