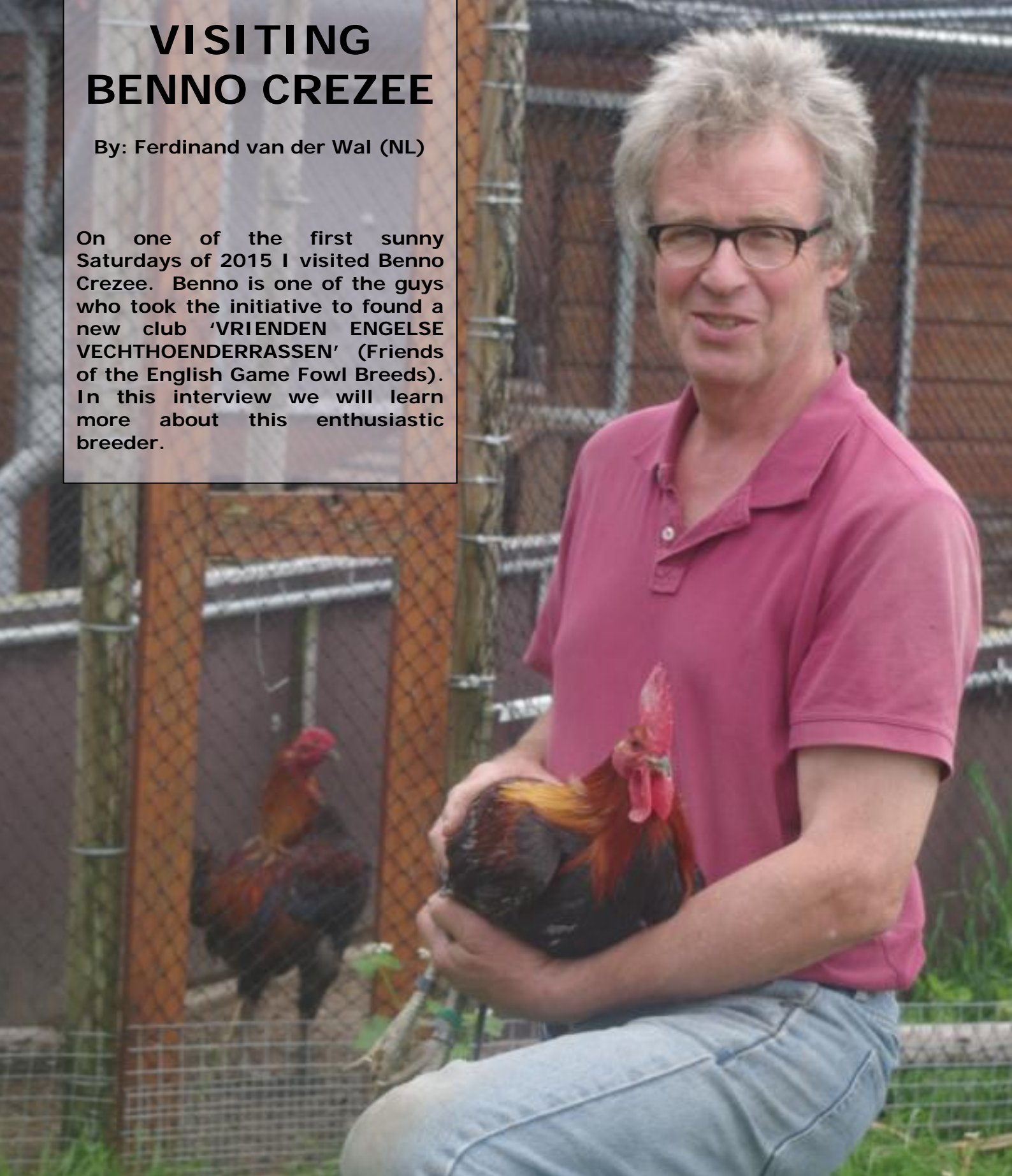


VISITING BENNO CREZEE

By: Ferdinand van der Wal (NL)

On one of the first sunny Saturdays of 2015 I visited Benno Crezee. Benno is one of the guys who took the initiative to found a new club 'VRIENDEN ENGELSE VECHTHOENDERRASSEN' (Friends of the English Game Fowl Breeds). In this interview we will learn more about this enthusiastic breeder.



Above: Benno and an old black-red rooster.

Who is Benno Crezee?

I was born in 1957. Raised in Nieuwendijk (Dutch province of Brabant). My parents had a farm there, mainly agriculture. As a hobby sheep and cows were raised. I chose a different path and worked for 35 years in the international aluminum industry. Due to this work I lived abroad during several years.

Since 1988 I have been a poultry judge. I also breed Welsh Ponies and also I judge them at an international level.

How did you get involved in the poultry hobby?

On the farm we used to keep rabbits for meat and in 1970 I started keeping purebred rabbits for shows. They were Blue Vienna rabbits. A few years later I swapped the rabbits for my first bantams. These were Australorp bantams, soon supplemented with Orpingtons and Sussex. In the mid-1980's I became secretary for the NSODC, the Dutch specialty club of these breeds. Thanks to my efforts this specialty club has embraced the Dorking Fowl too. Over the years I have bred various chicken breeds, such as Barnevelder, Welsummer and North Holland Blue.



When did you start with Old English Game Fowl?

As a fancier of Orpington, Sussex and Dorking I used to come often in the UK. I had been judging Orpingtons at the Federation Show in Stafford even before I had a judge license in the Netherlands. During these trips (end 80's – early 90's) I would mostly hang around with the well-known English judge Fred Hams. This English judge has often judged at the Ornithophilia Show in Utrecht, Holland. I gave him a lift frequently to the railway station in Roosendaal for his trip back home.

Together with Fred Hams I visited many breeders in England and so I got acquainted with the Old English Game. I got my first O.E.G. (bantams) from Mark Perkins in various partridge colours and I got my first black O.E.G. (bantams) from Norma and Harold Chritchlow. The offspring were shown in my own name. A real highlight from that period was the recognition (in the Netherlands) of my O.E.G. bantams in the colour variety 'brassy back'.

By that time I was already interested in the large O.E.G. but for practical reasons I could not keep large fowl.

Left: An impressive breeding cock. It is showing well-developed legs and spurs. This cock is a descendant of English birds and was dubbed there as well.

What fascinates you about this beautiful breed?

What struck me the most are the historical facts and myths around the breed. A lot is known about 'cockfighting' but the history of this breed is not fully known yet.

My own preference is the Carlisle type of the breed, the show type of the breed. In England the entries at shows of the Carlisle type are much larger than the entries of the Oxford type. The Oxford type is actual the descendant of the original gamefowl. Cockfighting has been forbidden by law for about 160 years already in England, but it cannot be excluded that cockfighting still takes place in certain circles, with the Oxford type ...! The existence of the Old English Game Club is known, but only insiders know the rules and regulations.

When I compare both types I prefer the Carlisle type. I like the broad type and the way they carry their wings and tail.



Right: Head study of an outstanding pile cock, imported from England. This one also shows a typical tassel.

How are the contacts with other breeder of O.E.G.?

The contacts in the Netherlands are limited because there are only a few breeders of large O.E.G. I co-operated with breeders like Bert Lam and Evert van de Waerdt. Also I am member of the recently founded German O.E.G. Club and I hope to have more contacts there in the foreseeable future. I have the most contacts with a very experienced top breeder in northern England. Actually he is my mentor.

Of course I am a member of the Carlisle Old English Game Club in England.

What are for you the most important moments in the year?

I consider spring the nicest time of the year. Especially when the chicks are there and you watch them grow.

Furthermore composing the breeding pens is always something I look forward to.

What Dutch shows do you like most?

Oneto and the Noordshow appeal to me, (Oneto above all), because these shows attract many visitors and there is a fairly large number of gamefowl. Shows like Avium Optimum are very attractive because there are only gamefowl present, and some rare breeds. Moreover, such a one-day show is less exhausting for the birds. Also there are many breeders and fanciers present all day.

To support my local club (VKPNO Nieuwendijk) I always enter a few birds at our show.

I hope that in the foreseeable future more O.E.G. will appear at shows; then showing will become more challenging.

**Left and below:
A number of young
chicks, black-red and
pile.**



**Below: A number of
partridge-coloured young
hens. They look promising.**



Friends of the English Game Fowl breeds - what is the purpose?

Personally this occurred through my contacts with Ferdinand van de Wal. Together we agreed that it is a pity that less experienced breeders and fanciers (in our case breeders of O.E.G. standard and bantam) cannot get any information on breeding, hatching and training for shows. In the meantime a taskforce has been formed by Gerrit Laarman, Marten van Pijkeren, Conno Vlaardingerbroek, Ronnie Siemes, Wim Voskamp, Ferdinand van der Wal and myself. As a group of friends we focus on three English game breeds, large and bantam. These breeds are the Indian Game, the Old English Game and the Modern Game. The idea is that breeders of these breeds come together and share information and experiences.



Saturday, December 5th, our first promotional day will take place, including a judging in the English style. Two prominent German breeders/judges have been invited. These judges are leading breeders and are oriented at the country of origin of the breeds, England. The latter is important since the breeds will profit by an equal assessment in all countries.

We hope to learn from their experiences and views. Also we hope to come closer in a European perspective.

The second promotional day is planned for January 2016. The main question will be: how do I compose a breeding pen? Furthermore: what and how do I proceed with feeding the birds? Also, on that day, birds can be exchanged.

Both events will be held in Amsterdam. Central in the country. So, easy to reach for everybody.

What are your expectations?

I hope and expect that we can help new breeders by these initiatives. Also I hope together we will be able to maintain and improve the English gamefowl in the Netherlands.

Best Hen in Show at the latest Noordshow.

She was awarded the max 97 points and won the most coveted medal of the Dutch Poultry Association.



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