

# THE NETHERLANDS

by Anthony Th. Bijkerk

Until the early sixties the *Netherlands Olympic Committee*, which was founded on 11 September 1912, always thought that the first appearance of Dutch athletes in the Olympic arena, took place at the Intermediate Games in Athens in 1906. In 1960 and later years, I was able to discover that this was not correct, and that 36 participants from the Netherlands took part in various events in Paris in 1900.

Up to this moment, we do not know how the sixteen Dutch participants in Athens in 1906 were elected and how they travelled to Athens. The Dutch, although a country famous for its old archives from the V.O.C. (United East-Indian Company), in later years completely neglected its own sports history. There are various examples of this neglect, but for this moment I will only mention the fact that from the one sports magazine, titled *Nederlandsche Sport*, which was published bi-weekly in the period from 1880 to 1928, not a single copy from the years 1906 and 1908 can be found; not even in the famous *Royal Dutch Library*.

It is most likely that IOC-member Frits Baron VAN TUIJLL VAN SEROOSKERKEN played an important role, like he did two years later for the Games in London in 1908.

The sabre-team with M.J. VAN LÖBEN SELS, J.A.H.L. Baron Melvill VAN CARNBÉE, J.F. OSTEN, and G. VAN ROSSEM won a bronze medal. Four teams had entered the competition. In the first round

the Netherlands competed against Germany and lost. The results of this match were nowhere to be found. The two other teams: Hungary and Greece had to compete against each other to decide which of the two would reach the final. Halfway during the match the Hungarian team retired from the competition. Greece and Germany decided among them in the final who would win gold and silver and the Dutch team automatically gained third place and the bronze medal.

The epee-team with J. DOORMAN; H.J. VAN DER GRINTEN, W.P. Hubert VAN BLIJENBURGH and A.E.W. de JONG lost in the preliminary round from Belgium (4-9) and was immediately eliminated by the use of the 'knock-out-system'.

## Who were the Dutch Participants? - Fencing

Alexander Hendrik Willem VAN BLIJENBURGH; born 28 May 1877 in Amsterdam; † 23 January 1960 in Wassenaar; his final rank in the Dutch Army was lieutenant-colonel in the Royal Hussars. Mr. VAN BLIJENBURGH participated in epee individual [he became second in the 3rd pool from the first round; in the 1st semi-final he became third; in the final he reached the third place and the bronze medal]; in sabre individual (three hits) [he was eliminated in the 2nd pool of the first round]; and sabre individual (one hit) [he was eliminated in the 6th pool of the first round third].



Fencing took place in the presence of the Royal families



**The Zappeion, constructed on the occasion of the so-called Zappas Olympic Games in the late 19th century, hosted the fencing competitions and was used as accommodation for the most teams**

Jetze DOORMAN; born 2 July 1881 in Balk (Friesland); † 28 February 1931 in Breda; DOORMAN was a first lieutenant, later a captain in the Royal Artillery. On June 1, 1907, he became world champion in sabre, defeating the famous French Count DE LA FALAISE and the Greek Jean GEORGIADIS with nine hits against only one on himself, to gain the title. In 1914, he was despatched with a group of Dutch officers to serve in Albania to assist in setting up a new Gendarmerie. He was lodged in Kortsha, in the South, close to the Greek border. Because of mass-desertion by the new gendarmes, the city was taken by Greek forces and with great difficulties Doorman and the other officers were able to escape to Valona. A few months later, DOORMAN returned with sick-leave to the home-country, never to return. For services rendered, he was made a "Knight 4th Class" in the Order of the Black Eagle of Albania by the German Prince WILHELM ZU Wied! Jetze DOORMAN competed in the epee-team match and also competed in sabre individual (one hit) [he was fourth in the 1st pool of the first round and eliminated]; he also competed in epee individual [he won the 4th pool of the first round; in the 1st semi-final he was fourth and eliminated]; in foil individual [he was eliminated in the 7th pool of the first round]. Jetze DOORMAN participated in five Olympic Games, including 1906, 1908, 1912, 1920 and 1924.

Adrianus Egbert Willem "Arie" de JONG; born 21 June 1882 in Pelantoengan near Semarang, Dutch East Indies; † 23 December 1966 in The Hague; military; in 1906 he was a first lieutenant, later he became a major in the Royal Artillery; but after being pensioned, he opened an Indonesian restaurant called *Tempat Senang* ["Happy Place" in the Indonesian language] in The Hague. Arie de JONG became world champion sabre in 1922 and 1923. Arie de JONG was also the first Dutch Olympian to take part in six Olympic Games, including the 1906 Games; 1908, 1912, 1920, 1924, and 1928. Arie de JONG was also elected in the first Executive Board of the *Netherlands Olympic Committee* and served from 11 September 1912 until 11 September 1915, when he retired from this position. Arie de JONG competed in the epee-team match and also competed in foil individual [he was third and eliminated in the 7th pool of the first round]; in epee individual [he was third and eliminated in the 5th pool of the first round]; in sabre individual (three hits) [he was fifth in the 4th pool of the first round; in the finale he was not placed among the first six fencers; possibly he became tenth and last in the final]; in sabre individual (one hit) [he was fifth and eliminated in the 4th pool of the first round].\*

Willem Peter Hubert VAN BLIJENBURGH; born 11 July 1881 in Zwolle; † 14 October 1936 in Bilthoven; in 1906 he was also a first lieutenant; later he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Royal Artillery. During his military career he was among other things in charge of the military sport school in Den Helder. He was promoted Doctor



**Hubert van Blijenburgh**

in Physical Education at the Catholic University of Gent, Belgium, on August 2, 1919 and was the first Dutchman ever to gain this title. Hubert VAN BLIJENBURGH was a great admirer of the Swedish School of Gymnastics; he visited Victor BALCK in Sweden and afterwards wrote a series of articles in a Dutch sports magazine about the Swedish system. He competed in the epee-team match and also in epee individual [eliminated in the 7th pool of the first round]; in sabre individual (one hit) [he was eliminated in the 5th pool of the first round]; in sabre individual (three hits) [he was eliminated in the 1st pool of the first round]; and in foil individual [he was eliminated in the 6th pool of the first round]. Hubert VON BLIJENBURGH participated in five Olympic Games, including the 1906 Intermediate Games; 1908, 1912, 1920, and 1924.

Hendrik Joseph VAN DER GRINTEN; born 22 May 1880 in Breda; † 24 July 1911 in Utrecht; he was a first lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. He competed in the epee-team match and also in sabre individual (one hit) [he became second in the 6th pool of the first round; he was fifth in the 2nd semi-final and eliminated]; in epee individual [he was third and eliminated in the 2nd pool of the first round]; in foil individual [he was joint third and eliminated in the 5th pool of the first round].

Frits Johan Marie Herman KOEN; born 19 July 1876 in 's-Gravenhage; † 11 February 1932 in Buitenzorg (today called Bogor in Indonesia), Dutch East Indies; Mr. KOEN was a first lieutenant in the Royal Dutch East Indies Army. His participation remains a mystery up to this day, as I could never find definite proof that he was the real participant with this name in Athens. I came across his

name only once in relation to a fencing match. Since he served most of his military career in the Dutch East Indies, where he also died in 1932, it seems that he must have joined the team while underway from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies or vice versa. Mr. KOEN took part in one event: epee individual [he was last and eliminated in the 7th pool of the first round].

Maurits Jacob VAN LÖBEN SELS; born 1 May 1876 in Meppen, Germany; † 4 October 1944 in Velp; he was a first lieutenant in the infantry and competed in the sabre-team matches and also in sabre individual (three hits) [he became fifth in the 2nd pool of the first round; in the final he reached eighth place]; in sabre individual (one hit) [he was fourth in the 2nd pool of the first round and eliminated]; in epee

**Baron Melvill van Carnbée**



individual [he was second in the 6th pool of the first round; in the 2nd semi-final he was third; and in the final he reached the sixth place (and last)]; and in foil individual [he was fourth in the 4th pool of the first round and eliminated]. VAN LÖBEN SELS again competed in fencing in 1908 in London.

James Arnaud Henri Louis, Baron Melvill van CARNBÉE; born 11 August 1867 in The Hague; † 4 January 1944 in Zeist; at the time he was a captain in the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps; he started his career as a sports-officer in 1899, when he was ordered to follow a course in teaching gymnastics, fencing and swimming; in 1902 he was detached as a teacher for the same course. On April 1, 1906, he was nominated chief of physical education at the naval gymnastics school in Amsterdam. In May 1913, he was appointed director of the military gymnastics school in Utrecht until his retirement in November 1915. Baron Melvill VAN CARNBÉE competed in the sabre-team matches and also in epee individual [he was second in the 4th pool of the first round; but was eliminated in the 2nd semi-final]; in sabre individual (one hit) [he finished joint first in the 4th pool of the first round; became fifth in the 1st semi-final and was eliminated]; in sabre individual (three hits) [he was eliminated in the 1st pool of the first round].

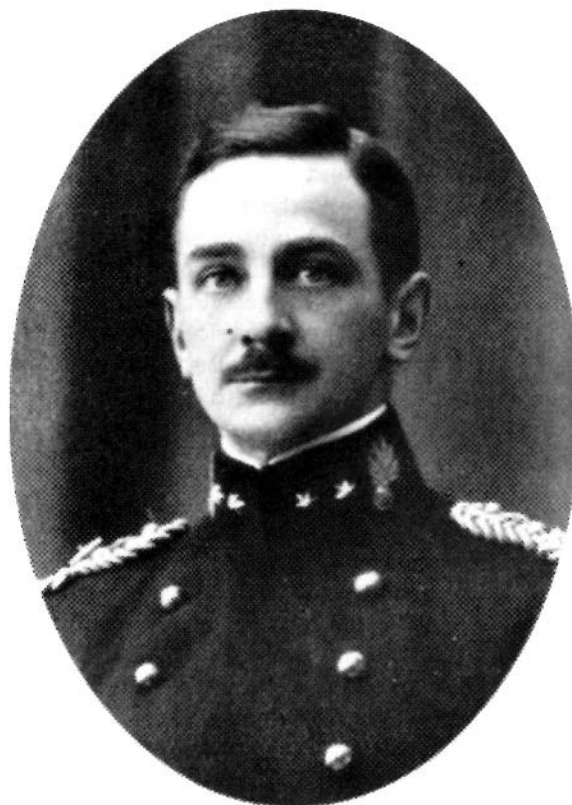
Simon OKKER; born 1 June 1881 in Amsterdam; † 6 March 1944 exterminated by the Germans in Auschwitz (Oświęcim), in Poland. Simon OKKER was the grandfather of the famous Dutch tennis player Tom OKKER. Simon OKKER took part in foil individual [he was second in the 3rd pool of the first round; he finished joint first in the 2nd semi-final; and in the final reached fifth place]. Simon OKKER also participated in fencing in London in 1908.

Johannes Franciskus OSTEN; born 14 September 1879 in Batavia, Dutch East Indies (now Jakarta, Indonesia); † 27 March 1965 in The Hague. OSTEN was at the time of the Games a full lieutenant in the Royal Netherlands Navy; in 1930 he reached the rank of flag-officer by promotion to the rank of rear-admiral; he finally reached the rank of vice-admiral in 1932. During his naval career he was appointed commanding officer of all naval forces in the Dutch East Indies from January 1931 to his pension in February 1934. After his pension, he was appointed president of the National Commission for the examinations of all mates aboard ships in the Dutch Merchant Navy. During World War II, he became a member of the Dutch underground forces and was even commanding officer of the South-Holland chapter of the "Ordedienst". In February 1944, OSTEN was taken prisoner by the German Occupation forces and first brought to the famous prison in Scheveningen [where Slobodan MILOSEVIC, and other war criminals were/are imprisoned]; he was then deported to several other internment camps, and he was finally

liberated by American troops in Lüttringhausen [Germany] on May 8, 1945. OSTEN competed in the sabre-team matches and also in sabre individual (three hits) [he did not finish in the 1st pool of the first round]; in sabre individual (one hit) [he was fourth in the 3rd pool of the first round and eliminated]; in epee individual [he was fourth in the 7th pool of the first round and eliminated].

George VAN ROSSEM; born 30 May 1882 in The Hague; † 14 January 1955 in Wassenaar; George van Rossem was a first lieutenant in the Royal Grenadiers, he was later finally promoted to the rank of major; George VAN ROSSEM became well-known in Olympic circles as the General Secretary of the Organizing Committee for the Games of the IXth Olympiad, Amsterdam 1928, and he was also the Secretary-General and Treasurer of the *Netherlands Olympic Committee* from 1930 until 1946. He competed in the sabre-team matches and also in sabre individual (one hit) [he finished joint second in the 5th pool of the first round; in the 2nd semi-final fourth and eliminated]; in sabre individual (three hits) [he finished joint first in the 1st pool of the first round; in the final he reached the second place and won the silver medal]; and in foil individual [in the 1st pool of the first round third and eliminated]. George VAN ROSSEM participated in four Olympic Games, including the 1906 Games; 1908, 1912 and 1920.

George van Rossem



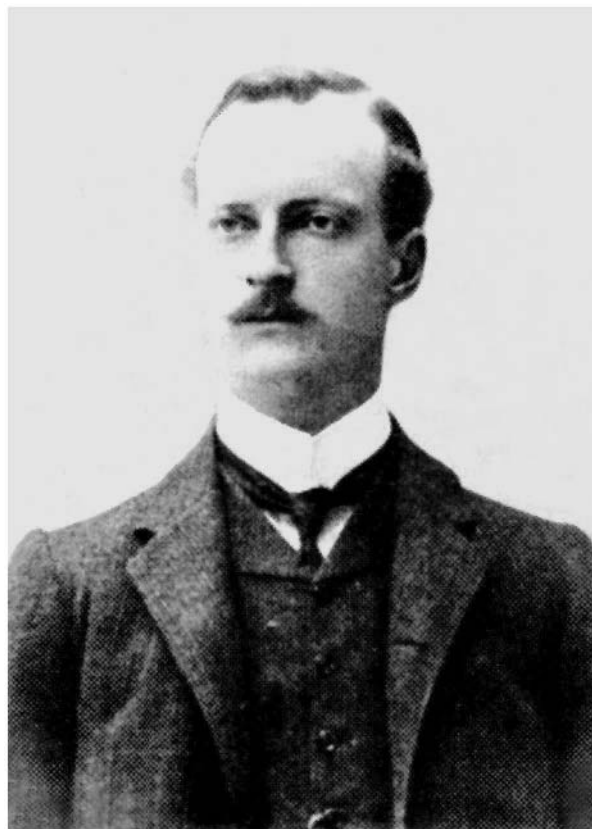
Raphaël "Felix" VIGEVENO; born 25 March 1881 in Amsterdam; † 6 September 1955 in Brussels, Belgium [during a holiday]; diamond-worker; Felix VIGEVENO lived alternately in Amsterdam and Antwerp in Belgium; according to documents in my archives, he finally emigrated from Antwerp, Belgium to the United States of America on 11 April 1940; and lived in New Jersey, USA; he is the brother of Gabriël VIGEVENO. Felix VIGEVENO took part in epee individual [he was second in the 1st pool of the first round; he won the 1st semi-final; in the final he reached the fourth place]; he also took part in foil individual [he was eliminated in the 2nd pool of the first round]. Felix VIGEVENO also participated in the Olympic Games in 1912, 1920 and 1924.

Gabriël VIGEVENO; born 12 October 1888 in Amsterdam; † 24 August 1952 in Rotterdam [travelling from the USA to Europe, he passed away on arrival in Rotterdam]; diamond-worker; he emigrated with his brother Raphaël (Felix, fencing 1906, 1920, 1924) to the United States of America. Gabriël VIGEVENO took part in epee individual [he was eliminated in the 7th pool of the first round].

#### Who were the Dutch Participants? - Lawn Tennis

Karel Willem Adriaan BEUKEMA; born 4 January 1878 in Yedo (nowadays called Tokyo), Japan; † 6 January 1908 in Pera (near Istanbul), Turkey; he was a Master of Laws and Acting Dutch Consul in Istanbul, Turkey. He entered the lawn tennis tournament on his own initiative. The "Karel Beukema Fund" [established by the BEUKEMA Family on behalf of the *Netherlands Olympic Committee*, to commemorate BEUKEMA'S early death] has been named after him. Karel BEUKEMA took part in men's singles [he won the first round with 6-0 and 6-4 from Ladislav "Rázný" ŽEMLA (BOH); won in the 2nd round with 6-4, 3-6 and 7-5 from Jacques GIRAUD (FRA); lost in the quarter-finals from Maurice GERMOT (FRA); finished joint in sixth place]; and, together with Gerard SCHEURLEER in men's doubles [first round free; lost in the second round with 4-6, 0-6 from Max DECUGIS en Maurice GERMOT (FRA), the later gold medal winners; the team BEUKEMA/SCHEURLEER finished joint in fifth place].

Jean Baptiste August "Guus" KESSLER; born 16 June 1888 in The Hague; † 5 November 1972 in The Hague; KESSLER was an electro technical engineer; later he became a member of the Director's Board for the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company (the *SHELL* Company). Guus KESSLER played only in the men's singles [He had walkover's in the first, second and third round, all because his opponents either retired or did not show up; he played his first match in the quarter-finals and lost from Max DECUGIS (FRA); he finished joint in fourth place (together with Gerard SCHEURLEER)].



Karel Beukema

Gerard Jacobus "Gerard" SCHEURLEER; born 29 May 1886 in The Hague; † 11 October 1948 in The Hague; SCHEURLEER was a sport journalist; in later years he lost a leg through a motor accident, which finished his career as a tennis player. Even today a tennis-tournament is still named after him. Gerard SCHEURLEER took part in men's singles [he won in the first round with 6-0, 3-6, 6-2 from the Greek Nikolaos ZARIFIS; he won in the second round with 6-1, 6-4 from Ioannis BALLIS (GRE/EGY); he won in the quarter-finals with 6-3, 8-6 from Georgios SIMIRIOTIS (GRE); he lost in the semi-final with 6-4, 6-1 from Maurice GERMOT (FRA); he finished joint in fourth place (together with Guus KESSLER). Together with Karel BEUKEMA he also participated in men's doubles [first round free; lost in the second round with 4-6, 0-6 from Max DECUGIS and Maurice GERMOT (FRA), the later gold medal winners; the team BEUKEMA/SCHEURLEER finished joint in fifth place].

\* I personally met Arie de JONG in 1964, when serving as a naval officer in The Hague. He invited me to his home [in the back of his restaurant] where I was allowed to look through his carefully kept albums with photographs and newspaper clippings from his career as a fencer. While leaving through one of the albums, my eye fell on something hidden behind a large photograph. I took it out and the item I found was a then still valid banknote for one hundred guilders. Mr. de JONG explained that the fencers used this method to

smuggle some extra money with them, when they were fencing abroad, immediately after World War II, during the time when currency was limited and it was not allowed to take extra money with you.

One year after I met him for the first time, in 1965, I served as torpedo-officer on H.N.M.S. Karel DOORMAN, the aircraft carrier which was later sold to the Argentine Navy. During May/June 1965, the ship took part in NATO exercises in the Mediterranean and such exercises are always quite strenuous for those who participate in them. Upon our return to Rotterdam and my return home in The Hague, I invited my wife to join me in an Indonesian dinner at Arie de JONG'S restaurant, to celebrate my homecoming. We booked a table and upon arrival met for a short time with Mr. de JONG. After ordering, I had to visit the toilet. After an absence of more than ten minutes, my wife became uneasy and asked the waiter to check where I was. When they finally opened the door of the toilet with a master key, they found me on the floor, unconscious and 'flat out'. Apparently I had been too tired to enjoy that dinner!

Two days later, Arie de JONG re-invited the two of us for a repeat Indonesian dinner, which tasted much better than ever before. It was the last time I met him as one year later he passed away.

**Many of the athletes enjoyed their free time by excursions into the city centre and the excavation area of Athens**

