

Buckriders

Buckriders

Roger P.M. Cals

Author: Roger P.M. Cals
Photographs: Roger P.M. Cals
Cover: Roger P.M.Cals
ISBN: 9789403888644

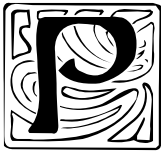
www.facebook.com/rogerpmcals
www.rogerpmcals.nl

© Roger P.M. Cals



**This work is dedicated to my godson
Seppe
May you have many adventures**

**Massive thanks to Pauli Kelley for her
endless amounts of work.**



REFACE

It has been a couple of years since Bokkeriejesh.nl was first published. A good reason for an English version complete with a guide to all locations mentioned in this book. Here you will find locations, pictures, information and websites, when available. The boys encounter a bit more excitement in this new and expanded edition. I invite readers not familiar with the Buckriders, to step into the adventure. The Dutch title "bokkeriejesh" is in the old Southern Dutch dialect of Limburg and is most commonly translated into "Buckriders". These Buckriders were a band of ruthless robbers who haunted the countryside of Limburg, and parts of Belgium between 1740 and 1798. Legend has it that they were either people or spirits riding through the skies on giant goats, swooping down on wealthy farmers and clergy, to take whatever they desired. They were mostly active in Zuid-Limburg and Midden-Limburg (South- and Central Limburg) in the Netherlands, as well as in Belgian Limburg, the Belgian Kempen and some German territory around Herzogenrath. Over time, these Buckriders, garnered an almost Robin Hood like reputation... but these days, they are more often seen as separate gangs, following the same practices. Many of the roughly 1200 accused and 500 convicted, were likely innocent, having confessed under brutal torture. Even now, the Buckriders live on in local folklore, woven into the region's cultural memory and commemorated in various ways. Names are kept in the original language of where the story lives. Although the story is fiction, the places are not, so their names are maintained as well. Names are kept in the original language of where the story lives. Although the story is fiction, the places are not, so their names are maintained as well.



INTRODUCTION

The sun rises slowly over the gently flowing hills of Limburg. Animals awaken. A fox searches for his breakfast between shrubs and bushes. A little rabbit pops its head up and falls victim to the fox with a swipe of its paw and is dragged, unconscious, to its lair. The rays of the sun illuminate Parkstad, the city skyline of Heerlen and the villages and fields of Onderbanken, eventually, the light reaches Brunssum, expelling the shadows from Op Gen Hoes, where the last bit of darkness beats a hasty retreat, finding new hiding places for the day. The shimmering silhouette of the little castle that once stood proud, slowly disappears and is replaced by the stark skeletons of the new houses. The shadow of the mighty castle Op Gen Hoes, this stronghold surrounded by moats, is reduced to its current state... one building surrounded by empty fields. Birds wake up and loudly greet the new day. So too, does the little church of Merkelbeek, reluctantly letting go of the grandeur it once had, to return to the derelict little building it is today. All modern residential areas come to life, slowly overwriting all memories of the wide expanse of fields and woods that once existed in this spot in rampant abundance. The past is once again replaced by the present, people taking up their daily chores like they do every day. And plans to turn Op Gen Hoes into an amusement park go forward. The thought of having rollercoasters running under their castle, their home, probably has the original owners turning in their lavish graves, but you can't stop progress. And so our story starts...





WO WEEKS AGO

Henk Ten Eegerie burrows deep into his chair. Turns around a couple of times smiling blissfully. Finally. The promotion he waited so long for is finally his! F.G.N. (Financier Groep Nederland) has acknowledged that they value the job he is doing for them and he is now the most recent and, at age 43, their youngest Project Manager. A fancy job title, giving him the power to make decisions on projects. His project: Op Gen Hoes in Brunssum, Limburg. The response of his family to the news and the consequences, is still undetermined. There's a soft knock on his door. Stefan, his colleague and best friend peeks around the corner and shoots him a grin. "Hi boss! How's your promotion treating you?" Henk looks at him and heaves a big sigh. "Boss? That's all? No bribe? Keep in mind that as of today, I have a say in your future with the company." Stefan laughs. "Alright, this soon, and it's already gone to your head. But I already took that possibility in account." He walks over to the desk and puts down a steaming cup of Cappuccino. "Just the way you like it." Henk nods. "Okay. You're safe today." Stefan takes a seat. "Do you have a project, already?" Henk grins, as he looks out the window. The silhouette of Amsterdam is smiling back at him. A twinge goes through him. Does he really want to leave here? "Yes, in Limburg." After all these years, the view of the capital city still beguiles him. Stefan thumbs through the folder on Henk's desk. "Hm" "What?" He continues looking over the papers. "An amusement park in Brunssum?" His brows furrow, as he seems to think. "You know I'm from there. I don't know how that would work. The people there are pretty down to earth". Henk takes the folder away from him. "Hotel- and amusement park Op Gen Hoes. The castle?"

But they're already rebuilding it, aren't they?" "According to this information, the construction has been at a standstill for several years. No one seems to know what's actually happening, and now the whole thing is supposedly up for sale again. A new roof, everything whitewashed - except for an annex - and then it just stopped" Stefan nods. "Yes. They say the place is cursed or something. Several companies have tried to make it work, but before they get anything off the ground, they go bankrupt. One company even managed to put up a complete building, but things went sideways before the opening. That building has already been demolished. The only part of the complex that is still standing through it all is the Gatehouse. Look at how the castle used to be. How big it was... and now..." Stefan studies the image of a vast courtyard and the massive building surrounding it. Henk, meanwhile, is looking at a photo of the current area. "yeah, there's not much left. But this firm wants to rebuild the entire castle, based on 19th Century records. It would become a fortress again, with a courtyard. All surrounding businesses will be bought up at a price that will allow them to relocate and the whole area will be turned into a park. A newly planted woodland would include all sorts of attractions within, like swing rides, carousels and game stalls. And here's the kicker: Underground there will be various concrete structures with rollercoasters, wild water rides and a funhouse, with hotel space around the edge. The castle itself will be used for office space, with a wedding venue and a mirrored maze as well as a restaurant. The horseshoe shape - buildings on three sides and a gate on the other - mean there will be no lack of space. It's a crazy project and they'll need about five million Euros" His expression turns solemn. "Of course, that's no problem for a company like F.G.N. but still..." He laughs. "So, as a native to Brunssum, what do you think? Is the plan viable?" Stefan shrugs. Henk nods. "I want to take a look, this afternoon. Want to come along? You would know better what goes on there in Brunssum, than I do. Honestly, I've never been there." "What? You've never been to the pearl of the mining district?" "You mean the pearl of Parkstad?" Henk shoots him a look with

a raised eyebrow. Stefan hangs his head, grinning sheepishly. "Okay, you got me. We Brunssumers like our freedom, not quite ready to go along with the Parkstad thing." Stefan gets up and walks to the door, but before opening it he turns around. "What time?" "Twelve? That gets us there around two." Stefan nods. "See you then. I should get back to work"

Koen Ten Eegerie struts across the schoolyard. Greetings come from all directions. His grin gets wider as he gets closer to his group of friends. He sighs. Yeah, he's happy. His life is good. Sixteen, blond hair, blue eyed, well built and muscular. Good friends, a decent school and he's popular. Girls are all over him, though strangely, he doesn't really care. He can wonder about that later. His friends spot him, and shout a loud greeting. Especially Kevin, his best friend since kindergarten who grins at him. "You up for this?" Koen groans dramatically... "Man, so much!" he laughs. He glances at the ugly building that will be their home for the day and grins. Not so bad after all. Honestly, he kind of likes school - not that he'll ever admit it! Are you nuts? He has no intention of being the center of ridicule in a world that hates school. They sling their arms around each other's shoulders and walk into the building under the bright afternoon sun.. Looks like it's going to be a great day.

A little before twelve, Henk takes his time walking downstairs. The morning hasn't been too busy, thankfully. A lot of handshaking and introductions, even though he had worked for the company for three years. Until now, he'd been part of the regular staff - not the sort higher-ups usually mixed with. That's not the way Henk wants to be. When someone suggested he shouldn't spend quite so much time with Stefan anymore. the look Henk gave him was enough to make the man fall silent. Stefan is already waiting for him at the exit. He opens his car door and grins at Henk. "Your carriage awaits." "Great. I was planning on taking the train." "I figured as much. That's why I went and got my car." Stefan doesn't understand why Henk still doesn't have a driver's license. Henk has explained several times that he just doesn't see the need.

Anything he has to do, can be done by public transportation or bike. Now, with the new job, that will probably become a problem. He will have to move to Limburg, and because it's not a pillar of effective public transportation, he will lose a lot of time. But, those are worries to be taken on later. He takes his seat next to Stefan, and a little later they're zipping down the road on their way to Brunssum.

"Finally, lunch break About time." Kevin sighs. Kevin has been Koen's best friends since they were toddlers. They are inseparable and are even sometimes jokingly called Siamese Twins. Koen grins at him. "Was the test that hard? I thought it was pretty easy." Kevin stares at him, stunned. "Seriously?" "Of course not, idiot!" He thumps Kevin on the shoulder. "Spiersma sets the toughest tests. I've already accepted I'm going to flunk. and I'll talk my way out of it at home later." Kevin roars with laughter. Together they head into their favorite little bistro, where they always eat their lunch. They may not be rich, but they happily skip the school cafeteria. It takes a bit more of their allowance, but a decent lunch is a must. The waitress approaches and gives them a wink. "Afternoon, gentlemen. Same as always?" The boys nod and slide onto their usual table by the window. Koen sighs contentedly as he looks outside. He loves Amsterdam. The freedom and scale of the city speak to him. When their sandwiches arrive, he eats leisurely, chatting with Kevin. After lunch it's unfortunately back to school. Or is it...? "Want to just skip it?" Koen says. "I'd really love to just walk through the city. It's a quiet afternoon." He looks at the street filled with people and laughs. "Well, for Amsterdam, at least!" They spend the rest of their afternoon wandering through the city under a pale autumn sun.

"Welcome to Broenssem." "They're friendly, at least." When they arrive at "Op Gen Hoes", Henk sees the old gatehouse surrounded by scaffolding. "What a shame. Such a beautiful building." "Yes. It really should be properly rebuilt, this time. The plan would be fantastic. If it actually happens." "Yeah, *if*.



There's a bakery on the site, that already had to relocate a few years ago... "Do you think they'll want to move again?" "One of the councilmen from the party currently in power has already said that his plan is to turn Brunssum Oost from industrial into a recreational area. This plan fits perfectly. Just imagine. There, behind the recycle center, would be parking. And if the park is successful, a little bridge could connect this property with the one across for expansion. Right now, that's nothing but shrubs and it's almost twice the size of this one." He looks around enthusiastically, gesturing as he speaks. Henk laughs. "You'd almost think you're the one heading up this project." "I wish I was. I wish I had the money to put into it." "Well, this company..." He flips through the papers. "Op Gen Hoes Entertainment B.V. They don't have the money either. They wouldn't be knocking on our door otherwise." Henk pushes his way through the shrubs and reaches the front door. It can only be accessed by crossing a wooden plank, since a trench has been dug around the building. A man approaches them, not looking particularly friendly. "What do you want!? This is private property." "Good afternoon. My name is Henk Ten Eegerie. I'm with F.G.N. and we're here on behalf of a possible buyer for the property." The man's expression softens. "Alright. I expect you want to look inside?" He takes out a key and opens the door. Henk and Stefan gingerly follow him across the rickety plank. Once inside Henk looks around in astonishment. There's nothing there! One big empty space, dominated by a gigantic fireplace. "My name is Jan de Haan. I'm in charge of property maintenance. When you're through looking around, come find me." With that, he quietly walks away. Henk walks to one of the big windows in the back of the space. As he looks out, a strange sensation runs through him. There, to the right of the building, is a wall. With windows. But the gatehouse was the only building left standing. How can this be? Yet he's certain. There's a building there and a courtyard. In disbelief Henk sees a well, and an old woman filling a bucket with water. Chickens scurry across the yard, picking at the weeds between the stones. Only now Henk realizes, that the courtyard is closed in. To the left are barns. Straight ahead is a



wall with a big gate. To the right is the building he'd noticed first. Suddenly, the gate is thrown open and 4 horses gallop into the courtyard. One of the last horses is dragging something behind it. When he focuses, he realizes it is a person - or at least, it may have been, once. One arm and leg are badly broken, blood cakes his clothes, mixed with fresh streaks. Henk doubts the man is still alive, but he is too shocked to look away. In the cart trailing the horses into the courtyard are two boys and a woman. All three are crying. Four men jump off the horses and drag the man to the middle of the courtyard. Here, they tie him to a big wagon wheel. "Piet Waterbrouwer, do you admit to the crimes you are accused of?" A voice booms across the space. The man takes a labored breath and his gaze comes up. Not to the speaker, but to Henk. And he smiles at Henk. "NO" he snaps. Henk takes a step back, stunned. The man looked right at him. Why? Before he can react, a knife is drawn and quickly pulled across Piet's throat. Slowly, his head drops forward... and keeps dropping. Until it finally falls to the ground. Henk wonders how the head could sink so far, but when it finally tips forward and lands on the ground he understands all too well. He screams and squeezes his eyes shut. Feeling a hand touch his shoulder, he looks up in Stefan's concerned face. When Henk looks out again, he sees only the empty terrain - a wasteland of sand and stones. No wall. No gate. No building. He shakes his head, turns abruptly and walks out the door.

Once outside, Stefan puts a hand on Henk's shoulder. Henk is white as a sheet. "What happened in there?" Henk shakes his head again. "Nothing." He grins nervously. "Let's get out of here." Stefan stops him. "What did you see?" "What do you mean?" "Well, it's a strange spot for seeing things. Usually, you hear more about the other side." "The other side?" Henk follows Stefan's gesture towards the neighborhood "Op Gen Hoes." "You hear a lot of stories about that place. None of them positive, either. People complain about a general feel of danger. But is that really because of the kids everybody likes to blame? Walk with me." They cross the street, and follow a narrow path into the neighborhood. Almost immediately, Henk feels

the tight knot of anxiety. Dizzying, claustrophobic. Everything looks the same. The row houses accentuate the dark, disorienting feeling. "I wouldn't want to live here," he mutters "No, me neither. But believe it or not, some people are perfectly happy here. They actually like living here. The lucky ones - they're not bothered by any sixth sense. They're practical - they go to work, come home and live here comfortably. Everything is fine. But for us... we're not built that way. I can see it on your face. Plain as day. The need to get out, the dark alleys, the multitude of corners, the bridges and passageways. You get uncomfortable real quick if you have any kind of sixth sense. You feel it too, don't you? Uncomfortable?" "I've never put any stock in my sixth sense. I don't even think I have one" confesses Henk with an uncertain chuckle. "What did you see in the gatehouse?" Henk shakes his head violently. "I don't want to talk about it!" "Exactly! That's what I'm talking about. You saw something. You're sensitive to it - more than most people. You feel it here too, don't you? Uneasy?." A cloud passes in front of the sun, and the whole area feels even more menacing. "I really want to get out of here!" Henk turns and strides back the way they came. But is it the right path? They again walk into a long road with row houses. "What?" Henk looks around in confusion. Stefan laughs softly. "Don't worry. As long as it's light, we're safe" He pulls Henk along into a narrow alley and pushes him against the wall. "But never come here after dark. Our kind doesn't belong here then. Let's get out of here. I'll tell you about this neighborhood once we're clear." He leads Henk forward and soon, they're in the field beyond the housing complex. Henk exhales in relief and at Stefan's suggestion, they get in the car and drive off for a cup of coffee - somewhere else.

The simplicity of the fifties. That's what the small diner reminds Henk of, as they take a seat at a small table. Music from the fifties plays in the background and all the accessories in the lively decorated place are from the same era. "What can I get ya?" asks the friendly waitress. Both men order a cappuccino and soon there's a good size mug in front of them accompanied

by a nice piece of chocolate. After taking a sip, Henk breaks the silence. "Okay, what's the story on the neighborhood?" Stefan takes a deep breath. "There was a castle there once. In the Middle Ages - Castle Clutteleen. It wasn't a happy place. The Lord of the castle, Jonker Clut, was cruel and abused his wife and daughters on the regular. His wife spent most of her time spinning wool in the tower and his daughters mostly spent theirs crying. They had no freedom, at all, except for the week he took off for his annual hunt. That's when they could do what they wanted... until that one year. One of the daughters really did as she pleased and ended up pregnant. When he returned from the hunt and found out, he roared with rage. *She no longer was his daughter. He would banish her. No wait, he had a better idea.* He feigned affection, lured her close... "You are my daughter. I love you." He embraced her, but nobody had seen the knife in his hand. Without warning, he plunged it in her back with such force that it almost came out the front. She stared with big eyes at her father while the life slowly drained out of them as she slumped to the ground. Crazy with grief, her mother rushed in and jumped her husband. They fought fiercely and ultimately ended up on the landing at the top of the stairs where they lost their footing. They tumbled down the stairs, breaking their necks. When the other daughter finally returned home and discovered the bodies of her family, she lost her mind so completely, that she was put in an institution. During her lifetime these were not good places to be and until her death, she merely existed in a little room without anybody caring about her well-being. The castle didn't have a lord anymore and without him, it deteriorated. Other nobles took an interest over time, but the feeling that had ingrained itself in the castle since the tragedy turned them off. Dark and grim, it towered over the trees, and when prospective buyers heard the stories, nobody wanted any part of it. One nobleman decided to demolish the castle and use the materials for another castle." "Op Gen Hoes?" Stefan nods. "Yes, Op Gen Hoes." The space where the old castle had once stood, stayed empty. Nobody ever wanted anything to do with the property. That is, until our time. This developer didn't care about the

stories. Houses needed to be built there, no matter what. A modern neighborhood, providing living spaces for as many people as possible. And so the neighborhood was built. From the start, the houses were fraught with problems. Seepage, unexplained chills, people getting lost, even when they're very familiar with the area. I still talk to people who sometimes don't find their way home right away — even after living there for years. Can you imagine? And then there's other stories, still..." "Like?" Stefan looks him in the eye. "The young man that wasn't fazed by any of this. Staying away there at night? Hah! Nothing would deter him and he decided to stay out here all night. He walked the streets some, and looked around a little. When the sun set, and the moon was only a weak light, he still didn't feel any trepidation. The next morning, he was found outside the suburb in the field. His hair white as snow. He never talked about what happened, what he had seen, but he also never smiled again. A couple of years later, he died. At age 23!" They stare into their coffee cups in silence. "And you put stock in that story? Isn't it just a... what do you call it, an urban legend?" Stefan shrugs and gives Henk a crooked grin. "You can try it, if you want. But I'm not going in there at night. And, honestly, I don't think you want to either." Henk shudders at the thought of Op Gen Hoes in the dark. "No," he whispers "No, I don't want to, either."

Koen lies in bed and goes over the day again. The afternoon with Kevin was fun. They visited several nice little shops, and Koen bought a sweater that, according to Kevin, looked particularly good on him. They didn't do much else. They laughed a lot, had something to eat and drink, and now it's night. For the second time that day, Koen thinks about how good his life is. It couldn't get any better, and he never wants to leave Amsterdam. What he doesn't know, is that he will be gone sooner than he thinks... does he have the gift of prediction, maybe?

That night, safely back in Amsterdam, Henk doesn't sleep a wink. He tosses and turns, replaying the day's events. What had

he seen at the castle? Why is had the neighborhood affected him so strongly? Come on. He doesn't believe in ghosts, does he? But the eyes of the beaten and murdered man won't leave him alone. Nor will his grin. The story of the boy with the white hair gives him goosebumps as well. When he got home, he searched the internet to see if he could find confirmation of Stefan's stories. And he did. Unfortunately. The young man with the white hair was just the tip of the iceberg. What he found shocked him so much that he couldn't imagine anyone still wanting to live there. Admittedly, the houses go back on the market more often than average, and turnover is very high. But what about the woman who creeps through the dark alley with her spinning wheel? The lord of the castle, searching for his surviving daughter, with a knife dripping with blood. The daughter - the beautiful daughter - wandering around in search of men. And when the man takes pity on her, she only has to look at him once for him to lose his mind. What on earth is he supposed to do about this promotion? Refuse and leave the project to someone else? But it was assigned to him. He has to decide. When he finally decides to study the plans further tomorrow and make the final decision, then he feels a little better and soon falls into a deep sleep.