

# History and Heritage of Chemistry in the Netherlands

Founding Meeting of the Heritage Council –  
Europe of the CHF

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# Organizations History of Chemistry within the Dutch Chemical Society (KNCV) (1903-present)

- Historische Commissie (HC) (Historical Commission) founded by prof. Ernst Cohen in 1903, at the start of the KNCV
- Chemie-Historische Groep (CHG) (History of Chemistry Group), established by Dr. Willem Hornix in Sept. 1998
- 2005: Historische Commissie absorbed by the Chemie-Historische Group



# Historische Commissie (ca. 6 members; funded by KNCV)

- Central figures
  - Ernst Cohen
  - Willem Jorissen (c1910-1950)
  - Hans van Spronsen (1965-2005)
- Main activities
  - Library of Dutch chemistry books c1500-1900 at Museum Boerhaave (very complete)
  - Collection of more than 3.000 chemical instruments. In 2003-04 that collection was dissolved by the KNCV. The 500 best pieces became part of the collection of Museum Boerhaave. The rest was dispersed.
  - Membership of the Working Party of the FECS/ EuChemS, until 2001 when CHG-chairman Ernst Homburg took over the position of Hans van Spronsen in the WP.
  - Exhibitions at meetings of the KNCV



# Chemie-Historische Groep (ca. 75-80 members; funded via membership fees)

- President Prof. Rob van Veen;  
Past-president Prof. Ernst Homburg
- Main activities
  - About 4-5 symposia annually, one of which is organized together with the Sektie Historiek of the Flemish Chemical Society (KVCV)
  - Until ca. 2012 organization of a historical session at the annual meeting of the KNCV. Unfortunately KNCV cancelled these annual meetings
  - In 2004 and 2006 conferences with the RSC. A joint meeting with the DChG Fachgruppe is intended
  - Historical excursion to industries, together with the Process Engineers
  - Website: <http://www.kncv.nl/chg> (very informative - but in Dutch)



# Other relevant parties

- Universities
  - Most professionals do not take part in CHG. The Group mainly unites historically inclined chemists.
- Museums
  - esp. Boerhaave and Teylers, and many smaller ones.
- Gewina (history of science society)
  - see: <http://www.gewina.nl/>
  - Journal: *Studium*
- Huygens Instituut/ DWC
  - see: <http://www.dwc.knaw.nl/>
- Industrial heritage + History of technology
  - journal: *Erfgoed van Industrie en Techniek*



# Chemical Heritage

- The CHG is NOT directly involved in immobile and mobile chemical heritage, nor in chemical landmarks. There are only indirect, ad hoc connections.
- Talks with the KNCV on chemical landmarks are intended, but have not started yet.
- Museums Boerhaave and Teyler house the major instrument (etc.) collections in the field of chemistry, but have not given these collections a prominent place – the illustration right is the major exception.
- Boerhaave absorbed major collections from KNCV, Shell and Unilever
- Philips has a small historical museum, with indirect relevance to chemistry. (+ there are other small museums)
- Built heritage (industrial monuments) is the domain of RCE and FIEN, but there are only few chemical factories among these monuments.



# Some conclusions

- More collaboration needed between CHG and professionals
  - CHG plans to strengthen links with PhD's and post-docs
- Overview of mobile and immobile chemical heritage + plan of action are desiderata
  - No manpower available at the moment

