



MONDO CANE

VISITORS GUIDE



FLAP AND FLOP

Flap and Flop are two comedians from Bilzen, a village in Limburg. Flap and Flop's jokes are so bad that no one wants to hear them. If Flap tells a joke, only Flop laughs, and vice versa. They travel from village to village in their cart. Sometimes Flop stands on the cart, and sometimes Flap. They go to the places where there are fairs and markets, and try to draw people's attention by singing loudly or shouting jokes. However, they are always chased away and have mud and stones thrown at them. Once Flap and Flop had the idea of making a big trip to Spain. They were going to go by train, but they didn't get further than the station of L. They spent half their money in a café next to the station celebrating their departure. When they finally went to set off, they were so drunk they couldn't read the departure board at the station. So they didn't go.

Flap and Flop spend the cold winters in Sint-Alexius, a clinic for the mentally disturbed. At the end of April, in spring, Flap and Flop are sent on their way, and they have to fend for themselves until the end of November, when they are readmitted to Sint-Alexius. Flap likes to eat spaghetti with mustard sauce and onion. Flop likes white bread sandwiches with cheese and Nutella. Flap and Flop have been living like this for 30 years, and there is no prospect of their lives changing.



THE RAT WOMAN

The appearance of the Rat Woman is a harbinger of Death. If you are alone in the dark, groping hopelessly around for something to cling to, then the Rat Woman suddenly materialises. The first thing you hear is the tapping of her stick but, before you know it, her presence is felt. Her approach is slow. At the sight of this gruesome apparition, her victim – sweating and trembling with fear, and perpetually searching for a way out of the darkness – will enter the final phase of life. One glance at the Rat Woman and you stop breathing, your muscles slacken and you beg for forgiveness. Finally, your heart stops beating and death takes over. Then the Rat Woman will turn on her heel and disappear back into the darkness.

There are precious few who live to tell the tale of an encounter with the Rat Woman.



FRANCELINE DE VEUGELEIR

Franceline De Veugeleir was born in Wervik in 1938. She has spent her entire life wishing that she had never been born. She always thinks that she is worse off compared to other people. She can deliver long tirades about how, in a restaurant, the service she received was below the standard given to her fellow diners.

She is hated by many, which suits her perfectly, because then she can hate them back with even greater ferocity. This paranoia makes life very hard for her nearest and dearest. It is not clear why she sits in a wheelchair, as there has been no medical diagnosis that justifies the use of such a contraption. But Franceline is resolute in her anger and moans constantly about the pain in her knees that makes it impossible for her to walk. Franceline De Veugeleir drives everyone to despair with her complaints, but it doesn't look as though the world will be relieved of her presence any time soon. Franceline also has a daughter, called Brigitte Pannecoucke.



ERNST WOLLEMENGER

Ernst Wollemenger joined the GDR's Staatssicherheit (Stasi) in 1953. He was valued by his employer for his exceptional attentiveness, analytical ability and encyclopaedic memory. With his three brown suitcases, he always took up his position in stations, at bus stops or in airports. He would sometimes stand on a street corner, pretending to be waiting for a taxi. In this way, Ernst Wollemenger spied upon hundreds of thousands of random passers-by over the years. He knew the movements of everyone within the GDR. He meticulously noted down his findings in blue notebooks that he stashed in the three suitcases. Once a month, he reported to Stasi headquarters in East Berlin, where he would tip out the brown suitcases onto his boss's desk with the following words: 'Viel Spass damit! Bis nächsten Monat' (Have fun with it! See you next month).



JACOBINA BIENEBOL

Vicar's daughter Jacobina Bienebol grew up in a strict Protestant family in the rural village of Kruiningen. Her father Rev. Dirk Bienebol (1922–1999) was a highly esteemed preacher and a member of the Reformed Congregations church in the Netherlands. *De Tucht in de Kerke Christi* (*Discipline in Christ's Church*), a twenty-page treatise about restoring the discipline of the past, can be considered Rev. Dirk Bienebol's life's work.

Since his death in 1999 Jacobina has continued her father's work. She is regularly spotted on her bicycle around Kruiningen loudly urging other cyclists and pedestrians to live a devout life in accordance with the rules of the Reformed Church. She thereby regularly collides with the local youth.

Jacobina Bienebol was recently reported for mistreating a lost dog. The animal was found by walkers. It had been tied to a concrete block for a number of days, and was utterly exhausted. A copy of *De Tucht in de Kerke Christi* wrapped in cellophane was found underneath the concrete block. Jacobina Bienebol denies any involvement in the case.

The dog had to be put down by a vet.



MADAME LEGRAND

Madame Legrand was born in Versailles in 1889. At a young age she moved to Paris with her three brothers and parents, where they settled in a new home in the 16th arrondissement. During the occupation of France, many German officers visited the Legrands, and it was always lively. There was vigorous mockery of 'Les sales rats', referring to the Jewish community. Madame Legrand soon became an essential tool in the detection and deportation of every living Jew in Paris and its environs. In this, she adopted a very pragmatic approach, and with the aid of the French authorities she drew up lengthy lists of the Jewish population in Paris and those she suspected of offering shelter or even services to Jews, broken down by arrondissement. The names on the lists were often prompted by hatred and envy. This gave the German occupiers so much to do that after a few months they tried to persuade Madame Legrand to calm down a bit, but to no avail... If she didn't get her way, she shouted the now-notorious sentence: 'Si vous ne m'obéissez pas, je pisse!' (If you don't do what I want, I will piss!) After the Liberation she did the opposite, and reported everyone that she suspected of collaboration.



MOSQUETERO SIN DINERO

Raf Smulkens, a.k.a. Mosquetero sin Dinero, grew up in Ekeren in the Eighties. As a teenager he produced his own newspaper called *Het Lopend Vuurtje* (Wildfire), of which he had a few dozen copies produced and circulated in the town for 10 francs apiece. It consisted of various sections such as 'sport and sweat', 'gifts galore', 'news and fun facts', 'joke corner', 'yum yum glug glug', etc. In short, as he described it himself, 'something for everyone'. The newspaper did not have much success outside a few family members and a neighbour. A total of 17 stapled issues were produced.

In the Nineties – by which time Raf was in his thirties – he fell deeply in love with a girl called Hilde. He tried to court her with various songs that he composed and recorded himself such as 'Hilde I'm mad about your body', 'Hilde, help me' and also 'All of Ekeren can know, Hilde you have broken my heart' – but all his entreaties were in vain. A few years later Smulkens was spotted at the annual living statues festival in Marchen-Famenne in the Belgian Ardennes as Mosquetero sin Dinero.



ROCCO SWENTY DI MALAGA

Every year, Rocco Swenty Di Malaga, a ventriloquist, appears in the small villages of the Veneto province. In winter, when the nights are cold and foggy, he takes his place on the steps in front of the church and tells grisly tales with his scary doll. One assumes that the doll, which he always keeps about his person, is already a few hundred years old. Nothing is known about Rocco Swenty himself. It is said that his frightening tales are based on real-life events. He is rumoured to be a murderer who constantly adopts different guises. He was once seen near a place in southern Germany where a couple was burnt alive. It is impossible to converse with the ventriloquist. His doll starts to roar with laughter when you try to speak to him. Then he will flee, disappearing into the night-time fog without a trace. It is claimed that Rocco Swenty Di Malaga can travel through time, which explains his ability to appear and disappear at will. He is thought to have been seen in several locations at once, but all these things are difficult to prove.



KRISTINUS OPLINUS

Kristinus Oplinus is said to have been possessed by Satan. Originally a devout Catholic, she was fanatical about the scriptures and cursed everyone whom she believed to be living in sin. Kristinus was convinced that the Antichrist would rise up during her lifetime and that she alone, as the Chosen One, would lead the ultimate fight against Evil. One night, after a heavy thunderstorm, she was discovered in a trance from which she never reawakened. She was standing in the bushes and was only able to turn her head. Moreover, from that night onwards, her hands possessed six fingers. This event was seen as a dark miracle, and Kristinus Oplinus was idolised by sinister sects who saw in her an omen for the End of Days. For this reason, she was locked away in a deep cellar in the Vatican.



THE FOOL

We know that the fool has a mental age of around eight. When visiting the zoo with his aunt, he was entranced by the nocturnal creatures. He stood stock-still for hours on end, staring into the eyes of a barn owl until hypnotised. Since then, he only sings the few songs that he can remember from his childhood.



THE KNIFE-GRINDER OF WEXFORD

The Knife-Grinder of Wexford was a respected man. His years of experience meant that he had perfected the art of sharpening such that he was much in demand and enjoyed a certain status. He sharpened for both the farmers and the local aristocracy, and his craftsmanship was generally considered legendary. Hence the story went round that with a knife sharpened by the Knife-Grinder of Wexford one could cut the legs off a horse in a single blow. As he sharpened, the Knife-Grinder of Wexford always whistled the same tune.

What people didn't know was that the Knife-Grinder of Wexford led a double life.

During the day he did his job with dedication, but at night he wandered the dark streets of Wexford in search of blood. His victims were always attacked suddenly in the dark and beheaded. People started to suspect the Knife-Grinder when an old woman heard someone whistling the Knife-Grinder's tune just before one of the murders. When this became known, the Knife-Grinder of Wexford disappeared without a trace and the murders stopped. Some say that the Knife-Grinder of Wexford fled to America and made his fortune there. Others claim that he had been spotted in London. Whatever the case, the Knife-Grinder's tune is still whistled to scare children in the dark.



LATHGRETA TOFT

Lathgreta Toft lives in a wooden house in Harken in northern Denmark. Harken has four hundred inhabitants, and Lathgreta knits a scarf for every single one of them every year. So she knits 1.1 scarves a day. Her days always follow the same pattern. She gets up at 6 o'clock and eats barley gruel. She then knits until noon, prepares her lunch, eats it and takes a nap. At 2.30 p.m. Lathgreta starts knitting again, until 6.30 p.m. She then takes a break to eat a sandwich. She starts knitting again at 7 p.m., and carries on until 9 p.m. Then she goes to bed. The scarves are distributed to the residents of Harken on Christmas Day. During a short ceremony with tea and biscuits, Lathgreta Toft is celebrated for her perseverance. Every inhabitant of Harken receives his scarf and returns home in silence. Sadly Lathgreta has never attended the ceremony in her honour, since she's always knitting. If she were not to knit for just one day, next year one Harken resident would be literally and figuratively out in the cold, and Lathgreta Toft doesn't want that on her conscience.



SATERI

Sateri, nicknamed Il Pesce (the fish) because he can apparently swim underwater for hours without coming up for air, comes from a large family in Santa Capola, a hamlet near Bari. Together with his 4 brothers, 8 nephews and 11 cousins Il Pesce operates a chain of pizzerias under the name 'Sateri Pizza Sateri'. Initially based in and around Santa Capola and subsequently in 20 locations throughout the region, thanks to a financial arrangement with Chinese businessmen the pizza chain grew to be one of the most important in southern Italy. Its financial success was based on buying up large quantities of spoilt food from the food industry. The pizzas from Il Pesce were particularly enjoyed by Dutch and German tourists.



THE TOWN CRIER

Bartholomeus De Bie was the last town crier from the village of Duffel, which is close to Antwerp. A town crier, or 'bell man', would proclaim the official notices sent from the government to the people. As well as the formal messages, Bartholomeus De Bie would also shout jokes of his own making. Once he called out the following: 'What do a Christmas tree and a priest have in common? – Their balls are just for decoration.' Although the villagers found this amusing, Bartholomeus was sacked on the spot. At the same time, the post of town crier was abolished because printing was on the rise and illiteracy was falling. Written pamphlets were henceforth seen as a better option for disseminating official notices. Bartholomeus De Bie died in 1874. He had six children.



DE BELDER GUIDO

De Belder Guido, a painter from Leuven, was the inventor of Magical Abstract Realist Romanticism, an artistic style of which he was the sole practitioner. He meticulously documented the movement in a 150-page manifesto which has sadly been lost. In his oeuvre, we find many dark visions that are combined with landscapes in which timid animals play the leading role. De Belder never enjoyed success in his lifetime. He survived on hand-outs and the small pension paid to his mother, who took care of him for her entire life. After his death, a few of his works were purchased by the City of Leuven.



IRMGARD SPECK

From 14 April 1856 to 17 May 1960, Irmgard Speck lived in the village of Kaisborstel in Schleswig-Holstein in north-west Germany. Her parents were livestock farmers. Throughout her life, Irmgard was extremely introverted, and from her early youth she was wedded to the spinning wheel that she received as a gift on her seventh birthday. She barely spoke, had no social contacts and spun wool for up to ten or twelve hours a day. Her closed character meant that she was unfamiliar with the world around her. The Industrial Revolution and the First and Second World Wars passed her by completely. Year upon year, she kept on spinning wool. It has been calculated that in her lifetime, Irmgard Speck must have spun around 400,000 kilometres of yarn – the distance from the Earth to the moon.



ILSE KOCH

The Koch family hailed from Falkenau an der Eger in Sudetenland, now called Sokolov. For generation after generation they practised the craft of pottery-making. An inscription on the facade of their shop read 'Koch Töpfer seit 1628' (Koch Pots since 1628). In October 1938 the Koch family and young Ilse were out in the streets cheering the arrival of the German troops. After the war, when Sudetenland was returned to Czechoslovakia, the Koch family had to flee. After many wanderings, Ilse Koch ended up in Leverkusen, where she ran a café by the station called 'Zum alten Topf' (In the Old Pot). In 1967 she was killed in a fire that broke out in one of the rooms above the bar.



THE SWISS

He was given this nickname because of his blond hair, blue eyes and tanned skin. He was spotted in various places in southern Germany at the end of the 19th century, and was wanted for a series of violent murders. The Swiss always had the same modus operandi. He travelled from village to village, and started playing his zither in squares and bars. He searched for his victim in the crowd that gathered around him, and started staring at them. The victim was stupefied by his gaze and the melody, and became a helpless puppet in The Swiss' hands. In a complete trance, the victims followed the man after every performance to their place of execution – usually a dark alleyway, an internal courtyard or a shrivelled thicket – where he strangled them with a string from his zither. Despite various searches by the authorities, he was never captured.



REVEREND SIMONS

Samuel Simons was the vicar of the small town of D.

Simons had four sons, who all had biblical names: Daniel, Andreas, Jozef and Philippus. They were pale, timid pubescents who suffered massively under the iron rule of the vicar's wife Renée Hugaerts. With her penetrating stare, small pupils and thin lips this woman, who wore her long grey hair pulled back tightly in a ponytail and had a yellowish skin, could terrify her husband and sons with just a couple of words. Once the entire family were ready to go to the seaside. It was the first time that the sons were going to see the sea, and they were somewhat excited. They giggled and talked in excited voices about the plans they had for a giant sandcastle that they were going to build on the beach. Philippus, the youngest, was so excited that he expressed his joy with a couple of loud cries. At that moment the vicar's wife came into the room. Shocked by the noise, she stared at her sons one by one with a penetrating gaze, in order finally to rest her eyes on poor Philippus, who was staring at the floor. The icy silence that prevailed for minutes was broken by the firm voice of Renée Hugaerts, who curtly said: 'WE ARE NOT GOING!'

BELGIAN PAVILION
58TH INTERNATIONAL
ART EXHIBITION
LA BIENNALE DI
VENEZIA
COMMISSIONER:
FÉDÉRATION
WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

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