

# FEATURING

## The Story of the Hidden Mahj-Treasure



### De Haar Castle

Medieval castles conjure images of romantic times, of damsels in distress and rescuing knights, of dragons and magicians; they can be the stuff of fantasy while in reality they were originally the seats of royalty and military power. Castles have been regularly used as settings for books and films. Today, castles serve as historical sites and museums, capturing lifestyles long vanished.

One such museum, the Castle de Haar, is the largest and most luxurious castle in the Netherlands. The museum consists of the castle, a collection of art objects and the surrounding park and the associated property. Both the guest houses and servants' quarters can be visited. Its collection includes objects of Ming, French antiques, tapestries and specially designed cutlery and one surprising Mah Jongg connection.

Here is the story of the discovery of a hidden mahjong treasure told by Jan Keeval

## About Jan Keevel

I started playing mahjong in 1980.

At the office we play five days a week, from 12:00 till 13:00.

We played the classical rules. With a local addition: if you didn't win with at least Half-flush (a hand with tiles from only one suit plus honor tiles, aka Clean Hand) people didn't speak to you for the rest of the day ...

Some years ago my daughter and I were trying to teach my son-in-law to play mahjong. Searching for information, I discovered the modern Dutch Tournament Rules (in Dutch: NTS). From that day we converted to NTS.

Jelte Rep, a friend of mine, is the founding father of the Dutch Tournament Rules of Mahjong (NTS). NTS is meant for 4 players, obviously.

Already in 2002 Jelte thought of playing the game with 3 players. However, many players were not really happy to by those rules.

In 2017 I redesigned the rules for three players (San ma).

"My" rules are now used at my club, at Jelte's club and at two more clubs.

There are two types of clubs: formal clubs which are members of the Mahjong League (approx 25 clubs) and informal clubs that are not a member of the Mahjong League. My club used to be a member of the League, but we stepped out

Most informal clubs are not easy to find on the internet; they are known by word of mouth. Estimates on these informal clubs vary from tens to hundreds.

In 2018, by agreement of Gladys Grad, I designed Siamese Dutch rules: inspired by Gladys We have also played some demonstrations at NTS tournaments, where the public was enthusiastic.

At my former club we have played it in a competition: we played 4, 3 and 2 player versions in the same competition (so: NTS, San ma and Siamees).

Please have a look at <https://www.pe-ling.nl/mahjong/download-public/pe-ling.tk%20-%20Dutch%20Siamese%20Mahjong.pdf>

and

<https://www.pe-ling.nl/mahjong/download-public/pe-ling.tk%20-%20cheat%20sheet%20Dutch%20Siamese%20Mahjong.pdf>

Basically, the players use 2 racks and may make mahjong twice.

For each players 1st mahjong restrictions apply (otherwise it would be too easy to win as one has 27 tiles in hand)

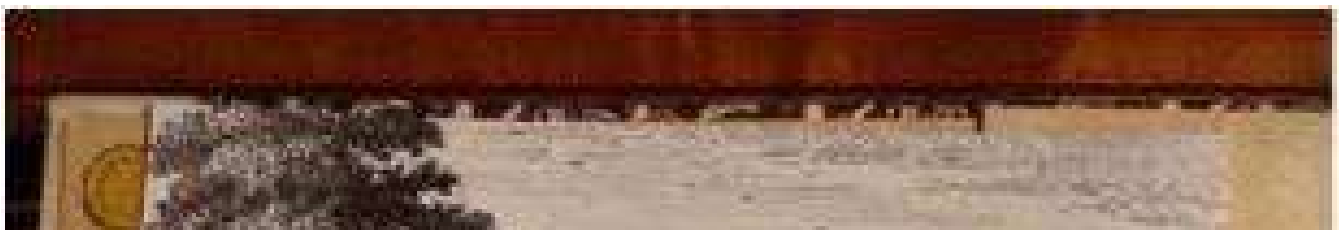
## An Introduction to De Haar Castle by Jan Keevel



Jan Keevel is a guide at De Haar Castle and a Mahjong-maniac

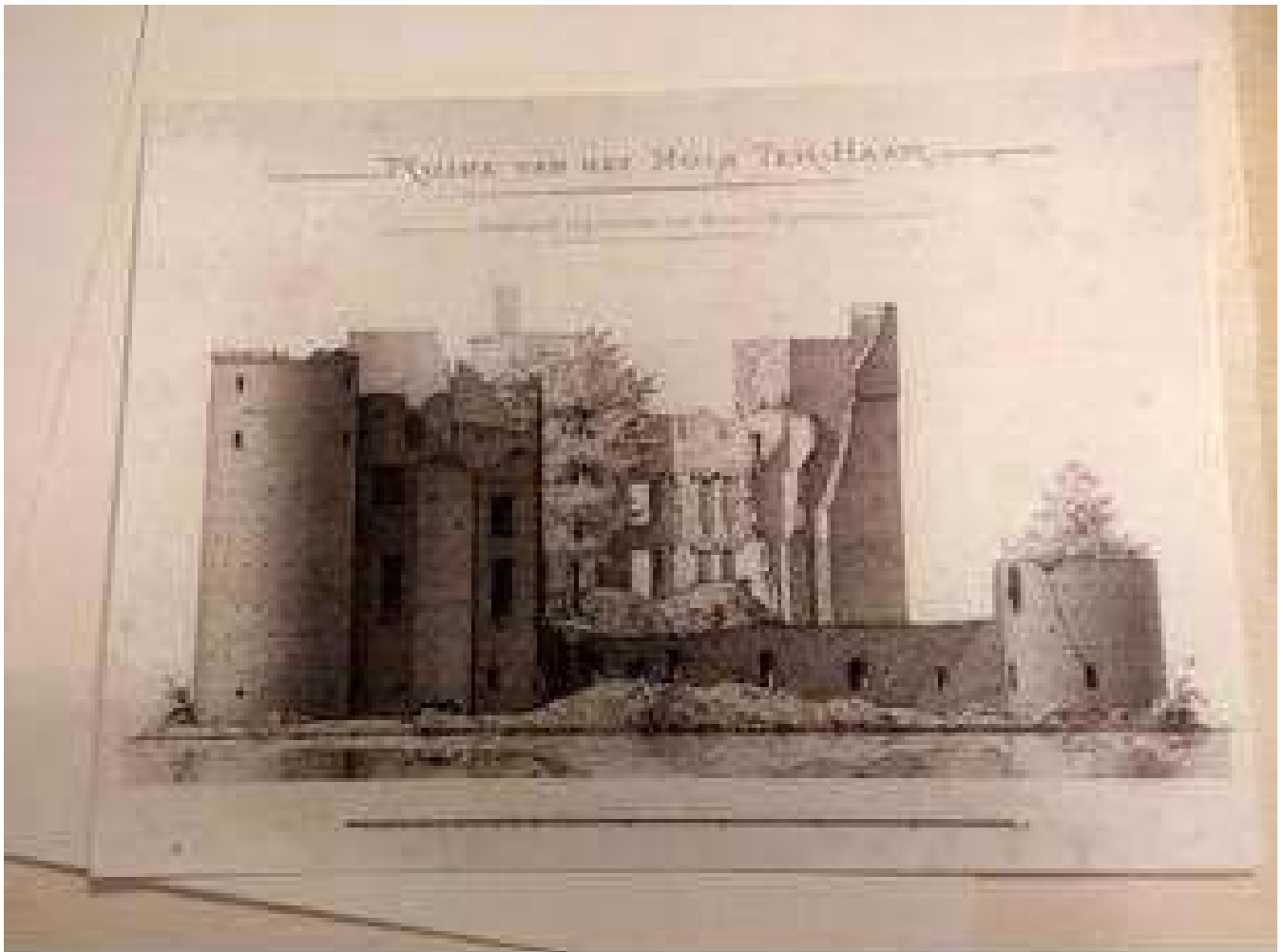
Already in the 12<sup>th</sup> century there was a castle on the estate. In those days it was just a simple house with a tower and a palisade.

In 1500, the current pentagon-shaped castle was built, with an open courtyard.





In the ages following this, the castle fell into ruins caused by various reasons.





In the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Baron Etienne van Zuyle van Nijvelt van de Haar* knew

he was going to inherit this ancestral castle.

He was wealthy, but by far not wealthy enough to rebuild this castle.

Fortunately he fell in love with (at that time) the richest young woman in Europe: H el ene de Rothschild.

Both their parents were against the marriage (old money vs new money, Catholic vs Jewish, old aristocracy vs new age bankers).

The moment they got married, H el ene was disowned by the Rothschilds and her mother only wore black dresses from that day on. The Rothschild family never did anything for the castle.

However, as H el ene's father had died when she was very young, she already had an impressive inheritance that the family couldn't touch. She kept in control of her own money, but she gave her husband Etienne a monthly allowance ... just enough to rebuild his ancestral castle.

Pierre Cuypers, the architect famous for the Rijksmuseum and the buildings of the Central Station in Amsterdam, was hired to rebuild the medieval castle in all its glory and to add all the luxury money could buy. He managed to do this in only 20 years (1892-1912)

From its ruins, the medieval castle was rebuilt in all its glory. During this rebuilding a roof was put over the open courtyard. At the same time "all the luxury money could buy" was installed: central heating with floor heating and hot air heating, running warm and cold water, proper showers and baths, a generator for electricity, an elevator, telephone, a miraculous kitchen, and much more.







The luxury castle has about 25 guestrooms, each with its own style, its own design, its own atmosphere. In the dining room the table can host up to 34 persons.

The castle is now owned by the Van Zuylen van Nyevelt as the family's country house; they retain the right to spend one month a year there, usually September.

From 1893 up to 2005 hundreds of celebrities were guests in this castle: Coco Chanel, Maria Callas, Onassis, the Aga Khan, Gregory Peck, Roger Moore, to name just a few.

If ever in The Netherlands one should visit this castle.  
It's only half an hour south of Amsterdam.

See you at the castle!





## THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Hidden treasure

23 October 2018



### The discovery

In March 2018 I started as a volunteer at Castle de Haar. Soon I discovered a little chest in the Great Hall.



This chest has a strong resemblance to my own mah-jong chest, which stimulated my curiosity. This was a motivation to put in a request to research this chest. The chest turned out to be a **hidden treasure**.

### Hidden Treasure

All sides of the chest is decorated; the quality of this paintwork is extraordinary. The main image, on the front lid, is most probably from *"The Story of the Western Wing"*.

Behind the lid five drawers are visible; all five drawers bear groups of traditional words that originating from ancient writings and traditions.

The combination of a well lacquered chest and sinograms on the drawers is not commonplace, thus making this an extraordinary set.

The 144 tiles fit exactly in the drawers; one may assume that this set was one set from the start.

The tiles are engraved by hand; the engravings are beautiful and of very good quality. Bamboo tile with serif together with perfect circles on the Circle tiles make this set a high quality set.



The flower tiles show a rare combination of animals and trees. The series at the top stands for Bamboo tile with serif together with perfect circles on the Circle tiles make this set a high quality set; the series at the bottom a congratulatory wish for a birth or a birthday.

The extraordinary flower tiles, the beautiful chest, the texts on the drawers, the engravings of good quality make this a good, respectable set.

The combination of all the qualities mentioned makes this set a coveted set for collectors, and places it in the top5%.

More about this chest, the research and also a documentary may be found at [verborgen-schat.keevel.eu/](http://verborgen-schat.keevel.eu/)



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