



*Facing a long, painstaking task, the Stolks sand the gear of the Crème Caleche in preparation for repainting and gilding. The lion's head finials require an infinite amount of patience.*

& Co, in The Hague, it had been presented to Queen Wilhelmina by her mother, Queen Emma, that year and had undergone several partial restorations since then. At the time we saw it, the wheels had already been restored and repainted, and were in the drying room, and the gear, with its gold leaf decoration of oak leaves and acorns, was being painstakingly repainted. This caleche has been completed now, and is currently being exhibited at Leek.

During the visit we toured all the



*This magnificent brass boss, a coat of arms, is attached to the hammercloth, the driver's cushion. It is an example of the superior brass work utilized in restoration at Firma Stolk. The individual parts of the coat of arms are very distinguishable: the shield (quartered), the helmet surmounted by a crest, and the lace-like lambrequin.*

various shop rooms examining equipment, the most intriguing of which was a huge stamping machine which cut the patterns in rubber floor mats. Jean Louis had been able to make the cutting dies in several patterns, and showed us how these chucks were fitted into the machine. We were likewise treated to an inspection of the storage room overhead, where bits and pieces and parts of carriages, and cans of paint and varnish, no longer available, were shelved.

Since I had once done some follow-up research on those carriages that J. Pabst and his fellow collectors had brought over from Hanover, I was delighted to find two of the so-called missing panels lying on a shelf there, their coats of arms still readable. From here, we went into the back storage areas, where some carriages awaiting restoration stood, as well as some of the vehicles the Stolks had obtained for their own collection. To say I was in awe, as I stood there examining several chariots, a Forder hansom cab of large proportions, breaks, omnibuses, and other large vehicles, is putting it mildly.

When going through someone's shop, it is amazing what catches one's eye. Almost unnoticed behind one of the vehicles in the storage area, sitting against the back wall, was a huge stack of lumber, the whole of one mahogany tree, sawn and stacked there to dry. These boards will one day be paneling for some yet-to-be-determined coach or chariot.

Only the gremlins know when one of the vehicles in that back room will



*The interior trim in red and grey was especially woven for one of the coaches, and the coach lace, pasting, and seaming lace was made by Rudolf Stief. Every attempt is made to match original materials. Even the wooden pulls on the door cords (passementerie) are covered in grey silk and red silk netting.*

make the journey from storage to shop, to emerge as a finely-crafted, well-restored documentation of the coach builder craft, and the expertise of Piet and Mar Stolk and their son, Jean Louis. In the meantime, the unsurpassed work of Firma Stolk, *restaure atelier*, will continue to earn plaudits well deserved.