

Between sport and meeting

clubhouse of the Amsterdam rowing association K.A.R. & Z.V. De Hoop



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ABSTRACT

Although playing sports and meeting go hand in hand, architectural literature does not thoroughly delve into that connection. This thesis, however, is an attempt to grasp the theme through the study of the clubhouse of the rowing association De Hoop on the Amstel River in Amsterdam. First, historical context is provided. The clubhouse dates from 1952, at a time when several other rowing associations were rebuilding their homes that were destructed during the Second World War. Subsequently, a short note is made on the typology of clubhouses that specifically include a space to gather and spectate the sport. The core of the thesis regards an analysis of the three designs that architect Auke Komter made using mainly archival material. All the designs consist of a boathouse on the ground floor, whilst the clubroom is elevated on either the first or second floor. In order to optimize the space meetings, it can be concluded that several sitting areas as well as the flexibility of the space in general. In addition, a transparent facade attracts the members to the space to chat and spectate.

KEYWORDS

clubhouse, boathouse, rowing association, 1950s, Amstel river, Amsterdam, Auke Komter

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO THE FOLLOWING THREE PERSONS WHO WELCOMED ME AT THE CLUBHOUSE OF THEIR ASSOCIATION ON 24 FEBRUARY, 17 MARCH AND 31 MARCH 2023 RESPECTIVELY: AB STOKVIS (HISTORIAN OF THE ASSOCIATION R.Z.V. POSEIDON), PIM VAN OPPENRAAIJ, (BUILDING COMMISSIONER OF K.A.R & Z.V. DE HOOP) AND YOUP LEEUWENBURGH (BUILDING COMMISSIONER OF A.S.R. NEREUS).

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INTRODUCTION

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2. Letter regarding Rebuilding plans of Amsterdam rowing clubs, 1950, April 13 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 31010, 2333).
3. Translated from Dutch: “Schade Enquête Commissie”
4. Translated from Dutch “Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling”
5. Letter in reply to [footnote no. 2] 1950, June 15 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 31010, 2333).
6. Translated from Dutch: “Gemeentelijk Inspecteur voor Lichamelijke Opvoeding
7. In Dutch: Koninklijke Amsterdamsche Roei- en Zeilvereeniging ‘De Hoop’ (K.A.R. & Z. V. ‘De Hoop’).
8. See *Wenken en raadgevingen voor de bouw, aanleg en inrichting van gymnastieklokalen, sport- en speelterreinen* by Boer and Drenth.
9. Accommodated at Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam (KOMT.110310605)
10. Accommodated at Stadsarchief Amsterdam (489)

“*Build or undergoing on short-term*”,¹ wrote the secretary on behalf of the board of the Amsterdam Rowing Federation in a letter to Mr De Roos, alderman of the municipality of Amsterdam.² The letter, dating from 13 April 1950, described the predicament that five rowing associations found themselves in after the second world war and asked for financial support. Their predominantly wooden clubhouses along the Amstel River were dismantled by order of the German occupying forces for strategic reasons at the beginning of 1944 (De Brock, 1998). By 1950, membership had not yet reached pre-war levels which were partly explained by the repulsive effect of poor temporary accommodation. This in turn, as the Amsterdam Rowing Federation argued, affected the financial position due to reduced revenue from membership fees. The contribution obtained from the Damage Enquiry Commission³ was, moreover, far below the estimated construction costs to rebuild their clubhouses. In addition, the strict requirements of the municipality’s Urban Development Department⁴ created difficulties in approving building permits and as well in resulting additional costs. The federation thus concluded that the rowing sport in the capital was in danger.²

A new clubhouse was important not only for water sports’ characteristic “*sense of community*”⁵, as Mr Kuypers Jr. agreed in his role as municipal inspector of physical education.⁶ It would also revive the “*barren*” river (V. L., 1952, p. 4). One of the associations that have been contributing to the vibrant image of the Amstel River since her foundation in 1848 is the Royal Amsterdam Boat Club ‘De Hoop’⁷ (further: De Hoop). Until the year 1944, De Hoop had four clubhouses of which the last one was opened in 1923 and designed by Michel de Klerk (Landaal, 1998). The architect was known for his social housing plans and the Amsterdam School style (Wikipedia, 2022). The thesis, however, investigates the design of architect Auke Komter with which, in 1952, De Hoop became the first out of the five rowing associations to bring her new clubhouse to completion.

Komter was involved in post-war reconstruction, mainly at urban planning level in the role of supervisor. During his career, he designed all kinds of buildings, from residential houses to schools and retirement homes, and from interiors to a trio of war memorials (De Wit, 1978). His design for De Hoop’s clubhouse is the only design in the typology of sports association buildings.

Within the context mentioned above, the thesis aims to answer the following research question: *What is the balance between sport and meeting in the building of the Amsterdam rowing association De Hoop?* In order to fully understand the rowing club building, one is chosen instead of comparing all five on equal levels.

The topic of sports and meeting in relation to architectural design appears sparingly in literature. The sources studied are mainly manuals on the design and management of sports facilities. For instance, architect Jan Wils, in collaboration with Mr Scharro, second chairman of the Dutch Olympic Committee, published the book *Gebouwen en terreinen voor gymnastiek, spel, en sport* in 1925. This was two years before the Olympic Stadion in Amsterdam was completed to his design. Although the book is approached from an architectural point of view, it does not go much beyond technical aspects such as dimensions, and a range of examples. In 1941, a similar publication focuses mainly on gymnasiums⁸. Foreign publications also provide overviews of sports and associated facilities, such as *Sports buildings and playing fields* (1957) and *Sportbauten* (1982).

In addition, there are rowing clubs such as ‘De Hunze’ that publish their own books in which their boathouses are highlighted. De Hoop’s commemorative book *Aan de boorden* (1998) is a useful source in the light of this thesis.

The thesis is divided into two body chapters. Before uncovering the creation of the clubhouse, the first chapter provides context of sport practice in the 1950s as well as it tackles the layout of a sports association building. The second chapter begins with a discussion about the new place where De Hoop would build as it relates to the association's purpose. Three subchapters thereafter address the following questions: Which functions will be housed in the building and how is this expressed in the facade? What is the routing through the building in relation to these functions? Komter drew two drafts before arriving at the final design. How did they differ and which ideas were retained? Focus is put on the spaces that are meant for gathering and spectating. Central to this investigation in chapter two is the examination of the architect's archival material⁹. A thorough comparison of his drawings will be supported by primary sources like articles from newspapers and magazines. In addition, reported meetings and letters from the rowing association¹⁰ offer a wealth of information to clarify certain decisions.

To put Komter's design in a wider perspective, the designs of the four other rowing clubs and their post-war club buildings are discussed. While the first chapter de introduces them in the historical context, the next chapter builds on the findings at De Hoop's clubhouse in an attempt to grasp the relationship between sport and meeting. Lastly, the current state of the building is covered.

CHAPTER 1 - CONTEXT

1.1. DUTCH BOATHOUSES IN THE 1950S

11. Translated from Dutch: “Lichamelijke Opvoeding”

12. Translated from Dutch: “Landelijke Contactraad”

13. Translated from Dutch: “Het is jammer, dat ook met die botenhuizen weer meer naar herstel dan naar vernieuwing is gestreefd.”

14. Letter by “Amsterdamsche Roeibond” addressed to councillors of the municipality of Amsterdam, 1951, April 12 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 31010, 2333).

15. Minutes Extraordinary Assembly, 1949, April 22 (SA, 489, 12-18, 1)

While in 1941 Physical Education¹¹ becomes a compulsory subject at school (Boer & Drenth, 1941), the National Council of Contact¹² is established in 1949 to enable municipalities in the field of physical education, sports and leisure to cooperate in policy-making and implementation (De Korte). Two years earlier, the first edition of Sports Week Amsterdam takes place to highlight different sports (De Brock, 2019). It reflects a growing awareness that sport is a useful leisure activity for the motor and social development of human beings. Consequently, in the years after the war, the number of people joining together in sports clubs increases, partly because people have to work fewer and fewer hours. There is an increasing agonising shortage of sports fields and sports halls, but in the years after the war, the authorities’ focus was on restoring infrastructure, industry, agriculture and trade while building a large amount of housing (De Korte, 2005). Nevertheless, five Amsterdam rowing clubs managed to build a new clubhouse.

After De Hoop (1952), the student rowing association Nereus (1953) and the civic associations Willem III (1953), De Amstel (1954) and Poseidon (1954) followed with the opening of their new boathouses. In Groningen, rowing club De Hunze was also able to use its new boathouse in 1952 after losing the previous one during the liberation (Luiken, 1992). The buildings are a reflection of their time, about which the Parool, referring to De Hoop and Nereus, writes: “*It is a pity that even with these boathouses more restoration than renewal has been sought*” (1953, p. 2).¹³ Perhaps the writer is referring to the fact that the structures were erected with limited resources against high construction costs. Not only the associations, but also the municipality of Amsterdam, and in fact the entire country, was crabby after the war. Due to budget cuts, luxuries were stripped away, and moreover, the volume of the design plans was reduced.¹⁴ For De Hoop, for instance, they went from 10640 to 51000 cubic metres. In 1949, architect Mr Komter described his building as an “*expression of extreme austerity*”, but “*fair [and] reasonable*”.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the boathouses embodied a completely different architectural style in comparison to their precedents. Thus, architect and editor of Forum magazine J. Schipper pointed to the visible reinforced concrete structures, in an article in which he discussed three recently completed boathouses, that of De Hunze, Nereus and De Hoop respectively. Schipper opined that the architects intended this to continue the “*articulated character that characterises timber construction*” (1953, p. 229). As will be shown more comprehensively in images in the next chapter, the concrete skeleton, which was also used at De Amstel, was filled with brick and a lot of glass in the communal areas. Concrete, glass and steel were newly used materials during the reconstruction period (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.).

1.2 SPORTS ASSOCIATION BUILDINGS

Before highlighting the floor plans for De Hoop’s clubhouse in Chapter 2, this section looks more generally at the typology of sports clubhouses with an obvious emphasis on those of rowing clubs. Looking at it simply, it can be said that for outdoor sports, a changing and washing room in proximity to the sports ground is in fact a minimum requirement. Specific to water sports, however, is that first and foremost it should be possible to store boats and there should be space for boat repairs. Figure 1 showing a drawing by Jan Wils is an example of this. The second figure (page 10) contains a larger floor plan with changing rooms for ladies and gentlemen. It is the 1946 temporary boat shed of the Groningen rowing club De

Hunze. Regardless of size, these structures are semi-publicly accessible while located on or near public domain: the water. That is another aspect to consider. Spectators should be provided with a good view up and down the river from the building (Sudell & Tennyson Waters, 1957, p. 222).

The latter also becomes clear when studying a function diagram appended to a section on rowing and canoeing facilities in *Sportbauten* (1982). Besides the boat shed and workshop, which comprise roughly half of the buildings, it shows a juxtaposition of different spaces (Figure 3). For instance, according to the diagram, a club room or seminar room (number 11), like changing rooms, should be positioned on the waterfront, while on the access side of the site, the caretaker space is a logical place (12).

Returning to the statement that a changing room or shed can be sufficient, the article From changing room to club building published in 1959 is interesting. It includes an explanation of the 1954 report Spatial Possibilities for sports clubs' ancillary activities and concludes, among other things, that sports clubs have started to organise more and more activities "which are located outside the direct sporting sphere" (Studiecommissie Landelijke Contactraad, 1959, p. 462).¹⁶ Thus, it is increasingly the place where youth is present. To facilitate this, a space is needed, preferably as close as possible to or on the association's sports facility. Possibilities to this end have been outlined, starting with simply making changing rooms that can be formed into a room by means of removable walls. On the other hand, the committee considers it more efficient if "the changing and washing rooms and the room for ancillary activities are not the same" (Studiecommissie Landelijke Contactraad, 1959, p. 464). Thus, a choice could be made to separate those spaces into separate wings or to place the recreation room as a floor above the changing rooms. Although no rowing clubs are cited in the article, it is then obvious to place a club room above the actual boat shed.

16. Translated from Dutch: "welke buiten de directe sporttechnische sfeer zijn gelegen".

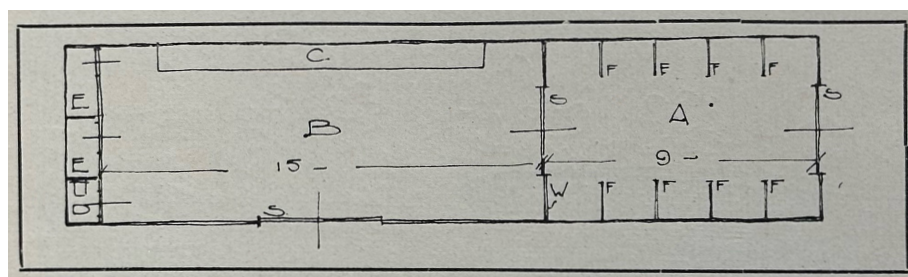


Figure 1. Type of a simple boathouse with storage for one-person rowing boats (A) and a workshop (B). From *Gebouwen en terreinen voor gymnastiek, spel en sport* (p. 214).

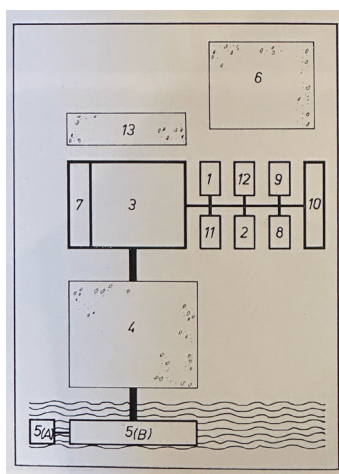
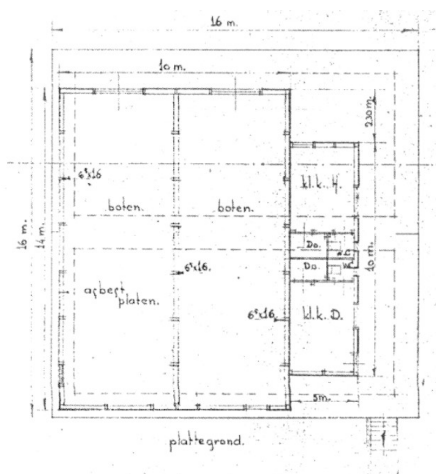


Figure 2. Floorplan of the temporary shed for "De Hunze". From *Botenhuizen K.G.R. De Hunze* (p. 33).

Figure 3. Functional diagram of a boathouse. From *Sportbauten* (p. 194).

17. See Stadsarchief Amsterdam: Beeldbank

18. A golf course generally consists of eighteen holes.

Considering the clubhouses of the rowing clubs on the Amstel before the demolition, however, space for side activities is nothing new.¹⁷ The clubs owned not only a boat shed with changing facilities but richly decorated clubrooms. They were not inferior to a regular pub here, as can be suggested from Figure 4. Similarly, as early as 1925, Wils suggests taking into account the cachet of the association when designing a boathouse (p. 209).

Finally, the clubhouse typology forms the architectural component of the theme sport and meeting in this thesis and is greatly linked to the golf sport. In golf, the clubhouse is often referred to as the nineteenth hole.¹⁸ In that light, it is not surprising that a number of several publications are done on just the planning of golf clubhouses. Golf clubhouse design came to the fore in the United States in the 1920s and the American magazine *Architectural Forum* published special issues in 1925 and 1930 on that topic. In the article *The Architecture of Country Clubs* (1925), the plan of the country club is considered to be divided into four clusters. The actual club area includes a lounge or living room that, according to the author and architect Roger Bullard, “must provide for the comfort of the members and furnished accordingly” (Bullard, 1925, p. 137). Here, the fireplace is the “*chief, and often the only feature of architectural interest*”, as Baum elaborates in *Interior Architecture of the Country Club* from the same issue (p. 146). As one can assume, gathering around a fireplace generates a homelike atmosphere and can therefore still be found in some of the designs of the clubhouses of the rowing associations in the 1950s in Amsterdam.



Figure 4. Clubroom of Willem III in 1941

CHAPTER 2 - DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESIGN

2.1. A SUITABLE SITE

19. Minutes Annual General Meeting, 1946, April 10 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 489, 12-18, 1)

20. Minutes Annual General Meeting, 1946, April 10 (SA, 489, 12-18, 1)

21. (SA, 437)

22. Minutes extraordinary General Meeting, 1946, July 5 (SA, 489, 12-18, 1)

23.. Minutes Board meeting, 1946, January 30 (SA, 489, 6, 1)

24. Translated from Dutch: “aan een vischkommetje”

25. Minutes Board meeting, 1947, June 3 (SA, 489, 12-18, 1)

Before going into the design of the clubhouse, it is relevant to explain how the building eventually ended up on its present site. Consulting minutes of meetings in the years 1946 and 1947, it becomes clear that there were different opinions within De Hoop.

Although the members were generally unanimous that there should be a (joint) “*rowing and society centre*”,¹⁹ the discussion continued about the location of the building which related to two components. On the one hand, the association revolved around the water sport of rowing and a location had to be chosen that would serve the rowers the most. Here the reasoning of member Mr Steins Bisschop²¹, namely that “*the financial condition of the Vereeniging is related to the name of the Vereeniging and depends on the results achieved at competitions*”, fits in.²⁰ On the other hand, Schipper stated that “*the sport of rowing has to depend to a very large extent on team spirit and that a clubroom for cultivating this is a precondition*” (Schipper, 1953, p. 229). Members of the club meet before and after playing sports and organise activities. So a clubroom, in a place that is easily accessible, is important.

The latter was mentioned as an advantage for a place in the Kom, an inland waterway in Amsterdam South, because most members lived in that district.²² The board inquired about this spot January 1946²³ with Cornelis van Eesteren who was then head of the Public Works Department (Wikipedia, 2022b). He indicated that until then no other rowing clubs had shown their interest. Furthermore, it had to be a low building to which high aesthetic demands would be made. The board did feel attracted to this spot on Hobbemakade across from the Apollohal because in addition to its favourable location, racing, youth and instructional rowing would be shown to their best advantage here. This way, training can take place in the Amstel Canal and the distance to the Amstel River is not too great.

In May 1946, the board felt that a plan for the said site could be submitted to the members. At the members’ meeting on 5 July the same year, however, many objections for that site emerged. Mr E. Zeegers, a member since 1922,²¹ argued that the site was “*too private*” and Mr Rijkers, a member since 1921, was of the opinion that De Hoop should not be located on a “*fishing bowl*”.²² Moreover, from a clubhouse in the Kom “*national matches on den Amstel*” could not possibly be followed. In addition, several members suggested urging the municipality of Amsterdam to reclaim the old site, next to the Amstel Hotel. After all, they were entitled to it, they felt. However, for the sake of “*urban beauty and urban development*”,²⁵ the municipality decided not to make any spots available for clubhouses between the Hogesluis and the Nieuwe Amstelbrug (Het Vrije Volk, 1951). Finally, Mr Hemsing, a member since 1925^x, indicated that they should make the club, in which the society is necessary, the basis for the decisions to be taken. According to him, the Amstel was not suitable for that while Mr E. Zeegers thought that was nonsense. In the end, the board did receive permission from the members present to commission architect Auke Komter, appointed in January, to make a sketch design for a building opposite the Apollohal. In addition, the possibilities for a building on the Amstel were to be investigated.



Figure 5. Map showing

26. Minutes Board meeting, 1946, December 11
(Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 489, 6, 1)

2.2. IN THE FISHBOWL

Although the new locations for the rowing clubs have not yet been determined, De Hoop believes it would be wise to go ahead with plans for a clubhouse in the Kom before applying to the municipality for a site on the Amstel²⁶. This section discusses Komter's first design, which he explained to the members in March 1947 (Landaal, 1998).

The perspective drawing in Figure 6 shows a building of five linked volumes with arched roofs on a base that rises above the quay. Komter is aware of the different functions to be housed in the building and gives the clubroom a prominent role. On the north facade, the external staircase with a vestibule marks the entrance. On the waterfront, three sections are raised from glass and set back slightly, creating a canopy. There is also a sequence of entries where Komter uses different internal heights (Figure 9). In the vestibule, there are a few more steps and the space is higher than the hall following it. From the hall, visitors can drop their coats on the left and take the stairs to the boat storage on the floor below. The boardroom is immediate to the right. After the hall, an open, rectangular space is reached from where the eye is led outside to connect with the rowers on the water. In this social area, or hall as written in the floor plan, there is a bar and fireplace. These elements create three types of seating areas: in the corner at the bar, in the other corner around the fireplace and tables on the south facade overlooking the Bowl. Adjacent to the room is a billiard room with space for two pool tables.

Komter seems to want to enhance the sense of space through the double height, as visible in the cross-sections (see Figure 9). The fireplace cannot be missed in this either. The hall has a floor above the westernmost nave. Like the hall, the floor is an open space, but Komter gives it two functions, namely a restaurant and a reading corner. The restaurant is given more surface area by a bay window that simultaneously provides an expression to the west facade.

The design did not find passage. In the Kom, rowing club de Amstel eventually built its new home for the same reason initially cited by the De Hoop board. For de Amstel, too, the "location in the middle of Zuid seemed very attractive" for club life, architect Arthur Staal wrote in 1954 in an issue of the *Bouwkundig Weekblad* (p. 222).

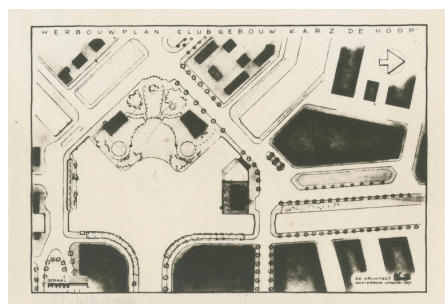


Figure 6. Site drawing Hobbemakade

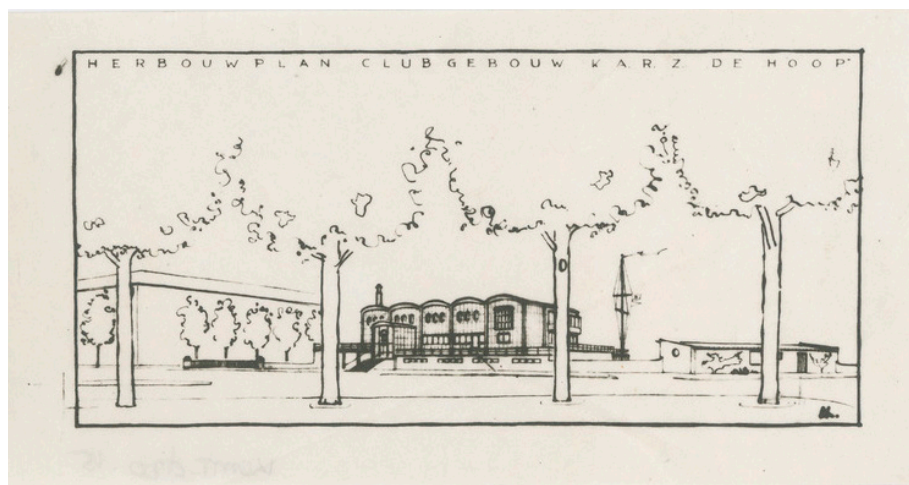


Figure 7. Perspective drawing from Hobbemakade

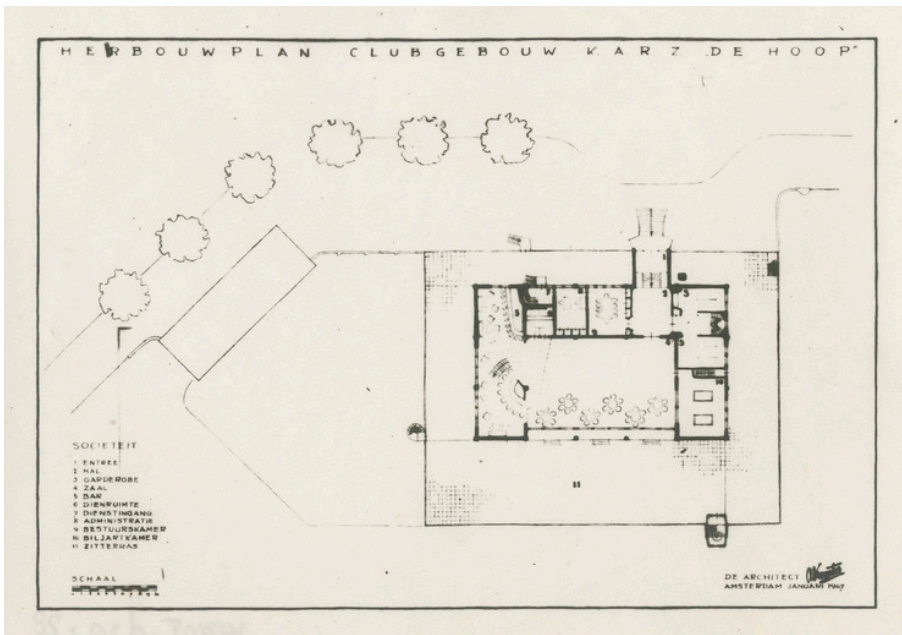


Figure 8. Ground floor plan

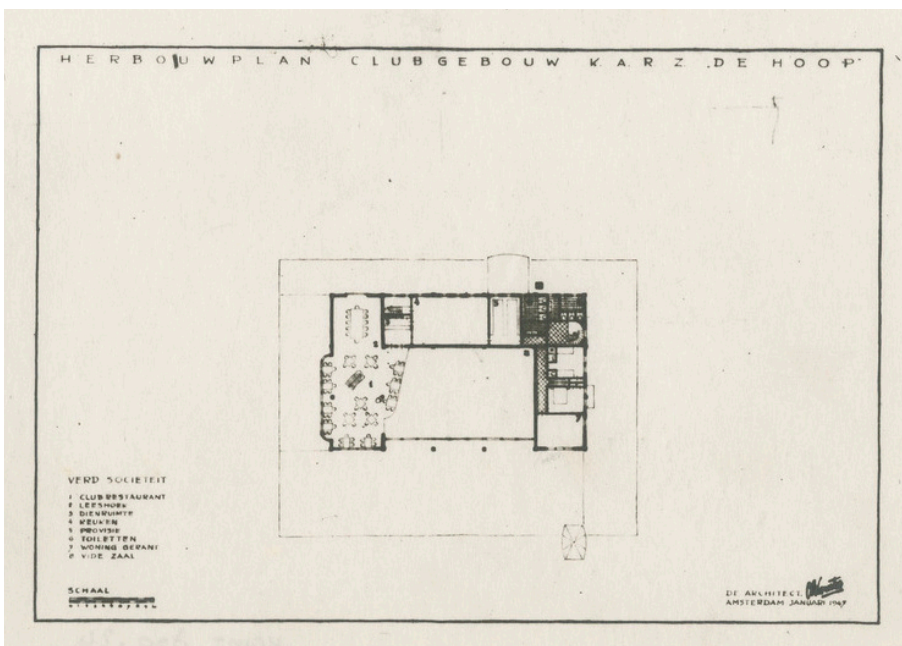


Figure 9. First floor plan

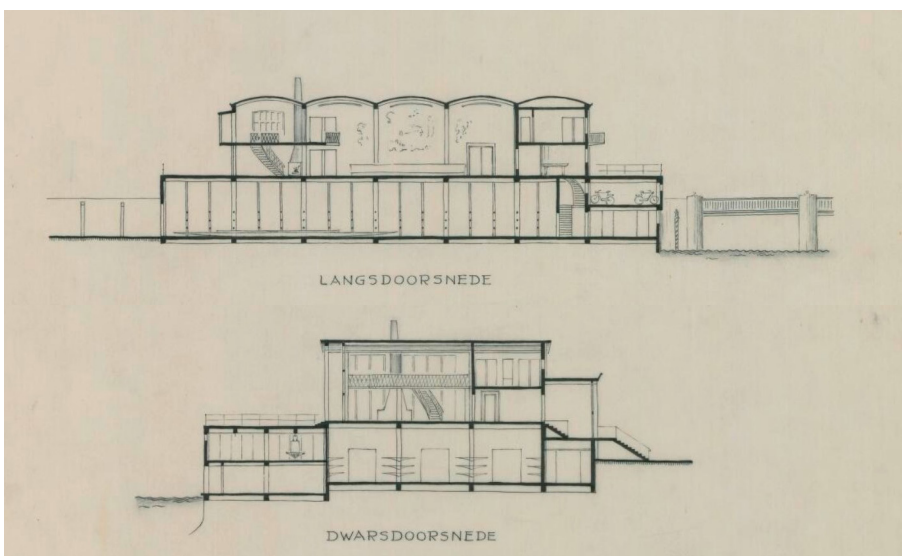


Figure 10. Longitudinal and transverse section

27. Minutes General Meeting, 1947, June 3
(Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 489, 12-18, 1)

2.3. ON LEGS

The General Meeting on 3 June 1947 aimed to reach a decision on the site. Board chairman Van der Leeuw informed the members present of the council's announcement two months earlier. "Five sites had been designated for the rebuilding of the boathouses, from which the Amsterdam associations were to make their choices by mutual agreement" (Landaal, 1998, p. 125). Once again, the issue was debated. Mr Hörchner, a member since 1938, for example, noted from an earlier meeting with Hoopleden and Komter that the wide and free waters of the river were desired.²⁷ Mr E. Zeegers also spoke of the attraction of the Amstel, there "where we have lain for 99 years"²⁷. The preference for a site along the Amstel over a site near the Apollo Hall became clear when voting took place. The majority then preferred a building north of the Berlage Bridge.²⁷ This allowed De Hoop to pin itself down to a site on the Weesperzijde at the level of Burmanstraat, where Poseidon used to be nearly located (Landaal, 1998). Komter made a second sketch design that differed considerably from the previous one in appearance.

Whereas in the first design, the society space remains within the rectangular volume of the building, this time Komter designs a society on the second floor that almost seems to float. He sets it as a self-contained volume on columns extended from one of the two ground-floor boatsheds, creating a partially covered terrace on the first floor. The effect is enhanced by a slightly sloping roof extended on the south side.

Here, too, the fireplace, which can be sat around in a half-moon, occupies a prominent place. There are several seating areas, a bar and billiard table, but the whole space looks tighter than the society on Hobbemakade, which was spread over two floors. Nevertheless, there is an oval-shaped space opposite where no furniture is drawn in. The floor plans also lack a description of the rooms, leaving one to only guess what the space was for. Given the rather compact social hall and high windows on the east facade, it can be suspected that it was a party room. Moreover, the society's monthly magazine shows that regular dance evenings were organised there in the 1930s.

This "ballroom" participates in accentuating the entrance on the north facade (Figure 11). The round shapes give the visitor the idea of "this is where I have to be". A rectangular volume provides a rain-protected platform with the entrance

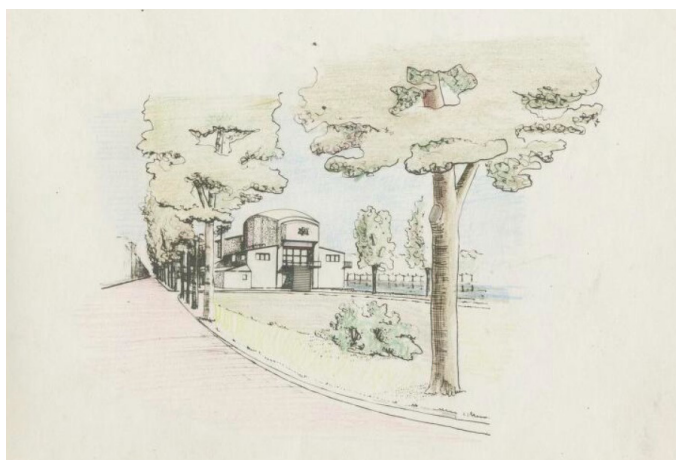


Figure 11. Perspective drawing from Weesperzijde towards North facade

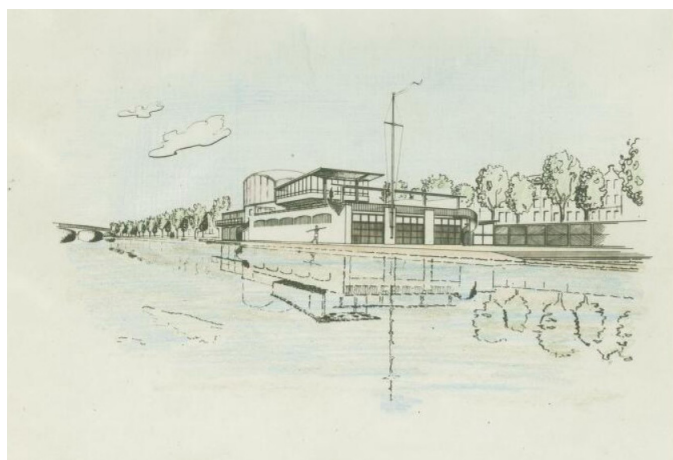


Figure 12. Perspective drawing from the Amstel River towards South-West facade

door set back slightly. Behind it is a clear corridor. On the right side are changing rooms and on the left a cloakroom with two flats behind it. At the end of the corridor is a stairwell that first gives access to the terrace before reaching the two rooms already discussed for promoting club life.

The board became concerned in December 1948 that plan would be too expensive and asked Komter to work on a “*simpler design*” (Landaal, 1998, p. 125). To clarify, the building was to cost a maximum of 220,000 thousand guilders. In April 1949, the new design was approved with reservations about the interior design, as there was no budget for this yet. Given the equity of 172,000 gulden, there was still a deficit of 58,000 in April 1950.²⁸ A few months later, however, the cost of construction was estimated at 320,000, upon which it was decided to first build the boathouses with a modest social hall (Landaal, 1998)²⁹. However, this did not come to fruition. Instead, the building was shortened by two longitudinal bays, merging the two boathouses. The floor plan in Figure 20 shows the design before this change.

Finally, in the transition from the second to the third design³⁰, the cross-section shown in Figure 15 on page 18 is interesting.³¹ The “ballroom” has disappeared and the building volume has been reduced to two-thirds. However, there are elements that Komter continues in his third design. This is discussed in the next section.

28. Letter regarding Rebuilding plans of Amsterdam rowing clubs, 1950, April 13 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 31010, 2333).

29. This can be identified through dashed lines in an elevation drawing, dating from 1 February 1950 (Het Nieuwe Instituut, KOMTd18).

30. Minutes General Meeting, 1949, January 29 (SA, 489, 12-18, 1)

31. Shown during extraordinary General Meeting 1949, April 22 (SA, 489, 12-18, 1).

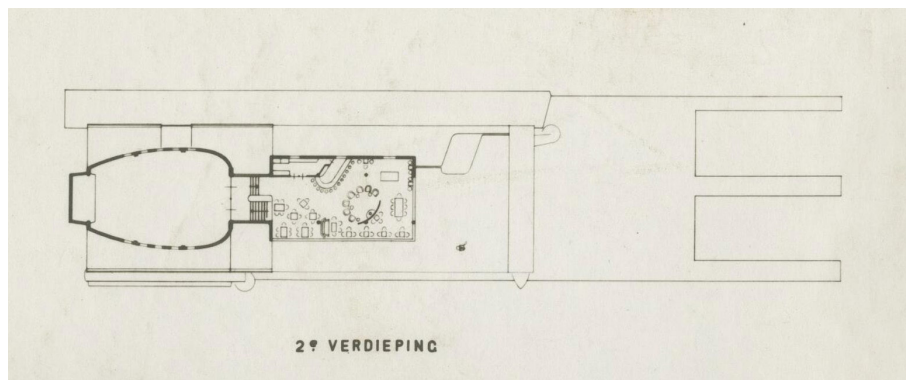


Figure 13. Second floor plan

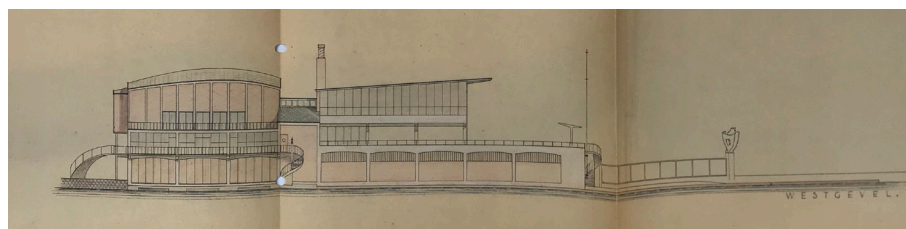
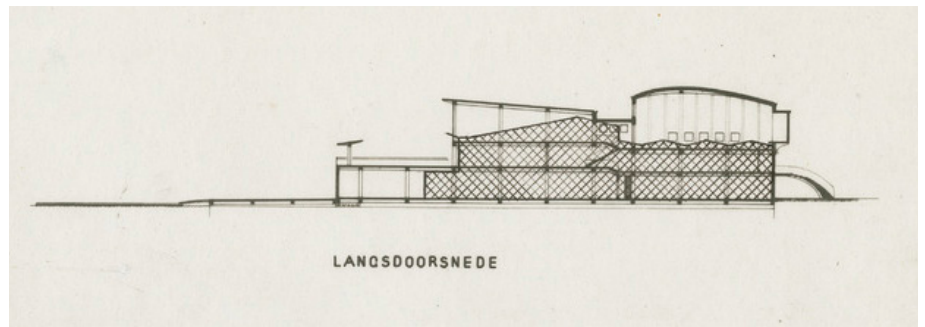


Figure 14. West facade

Figure 15. Longitudinal section of third design projected (hatched) on second design



31. Official organ of the Royal Dutch Rowing Association

2.4. NO MORE FIREPLACE

In February 1952, the sports magazine *Rowing*³¹ devoted a two-page article to De Hoop, which had just moved into its new clubhouse. The importance of this event was emphasised with the argument that the sport of rowing could again be exhibited on and around the Amstel River, so to speak. Although, according to the writer, the building could not match the “*proud palace*”, by which he was referring to the demolished 1923 clubhouse, within the financial challenges there is “*every reason to be proud*” (V. L., 1952, p. 4). The writer speaks of a spacious, functionally designed clubhouse.

In this design, Komter maintains the orientation of the building with the first-floor entrance on the north facade, and the clubroom with a terrace on the south. Also, the flats for the caretaker and boatman are on the street side, while the changing rooms are positioned on the waterfront. In addition, Komter seems to copy the spiral staircases on the south and west facades one on one (compare figures 12 and 17). There was a functional design idea behind this. Indeed, the rowers needed to go outside from the changing rooms to the boat shed and vice versa before entering the clubroom (Het Vrije Volk, 1951). The question is whether the other external staircase connected to the terrace could completely stop that.

As in the first design, the clubroom has a floor of floors. The height differences in this “*conversation hall*”, together with the transparent facades facing the water, promote spatiality, according to Schipper (1953). As can be seen in



Figure 16. Photograph from the Amstel River towards South-West facade

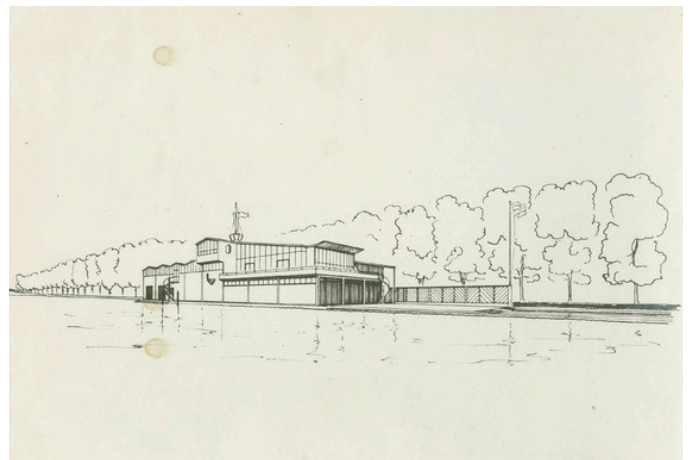


Figure 17. Perspective drawing from the Amstel River towards South-West facade

the images, the billiard room is in open communication with what is going on downstairs. The staircase in between forms an inviting element. Next to this room is the boardroom that protrudes from the red brick side façade. On that facade, The Point was placed. This was a “lead-clad ornament” that had survived alongside the flagpole, clock and main entrance door of the demolished building (Oppenraaij, n.d., p.1). The ornament marked the finish line and in the new building, this was to be reunited with the boardroom.

Furthermore, in this design, the society was divided into a club room and instruction room which could be separated with a removable wall. In this way, the instruction room can be added to the club room. This space was conceived as a party room, but if that was not agreed to, Komter said the large room could also be designated for “indoor training”.³² It was later decided not to make the wall, “because one does not want to lose the successful spacial effect”.³³ Indeed, the clubroom had been reduced in size due to the financial feasibility discussed in section 2.3.

Finally, it is striking that this design no longer features an open fireplace as had been envisaged in the two previous designs. Perhaps this was cut back and it was deemed unnecessary due to the installation of a central heating system. Nevertheless, the club magazine *De Punt* writes that in 1953 a pot-bellied stove was erected around which people “bubbled and talked”.³⁴ In the main hall, it turned out not to be comfortable in winter. The February 1954 issue describes the opening of the winter society in which “weekly club life” could begin to take place.³⁵ In this room, originally a storeroom, a fireplace had been built against the existing chimney on the initiative of some members. Furthermore, twelve people could eat there (P. H. van Oppenraaij, personal communication, April 14, 2023). While rowing was down in winter, the building was used for dancing every Sunday afternoon and for bridge on Tuesday evenings.³⁶ Like the previous clubhouse, this building again provided space for parties and table tennis tournaments.

32. Minutes extraordinary General Meeting 1949, April 22 (SA, 489, 12-18, 1)

33. Minutes Construction Meeting 1951, August 22 (Het Nieuwe Instituut, KOMTd18)

34. Kroniek, 1958, May (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 489, 707-711)

35. Opening wintersociëteit 6-2-1954, 1954, February (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 489, 686)

36. Derived from several issues from *De Punt* and its precedent: monthly magazine “De Hoop” (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 489)



Figure 18. Fire place in winterclubroom. From *De Punt*, issue February 1954 (p. 2).

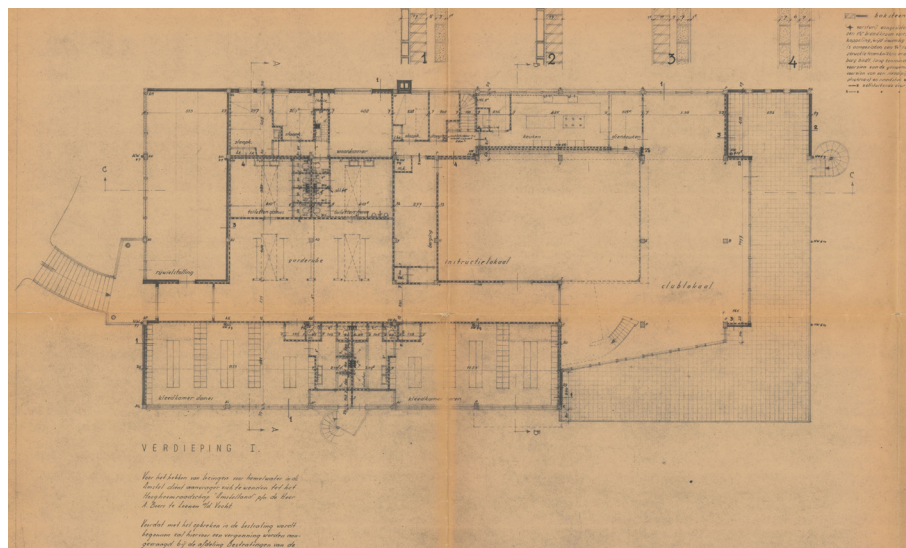


Figure 19. Interior view of clubroom towards elevated board room and biljart room

Figure 20. First floor plan



Figure 21-25. Top left to bottom right: interior of clubroom with view to Amstel River (20) and view to bar (21), interior of board room, terrace on westside, view to north facade with temporary wooden stairs

37. Letter regarding Rebuilding plans of Amsterdam rowing clubs, 1950, April 13 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 31010, 2333).

38. Booklet by “Herbouwcommissie” and addressed to (former) members with the aim of raising money, 1951, February (SA, 30581, 405).

39. Translated from “Nereus-hut”, as can be seen in floorplans and descriptions.

2.5. OTHER ROWING ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR CLUBHOUSE

De Hoop’s club building is not an isolated case. As already touched upon in the previous chapter, other Amsterdam rowing clubs were going through a similar period in searching for a temporary home, building a new home and reviving club life.

De Hoop, like Nereus and De Amstel, came to be located in the middle of the city so that all three designs’ functions fall within a rectangular two-storey volume. The public area extends to the façade which is used by city dwellers immediately after completion (Figure 26). The Nereus building ended the terrace that formed the extension of the Berlage Bridge, where a restaurant was originally conceived (The Telegraph, 1952). The municipality’s desire to make the building with the bridge into a “connecting whole”³⁷ as well as the “destitute state of Nereus after the war” led Jan van der Linden to eventually create five designs.³⁸

De Amstel got its financing done by having a petrol station for Shell erected on the corner of the site. Arthur Staal designed both buildings, with the image of Figure 30 characterising the architect’s vision. “The master builder wanted to see his

creation only in harmony with its surroundings”, said the chairman of the building committee (Strong, 1954, p. 222). A simple boat shed would not justify this (The Telegraph, 1954). Staal placed the clubhouse on the axis of the street from where it was possible to look straight through the clubhouse to the water. Moreover, with a dome on top of the clubroom, he suggested that this would be the club’s main space. The octagon was projected onto the floor.

Van der Linden also gave his design a dome by adding a space to the “Nereus-shed”³⁹ that gives a sublime view over the Amstel. This dome was recently renewed and made wider than its original dimensions. Through a glass front, the space can be closed off from the hall so that morning meetings can be held while late afternoon members gather for drinks (Y. Leeuwenburgh, personal communication, March 31, 2023).

Both Nereus and De Amstel, unlike De Hoop, had a fireplace in their societies when they were completed. Staal incorporated the fireplace into a wall with a prize cabinet and a bar. At Nereus, this was loose in the room, but a bar with an adjoining kitchen is conspicuously absent from the floor plan. Only the closed chimney now remains of the fireplace, while a bar in the corner serves the society.

Willem III and Poseidon found a site beyond the Omval, as shown in Figure 5 on page 13. For this location, the City Development Department of the municipality of Amsterdam set the requirement “that the future building should have its short side on the Amstel River and its long side on a harbour to be designed”.³⁷ This set their club buildings apart in design from the other clubs. As can be seen in the illustration in Figure 30, the club building at Willem III is in the centre, flanked on either side by a boat shed. Architects Helms and Van Pelt’s design for Poseidon is smaller in scale. Perpendicular to the boat shed is a volume of changing rooms with a society superstructure. The floor plan that accompanied the publication in the Bouwkundig Weekblad (1955) shows the word dance floor in addition to a bar, a pool table, a grand piano and seating. That the space could be put to good use for this was proven, for example, during a bar mitzvah celebration in which Poseidon’s “smooth floor provided [the opportunity] for the performance of all kinds of intricate New Israel dances” (Nieuw Israelitisch Weekblad, 1961, p. 9).



Figure 26-27. Exterior and interior view of the clubhouse of Nereus



Figure 28. Trophy cabinet and fire place in the clubhouse of De Amstel



Figure 29. Interior of the clubhouse of De Amstel



Figure 30. View of the northfacade of the clubhouse of De Amstel from Hobbemakade

Figure 31. Clubhouse of Willem III



Figure 32. Clubhouse of Poseidon at its opening.



2.6. RENOVATION AND EXTENSION

Komter's design put the changing rooms in direct connection with the boat shed via an external staircase. However, during a renovation and extension in 2009, they were converted into a small social clubroom and a residence. The brickwork was replaced by glass so that the entire west facade on the first floor offers a view of the Amstel River. New changing rooms were relocated below the boat storage, which was also extended, resulting in an enlarged terrace. On the south side, the terrace was surrendered by adding a small room in the style of Komter. This became the boardroom, while the earlier boardroom was turned into a committee room together with the billiard room. Furthermore, the entrance was given a new face. A glass volume was added from which the boat shed on the ground floor could be accessed directly. A spiral staircase leads to the training room and a vertical staircase parallel to the facade leads to the social rooms (P. H. van Oppenraaij, personal communication, March 17, 2023). According to the architects, the interventions led to a "desired separation" between "sweaty and clothed" (Arons and Gelauff, n.d.).

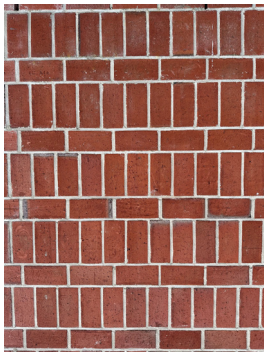


Figure 33. Characteristic masonry on the "new" east facade of the extended boat storage

CHAPTER 3 - CONCLUSION

The question central to this history thesis, namely what is the balance between sport and meeting in De Hoop's current clubhouse, can be answered from different angles. Functionally speaking, the building is twofold. On the one hand, a boat shed is tied to the dimensions of the boats, so a rectangular volume at the water level is self-evident. Dressing rooms can be positioned in different places in the building, but always in direct connection with the boat shed.

In addition, playing sports within a club is about contact between members, as well as encounters with opponents during matches. A building for the relevant sports association that includes a clubroom can facilitate that. Studying the three designs Auke Komter made in the late 1940s and early 1950s for the club building of the rowing association De Hoop, it can be concluded that in all three designs, the architect tried to stress that partial function of the building by expressing the clubroom and the entrance to that in the exterior. The pinnacle of this is the second design where Komter has been the most free-wheeling. The third floor has a bombastic appearance with two different volumes for a presumed party room and the clubroom.

From the inside, the following is typical. Whereas at De Hoop the double internal height and large glass walls make the clubroom a pleasant meeting place, at Nereus and De Amstel this has been addressed differently. Nereus has a dome as an extension of the clubroom. At De Amstel, the dome forms the roof of the clubroom.

*"Architecture is not a matter of money."*⁴⁰ So says Komter while presenting the third draft to members. Yet necessary budget cuts resulted in adjustments to the plans and the final outcome and thus in how the clubroom can be used. For example, in the first 1947 design, the clubroom was a large space with several seating areas spread over two floors. In the next design, it was more condensed over one floor. In the third design, the clubroom became smaller, but meanwhile part of the adjacent changing rooms became an additional small clubroom.

40. Translated from Dutch: "Architectuur is geen kwestie van geld."

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FIGURES

Fig. Frontpage. [Foto of rowers with the clubhouse of De Hoop in the background, presumably taken during a "grachtenwedstrijd" during ca. 1940s-1950s].

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