

DINNER WITH THE QUEEN

BY TONY BIJKERK

The official IOC publication OLYMPIC REVIEW recently published a series of articles about “Gastronomy at the Olympic Games”. In number XXVI-12, among other subjects, attention was given to the Games of the IXth Olympiad in Amsterdam 1928, under the title: GASTRONOMY AL FRESCO.

Believe it or not, Amsterdam fortunately had many more gastronomic events to offer during the period of the 9th Olympic Games, all of them related to those Games.

For instance, already on May 25th, 1928, the Organizing Committee for the Games of the IXth Olympiad invited representatives from the International Federations for Hockey and Football for a dinner in the Vondelpark Pavilion in Amsterdam.

As everyone should know these two Federations organized their Olympic Tournaments well in advance of the rest of the programme, with hockey opening the Olympic competitions on May 17, and the final played on May 26th; immediately followed by football, which opened its extensive programme on May 27, and which ended with the replay of the famous final between Argentina and Uruguay, on June 13, 1928.

But let's go back to that dinner on 25 May. Its menu is still available and reads as follows:

Hors d'oeuvre Variés
Pommery & Greno: Nature (Vin Brut)
Crème à la Duchesse ou Tortue Claire
Saumon du Rhin à l'Argenteuil
Sauce Americaine
Graves Le Lys d'Or (Sec)
Selle d'Agneau au Vin de Pommard
Petits Poids - Tomates - Céleris
Ch. Cantemerle 1920
Caneton jeune Rôti aux Cérises
Compote fine

Parfait de Vanille - Galettes au Chocolat
Sauce Framboises au Rhum
Pommery & Greno: Nature (Vin Brut)
Fruits Assortis - Gingembre

The invited guests sure must have liked the champagne!

The French Count Clary, President of the French Olympic Committee organized a ‘déjeuner’ on 8 June 1928 in Maison Couturier, Keizersgracht 674 in Amsterdam, residence of Monsieur De Marcilly, Minister of France in the Netherlands (Ambassador), also on the occasion of the hockey and football tournaments. I am quite certain that several other ‘outings’ must have been available for the Olympic and International Federation dignitaries, during the time of the hockey and football tournaments, but from the two mentioned ‘events’, I happen to have either the menu, or the invitation to attend.

The Opening Ceremony of the 1928 Olympic Games took place on 28 July 1928, and that is when the many gastronomic festivities started too. In my Olympic collection, I have several consecutive invitations for ‘dinners’, and in some cases the menu's from these dinners in that period too.

But there is one of these, that tops it all! This rare set of items is the official invitation for-, the ‘renseignements pour les présentations à S.M. La Reine’, the seating arrangements, and the menu for the official dinner, which Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands gave to the important and honoured foreign guests of her country, on 6 August 1928, in the Royal Palace in Amsterdam, to commemorate the occasion of the 1928 Olympic Games.

Before we invite you to visit this dinner, it is from an historical point of view more interesting to start with the story ‘why’ Queen Wilhelmina was not available to take part in the Opening Ceremony of the Games in Amsterdam! This has only recently been revealed through the official opening

of the archives from the Royal Cabinet/Secretariat from Queen Wilhelmina.

Thanks to journalist Paul Arnoldussen from the newspaper 'Het Parool' in Amsterdam, we have received this information, which he published for the first time in his book on the 1928 Olympic Games: AMSTERDAM 1928 - Het verhaal van de IXe Olympiade.

In spite of many speculations in the press about a visit to Norway during the period leading up to the Games, most of the journalists thought that the Queen would certainly be back in time for the opening ceremony to fulfill her role as Sovereign of the host nation; in spite of the fact that her itinerary explicitly mentioned the date of August 1st, as the official date for her return from her Norwegian trip.

But Queen Wilhelmina did not (intend to) return in time and that was a bitter disappointment for everyone, because this was regarded as a terrible affront against Olympic protocol and especially against the many foreign guests that would attend the Games.

It was the first time ever that the Royal Sovereign from the host country would not be available to officially open the Games. In Athens 1896 (King George I), London 1908 (King Edward VII), Stockholm 1912 (King Gustav V) and Antwerp 1920 (King Albert I), the Royal Sovereign's of the host-country always officially opened the Games. Why then did Queen Wilhelmina not show up?

As said, there was a lot of speculation going on in those days. One can read such arguments as: "Maybe the government was not in favor of a Royal opening?" That argument was mentioned, because the same government had in majority abandoned the Olympic Games four years before. But since the Queen had accepted the 'patronage' of the Olympic Games, this could hardly be a valid reason!

Was the trip to Norway so important, that its itinerary could not be changed to conform to the date of the opening ceremony? The answer is: "No, the trip to Norway was just an excuse, and in fact only a short holiday with no official functions at all!"

What then was the true reason?

The reason was quite simple after all: "Queen Wilhelmina was angry and nursed a grievance!" The grievance being that she had *not been consulted* about the date for the Opening Ceremony in advance, and therefore she simply decided that she would leave the country for a trip to Norway!

No, the government did not send her away to Norway. On the contrary, Dutch Foreign Minister Beelaerts van Blokland tried his utmost to persuade her to return in time. In Paul Arnoldussen's book the petition, which the Foreign Minister had had delivered to the Queen on June 21st in Norway, is integrally quoted. In this petition he mentions time and again that the absence of the Queen would be

regarded with great disappointment, not only in the home country, but especially abroad. He mentions that the president of the International Olympic Committee, Count Henri de Baillet-Latour had written him a letter expressing these sentiments from the side of the I.O.C. and explicitly asking her Royal Highness to return from her trip in time to conduct the ceremony herself.

Of course, the Minister involved was himself a victim of a very rigid Royal protocol and the reader should know in this respect that Queen Wilhelmina was very strict on protocol!

On July 2nd, Queen Wilhelmina answered from the Høyfjells-hotel Fefor in Gudbrandsdalen, Norway (in code) to the letter from the Foreign Minister and as could be expected, that answer was negative.

She wrote: "that only if the Organizing Committee would agree to postpone the official opening of the Games to 3 or 4 August, with, if need be, a provisional opening by Prince Hendrik, that would be discutible to her. But there was one additional condition: the Netherlands Olympic Committee should admit having made a mistake by fixing the date for the opening ceremony without consulting the Queen first. The Minister himself was 'ordered' to handle the matter in person."

This resulted in a last effort.

IOC-President De Baillet-Latour received a letter from Mr. Beelaerts van Blokland inviting him, together with NOC-President Mr. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye (also an IOC-member and President of the Organizing Committee), to the Foreign Office to discuss the question of the date of the opening ceremony.

The Baron (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye) declared that he was very sorry, but that the date for the opening ceremony had already been established in January 1927, without consulting the Sovereign, as had been done for all other Olympic Games in the past. The date had not been established by the Netherlands Olympic Committee or by the Organizing Committee, but by the International Olympic Committee. (This last remark must certainly have been a 'white lie', because there existed no such decision by the I.O.C.!)

There followed another attempt to have the Queen change her mind, but on July 19th a definite cancellation came from Norway. Queen Wilhelmina was of the opinion that if the opening ceremony could not be changed according to her wishes, it should proceed "without Her presence".

And so it happened that on Saturday 28 July 1928, Prince-consort Hendrik of the Netherlands officially opened the Games of the IXth Olympiad, Amsterdam 1928.

Queen Wilhelmina returned from Norway a few days later (August 1st); visited the Modern Pentathlon 'cross-country-event' in Hilversum on August 3rd, together with her daughter Juliana and then hosted the official dinner,

which we mentioned earlier in this article.

Let's now return to that official dinner. The official invitation says:

D'après les ordres de SA MAJESTÉ LA REINE et son altesse royale LE PRINCE DES PAYS-BAS, le grand-maréchal de la cour a l'honneur d'inviter:

au diner du lundi 6 août 1928 à 7 1/4 heures.

Dames: Robe décolletée.

*Messieurs: demi-gala, uniforme ou frac, plaque et cordon.
(Palais, Amsterdam)*

Of course, it was imperative that the 'invited guests' should send confirmations on receipt of this invitation to the grand-maréchal, as was mentioned on a special 'sticker' which was pasted in the upper left corner of the invitation.

All the invited guests received an 'information' about the protocol for the ceremony when attending the dinner. These "renseignements pour les présentations à S.M. La Reine après le dîner", was split in two parts; one part for the people who were honoured with being presented to the Queen, and the other part for those not so honoured. This ceremony would take place after the dinner itself!

The dinner was held in the Royal Palace at the Dam in Amsterdam. There were four long tables set; three in length of the room and one, the head table, across. On the right side of Queen Wilhelmina sat the Prince Royal from Norway 'Olav', who was to win an Olympic Gold Medal in yachting a few days later. On the left side of the Queen sat the Archduke Albert from Habsburg, next to Prince-consort Hendrik of the Netherlands. Crown-princess Juliana sat next to Crown-prince Olav, and next to her sat IOC Member Count Adolphe Frédérique de Mecklenbourg from Germany.

Ten other unnamed guests also were invited to this table of honour and one can be certain that IOC-President Count Henri de Baillet-Latour and NOC-President Baron Alphert Schimmelpenninck van der Oye were among these 'chosen ones'.

The other three tables had respectively 67 (the two outer ones) and 63 (the inner one) persons seated, so that two hundred-thirteen persons attended this dinner, including the Sovereign.

Each person had received his personal seating arrangement and found the official menu (and a card with his name) in front of him. The menu is on gilt-edged paper, with the Royal Seal in gold on the top. The inside of the menu contains the musical programme that was played during the dinner.

What did the honoured guests have for dinner?

The menu offered:

*Consomme Westmoreland
Langouste Richelieu
Selle de pré salé Floréal
Poularde à la Lambertye
Compote
Caneton rôti au cresson Salade
Soufflé glacé aux framboises
Mousse au chester.*

(There is no wine or champagne mentioned in the menu!)

While the guests were eating, the music-programme was played, containing the following pieces:

- 1. Piet-Hein Marsch..... A.L. Hazebroek (arr. L.H.F. Leistikow).*
- 2. Ouverture zum Drama-Rosamunde....F. Schubert.*
- 3. Kunstler Leben. Waltzer J. Strauss.*
- 4. Souvenir..... L.H.F. Leistikow.*
- 5. Die Italienerin in Algier.
Ouverture G. Rossini.*
- 6. La lettre de Manon..... E. Gillet.*
- 7. Cavalleria Rusticana. Fantasia...P. Mascagni.*
- 8. Finale*

After the dinner, the guests which were invited in advance, were presented to the Queen, and with that ceremony the Royal dinner came to an end.

Queen Wilhelmina visited the Olympic Games the next day (August 7th) in the Olympic Stadium, where she attended the 'gymnastics'-demonstration, which was not yet the real competition. The actual competition took place from August 8 to August 10. On August 12th, she attended the equestrian event the 'Grand Prix de Nation' in the Olympic Stadium and directly afterwards she presented the medals to all Olympic goldmedal-winners from behind a table in front of the Royal box. The Olympic silver medals were presented by Prince-consort Hendrik of the Netherlands, while the bronze medals were handed over by IOC-President Count Henri de Baillet-Latour.

Directly after the medals had been presented, the closing ceremony took place signalling the end of the Games of the IXth Olympiad, Amsterdam 1928.

References:

We thank Mr. Paul Arnoldussen for his permission to use the very interesting information from his book: AMSTERDAM 1928 - Het verhaal van de IXe Olympiade, published in 1994 in the series: NEDERLANDSE SPORTBIBLIOTHEEK, by Thomas Rap, Staalstraat 10, Amsterdam.

The mentioned items come from my personal Olympic collection.
