

Herstelling Foundation: Annual report 2001

Summary.

Introduction.

The Dutch province of Noord-Holland and the city of Amsterdam are working together in an unique employment scheme. People with little or no prior job experience can participate in the maintenance and repair of the Defence Line of Amsterdam. This is a series of forts and other defence constructions dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. This highly successful project offers participants a chance to prepare themselves for a regular job, further professional training or a combination of both.

Highlights of the year.

On the 22nd of March a conference was held with the title **“Building on Herstelling”**. This conference, which focused on the future of Herstelling, was attended by more than 150 people from employment agencies, employers, youth organisations and cultural heritage organisations as well as our potential partners from Germany, Denmark, Belgium, the Dutch Antilles and Surinam. Highlight of this conference was the signing of an international co-operation agreement.

This led to an international working week in September at the **former Concentration Camp of Neuengamme** near Hamburg in Germany. Intensive preparation and the presence of Martin van Gent, an ex-inmate of this Nazi death camp made a big impression on our participants. Or in the words of Martin van Gent: “It made these snotty nosed kids realise that they are living in a paradise.”

A new methodology : three phases instead of two. One of the effects of the strenght of the Dutch economy has been that more and more people have found jobs. But it also meant that many those who still did not find work were of much lower level than before. This has forced Herstelling Foundation to start with a “preliminary phase” in which the participants perform very simple tasks and can get used to the working rithm. This phase takes place at the “Westergasfabriek”, an old gas works in Amsterdam, which is being converted into a cultural site. This period also gives us the time to assess them.

Health and safety regulations. This year a lot of extra effort has been put into a) adherence to the actual health and safety regulations at the workplace and b) instilling in the pupils “a sense of safety”. This takes a lot of hard work because in the targetgroup it is considered to be “uncool” to take any precautions to avoid danger.

Co-operation and partnerships:

- Together with the Jellinek Clinics and the parole authorities in the region a project has been started for two groups of people with a drug problem. Volunteers or those who have been sentenced for a misdemeanour, can sign on for a programme in which they can get used to working (again).
- At Beeckestijn Estate, one of the prime examples of 18th century country estates in Holland, a similar project has been developed for people with psychological problems.
- Herstelling Foundation in Den Helder. The city of Den Helder, the most important Dutch navy port, has asked our help in setting up a project along the same lines as Herstelling Foundation in Amsterdam.
- A number of forts in the Defence Line of Amsterdam are owned by “Vereniging Natuurmonumenten” one of the largest (if not the largest) Dutch nature conservancy associations. Due to the military nature of the forts, their surroundings have been out of bounds for many decades. During this time rare flora and fauna have taken refuge on these “islands of tranquility”, which makes them invaluable pieces of nature in such a densely populated country. But “Natuurmonumenten” is interested in our cultural as well as our natural heritage and it also uses some of the forts as visitors centres for small scale tours.

In 2001 work has been carried out on the following sites:

Defence Line of Amsterdam (see map):

- Fort bij Edam
- Fort aan de St. Aagtendijk
- Fort bij Marken Binnen
- Fort aan de Winkel
- Fort aan de Middenweg
- Fort Nigtevecht
- Fort Kudelstaart
- Fort Abcoude
- Fort Vijfhuizen

Other sites:

- Fort Nieuwersluis (Prov. Utrecht)
- Westergasfabriek (in Amsterdam)
- Beekestijn Estate (in Velzen)
- Oude Rijkswerf (shipyard in Den Helder)
- Defence Line of Den Helder.