

# 80 years of Natural Granen,

## 60 years of Natural Breeding Station

**It was in the mid-1930s when the Antwerp champion Evrard Havenith set his mind on a nice bag of beans, which he bought entirely. It would not be the first time that a pigeon fancier is tempted into buying something which has to do with his hobby. That usually happens with pigeons but in Evrard Havenith's case it was a bag of beans of the best quality which caught his attention. That is not all that surprising since good quality grains and especially legumes were hard to come by back in those days. It was only after the beans had been delivered that he realised he had ordered too many. What now?**

Luckily, he was good friends with the two brothers Noël and Robert De Scheemaecker, two young men who had become pigeon fanciers at the ages of 16 and 14 respectively. They had obtained a few pigeons of Havenith through their father Joseph. Joseph was running a printing company and he encouraged his sons to found a pigeon magazine, which would be called Het Duivensport. That was in November of 1930. Evrard Havenith asked Noël and Robert if they could publish a small ad in their magazine to sell the remaining beans. The magazine already had a circulation of 40,000 copies, so there were many more interested buyers than Havenith and his loft manager Gust De Feyer had expected. That was also good news for the De Scheemaecker brothers, who were glad to see that their magazine was being read by so many people. It eventually gave way to the idea of founding a company specialising in pigeon feed. Noël De Scheemaecker had just started a law firm but he did not hesitate to throw his court robe

out the window; he would much rather spend his time with pigeon fanciers than in a courtroom. The Natural Granen-Gebroeders De Scheemaecker N.V. was founded in 1936, initially producing just four different seasonal feed mixtures. They had their hands full with just these four mixtures since they were rather labour-intensive, artisan products. In its early years the Natural company owed much of its success to the fact that the two brothers Noël and Robert De

Scheemaecker were genuinely passionate pigeon fanciers. They were just 20 years old when they won the title of general champion in the very competitive De Zwaluwe union in Wilrijk, which had about 700 fanciers at the time. The star of their loft was Kaers, which was one of the best pigeons in Antwerp for over seven years, winning numerous top prizes.

The De Scheemaecker brothers were so passionate about their hobby that they could not fit all of their articles in their (Het Duivensport) magazine. They simply launched a second magazine called Duifke Lacht in 1948, when pigeon racing in Belgium was in its heyday. The two magazines eventually merged in 1967 under the new title Duifke Lacht en De Duivensport. That magazine continues to be the most-read pigeon magazine in Belgium with 15,000 subscribers.



In November of 1936 the company Natural Granen-Gebroeders De Scheemaecker N.V. was founded by Noël and Robert De Scheemaecker.

In 1949 the De Scheemaecker brothers and Edgard Heirman together introduced an entirely new clocking device called Heirman. They sold a total of 15,000 Heirman devices, which were known to be highly reliable and which had an exceptionally long lifespan. In 1952 they introduced Junior, a record-breaking new clock of which an estimated 300,000 units have been sold. The immense popularity of the clock even led to the founding of a new company called Junior, which was to be led by Noël's oldest son Frans.

### The Natural Breeding Station and its new branch: the "Elite of Natural"

In early 1955 the De Scheemaecker brothers started working on a new project in the form of the Natural Breeding Station in the town of Sint-Antonius-Zoersel. Their initial goal was to breed youngsters from some of the most-renowned breeds, which would then be gifted to the company's most loyal clients. In the early days every fancier who purchased 500 kg of Natural mixture would receive one young bird as a gift. Each bag came with a voucher printed on it, which the clients then had to collect and send in. The company was also selling youngsters at cheap prices, simply because they wanted anyone to be able to obtain a youngster of excellent origin. The Natural Breeding Station currently houses about 10,000 pigeons, whose descendants can still be obtained cheaply. However, to ensure the continuity of their breeding loft the De Scheemaecker family decided two years

ago to further expand their project, introducing the special "Elite of Natural" breeding lofts. These lofts house a number of pigeons from highly prestigious bloodlines and famous parents which Natural invested heavily in, including pigeons of Gaston Van De Wouwer, Dirk Van Dyck, Etienne Meirlaen. In the future, more first-class breeds will be added. That is a project worth taking a look at and from which you will hear more in the future.

### Fifty-five countries across six continents

In the 1970s the Natural company was handed over to the second generation of the De Scheemaecker family, Noël's sons Joseph and Noël to be precise. They brought a new dynamic to the company, which moved from the centre of Antwerp to Schoten, where a modern new factory was built, ready to conquer the international market. Today Natural provides its pigeon feed mixtures and complementary products to 55 different countries across six continents.



Inspired by our clients all across the globe, Stephan De Scheemaecker (the third generation of the De Scheemaecker family) knows more than ever that pigeon racing still has a promising future. The photo shows Stephan De Scheemaecker together with his father Joseph.



However, not everything worked out as expected. The family invested everything they had into this company, especially for the development of complementary products, with a strong focus on quality and effectiveness. These complementary products were extensively tested before they hit the market: first in the Natural Breeding Station but at the same time also in the private lofts of the De Scheemaeker brothers and in those of their closest employees, many of which had become renowned fanciers over the years. That is still being done today.

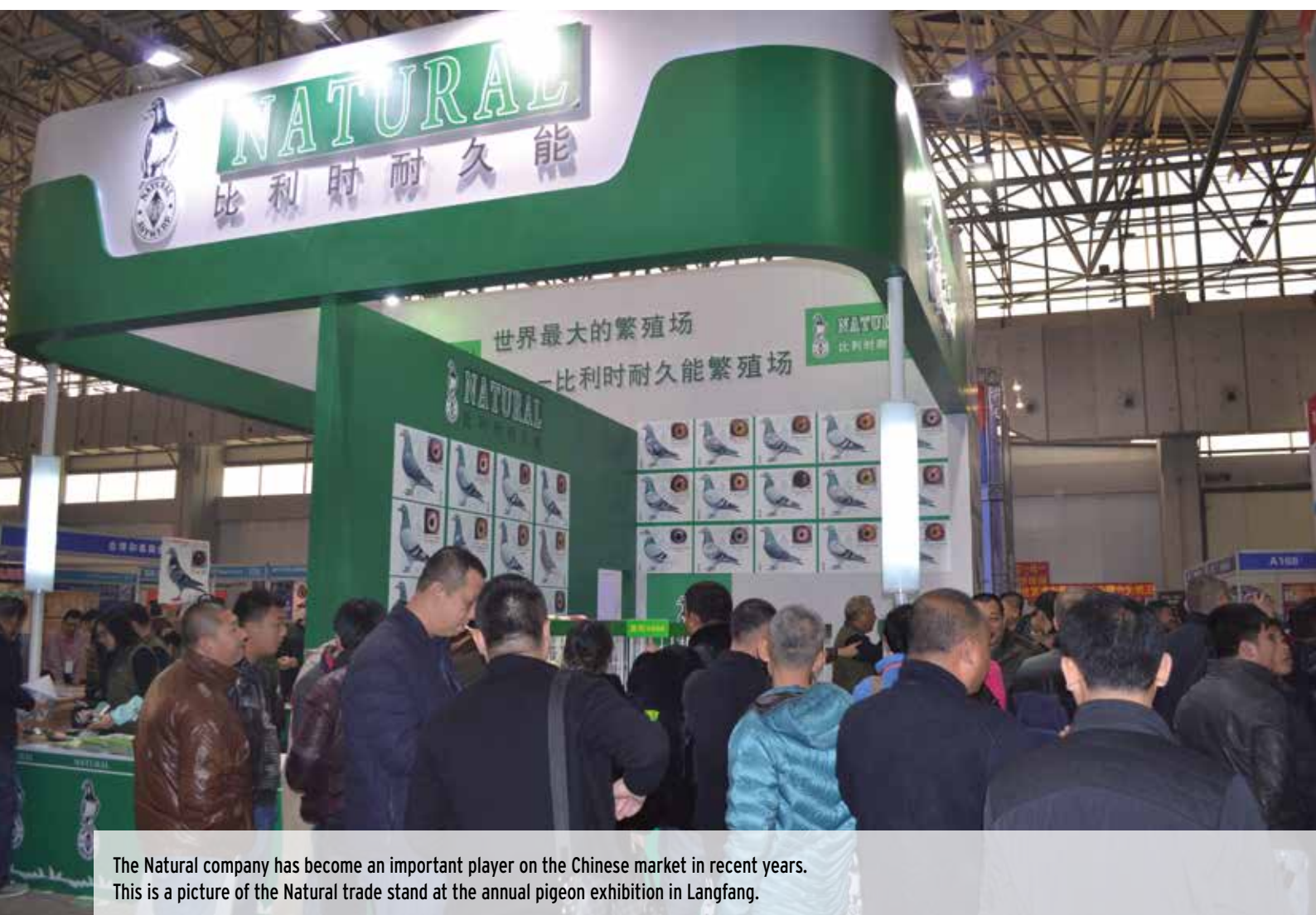
For decades Joseph and Noël and their staff attended every major pigeon exhibition as well as nu-

merous smaller events to promote their feed mixtures, complementary products and pigeons. These ambassadors of pigeon racing in Belgium travelled across continents to visit trade partners and pigeon fanciers across the world, often developing friendships for life. It allowed the company to win the confidence of thousands of pigeon fanciers.

In most cases, they managed to develop close relations with the retailers they visited, who are actively supported by the Natural company. They can in turn, through these contacts, supply pigeon products and provide valuable advice to their clients.

## China, the promised land

One of their many trips led to the first international pigeon exhibition in the Chinese capital of Beijing in 1998. Joseph and Noël De Scheemaeker were quickly charmed by pigeon racing in China as it reminded them of pigeon racing in Belgium back in the day. The Natural company, now led by Joseph's son Stephan, the third generation of the De Scheemaeker family, began to invest much time and energy in the Chinese market because the family immediately understood that the future of their company and of pigeon racing in general depended on the development of pigeon racing in China, a country with about 300,000 fanciers.



The Natural company has become an important player on the Chinese market in recent years. This is a picture of the Natural trade stand at the annual pigeon exhibition in Langfang.



The Natural Breeding Station currently houses about 10,000 pigeons. The breeding loft was further expanded in 2014 with the additional "Elite of Natural" lofts.

The company got the full support of Dr. Max Yang, a doctor in poultry science and animal medicine. It was on his initiative that Natural China developed an entire range of medicines for racing birds aimed at the Asian market.

A second pillar for "Project China" was the development of an entire range of pigeon racing items created by the De Scheemaecker brothers, called Haspeslagh-Natural. It has now developed into the most important provider of pigeon racing items worldwide. We are proud to say that the Natural company has become an important brand in pigeon racing in China.

### **Natural uses its know-how to prepare for the future: a new production unit delivering high-quality products**

The company's third generation, led by Stephan De Scheemaecker, understands more than ever that pigeon racing still has a future. That is stressed by all of Natural's

clients across the globe. The experience that the company gained over the past 80 years and its know-how on the sport have encouraged the Natural company to continue to



In this secondary cleaner the grain mixtures and seeds are thoroughly cleaned and dusted a second time, just before they are being packaged.



invest in our sport. A modern new factory, or rather an entirely new production process, has been initiated in Schoten this year. The goal is to better meet the demands and the needs of pigeon fanciers across more than 50 countries who would like to practice pigeon racing in a modern way, whether as a professional or a hobby player.

In October 2015 Natural Granen started working on an entirely new production unit in its pigeon feed factory in Schoten and we are proud to inform you that the updated unit has been operational since early May, producing ready-for-use mixtures fully automatically. You have probably seen the new packaging system with sewn bags. However, it does not stop there:



These are two of a total of five silo scales which weigh the individual ingredients of each mixture, as stipulated by the production instructions. It allows us to measure out each mixture with extreme precision.



This cleaner thoroughly cleans the grains and seeds upon delivery and removes dust particles. The state-of-the-art machine can thoroughly clean and dust twenty tons per hour.



The brushing machines give the grains a shiny appearance.

the most important improvements have been made to the mixtures themselves: thanks to the new production unit all mixtures are now being manufactured dust-free and they are precisely and evenly mixed, in accordance with the production instructions.

We also invested in modified silos, cleaners and secondary cleaners, new brushing machines, new mixers, new silo scales, a new bagging and packaging machine, a new palletiser, and a new stretch film machine. Needless to say, these are all computer-controlled installations equipped with the latest technologies.





The new mixers ensure a homogeneous composition of each mixture, making sure each mixture has a balanced amount of different grains and seeds.

Natural Granen strongly believes in a modern pigeon sport and in the continued existence of our hobby. That is why we continue to provide quality products at an affordable price, combined with our extensive expertise and with targeted advice tailored to the customers' needs. We included a few pictures which should give you an idea of our up-

dated production unit, which will not only benefit your wallet but will also benefit your pigeons' digestive system. We hope we can continue to win your confidence in the next 80 years as well.

*Patrick Philippens*



This 30-meter long bagging and packaging machine performs each step in the packaging process fully automatically: labelling, filling and sealing the bags, as well as palletising.