



De Bonte Hen

Oil Mill De Bonte Hen was built in 1693. In 1846, the mill was purchased by an oil manufacturer called Crok & Laan. This company still trades today, as part of Unilever initially and currently as a subsidiary of IOI.

The mill continued to operate until 1927. Following years of disuse, the badly run-down body of the mill, the support for the sails, was demolished in 1935. However, the mill shed and the base of the mill itself were left intact and used for storing all kinds of goods.



In 1973, Zaan Windmill Society purchased the remains of the mill. De Bonte Hen was restored completely in several phases during a period of 6 years. The two 17th century oil storage cellars are a unique feature of De Bonte Hen.

De Bonte Hen still produces vegetable oils today. A Foundation, Stichting De Windmolen Compagnie, purchases the raw materials and sells the finished products.

The mill has an authentic heated attic which can accommodate groups of up to 30 people. Further information can be obtained from the Zaan Windmill Society.

Please note! You visit the mill at your own risk. Keep your children close and do not lose sight of them. Smoking is not permitted in the mill. Thank you for your cooperation!



DE ZAANSCH E MOLEN

De Bonte Hen is owned by the Zaan Windmill Society (Vereniging De Zaanse Molen).

This society, which was founded in 1925, currently owns 13 mills and the Mill Museum. Its goal is to keep the remaining industrial mills in good condition, operate them and open them to the public. The Mill Museum opened in 1928 and displays a unique collection of paintings, model mills, and objects which were used on and in the mills: an authentic microcosm of windmills.

Volunteers are the driving force behind the Zaan Windmill Society. They keep the mills running, carry out maintenance work and support the millers. The proceeds from your visit are used to support the Zaan Windmill Society.



For all information about our mills and mill museum, opening hours, group visits and entrance fees:

www.zaanschemolen.nl

Oil Mill De Bonte Hen

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DE BONTE HEN

Oil mill on the Kalverringdijk,
Zaanse Schans,
Zaandam

1693 AD



DE ZAANSCH E MOLEN



De Bonte Hen in 1894



The Zaanstreek area

The Zaan River is the aorta running through the Zaanstreek, an old industrial area to the north of Amsterdam. This area flourished strongly in the 17th and 18th centuries. The many waterways made transportation easy and the flat terrain meant that there was always wind. So this was a logical place to build windmills.

At one time, the sails of more than 1100 windmills rotated majestically in the Zaanstreek. This resulted in the emergence of the oldest industrial area in Western Europe.

The mills processed raw materials into semi-finished products or finished products. There were sawmills, hulling mills for barley and rice, oil mills, dye-stuff mills, paper mills, snuff mills, mustard mills, cocoa mills and hemp roller mills, which all processed materials on an industrial scale.

Most of the raw materials came into the area via Amsterdam, and the majority of the processed materials were then traded again in Amsterdam's markets.

The steam engine arrived on the scene in approximately 1850. This invention allowed unlimited production without the need for wind power.

It made the industrial mills obsolete and they rapidly started to disappear. In 1880, 280 windmills were still in operation. This number had reduced to 40 by 1920. Today, a mere 17 mills are left in the Zaanstreek.

The Oil Mills

A number of mills were constructed as oil mills from 1600 on. They were used to press seeds to produce linseed oil, rapeseed oil and hemp oil.

Linseed oil is used in paints and varnishes, rapeseed oil is lamp oil and used as a cooking oil, and hemp oil is the basic ingredient for (green) soap. In former times, the mills used to produce millions of litres of (mainly linseed) oil every year.

In approximately 1650, the demand for oil increased. The mills increased in size, housing two presses rather than one.

Of the 1100 industrial mills in the area, 200 were oil mills.

The importance of the oil mills declined when the steam engine arrived and new techniques in the paint industry led to reduced demand for linseed oil after 1900.

The oil pressing process

Plant seeds are crushed under the heavy rotating millstones in an ingenious process. This produces flour, which is subsequently heated on the heated stirrer.

The oil is pressed out here under huge force in the press.

The process generates two products: the oil and the pressed seeds in the form of a cake. The latter was sold as cattle feed. The oil was filtered and stored in the oil storage cellars. The cattle cake was stored in the mill shed.

Between 30% and 35% of the initial batch of seed is converted to oil. The cattle cake accounts for the rest.

The flour from the seed is pressed in the press to produce oil.



The millers

Working in an oil mill was anything but a picnic. The oil mills operated day and night and only shut down on Sundays. A team of 4 mill operators was always present in the mill; they worked 16 hours a day and walked home in their own time. The earnings were low, because the mill operators received piecework pay: you were paid based on what you produced. So periods of little wind were also times of poverty.

The noise in the mill caused permanent damage to the mill operators' hearing from a very young age. This occupational disease was known as "haaidoof".

De Bonte Hen is not only a monument to the industrial age and technology, it is also a monument to the hundreds of people who toiled there during centuries of use.

