Sea science

Ostend was home to the world's first marine biology station

marine station. tute recently celebrated its pioneering centre, and the Flanders Marine Insti-Flemish city also shined as a scientific goes beyond its glory days as a high-end beach resort: the historical grandeur

as France (Concarneau, 1859) and Italy oyster farm, located on the east bank of the port of Ostend, to set up a labs sprouted in other countries, such station in the world - before similar modest laboratory. The "laboratory of the sand dunes" was the first marine Beneden picked a site on his in-laws In 1843, biologist Pierre-Joseph van (Naples, 1872). port of Ostend, to set up a

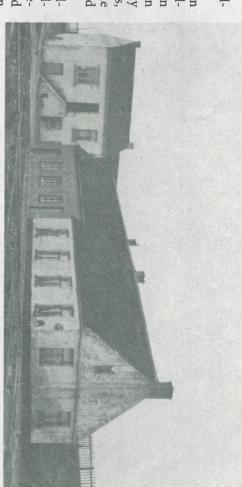
market, with fishing vessels and oyster station was located near the Ostend fish the Belgian coast's fauna. The marine research on fish parasites and studied In Ostend, van Beneden established his

ogist.

adult worms in humans' intestines and ogy at the Natural History Museum in demonstrating the link between the Paris. In these first years, van Beneden the larvae in pork or beet. unravelled the life cycle of tape worms, focussed on parasitology: he tamously Leuven and then specialised in zool-He went on to study medicine in

ogy and anatomy of marine invertebelonged to iguanodon dinosaurs. ied whales and explored the embryolthe Bernissart coal mine in Wallonia that the fossil skeletons discovered in brate animals. In 1878, he determined From 1859 on, van Beneden stud-

said to have caused an invasion of zebra Belgium's national dish, mussels. He is muscels (Droissona) in the area Van Beneden's legacy also extends to animals inspired him to become a biol-



Van Beneden built his marine station on his in-laws' oyster farm in Ostend



Like father, like son?

iootsteps. Edouard is one of Beigium's

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damaged during the First World War

finally disappeared completely

the extension of Ostend's

harbour channel. The Flanders Marine

Institute (VLIZ) has recently unearthed

sor mentioned proudly that this exper-Now, Flanders boasts about 100 research iment was so successful...

at great expense. The serious profes-

the canal locks, which had be cleaned years later, mussel shoals obstructed

that the current institute actually over-

location of the laboratory and found historical materials to spot the exact

looks the former site.

orative plaque to remind passers-by Last June, VLIZ unveiled a commem-

groups that study the sea, tides and a collection of multidisciplinary sciencharge of promoting all this work intertific literature and media about marine meetings and congresses and manages out its own research, but it organises nationally. The institute does not carry coasts. The Ostend-based VLIZ is in and coastal sciences.

specific information to policy-makers. in addition, the institute provides part of several international networks; mation from Belgium and abroad, as centre that collects and accesses intor-Importantly, VLIZ is home to a data



Belgium's groundbreaking marine biologist Pierre-Joseph van Beneden

the Belgian academic world

evolution theory, which he introduced to

www.vliz.be

darwiniste Edouard, Université de Liège évolutionniste en Belgique: Pierre-Joseph Van Beneden à son fils Photos from Hamoir, G, La révolution au fixiste

> stages of meiosis (the division process most famous biologists; he elucidated the van Beneden junior believed in Darwin's put on earth just the way they are. But that cuts the number of chromosomes in believed that all plants and animals were Beneden senior was a creationist: he two to produce reproductive cells). Van

Van Beneden started out as a pharmacy apprentice at Louis Stoffels' in Mechelen. There, he developed a knack for life sciences and palaeontology: Stoffels' collection of fossils, minerals and There, he developed a knack for

Marine science pioneer

tional reputation throughout centuries generally to celebrate Ostend's internaof the place's scientific past, and more

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