

Presenting MENDOP

a shelter for animal archives and animal heritage



The non-profit association 'Mendop' (Mens & Dier op papier --- Man & Animal on paper) is an independent archives and documentation centre treating the various contacts between human beings and animals, with special attention for the versatility of these interactions.

Animals are cherished, petted, admired, caged, hated, idolized, captured, trapped, hunted, fed, bred, shorn, milked, slaughtered and eaten.

For dozens of economic, cultural, religious or sports reasons, animals slipped into men's living environment. A mankind without animals is no longer an option; it's a dependency dating back to the hunters and fishermen at dawn of human development, branching out more and more by the rapidly growing population of pets and cattle.

As much as possible Mendop aims to save and store heritage and source material on the relationship between men and animals. Even though a good many of historical documents are at one's disposal, lots of those documents are scattered or hardly known.

Traces of the earlier human - animal relationship, such as old books, posters, paintings, albums, skillfully designed certificates and charters are part of the common cultural patrimony. These types of sources, as well as others, represent a considerable sum of interest for anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, sociologists, animal keepers and animal lovers. These evidences clearly reflect how the relationship underwent profound changes throughout the years.

The connection between men and animals took a turn for the better over the past two centuries. New facts in the mid nineteenth century were the breeding of well specified animals such as fancy pigeons, purebred cats and dogs, the increasingly successful animal shows and clubs and the creation of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals (R.S.P.C.A.) by enacting statutory legislation to protect domestic or wild animals from cruel treatment, misuse or unrestricted shooting.

With the arrival of trains, cars, trucks and tractors draught and pack animals (horses, donkeys, pulling dogs) disappeared from sight.

After 1850 poultry farming moved into large factory farms, keeping only a handful of highly profitable breeds. Within two generations family farms with open dunghills and various sorts of domesticated birds died out. Hunting lost its elitist and symbolic character. As offshore fishing took advantage of technological improvements such as diesel engines and cold-storage rooms, large-scale exploitation operations increased pressing in order to find ways to protect fishery resources.

Nevertheless people went on cherishing pets and cage birds, eating slaughtered animals and exterminating unwanted species (inside the house, in the garden or on the field.)

Mendop is trying to centralize this source material as much as possible and open it to the public and the researchers by means of websites, publications and expositions.

In addition to the protection of existing objects Mendop also wants to call attention to more recent animal items. Although today's material may look worthless and insignificant, it may bring in useful details for research in the centuries to come. Advertising leaflets for a meeting about koï carp or pamphlets providing information on prairie dogs clubs will show one day their value. The present is simply the future for the past.

Mendop considers the alliance of man-animal as an ecological, anthropological and sociological phenomenon with various kinds of cultural aspects around.

Private animal love or the promotions of various animal activities are not to be considered as basic concepts for the foundation of Mendop.

Furthermore Mendop doesn't claim men having to surpass the billions of other animals, although as a human being he's the only species able to find his life's fulfillment in creating archives.

Mendop wants to map out mankind's relationship with animals from an impartial, scientific, historical and cultural point of view, making it possible by collecting authentic source material and artifacts or by drawing up inventories of existing resources displayed in museums and in the archives of umbrella organizations dealing with cattle breeding, hunting, fishery, pigeon racing, equestrian sports and others.

Besides drawing up inventories on animal related articles or objects, Mendop aims at putting together a selective bibliographic survey of the relationship between men and animals based on already published contributions in papers, scientific journals, trade papers or (local) historical magazines and annals.

Mendop's activities are mostly focused on Flanders and by extension on Belgium. Places of origin however don't matter when acquiring general printed material or larger sources offering relevant information.

Mendop's scope of activities is diverse and extensive. It includes old pedigrees and documents about disappeared or still existing slaughterhouses, antique pigeon charters, hunting magazines, manuals for cage bird holders or fur traders, archives from vets or inspectors, artistically drawn up legacies, documents from fishing clubs and zoological gardens, cash books from animal homes, pest control services and so on. Summing up: Mendop wants to conserve, prospect, acquire, inventory, centralize, stimulate, publish and expose.

Out of Mendop's mission remain sizeable objects such as antique horse coaches, farming equipment, heavy machinery, architectural aviaries, stables, workshops, milk churns, poultry houses and spacious dovecotes. Nevertheless Mendop will always encourage actions to preserve or restore valuable exponents of this animal related inheritance.

Let it be said that Mendop doesn't take up the cause of live animals. Mendop is all the more focused on their figurative presence on paper as we can find them in books, pamphlets, magazines, post cards, prints, photographs, film pictures, posters, cuttings and artifacts.



Men and animals on paper, or Mendop, is willing to build up a safe haven for all archives dealing with interactions between men and animals, a storage place for orphan works, endangered, neglected and almost lost or misused inheritance.

Mendop appreciates all financial supports and donations.



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