

The Stevensweert Kantharos

Acknowledgements

The file below discusses the details of the discovery of the Peel helmet. The author 5 suspects that the Peel helmet is part of a complete outfit worn by a Roman cavalry officer, as the clothing and weapons of a person, as well as the harness of a horse, were found. Remains of a person or a horse were not found. From this, we can only conclude that the officer himself, or his relatives, hid all the objects in the peat during his lifetime. Hiding them in such a way that the few passersby who were there 10 probably didn't immediately see them. People were likely aware at the time that peat grows and that the objects would eventually be buried under an increasingly large layer of peat.

The author was surprised by the enormous value of silver objects, especially those 15 worked by a silversmith. Few people could make such a finely hammered helmet, making the helmet particularly valuable. The helmet was likely a silver object passed down and used by several people due to its value, especially since the average lifespan of a Roman at the time was not very long.

Very few such objects have been found in the region of Germania Inferior. Many have 20 undoubtedly been destroyed by the ravages of time, and the precious metals have been melted down.

A few months after the discovery of the helmet and the other objects, the portion of 25 the objects mentioned in the newspapers was acquired by the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. The officials responsible never visited the site themselves or spoke in detail with anyone other than the finder. Therefore, much circumstantial evidence has been lost. Nevertheless, we find various details in the newspapers and 30 magazines. There was also some correspondence to the museum regarding the discovery. The most interesting of these is the letter that Adrianus Bos, director of the N.V. Maatschappij Helenaveen, sent to the museum a year and a half after the discovery. In it, he provides a precise description of the finds, presumably from the first few days. It's striking that the museum officials don't respond with anything like: "Very interesting, do you know where these objects are now?" They let things take their course: after the acquisition, actual interest seems to have disappeared, undoubtedly because it wasn't their own excavation.

A scientific study is written that clearly explains the helmet's construction, but 35 the additional finds are described briefly.

If silver was so precious, and given that few people owned a horse, it's tempting to investigate what other valuable objects have been unearthed in the wider area surrounding the site.

40 It was already known that virtually no ancient objects had been found in the Peel peat bogs. In the peat bogs in the north of the country and also in the adjacent bogs in Germany, ancient objects have indeed been found since around 1800, even a kilometers-long wooden bridge over the peat, but this dates back to before Roman times. Also found are so-called bog bodies, the remains of a whale, and a horse.

45 Proof that a body can be preserved if buried immediately after death in suitable, oxygen-free soil.

Another valuable object immediately comes to mind: the so-called "Stevensweert kantharos"; perhaps the only other Roman silver object in the Netherlands that can rival the Peel helmet.

50 All Dutch jurists are familiar with the term "Stevensweert kantharos" as an example of "error"; much can be found on this elsewhere. Before the true value of this drinking cup was known, other obscure events occurred, which the author has examined with a critical eye.

55 When the scientific community saw the drinking cup around 1950, they investigated where and when it was found. The so-called finder, Borgers, pointed to three different years for the discovery: 1939, 1942, or 1943, and three different locations in Stevensweert. In the absence of better information, the drinking cup was then named the Stevensweert kantharos, although it is by no means certain that Stevensweert was the actual discovery site.

60 In the author's opinion, this is highly implausible, because if we delve into newspaper accounts of how gravel was extracted in the Maas around 1940, we quickly conclude that the sieving and sorting process, which had reduced the size of the stones, would have left the drinking cup in a battered condition. It may have disintegrated into its component parts much earlier and never been visible as a whole again. Moreover, no mention has been made by a...

65 A crew member of Borgers' dredger also claimed to have seen the object. It should also be noted that an inspector from Rijkswaterstaat (the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management) was on board, and he would certainly have reported

such a find.

70 In 2006, Mrs. Witteveen of the Valkhof Museum wrote a booklet about the drinking cup. In it, she mentions the contradictions and uncertainties, but cannot offer any other version than that given by Bongers.

Could there be a connection between the Stevensweert kantharos and the discovery of a complete officer's outfit?

75 From information provided by a servant at A. Bos's in Helenaveen, we know that there was a secret hiding place in his home, where he kept parts of the finds he had acquired. She didn't see everything in detail, but mainly spoke about leather pieces, which he indeed collected shortly after the discovery, because local treasure hunters showed no interest in them. Elsewhere, it is also mentioned that a wine barrel with a tap and a beautifully decorated drinking cup, with a hook for hanging on the horse's harness, had been found and were in the possession of A. Bos. These objects were also part of a Roman soldier's equipment and were carried by the soldier on his journey. If we consider the missing silver handles of the drinking cup to be a hook, then the search for them is indeed worthwhile.

80 85 It is written that the drinking cup ended up in the possession of an important person from the Helenaveen Company in Loosdrecht at a hunting lodge. Research into this has not yielded any clear indication, but we will return to this in more detail below. Incidentally, the wine barrel with the silver tap was apparently lost earlier.

90 The Legacy of Adrianus Bos

Director Bos likely became seriously ill at the end of 1930, at least to the point that he could not perform his daily duties. He died, rather unexpectedly, in March 1931. He had already purchased a large plot of land on Belgenhoek in the province of 95 Limburg (directly south of the A67 highway), where he hoped to later build his own house. See also <http://www.belgenhoek.nl/> and <http://www.belgenhoek.nl/page2.html>. Several brothers, distant relatives through the Gilse van der Pals branch, now own this 19-hectare nature reserve.

100 For when A. Bos died, only his sister-in-law, Bos-van Gilse-van der Pals, was still alive. According to tradition, she emptied the house and burned a great deal of paperwork in the process. She would have been assisted in this work by her daughter Annie, her husband, and her unmarried son, Cor.

105 Photos of the interior of Mrs. Bos-van Gilse-van der Pals's home in The Hague show no Roman artifacts, which is not surprising. Nevertheless, we can assume that the entire interior of the GENA villa in Helenaveen ended up with A. Bos's sister-in-law and/or nephew and niece (with their husband).

Son Cor, in turn, came to live in the house in The Hague when his mother died in 1936. Nephew Cor Bos had been appointed a member of the company's supervisory board very soon after his uncle's death.

110 Daughter Annie was thus married to Rutger W.C. Baron van Boetzelaer, and was therefore entitled to the title of Baroness. The marriage was not a happy one; the baron was said to be more interested in the money than in Annie Bos herself. Soon after her mother's death in 1936, Annie Bos divorced the baron. He remarried in 1938, to a man named Jordens, and later Annie married a man named Groote; she lived 115 in Hilversum for a long time under the name J. Groote-Bos. Meanwhile, she had become a major shareholder in the Helenaveen Company and remained so for the rest of her life, owning more than half the shares.

The inheritance was thus released during Annie Bos's marriage to R.W.C. van Boetzelaer, who later lived in Laren. It's tempting to think that most of A. Bos's belongings ended up in the Baron and Baroness's house, including the Roman objects from the secret cupboard. If the drinking cup was there, it clearly came from the finds around the Peel helmet, and for that reason alone is extremely valuable. On the other hand, these objects actually belong in a museum, not in a private collection, the existence of which was practically unknown.

120 125 The servant who also lived in the Gena villa deregistered from the municipality of Deurne at the end of July 1931 and moved to Wassenaar. There, she worked as a servant for a while, but later returned to Helenaveen. An illegitimate son was also born there, with the word "illegitimate" later crossed out.

The objects are therefore most likely to have ended up in three places: with her 130 135 sister-in-law Cornelie E.A. Bos-van Gilse van der Pals, her son Cor Bos, and her daughter Johanna van Boetzelaer-Bos and her husband Rutger W.C. van Boetzelaer. The mother was likely less interested in Roman antiquities, the The two men may well have been interested. Later, Boetzelaer's son-in-law became assistant curator of the Gooisch Museum and was therefore certainly interested in art objects. After his divorce from Johanna (=Annie) Bos, around 1937, the objects may also have ended up in a fourth place. When his sister-in-law died in 1936, his son Cor moved to her home in

The Hague, and in 1938, when Boetzelaer remarried, we again have three possible locations.

140 At the same time, Dr. F.C. Bursch, an employee of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, was assistant to director Holwerda.

The museum's arrogance is again evident in a piece about excavations near Vlodrop. That article, dated October 28, 1933, ends as follows:

145 A few years ago, at my repeated request, Dr. Holwerda from Leiden sent his assistant, Mr. Bursch, with some diggers to excavate a section of the Knippeheide, where the undersigned had previously unearthed numerous urns, and where Mr. Bursch now also found 18 urns, plus a fragment of a sword at a Germanic cult site, and where I later discovered more sites, it was said that this exploitation would be revisited.

This entire event was reported in the Publications year. 1932, with the following few words, "A remarkable urn field was excavated there (i.e., Vlodrop), on a site for 150 which permission had been obtained (i.e., from the owner in Belgium) through the kindness of Messrs. van Cruchten and Linssen of Roermond."

(Not a word was said about the fact that this remarkable field was discovered by the undersigned after much searching, and that the digging only took place after my repeated correspondence with the Museum of Antiquities.)

155 Summing all this up, it seems somewhat strange, even painful, to learn in retrospect that an authorized person once said: "There is nothing to learn in the area around Flanders." The reader can sense for themselves how blatantly untrue this is.

GERH. KR. [ekelberg]

160 Fourteen days after the start of the war, this Bursch was appointed head of a committee for archaeological soil research. Germanic culture is immediately mentioned, and they want to create an inventory per municipality of finds held by private individuals. Furthermore:

165 If, moreover, these are unique finds of truly national significance, we will naturally make an effort to find a place for these objects in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, possibly through exchange with other museum pieces, but the main reason we are interested is to have a complete overview of the archaeological wealth that Dutch soil has yielded and will continue to yield.

170 Although it had nothing to do with this case, the Leiden museum had brought in curator Bursch as a collaborator for the German cause. In February 1941, he was already placed on the "university blacklist" and after the war, he was suspended as a professor. He had been appointed professor at the University of Amsterdam and had conducted excavations in Ukraine, among other places, in 1943. The heirs of Adrianus 175 Bos must have been aware of the above information about reporting antique objects for inventory. This was likely the reason for "disposing" of the objects. They should have known, they were practically certain, that the objects came from the equipment found in 1910 in Helenaveen and thus belonged to the unique finds of truly national significance.

180 Ancient objects were occasionally found in the major rivers, and apparently the owner of the drinking cup, probably R.W.C. van Boetzelaer, wanted to make it appear as if the cup had also been found in the Maas, during gravel extraction, for example, in Stevensweert. However, this overlooked a careful study of the gravel extraction process: so much force was released during dredging and sorting by size in rotating drums that a delicate object like the kantharos could never have emerged undamaged.

185 The author believes he can conclude that the owner somehow came into contact with Jaak Bongers, who, after many years, was supposed to present the drinking cup as a find from the Maas. This, of course, came at a hefty price and was subject to strict confidentiality. This also saved the family's honor, in the sense that Boetzelaer and Bos's names would never appear in the news as the "receiver" of the drinking cup.

190 The sequel to this alleged discovery of the kantharos—namely, the complex process of transferring the cup within a family and, in particular, the years of legal proceedings concerning its ownership—could never have been imagined by Bos's heir and the new owner, Bongers. For them, the value had been undeniable from the very beginning.

In summary:

- The so-called Peel helmet was only part of an officer's outfit worn by a cavalry officer in the Roman army at the beginning of the fourth century.
- After a brief investigation following the discovery, its great value was recognized and it was purchased with financial leverage from the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. Evelein wrote a scientific report about the helmet and the finds present, which was published six months after the museum acquired it. It immediately became one of the museum's highlights.

205 - That considerably more finds were made than those that ended up in the museum after a few months is certain. The museum is acquiring several more objects, as director Bos of the Helenaveen Company explicitly mentions in a long letter. The very first written report from Reverend de Jong, two days after the initial discovery, also provides a description that does not correspond to the objects now in the museum.

210 Apparently, the officials were powerless and uninterested in seriously searching for, for example, the missing cheek plate. They did try to do so through the mayor of Deurne, but such a cautious and half-hearted approach was unsuccessful. When director Bos died in 1931, his possessions went to his surviving sister-in-law and/or her children. When the sister-in-law herself died in 1936, those possessions finally ended up in the hands of her bachelor son and/or her daughter and her husband.

215 The latter divorced very quickly. The son moved into his mother's house. The Roman artifacts could very well have ended up with Boetzelaer's now ex-son-in-law. In any case, immediately after the start of the occupation, pressure arose to

220 register, record, and photograph antiquities. Masterpieces should actually be in a museum. The National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden is specifically mentioned here; it is the most suitable location for this. Not everyone was pleased with Leiden's meddling. Perhaps that's why the owner of the Stevensweert kantharos—at the time just a beautifully carved silver drinking cup—wanted to get rid of it.

225 How was that supposed to happen? They were likely inspired by similar events in the recent past. They probably persuaded the so-called finder, Bongers, to pretend—for a fee—that he was the finder on a dredger near Stevensweert. Stevensweert had previously been in the news as a discovery site for fossils, human remains, pottery, and weapons.

230 A more benign explanation might be that the owner of the drinking cup feared it could be confiscated by the occupying forces and wanted to prevent this by giving it to someone unsuspected. The fact that he didn't ask for the cup back after the war contradicts this.

235 It is by no means certain that the Maas River flowed where Stevensweert is now located in the fourth century. Further east lies the Oude Maas.

240 - Despite the many uncertainties and the entire aftermath of the legal ownership dispute, Bongers' story was accepted, and much later, the Kam Museum in Nijmegen could claim ownership of the "from Stevensweert" kantharos.

245 - Both objects are made of gilded silver, finely decorated. A material comparison might perhaps provide more clarity about any possible "relationship." The kantharos has already undergone such an investigation.

250 Incidentally, the external characteristics can also be compared easily.

255 Is the Stevensweert kantharos part of an officer's equipment? This question probably seems silly, but the author has reason to believe it might be. The kantharos was not found in Stevensweert at all, because there are sufficient indications that the alleged finder repeatedly lied about the exact location and even the year of discovery. The possible reason for this remains unclear. The author believes the drinking cup was handed over to the supposed finder, with the request to reveal its existence sometime in the future, along with a fictitious location and year of discovery.

260 However, the supposed finder couldn't consistently maintain this story, perhaps because the entire matter hadn't been thoroughly discussed. Furthermore, they forgot—or perhaps the event itself was the reason for this cover-up—that the numerous floods of the Maas River would have severely damaged the cup. In January and February 1926, all of Western Europe was gripped by high river waters. Stevensweert was also a victim: it is reported that the Maas River there had become between 4 and 5 km wide! Under these circumstances, a delicate structure like the drinking cup would have at least shattered and likely been carried out to sea, causing the kantharos had been permanently lost.

265 No, if the drinking cup had been neatly stored in the peat, it would have been found after many centuries in practically undamaged condition.

270 Location of the Stevensweert kantharos To get straight to the point: There are many doubts about the location and circumstances of the kantharos. A.M. Gerhartl-Witteveen writes in her 2006 publication: p. 48 [...] manufacture and life cycle of the cup. Regarding the latter, it is striking that no damage was found on either the inner or outer cup that could have been the result of movement in flowing water, which would inevitably have caused dents and scratches from bumping against gravel and the like. Therefore, in our opinion, it is unlikely that the finder, J. Bongers, found the kantharos among stones along the Maas River, as he later claimed. His brother-in-

law's story, that Bongers found the kantharos on the dredger in a few lumps of clay, is more plausible because the clay layer in which the kantharos lay on the riverbed protected it for centuries, until the dredger disturbed the peace. [p. 19] And the year 1939 was recorded by Bongers in 1966, when the kantharos had temporarily returned to Stevensweert on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the Stevensweert parish. Bongers also said at the time that he had not found the cup on the dredger, but had seen it lying on a strip of gravel along the Maas while hunting. On a map, he had indicated a location on the western bank of the river, opposite Stevensweert, thus on Belgian territory!

Bongers died in 1969 and took the truth with him to his grave.

October 16, 1951 [...] The kantharos in question was found in 1942, during the occupation, in Stevensweert, approximately eighteen kilometers from Roermond, in the deep gravel banks of the Maas River. The finder saw nothing unusual in the clay-covered and gray rusty object. He gave it to a private antiquities enthusiast, who kept it unnoticed, thus safely, without exactly suspecting what it was. In 1949, he had the material from which the cup was made expertly examined.

October 24, 1952 The cup was found in 1942 by J. Bongers, a resident of Stevensweert, on a pile of gravel located on a site on the Koeweide in Stevensweert. It consisted of two interlocking pieces completely covered in clay. This had attached itself to the outer wall like a shell. Here and there, this shell had crumbled, revealing the shiny underside. He took the cup home, cleaned it, and placed it on a dresser in the living room.

The so-called finder, Jaak Bongers, mentions no fewer than three different locations. A map indicates one on the Dutch bank, directly opposite the spot where the Belgian-Dutch border runs perpendicular to the Maas River, near border marker 126. This border marker, incidentally, had long since disappeared. The second is somewhere on the Belgian bank. The third is on the Koeweide, which at the time was located further north on the northern (western) bank towards Maasbracht.

In coordinates: [5.8570 and 51.1440], unknown, [5.8740 and 51.1490].

Perhaps the Koeweide shown here on the map is not the one meant, as there is also supposedly a Stevensweerter koeweide or Stevenweertsche koeweide, but that doesn't significantly change the situation. On May 14, 1966, the director of the Rijksmuseum Kam, under the watchful eye of Mayor J. Kelleners, had a conversation with the alleged finder. No official report was likely made of this conversation, but it did not clarify the circumstances, location, or time of the discovery.

Therefore, the Valkhof Museum is sticking to the dredger version. In this regard, we encounter an oddity: assuming that multiple people worked on a dredger, they could have corroborated Bongers' story in retrospect, but this was apparently never asked.

The alleged finder: Bongers

It has already been mentioned that the alleged finder offered several versions of the discovery. If we study the dredging industry, it's almost certainly not much gravel was collected in Stevensweert in 1939, probably only from the second half of 1941 onwards. The crew consisted mainly of Sliedrecht residents, supplemented by local staff who worked there as deckhands, barge skippers, and barge hands. If Bongers had found the drinking cup during those activities and cleaned it immediately, others would undoubtedly have seen it. He wouldn't have put a cleaned cup in his jacket either; it's an object to show off. If others were involved in some way, they would undoubtedly have come forward in the 1950s when there was so much commotion about the one then called the Stevensweert kantharos! Colleagues or former colleagues would have approached Bongers, and probably the press as well, during that period to explain their work and to acknowledge Bongers's role. None of this happened.

The dredger uses buckets of sand and gravel to extract sand and gravel from the ground. These buckets have a volume of up to half a cubic meter. The load is then discharged into a series of drums and sieves, separating the gravel into four different types. The sand is also collected, and the water is returned to the river. The mass of the gravel in the rotating mill must have been many hundreds of kilograms. A delicate, silver object is crushed in it. The pieces would certainly separate, and it would be unlikely that a drinking cup could be removed in one piece. If the drinking cup, containing clay and sand, ended up in the mills and sieves, it could never have emerged unscathed. The drinking cup likely wouldn't have passed through the sieves in its entirety, as the largest sieve has 10 cm holes, but the loose fragments would have been scattered among the sorted boulders.

Moreover, there was constant monitoring by a Rijkswaterstaat inspector, as we read in the newspaper of April 21, 1933:

In the spaces below deck, on either side of the channel for the bucket chain,

there are spacious accommodations for the engineer, mill master, and deck crew, and for the Rijkswaterstaat inspector, who must always be on board to monitor the quantity of sediment collected.

345 The above and the at least three different versions Bongers has given can only lead to one conclusion: the drinking cup was NOT found in the Maas. It is also very remarkable that he gave the cup to a brother-in-law without compensation and didn't intervene during the commotion. He is the best person to provide the precise explanation, but he explicitly declined to do so. During a sort of interrogation in 1966, he offered a different version than before. The year of discovery was given as 350 1939, 1942, or 1943. Unless you note the date somewhere, you know whether it was before or after the start of the German invasion.

Elsewhere, it is reported that the pebbles in the gravel extraction areas were so densely packed that the drinking cup would have been completely crushed.

355 The reason for his lies and silence can only be that he was somehow bribed to make a false statement about the cup's discovery and thus publicize it.

The predecessor of the Valkhof Museum

360 The G.M. Kam Museum in Nijmegen was not very successful in acquiring masterpieces. Several masterpieces were acquired after the Second World War on highly questionable grounds:

In early April 1956, there was much discussion about the exact location of the Trajan statue. A year later, the museum still had the statue in its possession.

365 Dredgers in Xanten allegedly embezzled the Head of Trajan, then smuggled it to Nijmegen and sold it to an antique dealer.

The Phrygian Ganymede (puer pileatus) was also purchased on questionable grounds.

Archaeological research during the occupation

370 On July 31, 1940, the following announcement appeared in the newspapers:
July 31, 1940, PUBLIC COOPERATION REQUESTED.

By order of the Secretary-General, Acting Head of the Department of Education, Arts and Sciences, dated May 24th, 1940, A committee for archaeological soil research in the Netherlands was established, while simultaneously a national bureau for archaeological soil research was established. Dr. F. C. Bursch, curator at the 375 National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, was appointed director. Prof. Dr. N. J. Krom, professor at Leiden University, is chairing the aforementioned committee.

380 In the presence of Dr. W. D. van Wijngaarden, director of the Museum of Antiquities and member of the committee, we recently had a meeting with these gentlemen, during which they further explained the purpose and working methods of the committee and the bureau. According to Dr. Bursch, the simultaneously promulgated law is primarily intended to prohibit unauthorized persons from conducting excavations and has roughly the same scope as the law on monument preservation. Objects found in Dutch soil are just as important for the study of the earliest history of our country as archival 385 documents from more recent times and are therefore entitled to the same treatment. The committee's first task was to determine which institutions in our country are authorized to conduct scientific soil research, and then to achieve coordination in this area. While regional and local museums have also worked in this direction to date, this has been without coherence.

390 Currently, the following are authorized:

The National Museum in Leiden and the Biological-Archaeological Institute in Groningen will serve the entire country, and the National Museum G. M. Kam in Nijmegen will serve the surrounding area, at least as long as this museum remains under the direction of Dr. J. H. Holwerda, the former director of the Leiden museum. 395 All local museums and provincial societies will have to apply for recognition to conduct excavations, which recognition will only be granted after the National Commission has issued its recommendation.

400 The National Bureau is currently compiling a list of all sites in the Netherlands that are of archaeological importance, so that timely measures can be taken if the cultivation of these lands threatens to destroy the archival documents hidden within. This list will make it possible to protect such sites in the future. If this proves impossible, the Bureau will endeavor to carefully preserve the remains found during excavation for posterity. Furthermore, the intention is to inventory any earlier 405 finds that may be in local museums or have been reported in recent decades, so that the office can always determine the location of a particular archaeological find.

Furthermore, typical, old names of plots often indicate that relics from the past can

be found there, so it is recommended to compile a list of these as well.

410 Finally, in almost every location, there are some objects in private possession, such as stone axes, arrowheads, etc., which should also be recorded in drawings and photographs.

415 This extensive inventory, according to Dr. Bursch, cannot be accomplished without the cooperation of the general public. We need our volunteers spread throughout the country, who inform us of the existence of the aforementioned sites and inform us of the archaeological finds located in their vicinity. Ideally, we would have such a staff member in every municipality; it's quite possible that the discovery of the thousandth Germanic urn will then be reported to us, but after all, that too can provide clues about the spread of Germanic culture, etc.

420 Soon, the cooperation of all the mayors in the Netherlands will be requested for this purpose.

425 But that's not all we need, although they can be of great assistance to us. What we need are staff from the people themselves, who will regularly keep us informed when something special in the field of antiquity occurs in their municipality. Please understand me well: it is by no means our intention to acquire any finds for our museum; on the contrary, the distribution of material among the existing antiquity rooms, regional and local museums can only increase their attractiveness [improved!], and nor do we want the rightful owners to relinquish their possessions to us.

430 Naturally, we would prefer to see these objects placed in a museum, as there we have the greatest guarantees that they will be expertly preserved. However, this acquisition will only be possible with the full consent of the owner and for a reasonable fee.

435 Furthermore, if the finds are unique and of truly national significance, we will naturally make every effort to find a home for them in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, possibly through exchange with other museum pieces. However, our main goal is to have a complete overview of the archaeological findings that the Dutch soil has yielded and will continue to yield.

440 The intention is that reports of finds in the three northern provinces should be addressed to Prof. Dr. A. E. van Giffen in Groningen, and for the rest of the country to Dr. F. C. Bursch, Director of the National Bureau for Archaeological Soil Research, Rapenburg 28, Leiden. This letter places great pressure on those who possess archaeological finds, especially unique finds of truly national significance. The Stevensweert kantharos is certainly one of them!

445 How does the drinking cup fit into the overall find?

The helmet was so valuable that its loss would be a huge setback for the owner. Hiding the decorative helmet with other objects is intentional. The value of the kantharos—given the amount of silver—was much higher. So, from the perspective of the person who hid all the objects in the peat, the loss is indeed greater, but they could easily bear it. Anyone else would do everything they could to recover such an object if it were accidentally lost.

450 You could draw a comparison with a grave that is filled next to the body with items related to the deceased, and food for the deceased.

455 Or in the afterlife. You do this in the hope that the grave won't be plundered. You then try to take measures against that.

With such thoughts, the kantharos would indeed be part of the Man and Horse equipment that ended up in the peat near Helenaveen.

460 Kluijtmans writes: A silver cup has also been found, fitted with a hook to hang it on the harness.

The kantharos clearly matches the description of the first words; the hook could be one of the handles. These have not been recovered, even though scholars believe they certainly belonged to the cup. Kluijtmans seems to suggest that the drinking cup, like the beautiful small wine vessel he mentioned, holding a few liters, was found in 1911.

465 All in all, sufficient reason to suspect that director Bos of the N.V. Maatschappij (Dutch Society) had these objects in his possession in 1911. At the conference of June 23, 1910, the stakeholders reached a very clear agreement regarding the undescribed and yet-to-be-discovered objects.

470 Adrianus Bos was the designated person to acquire these objects. The Helenaveen Society kept meticulous records, but director Bos personally purchased the objects and thus kept them off the company's books.

475 These objects were therefore stored in the director's residence, but in such a way that only a few people saw them, and then only the director himself.

I also compiled an inventory of people who may have seen the Roman objects during the

director's lifetime. This primarily concerns servants, of course. Jootje, or Johanna, van de Bovenkamp came from Helenaveen and was a servant in Bos's later years (from around 1925). Kluijtmans relates that the director at one point showed her the contents of the cupboard. She was particularly struck by the large leather objects. She probably didn't have the opportunity to examine everything properly, let alone write it all down, even if she were interested.

480 Others who may have seen the find were the company's directors, and had done so for almost 25 years. These individuals were generally very successful social figures, 485 such as the director of the State Railways. They came to Helenaveen at least once a year for a meeting, which was usually held elsewhere. On July 1, 1910, such a meeting was held at the director's villa, more than two weeks after the discovery. However, the minutes of the meeting make no mention of it, even though the discovery had already been clearly reported in the newspapers and had occurred only about 2 km 490 away.

Doubts about the origin of the kantharos

Rijksmuseum Kam has doubted the story of the alleged finder, Bongers, from the very beginning. This has already been mentioned several times above. This concerns the war 495 years and those up to approximately 1950. The legal aftermath provides even more information.

For example, we read in [1998] *The Secret of the Smith* by Mr. W.M.J. Bekkers: [...] Not only are there different theories about the origin and age of the Kantharos.

This also applies to the year, the place, and the circumstances under which the cup 500 was found. Legal literature and case law mention 1942 and 1943, while Swinkels assumes 1939. He knows that at the request of Drs.

A.V.M. Hubrecht, director of the (then still) Rijksmuseum Kam from 1964 to 1978, the mayor and pastor of Stevensweert spoke with the finder of the Kantharos, J. Bongers of Echt, in November 1966. Bongers then stated that he had found the

505 Kantharos in January or February 1939 while hunting. On a map, he indicated where he had found the cup. This was supposedly on Belgian territory, on the west side of the Maas River. According to Swinkels, Bongers had previously reported other locations. Regarding this conversation with Hubrecht on November 14, 1966, the mayor wrote, among other things: "... I don't believe Mr. Bongers, or 510 rather, he's lying. He has already reported three different locations for the Kantharos.

Which one is correct? I don't know" (7).

7. Hubrecht did not publish the location Bongers reported in 1966,

515 but he did report the year 1939 as the date of the discovery (A.V.M. Hubrecht, *De Kantharos van*

Stevensweert

, in *Numaga* 13 (1966) 243-251, with a photo of Mr. Bongers on p. 250).

Museum Kam and its successor, Museum Het Valkhof, also questioned the provenance of 520 the drinking cup, but just like the legal aspects, the museum was interested in possession, not the provenance. Nevertheless, we find various comments on this in the museum's publications.

[2006] If Bongers did indeed pick up the kantharos from the dredger in 1943, he then took it home. According to the dredging permit, archaeological finds had to be reported and handed over to the government. It is therefore obvious that Bongers 525 quickly attempted to monetize his find.

[elsewhere 2006] In preparing this article, we studied the kantharos intensively several times, paying particular attention to indications of the manufacture and life cycle of the cup.

Regarding the latter, it is striking that no damage was found on either the inner or 530 outer cup that could have been the result of movement in flowing water, which would inevitably have caused dents and scratches from bumping against gravel and the like. Therefore, in our opinion, it is unlikely that the finder, J. Bongers, found the kantharos among stones along the Maas, as he later claimed. His brother-in-law's story, that Bongers found the kantharos on the dredger in some lumps of clay, is more 535 plausible because the clay layer in which the kantharos lay on the riverbed protected it for centuries, until the dredger disturbed the peace (see p. 18).

[1972] The discovery went virtually unnoticed at the time: J. Bongers found the cup 540 -in two pieces-among the stones along the Maas River, washed off the clay, and took it home.

Documents about the Bongers family and the dredging company
December 19, 1934 SAD ACCIDENT ON THE Maas RIVER IN STEVENSWEERT
Four people fell into the water. One of them drowned.

A sad accident occurred on Tuesday morning around ten o'clock on the Maas River near

545 the municipality of Stevensweert.

The Van Hasselt company from Nijmegen has been operating a dredging business there for several years. On Sunday, a tugboat arrived to tow away the dredger, which was undergoing repairs.

550 This was scheduled for Tuesday, and around ten o'clock, four of the boat's occupants had boarded a rowboat and sailed from the dredger to the shore to cast off the mooring line. They slid along the cable. They may have been standing on one side of the boat at some point, causing it to take on water and capsize, causing all four to fall into the water.

555 The tugboat, which was moored near the dredger, quickly sailed to the scene of the accident, halfway along the shore, and managed to rescue two of them; the third had managed to reach the shore by swimming. The fourth tragically drowned, despite further attempts to save him. His body has not yet been found.

560 The victim is married and 37 years old, named H. Peperkamp from Doornenburg, in the municipality of Bemmel, Gelderland.

August 4, 1945 The Gravel Dredgers

565 DE VRIJE STEM, the organ of the G.O.I.W., contains a thorough article about the wartime collaboration of the Gravel Dredgers for the construction of the Atlantic Wall.

We have included some figures from this article to clarify the matter for our readers.

The Paes Company in Nijmegen produced 209,349 tons in 1939 ... 537,960 tons in the eight months of 1944.

570 The Van Hasselt Company in Lent produced 270,634 tons in 1939 and 915,212 tons in 1943. The N.V. Grint Mij in Arnhem increased from 184,291 tons in 1939 to 483,938 tons in 1943. For the N.V. van Roosmalen Transp. and Handelsmij in Maastricht, these figures were: 108,905 tons and 210,851 tons.

575 The Hovestad en Dekker company in Roermond began operations during the war years and produced 211,421 tons by 1943.

The Ballastmij de Merwede in Rotterdam produced 225,526 tons in 1940 and 235,205 tons in 1943.

Official complaints about all these companies have been filed with the Military Commissioner.

580 And now the Vrije Stem continues:

All gravel produced in the Netherlands was resold by the N.V. gravel sales office in Nijmegen. The director of this company was Mr. Zuidema. This office provided gravel distribution services during this period and, among other things, sent a letter to 585 the affiliated producers urging them to increase production. We requested the closure of this sales office and the seizure of its records. This was done.

The German company "Niba" increased its production from 350,685 tons in 1938 to 1,522,949 tons in 1943. However, this company has two Dutch directors, Messrs. Müller and van Sprang. This, too, is tolerable even with a large dose of forbearance.

590 However, the fact that Mr. Müller was appointed a member of the tribunal in Nijmegen strikes us as "somewhat strange."

The fact that Mr. Wagemaker, as Director of the Gravel Sales Office, felt compelled to assist the German Wehrmacht may be due to his very "businesslike" views. However, 595 the fact that he was appointed manager of the National Socialist assets strikes us as "somewhat strange."

And Mr. van Roosmalen, who had approximately doubled his production, was charged with raising the ships sunk by the Germans in the port of Maasbracht. To great dismay of the hundreds of skippers.

600 June 16, 1964. Construction awarded [...]

Van Hasselt Gendt (Gelderland) 5, 5, 2, and 1 cent.

The registrations of [...] and the Niba were not accepted.

605 April 3, 2013. Jacobus Antonius Bongers was married to Hubertina Cornelia van der Riet (hamlet Diepstraat?). The couple lived in Echt at Maasbrachterweg 100.

A few days before February 1, 1937, Theodorus Lucienne was born. This Theo has passed away.

610 A few days before March 8, 1943, Helena Henrica Johanna was born.

Another son (aged 77 or 78). A son and a daughter are said to now live in South

Africa. Jan Bongers is said to live in Roermond. Information obtained from a cousin of Jaak Bongers from Stevensweert, Bernard Bongers. Jaak Bongers was called a fantasist in the family.

April 3, 2013 The dredger Jaak Bongers worked on was no longer owned by Dekker, but by the Van Hasselt company from Nijmegen (or Lent or Gendt). This Van Hasselt company had purchased the dredger from Dekker. It was probably a simple dredger, with a stationary sieve or sieves.

The arguments above have been presented that cast doubt on whether the kantharos was actually found in the municipality of Stevensweert. These arguments are repeated below.

- It is by no means certain that the Maas River flowed where Stevensweert is now located in the fourth century. The Oude Maas River lies further east.
- The numerous floods of the Maas River would have severely damaged the cup. In January and February 1926, all of Western Europe was gripped by high river waters.
- 630 Stevensweert was also a victim: it is reported that the Maas River there had become between 4 and 5 km wide! Under these circumstances, a delicate structure like the drinking cup would have at least shattered and likely been carried to sea, resulting in the kantharos's permanent loss.
- There are three variations on the circumstances, the location, and the year of discovery:

And the year 1939 was recorded by Bongers in 1966, when the kantharos had temporarily returned to Stevensweert on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the Stevensweert parish. Bongers also stated at the time that he had not found the cup on the dredger, but had seen it lying on a strip of gravel along the Maas while hunting. On a map, he had indicated a location on the western bank of the river, opposite Stevensweert, thus on Belgian territory!

645 The kantharos in question was found in 1942, during the occupation, in Stevensweert, approximately eighteen kilometers from Roermond in the deep gravel banks of the Maas. The finder didn't see anything unusual in the clay-covered, gray, rusty object. He gave it to a private antiquities enthusiast, who kept it unnoticed, thus safely, without suspecting precisely what it was. In 1949, he had the material from which the cup was made expertly examined.

650 The cup was found in 1942 by J. Bongers, a resident of Stevensweert, on a pile of gravel located on a plot of land on the Koeweide in Stevensweert. It consisted of two interlocking pieces completely covered in clay. This had adhered to the outer wall like a shell. Here and there, this shell had crumbled, revealing the shiny base. He took the cup home, cleaned it, and placed it on a dresser in the living room.

655 The so-called finder, Jaak Bongers, mentions no fewer than three different locations. A map shows one on the Dutch bank, directly opposite the spot where the Belgian-Dutch border runs perpendicular to the Maas River, near border marker 126. The second is somewhere on the Belgian bank. The third is on the Koeweide, which at the time was located further north on the northern (western) bank towards Maasbracht.

In coordinates: [5.8570 and 51.1440], unknown, [5.8740 and 51.1490].

660 Perhaps the Koeweide on the map isn't the one meant, as there also supposedly exists a Stevensweerter koeweide or Stevenweertsche koeweide, but that doesn't fundamentally change the situation.

- Brom believes he can deduce the year 1942 from a conversation he had with Bongers in April 1950, in which Bongers suggested that the cup had been on his cupboard for some time before he showed it to Schoonenberg. [...]
- On May 14, 1966, the director of the Rijksmuseum Kam, under the watchful eye of Mayor J. Kelleners, had a conversation with the alleged finder. Probably no official report was made of this conversation. But it did not clarify the circumstances, place, and time of the discovery.

670 There are various theories about the origin and age of the Kantharos. This also applies to the year, location, and circumstances under which the cup was found. Legal literature and case law mention 1942 and 1943, while Swinkels assumes 1939. He knows that at the request of Drs. A.V.M. Hubrecht, director of the (then) Rijksmuseum Kam from 1964 to 1978, the mayor and pastor of Stevensweert spoke with the finder of the Kantharos, J. Bongers of Echt, in November 1966. Bongers then stated that he had found the Kantharos in January or February 1939 while hunting. On a map, he indicated where he had found the cup. This was supposedly on Belgian territory, on the west side of the Maas River. According to Swinkels, Bongers had previously mentioned other

locations. Regarding this conversation with Hubrecht on November 14, 1966, the mayor wrote, among other things: "... I don't believe Mr. Bongers, or rather, he's lying. He has already listed three different locations for the Kantharos. Which one is correct? I don't know."

685 - October 31, 1941 [...] In Linne and also in Roermond, gravel can be found under a layer of clay and sand of several meters, sometimes to a depth of 15 to 16 meters. Occasionally, prehistoric finds are found in these gravel layers, including mammoth teeth and deer antlers, etc., which are of scientific value. Besides Roermond, a private company has also started gravel mining in Stevensweert. All these 690 activities provide work for many people. - August 28, 1951. My brother-in-law, Mr. J. Bongers (...), first showed me the aforementioned cup in the autumn of nineteen hundred and forty-three. My brother-in-law, Mr. Bongers, was working at the time on the dredger "De Dekker," which dredged gravel in the floodplains of the Maas River called "De Sleyen," near Stevensweert.

695 When showing me the cup, my brother-in-law told me that a few days previously, when the dredger was set to a digging depth of sixteen meters below the waterline, he had collected the object in two separate pieces from the discharge chute of the mill, into which the buckets pour their contents. Afterward, Bongers had cleaned both parts of the clay and silt at home, and it turned out that [...]

700 705 - If we study the dredging industry, then almost certainly not much gravel was collected in Stevensweert in 1939, probably only from the second half of 1941 onwards. The crew consisted mainly of Sliedrecht residents, supplemented by local staff who worked there as deckhands, barge skippers, and barge hands. If Bongers had found the drinking cup during those activities and cleaned it immediately, others would undoubtedly have seen it. He wouldn't have put a cleaned cup in his jacket either; it's an object to show off. If others were involved in some way, they would undoubtedly have come forward in the 1950s when there was such a fuss about the cup, then called the kantharos of Stevensweert! Colleagues or former colleagues would have approached Bongers, and probably the press as well, during that period to explain 710 their work and acknowledge Bongers's role. None of this happened. The dredger extracts sand and gravel from the ground using buckets. These buckets have a volume of up to half a cubic meter. The load is then discharged into a series of drums and sieves, separating the gravel into four grades. The sand is also collected, and the water is returned to the river.

715 The gravel mass in the rotating mill must be several hundred kilograms. A delicate, silver object is crushed in it. The fragments will certainly separate, and it's unlikely that a drinking cup could be removed in one piece. If the drinking cup containing clay and sand had ended up in the mills and sieves, it could not have emerged unscathed.

720 725 The drinking cup likely wouldn't have passed through the sieves in its entirety, as the largest sieve has 10 cm holes, but the loose fragments would have been scattered among the sorted boulders. Moreover, there was constant monitoring by a Rijkswaterstaat inspector, as we read in the newspaper of April 21, 1933: In the spaces below deck, on either side of the bucket chain channel, there are spacious accommodations for the engineer, mill master, and deck crew, and for the Rijkswaterstaat inspector, who must always be on board to monitor the quantity of sediment collected.

- Elsewhere, it is reported that the pebbles in the gravel extraction areas were so tightly packed that the drinking cup would have been completely crushed.

730 - Museum Kam and its successor, Museum Het Valkhof, also doubted the origin of the drinking cup, but, just like the legal aspects, possession was important to the museum, not the provenance.

735 Yet, we find various comments on this in the museum's publications.

[2006] If Bongers did indeed pick up the kantharos from the dredger in 1943, he subsequently took it home and did not declare it.

According to the dredging permit, archaeological finds had to be reported and handed over to the government. It is therefore also obvious that Bongers quickly attempted to monetize his find.

740 745 [elsewhere 2006] In preparing this article, we studied the kantharos intensively several times, paying particular attention to indications of the cup's manufacture and life cycle.

Regarding the latter, it is striking that no damage was found on either the inner or outer cup that could have resulted from movement in running water, which would inevitably have caused dents and scratches from bumping against gravel and the like. Therefore, in our opinion, it is unlikely that the finder, J. Bongers, found the kantharos among stones along the Maas River, as he later claimed. His brother-in-law's story, that Bongers found the kantharos on the dredger in some clods of clay,

750 is more plausible because the clay layer in which the kantharos lay on the riverbed protected it for centuries, until the dredger disturbed the peace (see p. 18).
[1972] The discovery went virtually unnoticed at the time: J. Bongers found the cup – in two pieces—among the stones along the Maas River, the clay was washed off, and it was taken home.

755 - Acquisition by Museum Kam
The G.M. Kam Museum in Nijmegen has not been very successful in acquiring masterpieces. Several masterpieces were acquired after the Second World War on highly questionable grounds:
In early April 1956, there was much commotion about the exact location of the statue of Trajan. A year later, the museum still had the statue in its possession.
760 Dredgers in Xanten allegedly embezzled the Head of Trajan, then smuggled it to Nijmegen and sold it to an antique dealer.
The Phrygian Ganymede (puer pileatus) was also acquired on questionable grounds.
- Not only have no co-workers on the dredger come forward to say that Bongers found the object, but there are also no known testimonies from family members who can 765 testify about the kantharos at the Bongers household.
- Neither Jaak Bongers nor any family members or the like have ever been heard about the object. At least, the author has been unable to find anything on the subject. A nephew calls Jaak Bongers a fantasist in 2013, at least that's how he was described in the family.
770 - The kantharos is so fragile that only a few people should handle it. Surely the condition of the drinking cup couldn't have deteriorated so much in 60 years that it came from a dredger or something similar and is now untouchable.