

Club chronicle part 1

The first meeting was held on 2. May 1912 at 10 a.m. in the restaurant "Bellevue". There were 10 gentlemen (at the time the men were still gentlemen) present.

Mr Reinhold was elected chairman. It was decided to name the association "Aquarien- und Terrarienverein Tegel".

But already at the next meeting, on the 15. May, the name of the association was changed to "Verein der Aquarien- und Terrarienfrende zu Tegel". The meetings were held regularly every 14 days. The protocols, which were often written in copperplate Sütterlin script, give us as chroniclers an insight into the association's work, which mainly dealt with the care of native aquatic animals.

In the minutes of 25th July 1912, a lady named Bertha Kuhnt was mentioned as a guest. Ms Kuhnt had an ornamental fish wholesale business in Konradshöhe. She brought some containers with live fishes. There were angelfish, barbs, platies and tetras that she subsequently made available to the association. At the same time, she applied for membership, and a date was also agreed for a guided tour of her company. Since that time, the association has been well supplied with aquaristic novelties.

The First World War began. The circle of club friends had grown only insignificantly. Some of the members had to join the military and so they met for a small round table. It was thought to dissolve the club. But it was agreed to hold meeting every 2 months.

After the end of the war and after the turmoil of the post-war period, the resurgence of the association slowly began. In 1920, in addition to the species that were already kept in the aquariums of the association friends before the war, warm water fish became very fashionable. Macropodes, swordtails, guppies and platies were found in almost every tank. Aquariums were getting bigger. The first framed aquaria moved into the living rooms and replaced the battery glasses and larger all glass tanks. Finally you could admire without a distorted view of one's pets.

The forms of aquariums were also very different. There were next to the rectangular, now hex- and octagonal aquariums, some of which even had a fountain. The fountain was also used to bring the water, which in the Winter cooled down quickly, back to the desired temperature. A container hanging over the basin was filled with boiling water and this let into the basin. Heating the tanks was one of the main problems, many diy solutions were invented. From tin boxes stocked with glowing briquettes which were able to be placed under the basins to gas burners, many varieties were in testing.

On 1st July 1921 the association joined the VDA.

After the end of the post-war period of inflation, which brought the association a membership loss, the number of members rose again in 1924 to over 40 members and a youth group was established.

The year 1925 was full of activities. Although the number of members declined again, through good lectures, family excursions and intensive enthusiasts' discussions, one tried to make the association's work more attractive. The meetings often started very late, around 9 p.m., because many club members had to work long hours. Session closed at around 11 p.m. But nobody even thought to leave the meeting early.

In the 1930s unemployment was rife and unemployed members contributions were reduced to zero. Unemployment also had its good side, because one had a lot of time to intensively breed fish to be able to offer them on the association's fish exchange.

In the autumn of 1937, the associations were forced to join the Reichsbund Deutscher Aquarianer (RDA). The policy was also noticeable in the association. When in 1939 the 2nd World War began,

again many members had to serve in the military. Club life continued. Sometimes only 10 members came to meetings. Instead of talking about aquariums, card games were often played.

The war reached Berlin with heavy bombing raids and reduced many houses to rubble. Many aquariums were broken. Taking stock after the war, there were only a few tanks left with the club members. In addition, there were the many power cuts. Therefore, the old methods of generating heat, e.g. with carbide lamps, which were also particularly valuable as light sources, were reintroduced. The aquarium hobby and with it the club was at zero point, because life in our city was characterized by the struggle for a morsel of food. Many went hungry.

When the old club chairman Hellmut Berger wanted to make a new start with the club members Glaser and Neukirch in 1947, they were at first hindered by a law from the allies. Societies were only allowed to re-form when they gave themselves a new name. The old name was no longer allowed. So the new name was to be "Naturfreunde für Aquarien- und Terrarienkunde im 20. Bezirk". The 20th District being Reinickendorf. The statutes had to be translated into French and submitted with the application.

Club members didn't have it easy. Money was tight and was needed to put food on the table. In 1950, the association had another 20 members. In 1951, the Pet Fish Exchange relaunched. As the first aquarium exhibition after the war was opened in the local Town Hall in 1952, no one was prepared for the public's response. Overall 18,000 visitors were counted in the 14 days. On just one morning, almost 800 school students came along. In the autumn, club membership increased to 70.

In the autumn of 1952, the delayed 40th anniversary was celebrated. All Berlin aquarium associations sent delegations. The local Reinickendorf council made rooms available, even the amusement tax was cancelled. The club grew and became one of the largest clubs in the local association of aquarium clubs 01 Berlin.

In 1957, there was a dispute with the district association, which led to the club leaving. No compromise was found which led to our club joining the district of Lower Saxony.

After a change of committee, new momentum came into the club meetings. Hobbyists' questions were again in the foreground. Lectures by well-known speakers gave the meetings a new face. The cohesion within the board and the members grew ever better, which in turn had a positive impact on the membership.

In 1962, Hans Krafcheck was elected as chairperson. He took on the leadership with youthful enthusiasm. Journeys to West Germany were undertaken and contact made with other aquarium clubs in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Through the Chairman's initiative, a link to hobbyists in Leiden in Holland could be established in 1966, and through mutual visits consolidated. In the meantime, the disagreements with District 01 were clarified and we were again welcome as district members.

In 1967, the club had 167 Members and was the biggest Group in District 01. The Fischbörse attendance had also continued to rise, in Nov. 1967 there were 415 visitors. The board made an effort to encourage younger club members to take up duties to secure their succession. A wise decision! The number of members remained constant between 1968 and 1970. Subsequently, it sank again and was down to 133 in 1973. In that year there was also a conflict with the VDA. ignited by the club's liability insurance, which they could not carry in this form. So in the middle of the year the club became excluded from the VDA.

A 2nd exchange in the Märkisches Viertel opened parallel to the 1st in the Holländer Straße. In 1976, the younger members came to the fore, because the incumbent board did not seek re-election. The conflict with the VDA was resolved by the old board.

Chairman was now Wolfgang Rau. He began work with a great deal of momentum. In 1976 we took part in the Hobby Tier exhibition in the Messehallen unter dem Funkturm. 1977 was one of the most active years since the association had been founded. The young board had to pass its first test. In May, the VDA Congress in Berlin, and all Berlin clubs hosted the West German Clubs.

After that, we undertook in August 1977 a 'daring adventure'. We participated in our Dutch aquarium friends huge exhibition. Joop Visser, from the "De Natuurvriend Leiden," meanwhile an honorary member of our association, led the exhibition. This exhibition of superlatives was to take place in an ice rink (36,000 m2 exhibition space). We drove in 3 Groups to Leiden. First group: Construction, second group: Support and third group: dismantling. The "Aqua Flora 77" became a complete success, not only because our society won 1st prize among the foreign participants.

On the 2. October 1977 we committed our 65th Foundation festival with 500 guests at the "Palais am See" in Tegel. The flower decoration came as a thank you from Holland.

In 1978, a club programme was published, sent to every member biannually and which has enjoyed great popularity since then.

The exhibition "Hobby-Tier" later "Hobby-Pflanze-Tier" and now since 1983 Heim-Tier-Pflanze (HTP) became the regular exhibition of the Berlin aquarium clubs. In 1980 we contributed to the district 01 Exhibition in the Botanical Gardens. We also took part in the Hortus-Botanicus exhibition in the Botanical Gardens of Leiden.

In 1982 we already had 198 members. In October 1982 the 70th Foundation festival took place in the "Palais am See". It was again an inspiring ball night.

1985 W. Rau resigned from his office for professional reasons. Bernd Hannemann, long-time 2nd Chairman, chaired for the next 2 years. Herbert Monien replaced him. This time the search for a suitable Chair had been more difficult, so that we had to persuade Herbert Monien, who at the time was still a member of the association "Natur im Heim". With him, a new style moved in. The sessions were marked by entertaining talks. There was a lot of laughter. Interesting speakers, mostly friends of our chairman, spread their knowledge at the meetings in front of the by now rather spoiled club membership. In the meantime, the aquarium hobby became more accessible to everyone through the media and the clubs felt this in the slowed increase in membership. The association was no longer sufficient as a source of information. The socializing as a relaxation was just as much in demand. Herbert Monien, as entertainer, was the right man at the right time. The club excursions with him were an experience. Unfortunately, he had to resign in 1992 for health reasons. As an emergency solution, since no one was found who wanted to take over the office, the long-time administrative director Lothar Helmdach agreed to take over the chairmanship. In addition to working as administrator, it was particularly difficult to meet the requirements due to the standards set by his predecessors.

In June 1992 we celebrated our 80th anniversary with a Brunch in the leisure home Donahgestell. The many guests enjoyed the food and drink and talked into the late afternoon.

Club trips to Dupla, to Kiel and Nordwik am Zee found a lively interest.

In 1996, the club had 220 members.

At the Annual General Meeting in 1997 Lothar Helmdach announced he would be giving up both offices (chairman and managing director). One year was spent searching for a successor. The club members Rainer Melzer, Oliver Münchow, Manfred Weiser and from 2001 Ralf Rothert took over the Chairmanship one after the other.

Many successes and failures accompanied our work in the 90s. Thanks to all those who committed their time to the good of the association, with deferral of their own interests and sometimes even making financial sacrifices, never letting themselves be discouraged and always with new ideas, the club has reached its current size.

I wish the club all the best and continued success in the name of aquaristics.

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As the former VDA President Joachim Matthies said on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the association 'Rossmässler Vivarium 1906 e.V.' (excerpt) about the clubs:

"Few of them have survived the time and can now look back on 100 years of successful activity. For this reason alone, such an anniversary is something special, it is an expression of the commonality over several generations. And no generation has had it easy, thinking of two terrible world wars, the Great Depression or the oppression of two dictatorships. Without restrictions, one must pay tribute to these clubs for their steadfastness, to congratulate them on their continuous work."

I would to join him in echoing those sentiments. Andreas Kersjes