

to suspend the body properly.

Faced with these conditions, the Crown Equerry decided to return the carriage to its original condition, using authentic materials.

The sculpture groups were removed for restoration later, and priority given to restoring the boot and the rumble seat. The body was removed from its gear and "rebuilt." New ash wood was used to replace rotted floor boards, this time including drainage grooves so that water would no longer collect inside the body. A new hood was required, using four vegetable-tanned hides with long grain to cover the bows, and a new headliner was installed.

Mar, Piet, and their son Jean Louis took on the tedious job of stripping the carved pieces and decorative carvings. It was a long, arduous task. The heraldry was still good, and care was taken to strip off varnish and paint around these various elements on the body.

The metal beading was removed, rebent, and new pins soldered on the reverse side. This would be the last thing done to the carriage before the final coat of varnish was applied.

Since it had also been decided to re-trim the vehicle, Rudolf Stief (Augsburg, Austria) analyzed the original material, and had his weaving master copy this exactly, using 60% cotton and 40% silk. Since it would take too long to make a weaving card to make the original broad lace, a selection was made from those laces once used for a caleche of the Ger-

man Imperial Court, as well as other carriages. Mr. Stief already had the pattern card for this and so new broad lace, seaming, and pasting lace was woven for the caleche, of 50% cotton, 30% wool, and 20% silk. The body was sent to Augsburg, where Mr. Stief retrimmed the carriage and put on the new top.

Repainting the caleche presented its own challenges. The area around the heraldic paintings was cleaned with acetone, slowed by isopropyl alcohol. The coats of arms and crowns were isolated with varnish paraloid B 72 10% in toluene. Redoing the gold leaf decorations also created special problems, specifically requiring research to determine where decoration had been applied, and what patterns were used. After the gilded leaves were put on, they were highlighted and shadowed, using raw sienna, tinted with light red oxide, Van Dyke brown, and some burnt umber, darkened with black, and Naples yellow hue, lightened with white and darkened, where required, with London yellow. It took many, many hours of painstaking labor to recreate this acorn and oak leaf decoration.

Varnishing the finished carriage presented another nightmare. The varnish used consistently by the Stolks was no longer being made. ICI Holland recommended a new varnish, which was first put through tests at the AKZO laboratory in Sassenheim. It provided the most durability and the least propensity to yellow of all those tested. The

Stolks took delivery of three liters before finding out that this, too, was no longer being made. ICI distributors in England were canvassed for supplies, and luckily another six liters was found, and varnishing could now begin.

This account of the work took only two days to compose; the restoration of the carriage itself took two long years, and hours of research and concern. The result is, I believe, one of most spectacular renovations of a historic carriage to have been carried out in recent years. It remains only that the sculpture groups be restored and returned to the vehicle. That work will be carried out in 2005.

The restorers provided a complete before-and-after documentation, with accompanying photographs and a program for cleaning and caring for the vehicle once it is returned to the Royal Mews in Den Haag. The carriage itself has been loaned by Her Majesty, Queen Beatrix, to the Nationaal Rijtuig Museum in Leek for exhibition. L.L.M. Eekhout, director of that museum, has now published an extensive catalog, in Dutch and in English, about the carriage.

Bibliography

- L.L.M. Eekhout. *De Crème Calèche*. Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2004.
Susan Niederberger, Translator. *The Crème Calèche*. Leek: Nationaal Rijtuig Museum, 2004. Typescript.
H. van den Hout and L. L. M/ Eekhout. *Rijtuigen en sleden in Koninklijk bezit*. Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1997.

Endnotes

- ¹ L.L.M. Eekhout. *The Crème Calèche*. Susan Niederberger, Translator. Leek: The Dutch National Carriage Museum (Nationaal Rijtuig Museum, 2004). P. 5. Unpublished.
² *Ibid.*
³ Letter of September 21, 1898: M. L. Hermans & Co. to Messrs. Valentine & Co. Leek: Nationaal Rijtuig Museum.
⁴ L.L.M. Eekhout. *Op. cit.* P. 5.
⁵ *Ibid.* P.9
⁶ See Ken Wheeling, "Proud Chariots & Golden Coaches," *The Carriage Journal*, Volume 42, Number 5 (October, 2004). Pp. 203-206.

The Carriage Journal is indebted to Mar and Piet Stolk for loaning us their photographs and sharing with us information about this restoration. They showed this work to Tom Ryder and Ken Wheeling in their shop in February, 2004, while it awaited reassembly. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the kind permission of L.L.M. Eekhout, Director of the Nationaal Rijtuig Museum in Leek, to use his typescript so liberally, and for the loan of material in the museum archives.



Piet Stolk solders the pins into the beading, which will be later electroplated and then varnished after being "nailed" back onto the caleche body. (Photo courtesy of Firma Stolk)