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The Edinburgh Legal History Blog

Valedictory Lecture: Professor Emeritus Dr Dr (hc) Laurens Winkel

Posted on [October 20, 2014](#) by [John Cairns](#)

The retirement of a distinguished colleague at the height of his powers could seem a misfortune; but, in fact, it raises hope that, freed from the increasing managerial trivia of modern academic life, more time is left to the colleague for future research and travel. On 10 October 2014, the *capitis minutio* of our colleague Laurens Winkel to the freer status of Professor Emeritus at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam was marked by a symposium in his honour entitled “The Many Faces of Legal History”, after which there was lunch, to be followed at 16.15 by a Valedictory Lecture entitled “Themis and Clio Revisited”.

Celebrations started the night before with a dinner for the speakers at the Symposium organized by Tammo Wallinga of Rotterdam and Antwerp. As well as the symposiasts of the next day, the guests included your Blogger. It was held at the splendid Hotel New York in Rotterdam, based in the former buildings of the Holland America Line, which could be viewed across the busy river Nieuwe Maas from the hotel on the Willemskade where many of us were staying. We had the excitement of the trip to and from dinner by water taxi.



Hotel New York

A pleasant evening was had by all.



The next day the Symposium began. It was chaired by Professor W.J. Veraart of the Free University of Amsterdam, one of Laurens' pupils. The first two speakers were Professor Xavier Prévost, now of the University of Bordeaux, who spoke of the work carried out by Jacques Cujas on the paligenesia of Roman jurists and its significance. Laurens had been one of the examiner's of Professor Prévost's important thesis. Dr Paul du Plessis of this University and Blog, and one of Laurens' doctoral pupils, then spoke on cursing and suing, a paper based on study of lead curses recently discovered in Bath, putting them into legal context and explaining their significance in a possibly plural legal system – a particularly impressive performance. Dr Jacob Giltaij of Helsinki, another of Laurens' doctoral students, then gave an imaginative and convincing paper about the context of Fritz Schulz' *Principles of Roman Law*, teasing out its political significance as an anti-Nazi text. All three provoked discussion and raised probing – if gently put – questions from the honorand. These three outstanding papers set a high standard for the rest.



The high standard symposium continued after coffee. Dr Emese von Bóné of Rotterdam, the first of the home team, presented an “Amuse”, in which she explored the Roman legal and historical context of Mozart’s “La Clemenza di Tito”. This brought together Laurens’ love of music and Roman law. Javier Rodrigues Diez of Santiago de Chile, currently Laurens’ doctoral student, then discussed the continuingly fascinating topic of objective good faith, rather wonderfully using little Lego figures. The final paper was by Tammo Wallinga, professor at Antwerp and teacher in Rotterdam, discussing the importance of the editing of texts as the foundation of legal scholarship, using the appropriate title “Ad Fontes”. Laurens again had a friendly and gracious word for each.



The symposium then moved to a presentation, with Professor Veraart again taking the floor. In an amusing and affectionate speech, he introduced a *Festchrift* prepared in Laurens' honour, a special issue of *Ars Aequi*, entitled, *Recht & Chaos*. It contained a number of photographs of Laurens' office; if they were meant to illustrate chaos, they did not seem to do so to this Blogger, whose office is even more apparently disorganized. But Professor Veraart spoke graciously and Laurens responded in like vein. Laurens then presented gifts of pens to those who had spoken.



Lunch followed. After which your blogger and some friends went and sought out some of the beer specially brewed for autumn.



Lunch and beer (for a true symposium)

At four o'clock the formal ceremony began. Professors robed and then formed into a procession led by the bedellus with the mace led by Laurens and the Dean into the *aula magna* of the University. Such is the affection and esteem in which Laurens is held, this was the largest such procession your Blogger has ever seen. The Dean introduced him, and then Laurens spoke eruditely and amusingly on his theme of the importance of legal history. The Dean then gave an account of Laurens' career, and others also spoke in his praise. He was also presented by his colleagues with a volume entitled (in Dutch), *Useful, but Important: Sayings in Law for Laurens Winkel*.



A reception followed for the huge crowd.

In the evening Laurens hosted a dinner at the Royal Maas Yacht Club, splendidly situated on the Nieuwe Maas in central Rotterdam. Again this was an elegant event with affectionate speeches, including one by Laurens' own Doktorvater, Professor Emeritus Hans Ankum, and also one by his partner, Peter. He was presented with a whimsical portrait of himself floating over Rotterdam in his Edinburgh doctoral robes.





In all, a dear friend was suitably honoured and suitably honoured his guests.

Laurens had declared that he did not want a *Festschrift*. Not only did that modest remark remind individuals that he deserved one, it was also very wisely ignored. We have seen he was presented with a special issue of *Ars Aequi*. Early in September, he had been presented with another *Festschrift* in Naples at the international Roman Law conference, the Société Internationale pour l'Histoire des Droits de l'Antiquité. Such is Laurens' reputation, and the love people bear him, there were over 90 contributors and it reached two volumes. Entitled *Meditationes de iure et historia: Essays in honour of Laurens Winkel* it was edited by Rena van Bergh et al. Finally there was the presentation of the volume at his lecture. A true measure of a professor is the esteem and affection of his colleagues and the love of his pupils. Laurens is eminently blessed with both.

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One Response to *Valedictory Lecture: Professor Emeritus Dr Dr (hc) Laurens Winkel*



Hector MacQueen says:

October 23, 2014 at 1:15 pm

Very good. I caught a glimpse of this event, and our blogger at it, on Facebook!

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