



Robbeburg Newsletter



Robbeburg International Playgroup
www.robbeburg.com

March 2009

Welcome from the Co-Chairs: Anne and Laura

Although the festivities of the New Year are now well past, this is our first newsletter edition for 2009, so we would like to welcome you to a fresh new year at Robbeburg.

As we settle in to our new roles as co-chairs we look forward to the year ahead, where we hope, along with the rest of the committee, to continue to run Robbeburg as the huge support that it is to the parents and young children of the international community in Amsterdam. We would like to thank Claire and Anna for their great contribution as co-chairs last year, and hope that we can continue on their good work. We would also like to welcome Erika, Billy and Rosalind to the committee in their roles of Special Event Coordinator, Publicity and Newsletter editor respectively (see below for full committee, plus contact details)

We are very excited about the plans that the committee have for sprucing up the place a bit. As of late last year we have new ceilings and floors, we have just recently rearranged the layout of the place and you can also expect a lick of paint and a few other changes over the coming months. Special thanks to those who cleaned up the mess after the ceilings were replaced, and to all those beefy blokes who stayed back after the Christmas party to move all the furniture before the floors were replaced - and also of course to the Wednesday morning group who moved everything back - very impressive considering that they did it with the help of only ONE beefy bloke! And while we are on thank yous, thanks also to all the mums who came along to our toy-cleaning evening last week - everything is now spick and span and we even had fun!

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to remind all our current members and guests that Robbeburg is a parent-run playgroup and that, as such, we hope that everyone will contribute to the smooth running of the session they attend. Our group leaders, wonderful people that they are (!), are there to oversee the session and make sure that everything moves along and gets done. But let's not forget that they pay the same fees as the rest of us, have their own children's nappies to change, noses to wipe, and tears to dry AND might like to sit with a cuppa for a couple of minutes and have a chat too. So let's do our very best to help them out in any way that we can. And if anyone feels that they would like to be more involved or make a greater contribution to Robbeburg as a whole, then please feel free to come along to our committee meetings which are held regularly throughout the year (next one, March 18th)

So here's to a successful year ahead at Robbeburg - we hope that you enjoy it!

Personal Profiles

In order to build a sense of community, share tips (and frustrations!) about life in Holland with little kids and just get to know one another a little better "cross-group", we'll be profiling some of our members in each of the coming newsletters. To start with, here's everything you've ever wanted to know about one of our wonderful and dedicated Co-Chairs, [Anne Hampton](#).



Children: Maya (3 years 4 months), and Jasmine (2 at the end of March)

Nationality: Australian

Robbeburg involvement: Started coming along to Robbeburg in Nov 2007. Now committee co-chair and Friday morning group leader.

Life before kids: Research. Initially medical research then, after completing a psychology degree as a mature-age student, early childhood public health.

Living in The Netherlands: Since October 2007

How's your Dutch?...! Might be able to have a reasonable conversation with a Dutch 3 year-old!

ME: Hobbies and interests: Craft. Current project (when I finally squeeze in a moment or two for myself) is a Vogue Living designer gold edition standard cardboard dolls house for the girls (really it is all about me...). Stained glass windows, Amsterdam canal house inspired gabled façade, fake fur and Asian silk soft furnishings...it is a complete obsession! Also love to sew. And travel - it is killing me being so close to so many wonderful places that are just too hard and too expensive to get to now with a family.

Reading: Ha! - trick question. Nothing of course. Waiting to retire to get to that forlorn-looking pile of books beside my bed.

Listening to: Arrow Jazz FM (love it). Anything with a funky modern jazz feel is good. Have GOT to somehow get to the North Sea Jazz festival this year. Also don't mind a bit of classical from time to time.

Favourite film: Favourite film of all time has to be "English Patient" ie. am a hopeless sucker for a good sweeping saga/romantic tragedy.

Ideal child-free dream holiday destination: Anywhere warm with sunshine, sand, crystal blue sea, palm trees, hammock, waves lapping gently at the shore. With loads of time for sleeping!

Essential handbag item/s: Packet of crackers, tissues, small tube of moisturising hand cream, pen and paper. KEYS(!).

THE KIDS: MOST-LOVED household item that makes life easier with kids: Table-top pot warmers that mean I actually get to have a hot meal after all the faffing around that seems to happen JUST as you are about to sit down to eat.

Number 1 tip for travelling with kids: Food that can be easily eaten without too much mess, paper and colouring pencils and some new little

something like stickers or a cute key ring to drag out of your handbag when things get REALLY desperate!

Feeding the kids: Anything that doesn't involve too much chewing is generally fine. Soups with heaps of puréed veges seem to be a good way for them to get their greens.

Children's favourite books: Maya - "Tiddler the Story-Telling Fish" by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, Jasmine - "Over in the Meadow", a Little Golden book, a rhyming counting book that we click along to as we read - she LOVES it.

Favourite things to do with kids in Amsterdam: Centraal library - it has a great selection of English books for kids and a cafe on the 7th floor with a view over Amsterdam. The kinder boerderijs and Artis are great. And we love to watch the world go by from a café (bribed with warm chocomel and muffins/cakes of course).

AMSTERDAM: Loves: Albert Cuyp market (for the fabric stores of course). The public transport (actually accessible with a pram). The bike-riding culture. Spring time, when all the bulbs come out.

Hates: Not much. The winters are long and miserable, that's about it. Oh, and the Dutch bureaucracy can be just a touch frustrating AND you don't get your bags packed in supermarkets.

Misses about home: Being able to get to a beach on a sunny summers day. Having my bags packed at supermarkets. And my family - OF COURSE I miss them!

AND FINALLY: Heineken or Amstel? Neither - don't like beer!

Salt and vinegar or Cheese and Onion? Plain

Robbeburg News

Improvements:

Plans are afoot to replace the tables for both adults and kids and to purchase a new ball pond as well sprucing up the woodwork and the walls and re-organising the noticeboards, if time and funds permit. As you've no doubt noticed, the play spaces have been reorganised for a trial period from the beginning of March, the idea being to separate boisterous play areas from quieter reading zones, and parents from the kids (this is just to help us eat our choccy biscuits without guilt-inducing stares and sticky paws reaching out for them!) Comments and suggestions on the new layout are welcome but please don't change things until we've all had a chance to "digest" the new format.

Committee:

Mel Cotterill is resigning as Membership Secretary. We'd like to thank her for her hard work in this area and welcome Lisa Boyle from the Friday morning group who is preparing to step into her shoes. We are always looking for new committee members so if you are interested in taking a more active part in the running of Robbeburg, please contact the Co-Chairs. In particular, we are calling out for any Dutch speakers as our current committee is largely deficient in this area! Please let us know if you can help. The same goes for any ideas or contributions you may have for advertising, events or future newsletter items. The current committee and their contact details are as follows:

Co Chair	Anne Hampton	co-chair@robbeburg.com
Co Chair	Laura Amiss	co-chair@robbeburg.com
Treasurer	Rebecca Moss	treasurer@robbeburg.com
Secretary and Party Booker	Jennifer Bridle	partybookings@robbeburg.com
Purchasing and Facilities	Ruth Paans	ruthpaans@yahoo.com
Membership	Mel Cotterill	membershiprb@yahoo.com
Webmaster	Daniela Gfeller	webmaster@robbeburg.com
Publicity	Billy Dhadwal	billy_gd@hotmail.com
Events Co-ordinator	Erika Reiter	e_reiter21@yahoo.ca
Newsletter Editor	Rosalind Arwas	Rosalind_mushin@hotmail.com
Fundraising	Vacancy	

Groups

The Japanese group will cease to exist from April unless anyone is interested in taking it over?

Events:

Toy Cleaning

The toy cleaning/wine and cheese evening on Feb 26th was a big success and a nice opportunity to chat to people without needing half an eye on whoever's falling off the slide. Thanks to everyone who showed up to help, especially the stars who cleaned every ball in the ball pit!

Christmas Party



The Christmas party was much enjoyed by all the small (and big!) kids amongst us!



Last year's Christmas party was a great success. Good food, mulled wine, cheery music, and most of the kids even sat on Santa's lap to receive their Christmas gift! Thanks to all who came along to make it the fun occasion that it was. And thanks so much to our raffle sponsors for providing such great prizes: Little Gym, Glow Golf, Chimpie Champ, Boom Chicago, The American Book Centre, The English Book Shop, Waterstones, Holland Pass, Mint Condition Hair, Koan Float, Fietspoint Pieters Zaandam, and last but not least, the Hard Rock Café. Money raised from the raffle will be put towards the purchase of a desperately-needed new ball pit for Robbeburg.

FOOD! FOOD! FOOD!!

A lot of the Parent-Playgroup-Chatter seems to focus on what to serve our little cherubs in order to get the skinny ones to eat, the chubby ones to stop demanding biscuits and the picky ones to just occasionally try something green. Below are a couple of ideas gathered from Real Mums and Dads, which are hopefully minimal on the preparation and washing up time:

Easy salmon, potato and broccoli: good from about 8 months, as can be mashed or blended. Put small piece of salmon (also good with cod) in a saucepan with a little milk and butter, seasoned with garlic powder, nutmeg, pepper or whatever else your kid will eat and cook until soft. Meanwhile steam potatoes and broccoli over boiling water. Add veg to milky salmon, allow the potatoes to absorb the liquid, mash as required and serve! Freeze the rest in handy child sized portions.



Lentil Stew: good recipe for the whole family in the quantities given below. Or freeze for the future. Put 500g of lentils (red, green, brown, it will work with everything), one tin of chopped tomatoes, a couple of grated carrots, a couple of spoonfuls of olive oil, a chopped onion and some chopped garlic and/or other herbs and spices in a big saucepan. Cover with water. Stew over a low heat for an hour or so until lentils are tender, adding more water if necessary. Serve with rice and natural yoghurt.

And not forgetting that we also like to eat, here is a cake recommendation (for maximum enjoyment, wait until kids are in bed before serving!)

Banana plus cake:



4oz butter/margarine
1 cup sugar
2eggs
4tbsp sour cream or natural
yoghurt

1tsp bicarbonate of soda
1 cup mashed banana (about 2
bananas)
1 1/2 cups flour
1tsp vanilla essence (optional)
1/2 cup blueberries, choc chips,
nuts, whatever (optional)

- cream butter and sugar
- add eggs one at a time (and
vanilla)
- add bananas

- mix bicarbonate of soda with
the yoghurt and wait for it to
froth up a bit
- add to the banana mixture
- gradually add flour, mixing all
the time (but don't over mix!)
- add choc chips etc

Spoon into a greased and lined
loaf tin. Cook in medium oven
(180 degrees) for 45 mins.
EAT!!

Advertisements



Birth Support with a Doula?

Are you pregnant and unsure of giving birth in the Netherlands? Would you like support during the birth of your child from someone who is fluent in Dutch and English and has given birth to 2 children here in Amsterdam?

My name is Catherine Gulliver and I am currently studying to become a doula. As part of my training, I need to attend 3 births. If you would like some support during this very special and challenging time I would be very happy to assist you and your partner free of charge.

I have a good knowledge and awareness of female physiology. As a Doula I will assist you in preparing for and carrying out your birth plans. I will stay with you throughout the labor and provide emotional support, physical comfort measures and an objective viewpoint.

As a doula I will not support you in a medical role - that is the job of your midwife or doctor. I will facilitate communication between you, your partner and your clinical care providers and help you to get the information you need to make informed decisions.

I perceive my role as nurturing and protecting your memory of the birth experience, a key experience you will remember all your life

Personally I have 2 children who were born in Amsterdam - Sam (5) was born at the VU and Scarlett (3) was born at home. I have also attended the births of other expat friends - one at home and the other in the hospital. From these experiences I realized that this is something I would really like to offer to other expat women in Amsterdam. The comfort and reassurance of having someone close by who knows the language and has experienced the birth process (myself and with friends) cannot be underestimated.

If you are interested in having a doula present during your birth I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you. You can contact me on 0622 460262 or via email: catherine@gulliver.name

Sporty Kids

Sporty Kids are exercise lessons for children from 1 to 4 years that are different from what you are used to.

The environment of our children today is loud, busy and structured. To grow up children do not need special sports equipment or technical tools but they need time and space to play, to be creative and to learn by trial and error.

The **Sporty Kids** courses help your child to

- inspire the imagination
- be creative
- improve self-confidence
- have fun being active

Spend some time with your child! You are the most important person for your child. **Sporty Kids** courses help to strengthen the parent-child-relationship.

In a good parent-child-relationship you can encourage your child to be active and creative. So you can help your child in a playful way to get fit for everyday life.

Register now!

The summer courses will start in **May 2009**. Lessons will be held in either English or German and take place in a central location in **Amsterdam**.

For further information and/or registration:

<http://www.sportykids.info>

maike@sportykids.info



Offering a quality education to children of all nationalities between the ages 2-18.

www.britams.nl
info@britams.nl
Tel + 31 20 6797840
Fax: + 31 20 6758396

THE **BRITISH**
SCHOOL 
OF AMSTERDAM

For admissions and enquiries,
Anthonie van Dijckstraat 1
1077 ME
Amsterdam