



A view of the future?

Magda M.W. Wensing

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FROM THE EDITOR

In Holland, going to Grammar School in the seventies usually meant visiting Rome. So did I in 1973. One of our duties was to write a travel journal. This was the start of the numerous travel journals I wrote over the years.

So when the word 'narrowboat' entered my vocabulary I immediately realised: this is going to be a journey as well (but not as we know it). I kept track of everything narrowboat-related after that. And when I finally moved to the UK I decided to keep a weblog. Primary for myself, but also for 'the folks back home'.

But reading a weblog on a day-to-day basis is one thing, reading all posts about one subject in one go is very awkward. Reading it as a pdf is a lot easier.

This document contains all the posts written from the moment I discovered narrowboats.. My thoughts, and everything I had to organize and do, in order to leave Holland behind, and move to the UK.

Enjoy reading.

Scarisbrick, 25 November 2017

Magda M.W. Wensing

If this book is unreadable on your e-reader, please tell me, and I will try to correct it.

HOW IT ALL STARTED – 14 FEBRUARY 2013

It's late afternoon, on the 14th of February 2013. A blizzard howls around the house. Not the first one this year in the Netherlands, and probably also not the last. Inside my house I'm curled up in my favorite chair next to the cosy warm wood stove, with a hot cup of tea and a magazine. A magazine that, a month ago, I didn't even know it existed. And I'm getting more and more excited.



A whole new universum

A month ago Lawrance, my partner, asked the difficult question that pops up every year: When and what? I need to book my holidays for this year! We usually go on a golf-cum-camping trip somewhere in the UK, but as we seem to get older every year (and the weather worse) it might be time for something completely new. I suggest a fortnight on one of them narrow houseboats I've seen on TV. This idea falls on good soil, so we have a look on the internet. Houseboats doesn't get us anywhere, and longboats is something for the Vikings, but then I spot the word narrowboat. Bingo! And as we happen to be in the UK for a couple of days, I almost immediately go to the shop to buy a magazine.

A whole new world opens up for me. Of course, being Dutch, I'm familiar with canals, locks, bridges and boats. But this is a completely different cup of tea. I see pictures of snug little palaces on water, either in a marvellous scenery or moored next to a picturesque pub, or both. And, I must admit, always in nice weather.

Lawrance told me yesterday he has booked our boat, so after supper I'm going to study the Boating Handbook...

IT GETS WORSE – 09 APRIL 2013

About two months later narrowboats are still an important factor in daily life. Due to the fact that, one day, I had the stupid idea of: I could live on a narrowboat!

Straight away came about a thousand reasons why me and Lawrance should buy a narrowboat.

- 1 Lawrance retires next year, so living and cruising on a narrowboat would give us a new goal in life.
- 2 I have my own company but, due to recession, a lot of my work is now done in India, for less than a tenth of my hourly rate, so I could have an early retirement.
- 3 No work for me means financial problems in a couple of years. If I sell my house and buy a boat I would easily make my retirement day with my savings.
- 4 ...

No. I won't mention all the one thousand reasons. And yes, I know, I've never set foot on a narrowboat yet, but I'm sure I'll manage. Although I have a big house, I used to spend a lot of time in my Volkswagen campervan, to save myself driving home after socialising with friends. And over the last ten years I've spent maybe half the time in a truck. In the truck we have two Captains Chairs, a coffee machine, a microwave, a pull-out bed, all squeezed into a space the size of a boatman's cabin. Just think of a narrowboat as a truck and trailer, but turned around. Then we would have not only the truck, but also the trailer as living space. Wow! And a real bathroom (not the under-the-trailer one). And a wood stove. And...

So, having nothing to do, I switch on my computer, click on Adobe Illustrator and start designing. Internet provides me with a heap of information, especially about things I have never heard of. Like weed hatches, calorifiers, fenders or bilges. I still don't know the Dutch words for them.

Once I created a rough plan for a narrowboat, I make a list of things to discuss with Lawrance, include the boat plan, make an e-book of it and send it to Lawrance, who at this time is on his way to Las Palmas (no, not on holiday, but with the truck). To my surprise his reactions are like: *Oh, and we could...* and *Yes, I like...* Or in one word: positive!

So, two months after my first encounter with a narrowboat, we have a detailed drawing for a 57 or 58 ft trad narrowboat, with a traditional lay-out. We'll have a cabin with an in-line bed, a walk-through bathroom, a galley on both sides of the boat, a L-shaped dinette (a bed for all the people that, undoubtedly, will come and visit us) and a saloon with captains chairs. I designed the under-furniture storage space, the high-level cupboards, the heating system, all the lights, and the hot and cold water system. So far it's the second boat plan (the first one had a reverse lay-out), the second galley plan, and the third plan for the bathroom.

The drawing as such is to scale, but since Illustrator can't deal with feet and inches I end up with some strange measurements, and at the moment the boat is 58.6813 feet in length. But a boat builder can open my drawing in AutoCAD and the measurements will all convert to proper feet and proper inches... (I hope)

Then the holidays get nearer and nearer, and we're about to set foot on a real narrowboat, for the first time...

But that's a different story.

DE-HOARDING HAS STARTED – 15 JULY 2013

It's five weeks after our holidays and summer finally arrived in the Netherlands. That is, I don't feel the need to switch the heating system on in the morning anymore. Not that either Lawrance or me have time to enjoy the weather. Lawrance is definitely back in the rat race, having been to Poland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium...

And what about me? Well, I started getting rid of all the junk I managed to collect in my (rather spacious) house over the last thirty years. Lawrance calls it hoarding, but I don't agree with that. A hoard to me means something that has a value. Either for mankind (like the Staffordshire hoard) or for a single person (to sell it and get money for it). But who would be interested in bank statements from the eighties? Not even the Tax Department! So I spend my days opening cans of worms, so to speak. And instead of putting them in a new, bigger can, I throw them in the paper wheelie bin, I shred some, and at night I enjoy sitting in front of the wood stove, getting rid of the real private paperwork (like very old bookkeeping stuff). The amount of paper that went into the wood stove would have been enough to heat the boat for at least a year! I still have to find space on our boat to store the seven years of bookkeeping that I need to keep for the Tax Department, though...

And since I have to read everything, in order to know if I have to keep it (which means scanning it later) or can throw it away, my past is also haunting me. The good times, but definitely the bad times. My remedy for a bad day is writing, and writing I did...! I spend at least an hour a day scanning all this. There might be a moment in the future that I want to read it all again. I also try to scan a picture album every day. I could have been a millionaire, had I not spent all that money on pictures, and picture albums! But I must admit, picture albums are a lot easier to scan than the loose pictures I keep in boxes.

It took me some time to find the right procedure to do this amount of scanning though. It has to be relatively fast, without too many mouse clicks. So what do I do? Most black and white stuff I scan with Nuance Omnipage. If it's handwritten I save it as a pdf (and will type it in later), if it's print I OCR it and make an ebook out of it. Picture albums I scan with Windows Fotogallery (eighty pages take about an hour), and process the files in Adobe Photoshop (there were 160 pictures in the album which took me about half an hour to process). If the background is a solid colour, Photoshop can find the different pictures on the page (Files – Automatic – Cutting and straightening pictures). And after that I save them. I don't have the time to adjust colours or levels or what ever. I just have to find some space on the boat for the negatives, in case I ever want to get one printed in the future.

Oh, and by scanning and processing these 160 pictures myself, I saved about a hundred euro's, which is not too bad.

So far I managed to empty a heap of carton boxes, scanned numerous pages and pictures, and made a (very small) pile of what I really need to keep as paper.

A car load of stuff (VW Golf, stuffed to the max) went to the skip. And while I was at the skip, a woman saw me throwing away a kind of wicker basket.

"Are you throwing that away?", she asked me.

I said: "Yes, do you want it?"

"Yes, please."

To my question if she wanted more of these baskets the answer was affirmative, so I got rid of some of my (empty) baskets as well.

CD'S AND PICTURE SLIDES – 29 JULY 2013

I get the feeling that the process of ordering the boat, and supervising the building, will be the easiest part of the job...!

In the last two weeks my scanner (and I) worked overtime. Beside having a heap of books, I also have a fair amount of magazines. And they have to go as well. But I still want to keep some of the articles in the magazines. So I have to go through all of them, and tear out the articles I want to keep. And then scan them.

This morning I finally finished all my computer art magazines. I went through 101 of them. And scanned 524 pages. These magazines come with a cd. So I opened 101 cd boxes, put 101 cd's in my laptop, created 101 new maps on the computer, copied at least 101 files, took 101 cd's out of my laptop and put 101 cd's back in their box. The result is impressive. The cd's will be thrown away, and I have two empty cd racks. And, of course, empty floor space in my office.



Two empty cd racks

For the time being I will keep hold of the very slim cd boxes. I might want to use them for cd's that, for whatever reason, I don't want to copy onto the computer. And these slim boxes take up half the space of one of the old boxes.



101 cd boxes

I'm still working on all my cooking magazines. Luckily I don't have that many of them. But it's difficult to decide what recipes to keep. I don't want dishes that take hours to cook. That's OK when you live in a home with an unlimited gas supply, but I know from my camper van holidays that gas bottles empty themselves faster than you think. And I also have to look at the ingredients. With no Tesco around every corner of the canals, exotic ingredients are out of the question. It's store cupboard recipes I definitely need. And, going through all the recipes, I wonder if a small freezer might be handy. I have to discuss that with Lawrance... Speaking of him, although he is in Romania at the moment, I can actually hear him say: "Why are you doing all this? You will never use any of these recipes, because it's ME that will end up doing the cooking every day!"

And I certainly hope that there will be an end to all the thunderstorms we have at the moment. My house has been struck by lightning a lot of times over the years (causing damage to electrical appliances) so every time I hear thunder in the distance I have to switch off the computer and find something else to do.

The weekend before last I had a look at all my picture slides. I went through approximately 3700 slides, and managed to reduce them to the 600 in the boxes at the left in the picture. I can have them digitized, but that would cost me about 250 pound. And I don't think these slides are that valuable to me. So either I reduce the amount even more or I might just project them on the wall and take a picture with my camera on a tripod. But that has to wait until it gets dark at night earlier than ten o'clock.

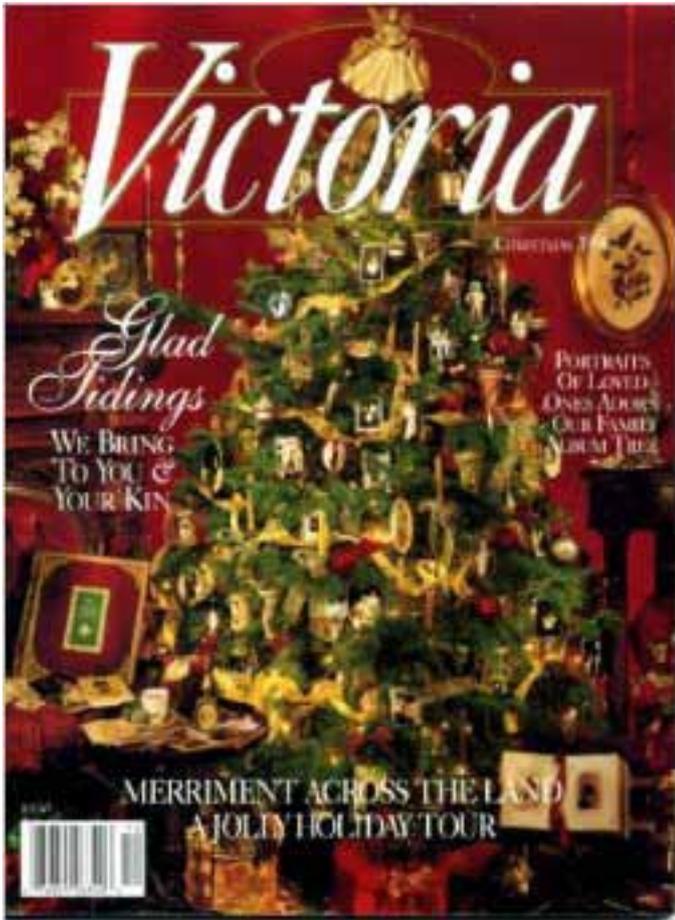


Approximately 3700 slides, reduced to 600

I also went through my 8 mm movies. That was really funny, seeing these for the first time in ages. I might want to get them digitized. That is not too expensive (it's only four small movies and a larger one).

SNOW, COSY WOOD FIRES, AND TURKEY WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS IN AUGUST – 2 AUGUST 2013

It's five o'clock in the afternoon, and it's 38°C here. Just about the right temperature to read... Christmas magazines!



Keep it or bin it?

No, I don't have a sun stroke. I haven't been outside much because of all the scanning and shredding. But besides having a lot of computer arts magazines I also have a fair amount of Christmas magazines. They came in handy over the last years to get the right Christmas mood, when I wasn't sure to set up the Christmas tree and put up all the decorations. But now I have to get rid of most of them. I don't think we have enough room on the boat for a Christmas tree. And, more important, where to store it the rest of the year.

So here I am, sitting in my deck chair in tropical temperatures, reading about snow, cosy wood fires, and turkey with all the trimmings. But I realize that this is just the right time to decide which ones I want to keep. If a magazine now doesn't urge me to get my fleece, it's not worth keeping it.

And with a big smile on my face I manage to reduce the amount from 43 to 13 magazines.

WASTE PAPER – 13 AUGUST 2013

An update on the de-cluttering. Today the council will collect waste paper. And they will be in for a nice surprise, while I have empty space in my garage again.



What a waste

And because I met Lawrance last night when he was in Den Oever, I got the newest Waterways World magazine, so I will definitely have a happy happy hour today.

The only thing left to do today is filling the normal wheelie bin with odds and sods, so that can be collected tomorrow morning. And keep an eye on my gardener. He has to transform the jungle into something that will appeal to people who are interested in buying my house.

After that I have to assess the current situation and start a new plan.

A FAINT ECHO IN THE DISTANCE? – 18 AUGUST 2013

I realize now what I didn't do when I started de-cluttering my house. I should have taken pictures of how things used to be. But I never imagined it would be so different. I only realize that now, after I more or less emptied my storage cellar, hoovered it and got rid of all the spiderwebs. I just can not stop going downstairs, to make sure it's real, and I'm not dreaming! It feels like being a stranger in one's own house!

OK, I admit, now the garage is full of stuff, but that only takes a trip to the skip, possible with a small trailer this time.

I think I've also finished hoarding my empty boxes. I started re-using some of them already. So this is about the biggest the hoard will get.



Empty boxes

There are 95 boxes in the picture. I've re-used three already, so I emptied 98 boxes with paper. I'm speechless...!

But they are all in the DIY-cellar, and that needs to be more or less empty as well. So I start breaking apart the boxes. With the following situation as temporary end result.



Empty boxes reduced

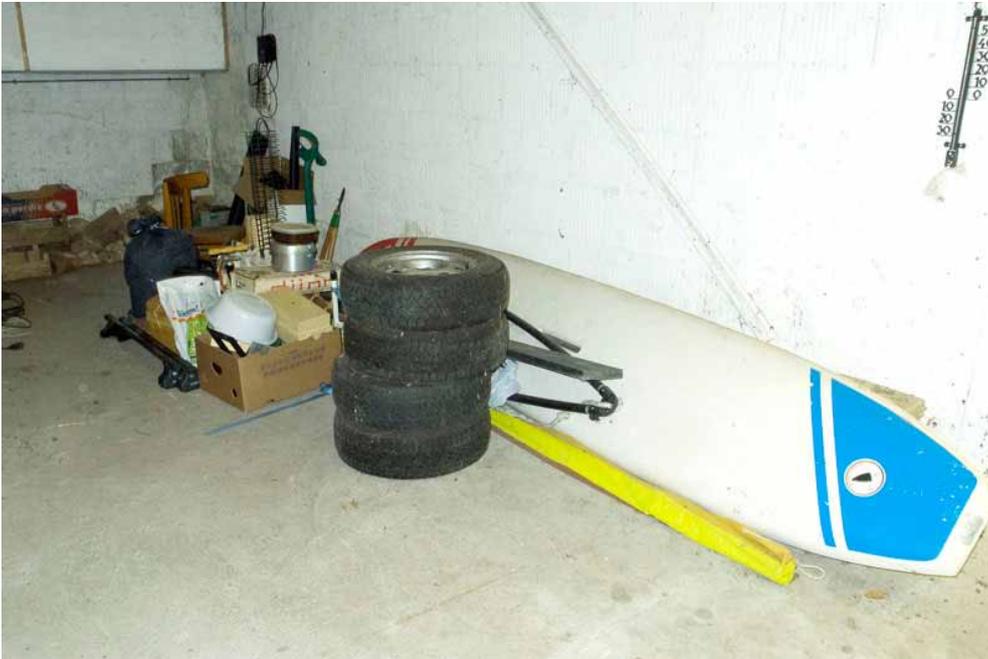
The boxes on the left I will use for carrying things to the skip, the second hand store or even to the UK. The boxes on the right I will keep for now (NO, I'M NOT HOARDING!). They are both sturdy and small, and might come handy for storing things on the boat. The pile in the middle is waste.

And after I've done this I'm able to clean this cellar, and also the already more or less empty wine cellar.

Did I just hear a faint echo in the distance when I walked through the basement?

WHY DID I KEEP ALL THIS? – 21 AUGUST 2013

Yes! I can finally see the end of the de-cluttering! I managed to get a couple of appointments on very short notice. In two days the people from the second hand shop will (once again) collect the (more or less) valuable stuff. Hopefully including my windsurfer (with mast and sail etc) and my old winter tyres, that don't fit on my current VW Golf. I know there will be a surprise waiting for me once the windsurfer is gone. There is stuff lying behind it. Tiles, and old (small) garden equipment, but I'm sure I can deal with that, after all these months of experience...



No need for this on a narrowboat

And next week Wednesday the council will collect an old cabinet and some wood, too long to carry to the skip myself. The small stuff in the picture I have to bring to the skip myself, but I won't need to rent a trailer for that.



More old junk

I also hoovered the part of the garage where my car usually stands. Wow! And after next Wednesday I can finally clean the other (biggest) part of the garage. At the end of that part is all the wood for the wood stove. I can't clean that until I have used all the wood. So secretly I'm hoping for colder weather soon (joking!)

READY FOR THE REAL ESTATE AGENTS – 29 AUGUST 2013

Sitting at my office desk is about the only thing I am able to do, at the moment. And even typing this text is a bit painful. Why? Well, I pressure washed my entire property...! At the end of next week everything will look like new. Monday my house will get painted. Front and back of my house are wood, and yes, it is some time ago since it was painted. Why painting it now, you would ask. Well, I had my first appointment with a real estate agent. And basically the only comment he had was about the state of the paintwork. So I immediately phoned Piet, who painted it the last time. We first had a bit of misunderstanding. I thought he said it would cost me € 7500, which was a lot more than I was planning to spend. In that case I would do it myself. It's a horrible job (I've done it before) but so be it. Luckily for me it will cost a lot less, so I told him to do it as soon as possible. He will repair any rotten timber as well.

I also knew I had to do some pressure washing. Especially the balcony desperately needed it. But it would be silly to have the house painted and after two weeks I spoil everything by pressure washing house, balcony and the terraces. So it had to be done before next Monday. Tomorrow I have an appointment with another real estate agent, and in the weekend we'll get rain. Not a lot of choices left...

I already had the brilliant idea to take my overalls (which usually are in the truck) home with me. With my safety boots on the job wasn't too bad. Overalls and boots got dirty and wet, not me. The worst part of the job was rolling the hose back on it's reel. That's why my fingers are a bit aching. But that could have been caused by removing ivy from the balcony as well. I definitely lost some skin, doing that, since you can't wear gloves because you need your nails. And the rest of my house is made of a very 'unfriendly' kind of stones...

But, as I said, at the end of next week everything will be in pristine state. The people from the second hand shop did take away the windsurfer and my winter tires (plus all the other stuff). And yesterday the council collected the old cabinet and the timber. What is left is some stuff made of iron, which is collected separately from the wood. That will go away next Wednesday. After that I can (kind of) clean the back part of the garage.



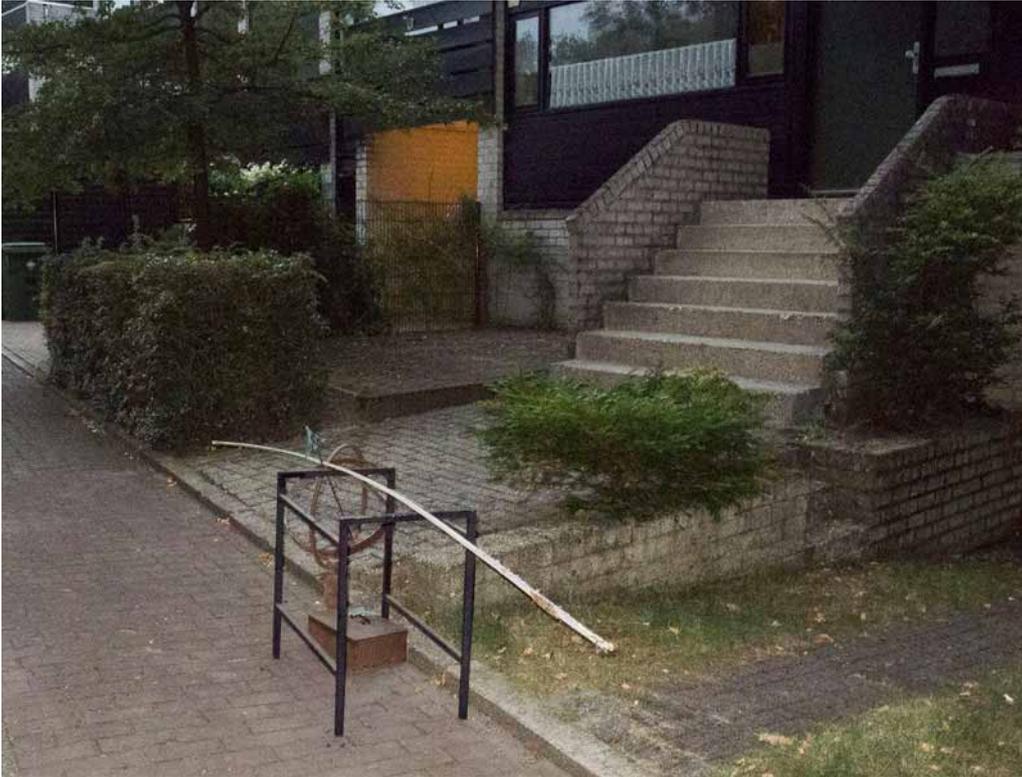
Waste wood

The real estate agent also would like to have plans of the three floors. I made them yesterday. The plans made me realize that getting a 58 ft narrowboat will definitely be a big step! My current living space (ground floor, first floor plus basement) in total is 216.5 m². On the boat I will have 32.78 m². That's 15.14%. In fact, the complete boat will be smaller than my living room now (34.04 m²). And I have to share the 32.78 m² with Lawrance as well...

But cleaning it will definitely be a lot easier. Not to mention the maintaining of the 221 m² around the house (garden, driveway, woods and terraces). We'll have C&RT for that.

LAST OF THE JUNK – 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

Today the last of the junk is collected by the council. The garage is mostly clean, except for the wood for the wood stove.



Last of the junk

Yesterday I had an appointment with the third real estate agent. This one was the only one of the three who came on time. The others were half an hour and fifteen minutes too late. I don't think that's a good habit when you have to meet possible buyers...! The last one also knows all the ins and outs of the kind of house I live in. In fact, he was able to tell me a lot of things I didn't even know. He also was the only one who didn't give me a price straight away. He'll be back with the price this week. Then I will decide which real estate I will use, and my house will be on the market two weeks after that.

And Piet started yesterday with the repair of the first rotten timber.

The last days were definitely not easy days. All the real estate agents told me that I have a very nice house. Of course, I knew that already, living here for more than 27 years. But it made me feel a bit sad, people telling you that at the very moment when you actually prepare to leave the house. And you ask yourself if you do the right thing. Unfortunately there is no one you can or will give an honest answer to that question. Luckily for me Ian, who blogs about his live on his narrowboat, sent an update. So at least I know where I do these things for.

POINT OF NO RETURN – 9 SEPTEMBER 2013

It's ten o'clock in the morning and the real estate agent, who is going to try to sell my house, just left. One point of no return...!



Point of no return

I must admit I do have some mixed feelings at the moment. Am I doing the right thing? Well, only time can tell. But if I am realistic it is a good thing. In 2017 I have to pay off my mortgage, which no doubt will force me to sell the house. By selling it now, it is MY decision. And even if I could keep my house then, I will have to sell it sometime later anyway, because it's too big to maintain and to keep clean. But then I will be a lot older, and I know for sure that it would be a lot more difficult to do all the de-cluttering at that age, and going through the selling process. It was already hard to do now.

I also don't want to spend the rest of my life doing what I did over the last weekend, which basically was nothing. With not really a lot at hand, days seem to have a lot more than 24 hours. And at some point in time I will run out of books to read and sudoku's to do. I don't think I will reach my retirement age this way.

And another good thing: I will get a brand new house. With brand new appliances. At the moment everything in my house is still in working order, but everything is around 30 years old. That never bothered me, but I must admit that I do look forward to all the new things...

So I decide to stop having mixed feelings and happily go on with life.

PICTURE SLIDES PART 2 – 11 SEPTEMBER 2013

I started the process of digitizing my 600 picture slides. If I go for the cheapest way to have them digitized, it costs me € 0.40 per slide. No, they are not worth € 240! And besides that, the quality might not be much better than the quality I get with my method.

It's not a good picture, because I took it with my (coal fired) mobile phone. But it gives you the basic idea of how I digitize my picture slides.



It's not a good picture, because I took it with my (coal fired) mobile phone. But it gives you the basic idea of how I digitize my picture slides

So what do I do? Well, I project the picture slides on the wall (all the walls in my house are white and flat), and take a picture of it with my digital camera, which is standing on the projector. I use the camera's zoom to get it almost full screen. And I use the timer to actually take the picture. My Camera Raw program just treats these pictures as normal, I only have to crop them. The result is good enough for me. Quality is not an issue, it's what's ON the picture that's important. Twenty years of my life, with all the hair styles, clothes (Oh, I remember that dress. How I liked it!), places I visited, cars I had. The slides are memory triggers, or some sort of time machine. Instantly you fill in all the details, how warm it was, the smell, the sounds, the subject of the conversation you had. It's not important to clearly see the registration of my blue metallic Golf from 1980, parked somewhat in the distance. I know it is GK-26-GD! I even found a nice picture of a lock. I don't think anybody will recognize this place. And we can't get there with our boat. It's in Sweden, in the Gota canal.



Göta Canal (Sweden)

I must admit, there are also some pictures that absolutely don't ring any bells whatsoever. I recognize myself, but that's about it...

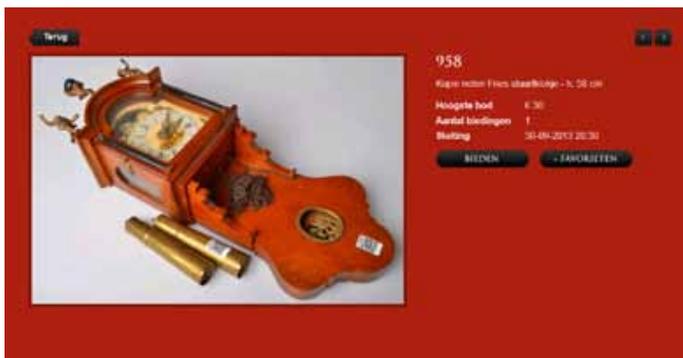
The only problem is: I can't take these pictures at daytime. I have to wait until it is dark at night, or, since I have been busy over the last two nights, do it at 5:30 in the morning. It's a slow process, but taking pictures early in the morning for about an hour gives me just the right amount of pictures to process afterwards.

And from today on I can also do it at night. Yesterday it was my tv night (I always watch a German scientific program on the Tuesday) and Monday night I went to a meeting of the local stamp collectors. To see if they could give me advise about what to do with my stamp collection. The answer? Sell it. Well, part of it; some of the stamps absolutely have no value. They gave me an address of a shop in Ede. So that's where I went yesterday morning. And I sold the stamps. Don't assume I got a lot of money for it. No, there are not a lot of people interested in collecting stamps anymore. So I got a staggering € 42 for it. Which definitely is a lot less than I paid to get them. But it's another € 42 towards a Houdini hatch WITH fly screen and black-out blind...!

ANTIQUES AUCTION – 28 SEPTEMBER 2013

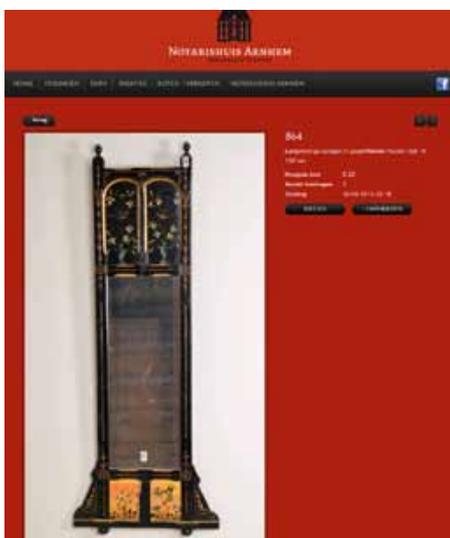
This weekend my three antique clocks and an old mirror are on an auction. Well, antique...? In theory, yes. The clocks belonged to my (grand)parents and since I am older than fifty the clocks must be as well. Hence antique. But they are fairly common, so I won't get a fortune for them.

I decided to have a look at the website of the auction. And to my surprise my heart skipped a beat... I definitely did not expect that! So far I hardly missed them, since they are gone.



The three clocks, as on the website of the auction

I do miss the mirror, though. I find myself quite often staring at a white wall, these days...! I notice that there are already two bids for it. It is only 10:00 o'clock on the Saturday morning, and the auction ends on Monday at around 20:00 hrs! Needless to say that I won't get a fortune for the mirror either.



The mirror

CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS – 18 DECEMBER 2013

It's a long time ago I took the time to write. It's now a week before Christmas and a lot has happened.

First of all: my house is for sale. I've got a nice sign in the front garden, and there are very nice pictures on the internet on the main Dutch housing site. Viewers so far? None!

Once the house was on the market I went on a long trip with Lawrance. We went to Italy a couple of times, and to Poland. Eight weeks I was away. During one week we took some time off to have a look at future moorings. And had an appointment with a surveyor to check my boat specifications. In one of the marina's we visited we met a boat fitter that is on our list. He basically made us change our plans a bit.

He gave us the advise to look for a second hand boat first, and have our own build later. This, plus the fact that selling my house might be somewhat problematic, plus the fact that nowadays it is a lot easier to rent out a house in Holland... So we made a list of the bare necessities, and now I start my day with a quick search on the internet for second hand boats.



Dowel tree

Today I plan to set up my Christmas decorations. I'm not sure about the Christmas tree yet. Although Lawrance is not a great fan of it, I still want to keep some decorations. Not the glass baubles, because they might break. But my (hand-made) fabric ones. With my dowel tree. Together that won't take up much space on the boat, be it during the year or with Christmas. It's not messy, because the tree is made of wood, it won't break, and it is small enough to be acceptable for Lawrance. Two hand-made place mats will stay, as well as my Christmas quilt. If we have enough room I might keep some paper bells, because they are exactly the same age as me. And perhaps some cross stitch wall hangings.



Christmas quilt

All the rest I will get rid off, after this Christmas. O, yes, I also had a look at the Christmas magazines again, the ones that survived the first round. And I think I can be proud: as of today there are two left, that I want to keep. For now, that is... Tomorrow I will have a look at my Christmas tree. No, it won't make the boat. It's old, falling apart and much too big for such a small space. But it might just be a nice touch for the (hopefully) last Christmas in Doorwerth.

UP AND DOWN THE STAIRS 20,000 TIMES A DAY, EVERY DAY – 19 DECEMBER 2013

Last night I realized how daily things will change, once we're on the boat. And I don't mean the fact that the 'house' is not attached to a proper foundation, or that the 'garden' looks completely different, every morning. And that we can avoid noisy neighbours by simply cruising away.

No, it's more about daily routine. Yesterday, while getting my Christmas stuff out of storage, I had to use a stool, in order to reach it. The ceilings in my house are 2.50 metres high, and so is most of my storage space. And what is usually on the top shelf? Correct, the things you only need once in a while. In this case the Christmas decorations. In the boat I should be able to reach virtually everything while standing with both feet on the ground.

Since all the Christmas stuff was in my bedroom, I had to take it downstairs. Four times up the stairs (14 steps) and four times down the stairs (14 steps again). That's another thing boats don't have: stairs. Oh, I know, locks will make up for that. But I don't have to go up and down the stairs 20,000 times a day, every day.

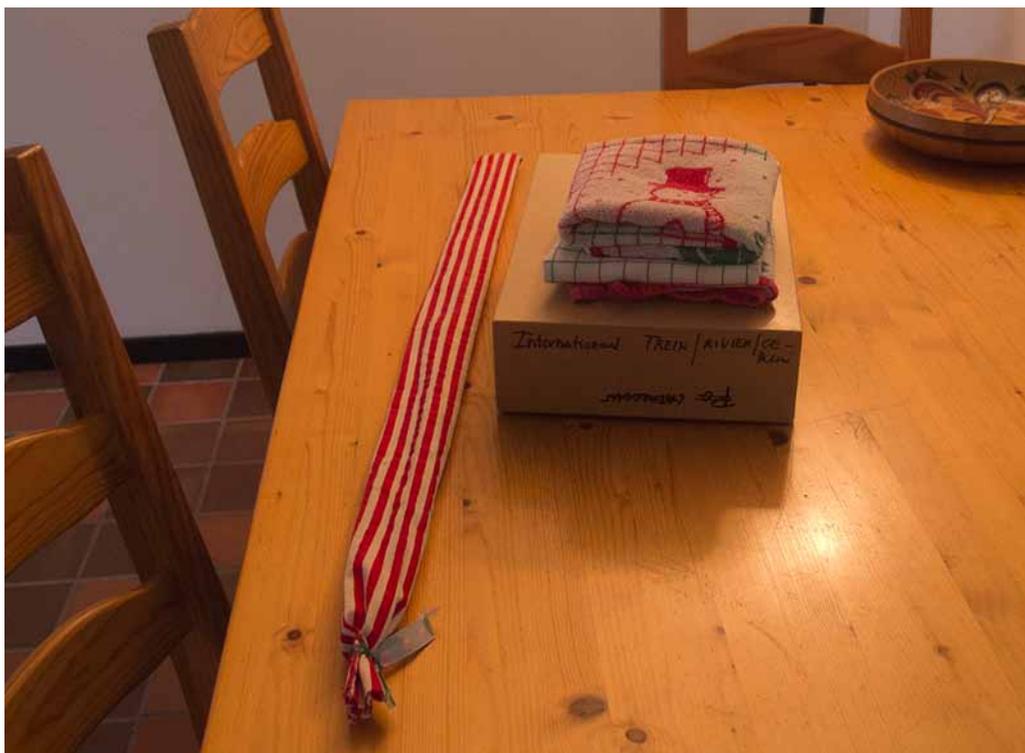
And as Ian once mentioned in his blog: will we still manage to drive a car, after eight months of cruising? It's a small step for me (from, in my younger days, 75,000 kilometres a year in a left hand driven car to next to zero in a car with the steering wheel on the wrong side), but it will be a huge step for Lawrance. At the moment he easily manages 130,000 kilometres a year.

BOOK(S) KEEPING – 29 JANUARY 2014

And once again it's a long time ago I had time to write. Basically due to spending New Year's Eve in Scotland, and getting back home via Marseille (France), Ortona (Italy) and Scotland.

When I came back, there still was the Christmas tree, and the Christmas decorations. So I made an appointment with one of my neighbours, who told me to be interested in some of my Christmas decorations. In fact, it turned out that she absolutely loves Christmas decorations. Has an entire (albeit small) room in her house full of it. So she went away with most of the decorations.

And I had a look into the future: living with next to no possessions. Now all my Christmas decorations fit in an A4-size carton box:



Christmas decorations plus Christmas dish towel plus Christmas hand towel

I'm really looking forward to owning next to nothing. It's amazing how much junk one collects over the years. And, for example, how many books. At the moment I have about 900 books. I think on the boat I will have room for about 100 books. So I have to get rid of 800 books.

Initially I had an appointment with the Arnhem depot of a big Dutch second hand book store. They would buy most of them. But when the guy from the store came to see me yesterday he said the books were too old, and that they were not interested in them. And, as he said, they are bankrupt as of today...! Nobody needs books anymore. And there are the e-readers as well. I must admit, I can live with all my science fiction books on my e-reader, but leaving all my other books behind does hurt.

But I can't take 17 metres of books with me on a boat that is only 18 metres. So I send my neighbours the following email:

Please help me to get rid of the following books:

- 130 computer books, like Photoshop and Illustrator
- 20 books about music and dance
- 40 small pocket books
- 9 English novel (like Dan Brown)
- 80 museum and country guides
- 65 cook books
- 190 science fiction/fantasy books (part English, part Dutch)
- 190 (picture)books of countries/city I've been to
- 5 Lonely Planet guides
- 20 Tour Books from America and Canada plus maps
- 5 books about golf
- 5 "antique" books

See what happens...

Last week I also made a telephone call to the Dutch Tax Department (Inland Revenue). When I move to the UK I need to end my company. But I still have to keep my administration for about seven years. I won't need a huge safe for it, but my administration consists of seven carton boxes, the size of one for the Christmas decorations. According to the website of the tax department it is allowed to digitize some of it. One only had to make an appointment to ask for the details. But an appointment with whom? No idea, so I phoned the information number for businesses.

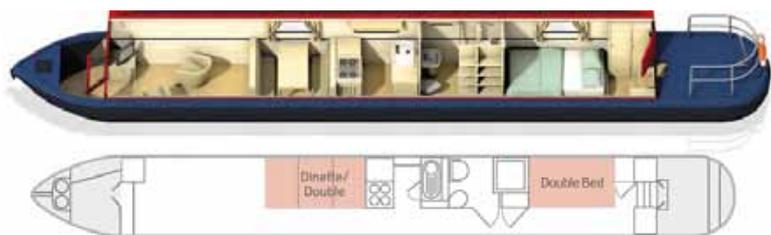
"No, I don't know what you need to do to stop your company. And I also don't know with whom you should make an appointment." (What do they mean by 'information number?') "I will find somebody and he/she will phone you back in two days, between 08:00 and 11:00 hrs."

And to my surprise that was exactly what happened. But he was working for the income tax department, and knew nothing about companies: "I advice you to speak with your book keeper." Well, as a former certified public accountant I probably know more about bookkeeping than most bookkeepers, so I told the guy that I did my own bookkeeping. "Then I advice you to speak with your financial adviser." Well, as a former etc etc I'm my own financial adviser. "We will phone you back." End of conversation.

One day later I got another phone call. Again from someone who does income tax and knows nothing about companies. He told me to write down all the questions I have, and send them in a letter to the tax department (yes, I even got an address). Then someone will call me and then I might be able to make an appointment with someone. I fear that by that time our boat is due its second blackening...!

At this very moment I'm at the garage. My car needed its MOT. And guess what happened this morning? The b****y thing didn't start! Luckily we have the Volkswagen Mobility Scheme, so I got to the garage, albeit somewhat later. I definitely need a boat pretty soon. Everything is starting to fall apart. My oven stopped working about a month ago (no oven, but also no microwave anymore), and my kettle is leaking. Now my car. And I don't want to spend money on things I have to leave behind soon.

But there is also one positive thing: in 3½ months time we will be on a boat for two weeks. Not OOR AIN but a rented one, for our annual holidays. This time from Black Prince in Napton, a 52 footer. With a conventional lay-out. If 52 ft is (almost) big enough for us, that increases the amount of second hand boats to chose from.



We will cruise the Warwickshire Ring, clockwise. I am really looking forward to it!

After these two weeks it's Crick Boat show. So we booked a hotel in Hillmorton (Rugby) and will spend three days in Crick. You never know, this might speed things up a little...

Two hours later

What did I say, just two hours ago? Everything is falling apart? I'm still at the garage. And they know why the car did not start this morning: the ABS regulator is gone. It must have taken out current continuously, and thus drained the batteries. A new ABS regulator will cost approximately € 1700 (£ 1500), and that is even without cost of labour. I don't need things like this for stuff I have to leave behind anyway.

Luckily my garage is a good one. They know about the plans to move to the UK and the future sell of the car. So they realized that I probably wasn't looking forward to pay a huge amount of money (although I don't have much choice, have I?). And they managed to find a decent second hand one. That one will cost me about € 1000 less. Sounds a lot better, doesn't it? And no, it is NOT even the cheapest one. I asked for one somewhere in the middle between the cheapest and the new one. My car has to be reliable until I get on the ferry in IJmuiden.

The only other (small) disappointment is: the regulator is not in stock (no, of course not), without it the car will not pass its MOT (so I have to spend another day here) and there will be a horrible sound when I'm driving before it is repaired.

Oh, why me? Why always the small ones?

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME – 2 FEBRUARY 2014

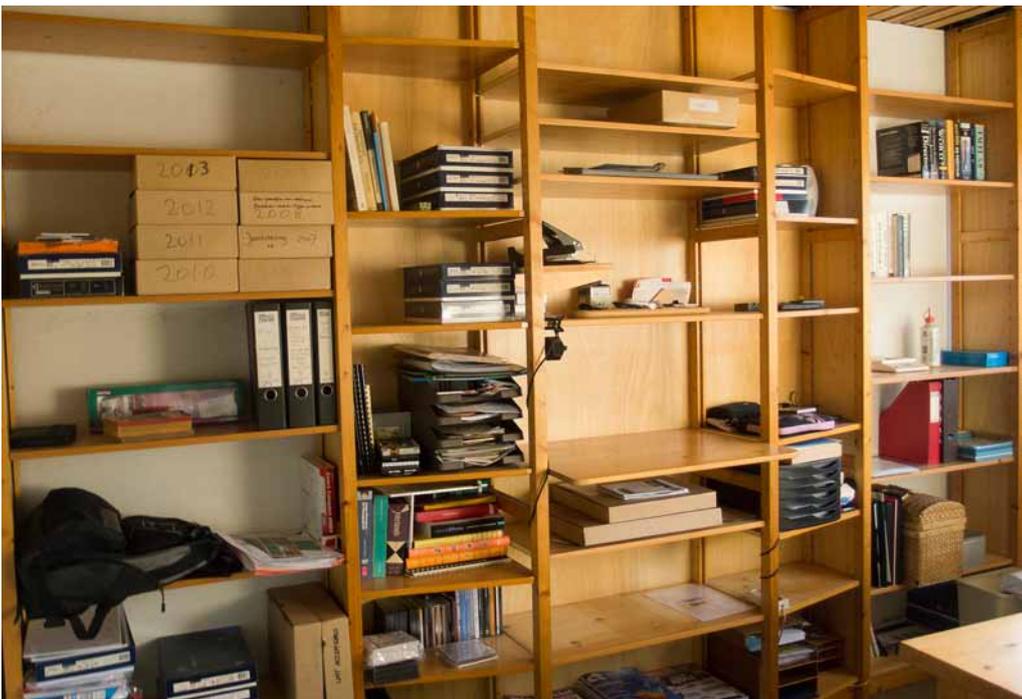
The plan was to do my bookkeeping for January and then do my Income Tax for 2013. But the Tax Department hasn't released the software yet, so after bookkeeping it's de-junk-time again.

Only one family came to my 'book shop' yesterday. So I'm left with most of my books. Time to start throwing some away. My grammar school books, and the books from my accountancy study, for example. They are really old, so they end up in the paper bin. I will keep the books about computer programs for a while. I divide them over two shelves, otherwise it really looks too empty. And my paper bin is now full.

But empty it gets...! As you can see on the pictures.



Before...



...and at the moment

OK, there is still a lot on the shelves, but the good thing is, I know exactly what to do with it. Some time ago I started to write down all my belongings. And colour coded them for what I want/need to do with the stuff.

	Cotillonprints en boeken voor Elsehe Waaier	Gebruiksaanwijzingen	Inbindingen Jalema A4-etiketten Divers verp.mater.	Boeken werk
Boekhouding Papier voor facturen Grampian Orange Grampian Blue Fotopapier	Printeretiketten en luxe Citopapier	Nietmachine Perforator Plakbandautomaat	Abacus Antieke passer Mutsspelden	Software boeken
Lopende boekhouding Map Dalweg Modeltruck Kindle keyboard	Weet-nog-niet Pay-as-you-go fones Portfolio Oude hard disks		Pinky Externe harddisk	Shreddervloestof Brievenweger Postzegels
Computerrugzak Verkoop huis Verhuur huis	Boeken werk Boeken software	Spullen laptop	Doorzichthoesjes Ladenkastje	Spullen kinderdagverblijf Kantoorpul
Printerpapier	CD's, DVD's en software			Inbindmappen
UMT acceptgiro's				Gegevens Amerika
Grote enveloppen Printerpapier	Computertas Oude laptop	Magazines	Magazines	Enveloppen Paperclips
	Telefoonboek			Sudoku's Scannertoeberehen Cadeaulint

Book shelf as table (situation 02-02-2014)

In the beginning the most used colour was for: Don't Know Yet. But at the moment that colour is no longer there. I now know exactly what to do with what. Blue means: I know someone to give it to. Yellow is for an auction in June, pink for the paper bin. White is an empty shelf, green is for throwing away, just before I move to the UK. And yes, red is for keeping. It probably means that I have to go through the entire process once more. Only the carton boxes on the left in the picture, seven of them I have to keep. That's seven years of administration for the Tax Department.

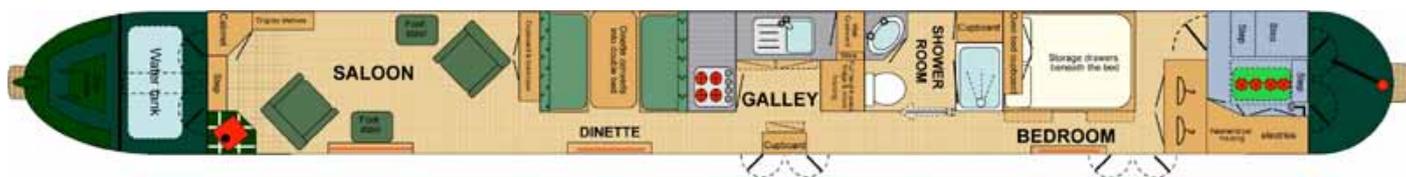
Although it doesn't change the colour of one of the shelves in my table, I can make things smaller, so to speak. I know, Lawrance classed it as hoarding, but remember I kept the slim CD boxes? (Monday 29 July 2013) I now transfer all my CD's into these slim boxes. And it does make a huge difference.



Half the amount of space necessary

Then I wonder if I still have a couple of CD's in the living room. Which would not be a problem, because I've still ten slim boxes left. So while getting a cup of tea I have a look in the drawer. And guess? Twenty-eight more CD's!!! Well, that will be a case of: most of them go in a paper CD cover, or to go into the bin.

It would be ideal if on the 16th of February I would know exactly how much storage space I need. Because then we are going to view a boat...! I found one on the internet that matches so far nineteen of our twenty nine points on the wishing list. There are only two minus points: it's a 60 footer, and it is older than we wanted. But the lay-out is nearly perfect.



Waa-Ry-Tired

OK, a walk-through bathroom would have been nice, and the multi-fuel stove could have been in a different place, and the dinette could have been an L-shaped one. But other than that, it might just be the right one. We will see, in two weeks time.

VINTAGE SPIDERWEBS ON OFFER! – 8 FEBRUARY 2014

Four days ago I got an email from one of my neighbours. She heard from another neighbour that I'm planning to rent out my house. Was that really the case? Then she knew someone who is having a divorce and trying to find accommodation for herself and three kids. OK, so yesterday I had an appointment with a representative from a company that deals with temporary rent of exclusive houses. And signed the papers for renting out my house. He reckons he might be able to rent it out as of the first of April.

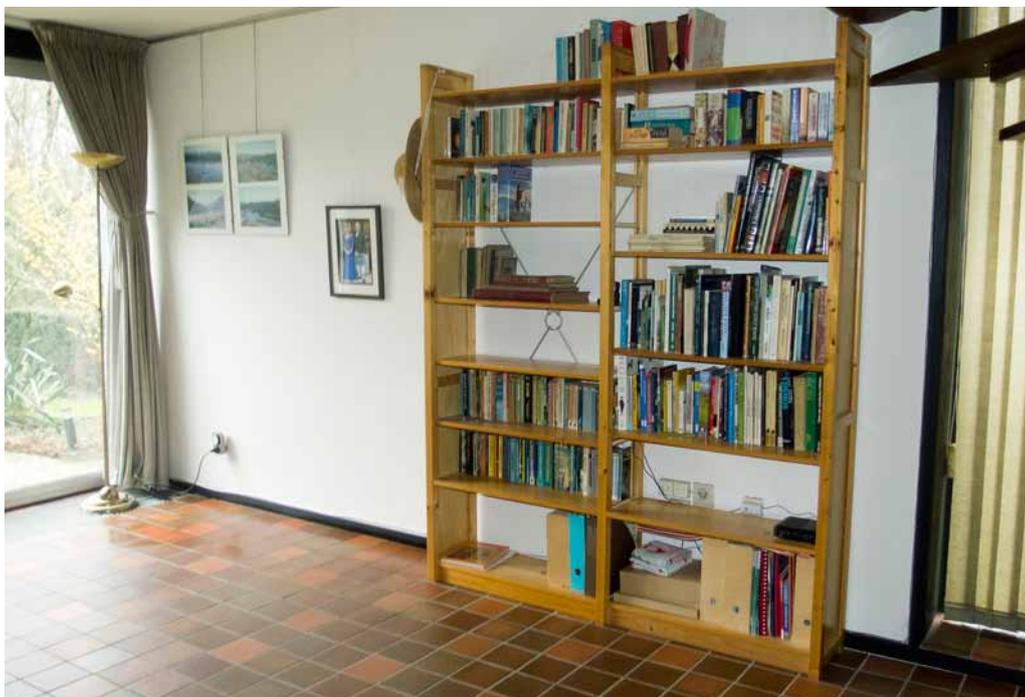
Yesterday I also found out that, if one doesn't use a colour printer for half a year, one might as well throw the thing away. All the ink had dried out, and with new cartridges put in I got all kinds of strange lines on the prints. My initial plans was to buy the smallest possible printer-scanner for the boat, but that's a waste of money. I don't expect to print a lot. Even for my work (if and when I get work) I can proof read on my e-reader. So I might take my laser printer with me on the boat (if there is enough space) or I'll have to do without a printer.

If someone wants to rent it, my house has to be empty. So today I do some serious work. With me going to Scotland next Tuesday I put all the books I want to keep in carton boxes, ready to put in the truck. So far I will take 82 books with me to Scotland. I reckon I need about 2.40 metres bookshelf for that. But if need be I can do away with some of these books. Just...

Then I dismantle part of the big bookshelf in the living room.



Before...



...and after

Because I've never changed anything in the living room (after my divorce) the (empty) space underneath the part of the bookshelf that is gone now, is full of nice surprises. Well, nice, or surprise? Not really. Vintage spiderwebs and twenty five years old dead spiders. Luckily there is no 'shadow' on the wall, were the shelves once were, so I don't have to do a paint job in the very near future...

I also use the opportunity to transport all my 'party clothes' to Scotland, as well as Lawrance's kilt. All this is in two plastic bags, that I make vacuum. I estimate that all my stuff will easily fit in the storage under a dinette. And that's one third of my wardrobe in the bedroom empty, except for my twelve jigsaw puzzles.

Then it is time to write today's blog. While doing this I'm still puzzled. I estimated earlier on that I had about a hundred books, to take with me. I now I only count 82. Then suddenly I realize: there are still some books in my office. Well, they have to stay in Doorwerth a little bit longer.

ONCE UPON A TIME... – 23 FEBRUARY 2014

...there was a book case. Full of books. Now there is S P A C E !



SPACE

Most of the books I want to keep are in Scotland already. All the other books are in carton boxes in the basement, ready to get rid of. And like last time, when I dismantled part of this book case (see Saturday 8 February 2014), I am in for a surprise. Spider webs of course, but also a nasty shadow on the wall. The book case is gone, but was still there. I could still see every single shelf, and basically all the books as well. Luckily for me the wall has washable paint, so I don't have to repaint it. I just wash it.

Another surprise (well, one that I knew I would find) are the sockets for telephone and cable-tv. They don't look nice on such a great white wall, so I put two wicker baskets in front of them. The big basket used to be in the upstairs corridor. This corridor is empty now, and looks big enough to organise a party in...!

It makes the living room feel completely different. The more I take out, the bigger the room seems to get. And with the wall now being white again, in stead of dark and full of books, the living room suddenly is a lot brighter. Which makes me feel even more like a stranger in my own house. Not really a surprise, when you see the picture that is on the internet for that part of my living room.



How it used to be

Of course the book case is not completely gone. That is also in the basement. Ready to be sold to a company that sells and buys this brand of furniture. It is a very popular brand, but the original company that manufactured it, has gone bankrupt. And since people still like the stuff, there is a good market for it.



Not completely gone

And I know that at least someone is interested in my house. Yesterday, while working in my office upstairs, I heard voices, kind of close by. When I looked out of the window I saw a couple, IN MY GARDEN! I found this a bit cheeky, but for once I didn't chase them away. One never knows...

BOOKS, AND MORE BOOKS – 8 MARCH 2014

The never ending story of getting rid of all my stuff. I make another appointment with the people from the second hand shop for next Tuesday. Although it is nice to have a lot more space in the living room, now the book case is gone, it fills the basement. So I move all the Dutch books to the garage, ready to be collected.



Book(s not for) keeping

All together there are nine boxes with books. And I add to this two boxes of kitchen equipment, two boxes of drinking glasses, some garden tools, camping equipment, a fish bowl and my backpack. I still have all my English books. I'm not sure what to do with them. Take them with me to the UK and donate them to an English charity shop? Or try to sell them on Marktplaats.nl (the Dutch version of eBay)? To be prepared for the latter I take pictures of the books. As well as of everything else I will try to sell in the near future.

Today we also submit our second offer for Wea-Ry-Tired. She needs some TLC and maybe a major operation, so we don't want to pay the full price. But we both like here...

Since the housing market is still death, I decide to take part in what they call an Open Houses Day. A day when people just can show up at the front door and visit the house. Of course it will be a problem for me to show a family of ten the entire house on my own, so I ask one of my neighbours if he's willing to stay with me for the four hours I can expect visitors. He can't really refuse; last Saturday he got all the wood for the wood stove I had in my garage...

And to make matters worse, I suddenly have a lot of work. One of my clients decided to alter some 80 books. All the books are still in WordPerfect, and I think I am the only one who is old enough to know how to work that software program. And whatever program I have to use, work pays some of the bills. So who am I to complain?

THE FIRST 8 PALLETS FOR THE UK – 18 MARCH 2014

Going to live on a narrowboat has a something to do with money, something to do with courage, and a lot to do with planning. Once you get rid of all the junk, you need to plan what you are going to throw away, or put on Marktplaats, otherwise you sleep on the floor, the last nights in the house.

So I put everything that is still in my house in an Excel file. And decide where it will go to, and when. The 'Where' can be Scotland/boat, the neighbours, the Second Hand Shop, eBay, or the skip. For the 'When' I create three phases: from now till the fifth of April (the Open Houses Day), from the fifth of April till the start of our holidays (the third of May), and a final stage.

I then mail the neighbours, and take pictures of everything that goes on eBay. Which means for example taking every book out of the box, take a picture, and put it back into the box.



Box 1 of 4 with Science Fiction books for eBay

And last Sunday I put the first of my belongings on eBay. And sell three of the items already that same day...! See what I mean with planning? I never thought I would get a reaction at all on anything I would put on eBay, so I did put my bed on it. Luckily I have not got a reaction on that, because that definitely has to stay until after the Open Houses Day. After that I will sleep in the spare bed, which is too old to sell, and will go to the skip.

I also prepare the first boxes for Scotland. They will go on a Euro pallet, and will ship to Aberdeen in a truck of a well-known company, as and when there is space left in a curtainsider. Of course, all these boxes need to have a label, so I know what is in which box, and whether the contents are fragile.

BOX			2/8
Weight	12.2 kg	Dimensions	51 x 28,5 x 30
Bakblikken	Cup-é-soup-bakjes	Elektrische deken	Glasen koedekhaal
Mooconapetten	Overschotelis (jeel f)	Stijlrujer	
			

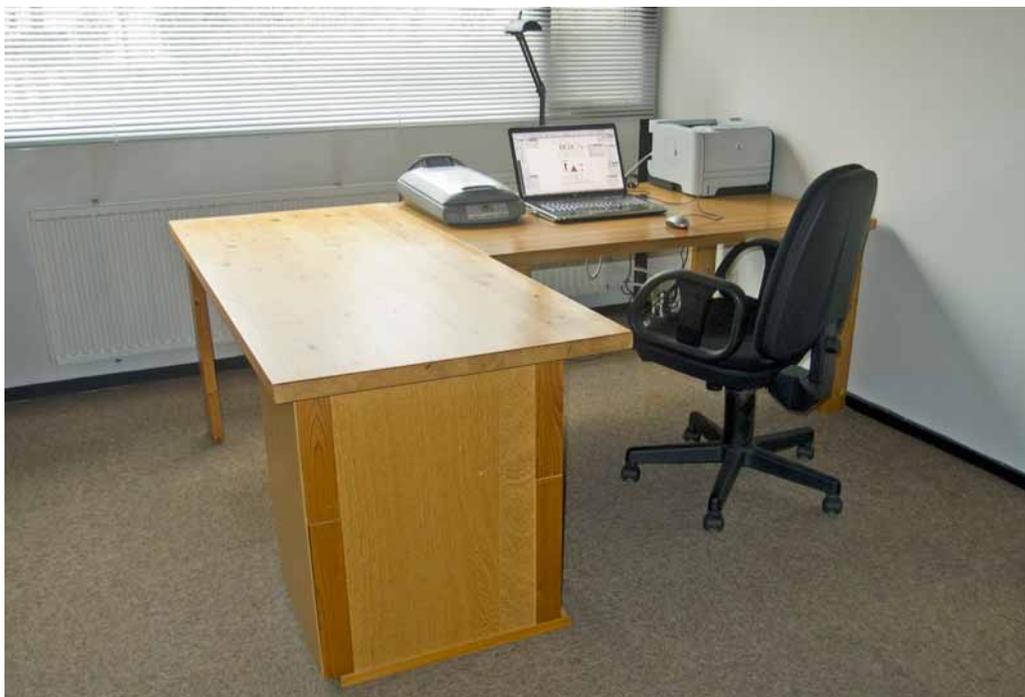
Box 2/8: Fragile

One box contains my three hurricane lights (ideal for long summer nights on the boat, sitting outside). But there is still paraffin in them, so that has to be on the label as well.

BOX			3/8
Weight	9.9 kg	Dimensions	60 x 29.5 x 31.5
12V stakkers	Golfschermen M	Saarbanden	Tees
Borstel	Klein golfspul	Sunnen	Wasreke
Golfballen	Schaatsen	Stormlantaarns	Zaem
			
Name: Paraffin (petroleum),normal C5-20 CAS No.: 64771-72-4 Synonyms: Normalparaffin (petroleum), Kerosene, Isooctaffin: (isoparaffin)hydrocarbons, Normalparaffin: EINECS: 232-365-4 Density: 0.8 g/ml, at 25 °C(81) Melting Point:		Boiling Point: 175-225 °C Flash Point: 179 °F Solubility: Appearance: Hazard Symbols: Risk Codes: 65 Safety: Transport Information: -	

Box 3/8: Hazardous

Once I have done all this, I make a backup of my desktop computer, take the hard disk out, and put the computer in the cellar, ready for the Second Hand Shop. The monitors are back in the original boxes, and on eBay. And now I'm sitting at an absolutely empty office desk. All that is left, is my laser printer, my scanner, a light and my laptop.



What a pleasure it must be to work in such a tidy environment...!

At the moment I absolutely enjoy the fast amount of space I created in my house over the last year. It is so much more peaceful, compared to the time when everything was cluttered. Just hope it won't take too long before we have our boat. Otherwise I have to adjust to the clutter again...!

ELEVEN YEARS AGO... – 23 MARCH 2014

...me and Lawrance met, on a boat. It is our anniversary day. Lawrance is in Holland, and we use the weekend to dismantle part of my office desk and another book case in the living room. After the book case is gone, I say something to Lawrance, and we look at each other in disbelief: we both hear the echo! Not really a surprise, though. There are only two sofa's and a seat left in the living room. And I have tiles on the floor. But it certainly tells us one thing: it's getting empty.

We tidy up the cellars and the garage. I Hoover garage, cellars and my now very spacious office. And that's the house ready for the Open Houses Day.

Last Thursday I took my eight boxes to IJmuiden. They were put on a pallet and shrink wrapped. And Friday night they shipped out to Scotland.



Pallet One

Around two o'clock we make our way to IJmuiden. The plans are to have a meal in IJmuiden and then I will go back to Doorwerth. Lawrance has to load very early tomorrow morning, and I don't want to get up at that time.

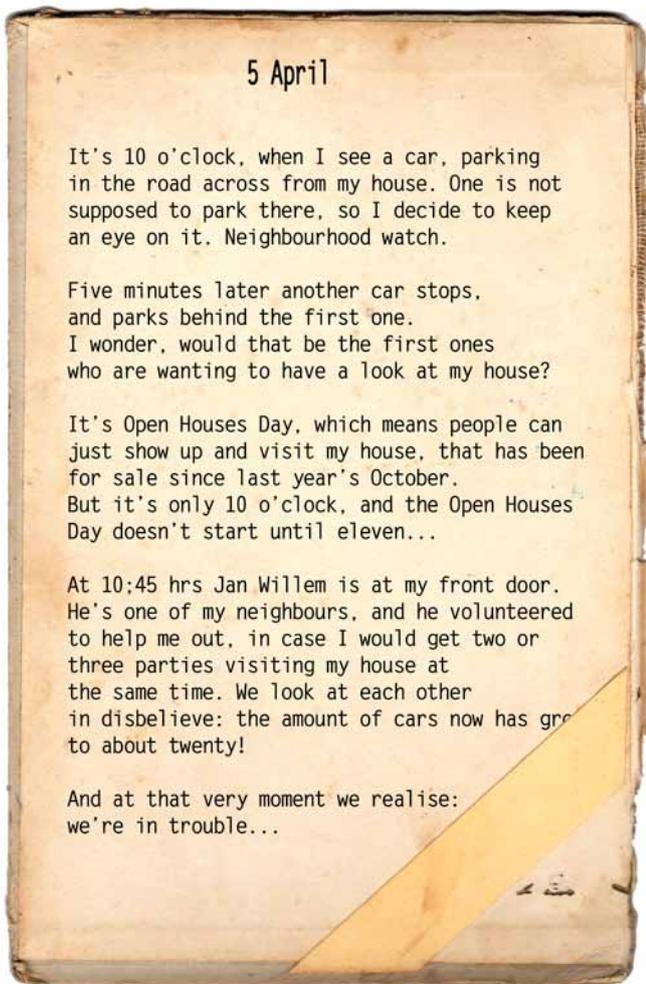
When we get to the yard, for some unknown reason I decide to check my email. That suddenly changes all the plans we had for tonight:

WE HAVE A BOAT !!!

They accepted our (final) offer for Wea-Ry-Tired, and if the survey doesn't show any major faults, then we have our new home. Yes! So instead of going home, I stay in IJmuiden to celebrate this very good news.

Now things really get complicated. We have to use our holidays to take Wea-Ry-Tired from Overwater Marina to Scarisbrick Marina. And try to cancel our Black Prince boat. We think that we need more than three weeks to get settled in, so Lawrance has to extend his holiday. And I have to work very hard to get everything packed, and across to Scotland. While having a lot of work for one of my clients as well. What do they mean by: We're retired?

OPEN HOUSES DAY – 6 APRIL 2014



Above you can see the first print of an old science fiction book. I was captured by the date it shows, and by all the other similarities. Because yesterday was my Open Houses Day.



5 APRIL 11.00 - 15.00 UUR

OPEN HUIS

Dalweg 166, Doorwerth

Vrije hoekwon. roy. inp. dubb. gar. Perc.
311m2, opp. ca. 217m2.
Bg: hal, ruime wnkmr, keuken, trap n. zeer
roy. basement met mog. Fraai, zonnige, goed
onderh. achtertuin. Verd:3slpkMrs, 2bdkMrs.

Vraagprijs € 297.500,- k.k.

VAN MUSSCHER & SONNEVELD
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Advert in local newspaper

But as always with science fiction, it's FICTION. Everything is fact, except for the amount of cars and visitors. I had all the time in the world to do some work for one of my clients, and Jan Willem, currently trying to learn business English, did all the home work for the next week. Because NOBODY SHOWED UP. Well, that settles it. The house will go up for rent. And as soon as I'm back from the UK, to attend the survey, I'll empty it.

Today I take some of my melodeons to a couple I know from my days of doing Swedish folk dances. They are on a weekend of dance in Utrecht, and I meet a lot of people I haven't seen for decades. It's very frustrating. You see a face, and you know: I've seen that face before. And you definitely recognise the voice. But until they say who they are, you're in the dark. Then you remember you actually were on their wedding.. twenty years ago.

It's nice to see these people again. And that would not have happened, if I wasn't going to the UK.

LAST SUPPER – 13 APRIL 2014

I know we still have one week to go, before it is Easter, but me and Lawrance already had our “Last Supper”. Well, at my diner table, that is... Yesterday we dismantled most of the dismantable furniture: the book shelf in the office, the remaining office table and my bed. Last night we slept on the mattress, on the floor. Today, after breakfast, we dismantle the diner table, and the king size mattress goes to the cellar. As of tonight I'll be sleeping on the mattress of the single bed. We also dismantled that bed yesterday.

The diner table had to stay till today. So yesterday night we had our Last Supper at this table. The meal doesn't look spectacular, but it is a very delicious Greek leek dish.



The Last Supper

I'm not sure if the guy in the picture is praying for supper, or asking for a younger body. I'm absolutely amazed that we managed to get out of bed, this morning, because there was not a single part of our bodies that didn't ache yesterday night!

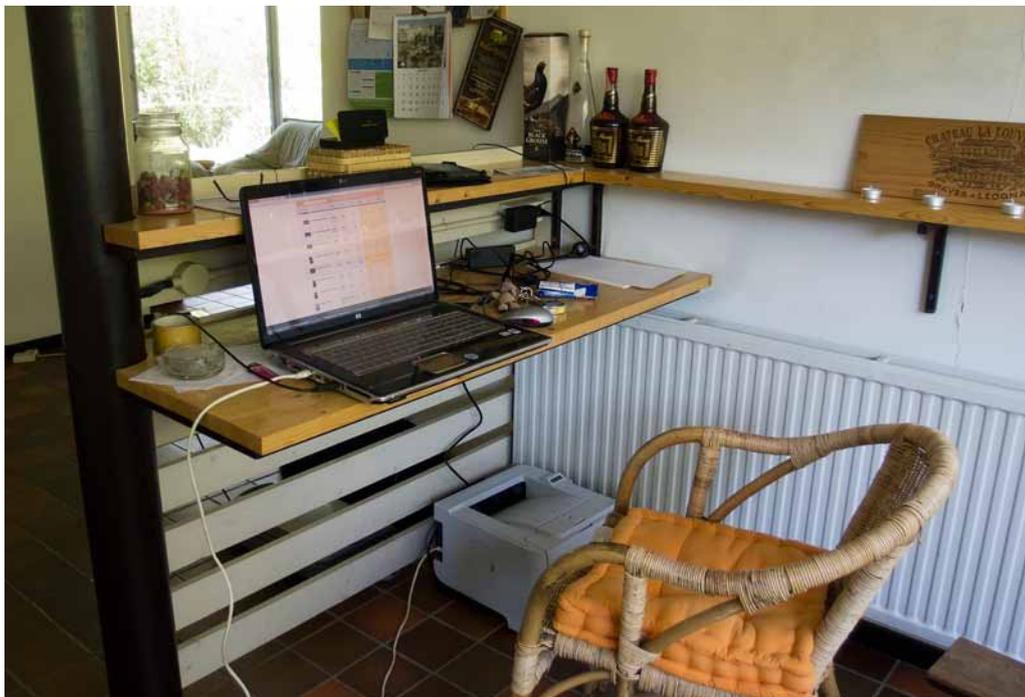
Today we also fill six boxes, to go on a pallet, ready for shipping to Scotland. I'll be in trouble if, between now and our holidays, it get's really hot, because most of my clothes are in a box, as well as most of my shoes. A cold spell will be a problem as well, because all my winter stuff is also in a box.

In the afternoon I take Lawrance back to IJmuiden. We assemble the boxes on a pallet and shrink wrap it. While doing this, I manage to sell my bike rack for the car to one of Lawrance's colleagues. Another item gone!

REALLY GETTING EMPTY– 15 APRIL 2014

It is really getting empty now, my house. There is an echo in every room. But the biggest difference is the lack of furniture to temporarily put things on.

Charging the phone? No problem, but the phone has to lay on the floor. My office desk has gone, so I have to use the breakfast bar in the kitchen to put my computer on. Although the breakfast bar is a bit too small for my laptop, and there is a huge window behind me, so the screen is hard to read because of the reflection. And when I need any paperwork while working at the computer, that has to stay on the kitchen worktop. Basically the kitchen worktop is the only place to do things while standing.



My office (note the printer on the floor, as well as the scanner (on the other side of the breakfast bar))

Me emptying the office upstairs means that, when I have to enter something in a planning file on the computer, I have to go downstairs. And hope that I still remember what I was going to enter, because I'm too lazy to write it down. OK, I could take the computer upstairs and sit on the floor, but that's not really an option, at my age...

Selling my belongings on Marktplaats is going well. The wicker baskets in the living room are gone, as well as 124 science fiction books. Buyers even travel for an hour, from Wassenaar (where the richest people of Holland live) to Doorwerth, for a picture slide projector that costs €25...! Putting things on Marktplaats, and keeping track of the reactions is a lot of work. Taking pictures, formulating a text for the item, and the most important thing: trying to find a price that makes the item interesting. My sofa's and seat in the living room won't have a price. Someone can have them for free. They don't look nice anymore, being 30 years old. And I just realise that there is one good thing with putting all one's stuff on Marktplaats: it might be gone, but I still have pictures of everything.

Next Friday all my book shelves will be collected. My doctor will have my medical records available for me. Not that he had a lot to record, over the last 58 years...! And our Polish handyman, Wojciech, just bought both my washing machine and tumble dryer. As well as my two hoovers.

Oh, yes, about my bedroom. I found out that sleeping on a mattress on the floor is bl***y cold.



My bedroom and night stand

BBC ON LAPTOP – 17 APRIL 2014

Sometime life is not too bad. This morning I find out that last night someone accepted the price for my television set on Marktplaats. Not that I watch tv very often, but I still have a couple of weeks to go, before I move to the UK. And sometimes watching television is just the right way to chill out, and relax from the hard work I'm doing.

So I have a look on the internet, and find out that I can just go to the website of my tv-provider, download a small software program, and watch all the channels I have on my (cable)-tv on my laptop. It does work indeed.



Watching BBC (it also works full screen)

There is not a big difference in size between my tv and my laptop. If I had know this when I got my provider, I would not have bought a tv at all...!

TOO OLD FOR THIS WORLD – 18 APRIL

I realise that there is another good thing, once we're on the boat: I won't get all the junk mail that I get here. OK, I must admit, going through all the leaflets is my way of going shopping. It keeps me informed about the latest fashion, and what kind of furniture I should buy this spring, without me leaving the house. On the boat, however, we won't get the leaflets, and if we get them, we can't buy anything because we have no space to put it. And, being retired, no money to buy anything in the first place.

I do hope thought that the mail in the UK is a little bit better than in Holland. Today I get a note from my postman (post women, in my case). It says:

"I'm sorry to have delivered mail to you yesterday that was not for you. Would you please be so kind and deliver the mail to the right address? Or throw it in a PostNL mailbox. Thanks, your mailman."

I wonder if, next week, I get another note, saying that she delivered an excuse note to me that wasn't meant for me. Because the only mail I got yesterday was mail from the Tax Department, about my Sales Tax. That letter definitely was for me. So I can only assume that she delivered the excuse note at the wrong address. I'm getting too old for this world...



Excuuskaart



Datum

17 april

Geachte mevrouw/meneer,

Per abuis heb ik bij u post besteld die niet voor u is bestemd.

Helaas kon ik deze fout niet meer herstellen.

Voor het ontstane ongerief bied ik u mijn verontschuldigingen aan.

Wilt u zo vriendelijk zijn de bedoelde post op het juiste adres te bezorgen of in een

PostNL-brievenbus te werpen?

U kunt ook bellen met PostNL Klantenservice Consumentenmarkt 0900-0990

(Dit telefoonnummer kost 10 ct/min). Deze zorgt er dan voor, dat de betreffende post

z.s.m. bij u wordt opgehaald.

Ik dank u voor uw medewerking.

Met vriendelijke groet,

Uw postbode,

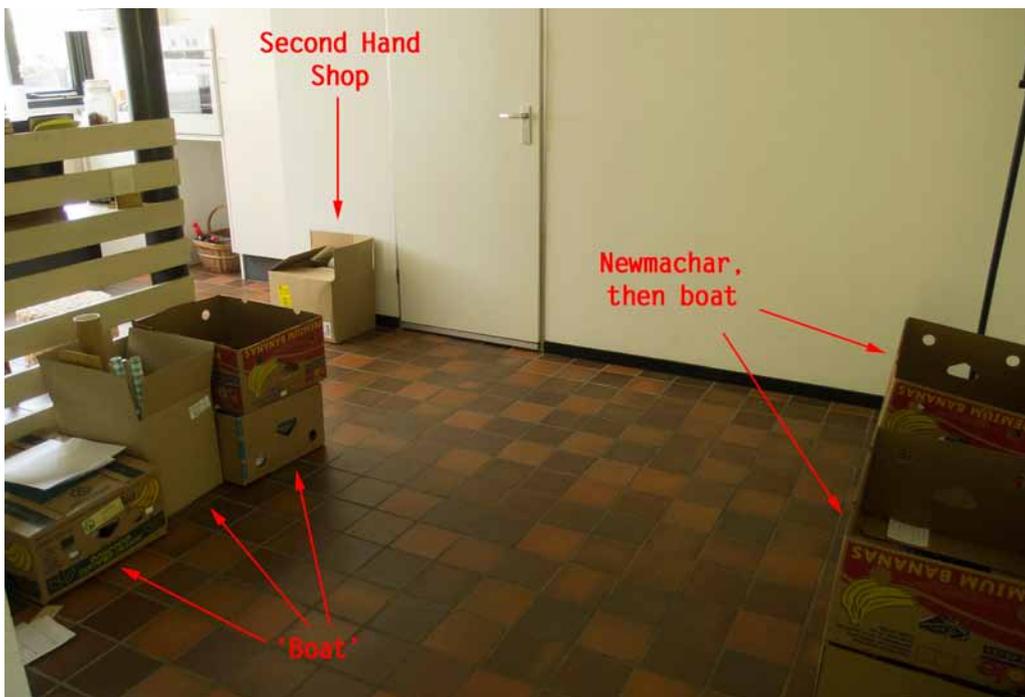
NOW THINGS START GETTING REALLY COMPLICATED – 20 APRIL 2014

If I do not manage to get my house empty before the holidays, there will be a short period in June that we have 4 ‘houses’: my house in Doorwerth, the caravan in Newmachar, the truck and the boat. All four ‘houses’ need to have at least the bare necessities: bedding, towels, food stuff... So today I start repacking a lot of the boxes that were ready for shipping. And a lot of things destined for the second hand shop in Holland will now end up in a second hand shop in the UK.

First priority is a full inventory for the boat. Luckily for me Black Prince provides it's customers with an inventory list of their boats, and I use this list as a starting point for everything we will need while cruising from Overwater Marina to Scarisbrick. The “What-to-take-with-us-list” from last year's boating holiday reminds me of other essentials. And my (now enormous) experience with cleaning things in Doorwerth provides me with even more stuff.

Everything has to come out of my inventory, because we have to leave the inventory of the caravan as it is. We need that when we're back in Newmachar to collect most of the stuff from there. Besides that, Lawrance will still need it when he's doing his last working days in Scotland. Transporting the bare necessities every time up and down between Scarisbrick and Newmachar might also take too much precious space in the car. And I don't want to loose extra days before we take over the boat just for packing stuff out of the caravan. When the holidays start, we just throw the boxes labelled “Boat” in the car, together with our clothes and things, and that's us ready to rock and roll.

So now there are boxes labelled ‘Boat’, boxes labelled ‘Newmachar, then boat’ and boxes labelled ‘Second Hand Shop’. All the stuff for the skip is piled up in the garage. As are the voluminous things for the second hand shop.



Boxes all over the place

What really makes it complicated, is the fact that, until I leave for Scotland and the holidays, I'm still using a lot of things that will be part of the inventory for our maiden trip with Wea-Ry-Tired. And I'm also using some of the stuff that is going to the second hand shop. So for every meal, or when I want to clean something, I have to unpack one or more boxes. Completely, of course, because everything I need is right at the bottom of the box. And every time I unpack a box completely, the box seems to shrink, because it seems nearly impossible to fit the things back in...

But I think I can be proud of myself. I've got almost two weeks left before I'm probably leaving for Scotland (depends when Lawrance is in Holland), and my kitchen cupboards are virtually empty.



Proud of what I achieved so far (and how silly to take a picture of empty kitchen cupboards...!)

WEAR AND TEAR – 28 APRIL 2014

Well, it certainly has its price, all the work I've done so far. Since I came back from the UK in February I lost 4.5 kilo (that's 0,7 stone). So Lawrance has to cook a lot of good food for me during our holidays, otherwise...



23-04-2014

And he also needs to buy me some new crocks. Because of all the walking I did on the tiles in the living room and kitchen, and the concrete in the cellar, my crocks turned into slicks, and one crock didn't survive at all. It was painful but I had to bin them...



These will stay in Holland

Last Tuesday Lawrance was in IJmuiden, to ship back to the UK with a curtainsider. The pallet that we assembled on the 13th was still there, so I took the opportunity to take another 6 boxes to IJmuiden. One pallet is one pallet, with 6 boxes or with 12 boxes on it. I also added my melodeon and my concertina to it. A sun hat I bought in Australia and a wicker basket with my medical records and my diplomas would go to the UK in the cab. Hopefully the Border Control people won't start asking questions about these (femalish) items.



Driving a truck with my high heels on...?

And guess what? On my way to IJmuiden I get a phone call from the guy who takes care of renting out my house. Would it be possible for a couple to view the house on Friday? Yes!!!

I made an appointment with the people from the Second Hand Shop for the 29th. Everything that on the Monday night is not sold via Marktplaats will go to them. It turns out that just during this last two weeks I will sell almost more things than all the time before...

I also tried to make an appointment with the people from the Council, to collect all the non-valuable stuff, like my seat and sofa's, mattresses, a ladder, basically everything that is left after the Second Hand Shop collected the things they can use. When I told the Council what to collect, the lady said: "Well, a seat and two sofa's, that will be your maximum for that week. You need to make another appointment for the week after that." Maximum, I thought? Never heard of. This is going to mess up my planning. I told her that by that time I would be out of the country. So the only thing I could do was make an appointment for the next day, and get rid of everything except the seat and sofa's, and the small mattress I'm currently sleeping on. Because I'm too old to sleep on the floor for two weeks, so that mattress has to stay. I still have to find a way to get rid of it.

And it's not only the preparation for moving to the UK that I need to do, I also have to work for one of my clients. It's still very sunny, every day, and working with my computer on the breakfast bar is not a success. Too much reflection from the window, and the wicker seat is way too low. So I move the computer to the kitchen worktop. And sit on an old stool. That's too low as well, but with one of my grand foulards I manage (if I don't work too many hours in a row).

In the mean time I keep putting stuff in banana boxes, and by the end of the week my office is completely empty, as is the small bedroom. There are 12 boxes in the DIY cellar, the other cellar is empty. I've sold one set of golf clubs, a painting, 7 books by Diana Gabaldon, and Sunday afternoon a guy collects my fur coat. An hour after he left, the phone rings. The same guy: Would it be possible for him and his wife to have a look at the house? He liked the spacious living room, and the spot of the house. Told his wife about it, had a look at the internet and decided: they would like to see it. Yes, why not?

It's now almost twelve o'clock local time. I've already visited one of my clients to take back the entrance card for their office, sent emails to people who want to buy my beds via Marktplaats. The one who wants the small bed also would like to have the mattress, so it looks like I end my time in the house on a self-inflatable mattress.

I really wonder what else will happen this last week in Doorwerth...

NO MORE BANANAS – 7 MAY 2014

I'm not sure if I will eat bananas in the future. Not that I don't like the taste anymore. No, I probably cannot longer stand the boxes they are shipped in.

I'm up in Scotland. Last Saturday I took the last 6 banana boxes to IJmuiden, put them on a pallet and shrink-wrapped the pallet; all ready for shipping on the Sunday. I shipped out on the Saturday, with Robbie. I had a good night on the ferry. For more than one reason. It was the first time in days that I had a proper bed to sleep in. And, realising how much work I did over the last week, I thought I'd deserve a mud slide (a cocktail with a lot of chocolate and ice). Unlike other people I was fresh as a daisy the next morning...

Robbie got a change-over at the Cedar Cafe. And who was also at the Cedar Cafe? Lawrance, on his way to Holland. So we had some time to kiss-and-cuddle. After tipping at Aberdeen Airport I was back in the yard around half past four, and in Newmachar just before five. I open the door to the spare bedroom, to put my jacket on a hook, and what are the first things I see? Banana boxes, of course the same ones I shipped over to the UK on the first two pallets.



Do these boxes seem familiar?

I left a more or less empty house. Last Wednesday the Council collected my seat and sofa's. Plus a demolished wardrobe, that I put on one of the sofa's plus a wicker chair. That was more than allowed, but they took it anyway.



More than allowed, but...

That left me with some smaller stuff, that I took to the skip the next day in my car.



Also for the skip

I also went to the Council to renew my passport. As of April our passports now expire after ten years, instead of five years, so I don't have to go to the Dutch embassy until 2024.

On the Friday Wojciech, the Polish handyman, repaired the ceiling in my former office. He bought my washing machine and my tumble dryer, but he had to come back with a friend on the Saturday morning to collect them. The washing machine was too heavy.



Empty (after 14 months)

And so I left an empty house, took the borrowed sleeping mattress back to my beautician, and made my way to IJmuiden. I'll be back after the holidays to collect my new passport. I'll try to make an appointment with my dentist. And there might be a goodbye-party from one of my clients. So in order to have a place to stay the house is not completely empty. I left a seat, my self-deflating mattress plus duvet plus pillow, one mug, a plate, a knife and a fork.

Once I got over the shock of seeing all these banana boxes, I prepare myself supper from the food Lawrance bought for me, switched on the electric blanket, had a glass of wine, and went to bed.

After a lazy Monday, waiting for work to be send to me, that, up till now, I never got, it was back to doing things again. With the van from the site manager I collected the two pallets that shipped out on Sunday.



More boxes

There is absolutely no room left in the spare bedroom, so I leave the three boxes, with all the stuff for the maiden trip, in the boot of the car, and pile the others up in the living room.



Is all this going to fit in the boat?

After that it's time for my appointment with Elaine, my hair dresser. As always she manages to make me look completely different again. I will certainly miss her in the future...

This morning, after another perfect night, I check my email (no, still no work), and make this blog up to date. Lawrance is off the ferry and on his way home. Only a couple of hours and it's holiday time.

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