



The Binnenhof



The Binnenhof

The Binnenhof (Inner Court) is a square in the The Hague city centre. At the heart of it, one finds the Ridderzaal (Hall of Knights). The square is lined by parliament and government buildings. It is the heart of Dutch government. This is where the House of Representatives and the Senate meet, where the Prime Minister works and where the Ministers hold their weekly consultations. Once a year, the Senate and the House of Representatives meet in the Ridderzaal in a Joint Session of the States General. This session takes place on the third Tuesday of September, the day upon which the Dutch head of state presents the government's plans for the coming year in the 'King's Speech'.

The Dutch centre of government *a brief history*

Counts of Holland

In 1229, Floris IV, Count of Holland from 1222 to 1234, acquired a plot of land near a pond in the woods, on the border of the dunes and the polder. Probably, this area was already the site of a farmstead. The Count held court in 's-Gravenzande and in Leiden, but he wanted to have a hunting lodge between both towns on his own property. He ordered the erection of walls of earth and wood around the grounds. Floris IV had little time to enjoy his new property, however, as he was killed in France in 1234.

His son William II succeeded him as Count of Holland. He ordered the construction of two new living quarters, which were only joined together at a far later date (1511). William II's reign also saw the building of the square Haagtoren tower and, some time later, the rooms for the Countess.

In 1248, in gratitude for the military aid he had provided to the Pope, the Dutch Count was crowned King of the German Empire. William II's position as king obliged him to build a large reception hall, but due to his death in 1256, he never had an opportunity to use it. The hall was completed during the reign



Castle of the Counts of Holland, around 1300



The Grote Zaal (Ridderzaal)

of his son, Count Floris V. It became known by the name Grote Zaal (Great Hall), and later the Ridderzaal (Hall of Knights). At the time of its construction, it was a very impressive building. The living quarters of the Count were now partially removed from view, but the building in its entirety did gain the appearance of a real castle. Various other buildings were erected around the castle, such as sheds, workshops and kitchens. The name Binnenhof derives from the mediaeval inner court of the castle of the Counts of Holland.

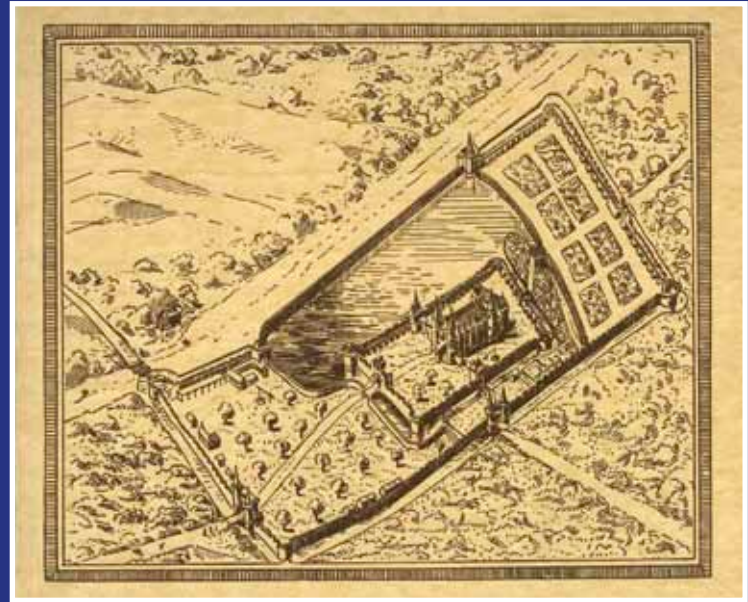
Floris V slowly but surely expanded his power and property. In addition, he improved the administration of the country. More often than his predecessors, he stayed at the castle in Die Haghe. This is also the origin of The Hague's official name 's-Gravenhage (the Count's Wood). The Hofkapel (Court Chapel), a small church to the north of the Ridderzaal that was torn down in the nineteenth century, was probably also built during Floris V's reign.

The Binnenhof was encircled by a moat and a wall with several gateways. These were surrounded by a number of the Count's estates. On the western side of the castle lay the so-called Buitenhof, which was where one found the cattle and the future site of the stables and the workplaces. To the east of the castle lay the kitchen gardens and the orchards, between the streets currently named Korte Poten and Toernooveld (an area that

also covered today's Plein, in other words). The Buitenhof and the kitchen gardens were also lined by a wall and a moat. There was a path running from the gate between the Binnenhof and the Buitenhof to the Gevangenpoort (Prison Gate). There was also a little road between the Keukenpoort (Kitchen Gate) on the southern side of the Ridderzaal and the Spui poort (Spui Gate), of which the outlines have been indicated on Hofplaats. Together with a gateway in the north-eastern corner (located approximately at the present site of the Historical Museum of The Hague), the Gevangenpoort and Spui poort formed the three outermost entrances to the castle. Of the three gateways, only the Gevangenpoort – whose name incidentally derives from its use as a prison from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century – remains. We do not know exactly when the Hofvijver was dug.

House of Wittelsbach and House of Valois

Due to the untimely death in 1299 of Floris's son John I, the House of Holland died out, as John did not leave any children. The County of Holland passed to the House of Hainaut. Count William III, who ruled from 1304 to 1337, ordered the construction of a new room for his daughters to the rear of the existing living quarters. The Hainaut period also saw the erection of the



The Binnenhof, around 1300

Ridderhuis (House of Knights), which offered shelter to visitors, in the north-western corner of the Binnenhof.

In 1358, the title of Count of Holland and Hainaut was inherited by Albert I, Duke of Bavaria, of the House of Wittelsbach. Like his son William VI, Albert lived almost permanently at the Binnenhof. Both the Binnenhof and the Buitenhof acquired all sorts of new buildings, such as a hawkery, a saddlery, a smithy and a bottlery. Artisans and traders set up near the Binnenhof, offering their goods and services to the court. This way, the settlement with farmsteads surrounding the Count's home developed into the village Die Haghe.

After a period of political and military strife, in 1433, Holland came in the hands of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, of the House of Valois. Since the Duke held court in Brussels, the daily administration of the County was left to a lieutenant called a Stadtholder. Several of the buildings on the northern side of the Binnenhof were now converted into his residences: the Stadtholder's quarters. Philip the Good, who in 1464 was the first ruler to call together all the representatives of the different classes (the nobility, clergy and citizenry) from the various regions in Bruges under the name States General, celebrated several major feasts with the knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece in the Ridderzaal.



The Rolzaal



Stadtholder William of Orange

Slowly but surely, the Binnenhof turned into a bustling administrative centre. In the mid-fourteenth century, all the classes (later called the States) of Holland had already convened here for the first time (at the time, they generally met in the cities). In 1511, the highest court of justice, the Court of Holland, set up in the original living quarters of Count William II, which had been joined and renovated for this purpose. The Court maintained its seat here until well into the nineteenth century. The hall where justice was administered, the Rolzaal (Roll Hall), owes its name to the rolls of parchment that listed the court cases and judgments.

The arrival of the House of Orange

In the early sixteenth century, a number of Dutch territories fell through hereditary succession to the future Spanish king, Charles V of the House of Habsburg. Upon his abdication in 1555, his son Philip II became ruler of these territories. 1568 saw the start of the Revolt of the Netherlands against Spain, the so-called Eighty Years' War. A remarkable feature of this Revolt is that it was eventually headed by Prince William of Orange (1533-1584), who had been appointed as Stadtholder by the King himself. Prince William did not live at the Binnenhof, incidentally. He did establish the dynasty of the House of Orange-Nassau in the Netherlands.

Ten years after the outbreak of the Revolt, the States of Holland decided to henceforth only convene in The Hague. After all, the 'village' did not hold a seat in the assemblies of the States so no city would be given undue preference. In 1581, a number of provinces (the Northern Netherlands) signed the Act of Abjuration, in which they abjured their King, Philip II. This event took place at the Binnenhof. On the occasion of this important historic move, the States of Holland offered the Stadtholder a magnificent feast in the Grote Zaal (Ridderzaal).

After William of Orange was murdered in 1584, his son Maurice succeeded him as Stadtholder. Maurice and his court set up in the Stadtholder's quarters. He ordered the construction of the Mauritstoren (circa 1585) at the corner near the Hofvijver. During the further expansion of the Stadtholder's quarters, the old gate leading to the Buitenhof was replaced by the Stadhouderspoort (Stadtholder's Gate), which was completed in 1621 and could only be used by the Stadtholder himself.

The Republic of the Seven United Netherlands was proclaimed in 1588 – during Maurice's time as Stadtholder, in other words. The general administration of the Republic fell to the States General, which consisted of representatives of the provinces that together formed the Republic: Gelderland, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Overijssel and Groningen. The States General gained a regular seat at the Binnenhof, as did the

Council of State, at the time a kind of advisory board that did not have much actual power. Virtually all the institutions and councils that had something to do with the government of the Netherlands could now be found at or around the Binnenhof: the States General, the States of Holland, the Council of State, the Court of Holland and the Audit Office.

Twelve Years' Truce and Peace of Münster

The war against Spain, which had started in 1568, was interrupted from 1609 to 1621 by the so-called Twelve Years' Truce. The negotiations about the suspension of arms were conducted, among other places, in the rooms of the States General along the Hofvijver. It was not until the end of the seventeenth century that presentable reception and conference halls were built here. The reception area was named after the negotiations for this truce (*trêve* in French). This hall carries the name Trêveszaal (Trêves Room) to this day; the Statenzaal (State Room) is located next to it. Both rooms are now part of the Dutch Ministry of General Affairs.

A dark page in the history of the Netherlands is formed by the execution in 1619 of the powerful, 71-year old Grand Pensionary Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. He and Prince Maurice were increasingly at odds about the desirability of the truce with Spain and about religious matters. On 13 May 1619, Van Olden-



Beheading of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt in 1619

barnevelt was beheaded on a scaffold in front of the Ridderzaal. After the Peace of Münster in 1648, which not only concluded a turbulent period in the history of Europe but also put an end to the Eighty Years' War, the Dutch Republic was recognised by all the signatory countries.

Stadtholderless Periods

Following the death of Stadtholder William II in 1650, several provinces, headed by the powerful province of Holland, decided to refrain from appointing a new Stadtholder. This decision was inspired in part by the political and religious conflict between the supporters of the House of Orange-Nassau, the Orangists, and the regents, the Republicans. The First Stadtholderless Period lasted from 1650 to 1672. The Stadtholder's quarters at the Binnenhof stood empty and the States of Holland took the opportunity to construct a meeting hall on a sizeable share of this area – a hall that was intended to symbolise their power and wealth. The Dutch Senate has been meeting in this hall since 1849.

In the Rampjaar ('Disaster Year') 1672, when the Republic was attacked by France, England and several German bishoprics, there turned out to still be a need for a central figure, in the person of a Prince of Orange as Stadtholder. The Grand Pensionary of Holland, Johan de Witt, was held responsible for the Republic's misfortune and was murdered by a furious mob in



The Binnenhof, end of the seventeenth century





Palace of Stadtholder William V with
the Balzaal on the first floor



The Hague. The successors to William II once again took up residence in the Stadtholder's quarters on the Binnenhof.

The provinces of the Republic each elected a Stadtholder separately, but in many cases, they chose the same person. For a long time, the province of Friesland had a different Stadtholder than Holland, however. The death of Stadtholder William III in 1702 marked the beginning of the Second Stadtholderless Period in Holland and the other provinces – William III had left no children, while the States of Holland had determined earlier that his office needed to be taken up by a first-line successor. Once again, the Stadtholder's quarters lost their function. In 1747, the States General decided to establish a general hereditary Stadtholdership, to be held by William IV, the Frisian Stadtholder and a scion of a different branch of the House of Orange-Nassau. He became the first Stadtholder of all seven provinces and moved to The Hague.

As a result, the position of Stadtholder increasingly came to resemble that of a traditional sovereign. It therefore comes as no surprise that between 1777 and 1793, a new prestigious wing was built on the south side of the Binnenhof for William V, the last Stadtholder. William V also ordered the construction of the Balzaal (Ballroom) which would later be used until 1992 as a meeting hall by the House of Representatives. This, for the time being, was the last of the new additions to the Binnenhof.

Batavian Republic and French period

In 1795, when William V was forced to flee for the advancing French forces, he took leave of his court in the Balzaal. The French revolutionaries and their Dutch friends proclaimed the Batavian Republic. Over a year later, a form of national assembly that had been elected by a limited portion of the population convened in the Balzaal. The parliamentary sessions could be attended by anyone and the balconies of the Balzaal were converted into galleries for the public. This national assembly was granted only a short life, however.

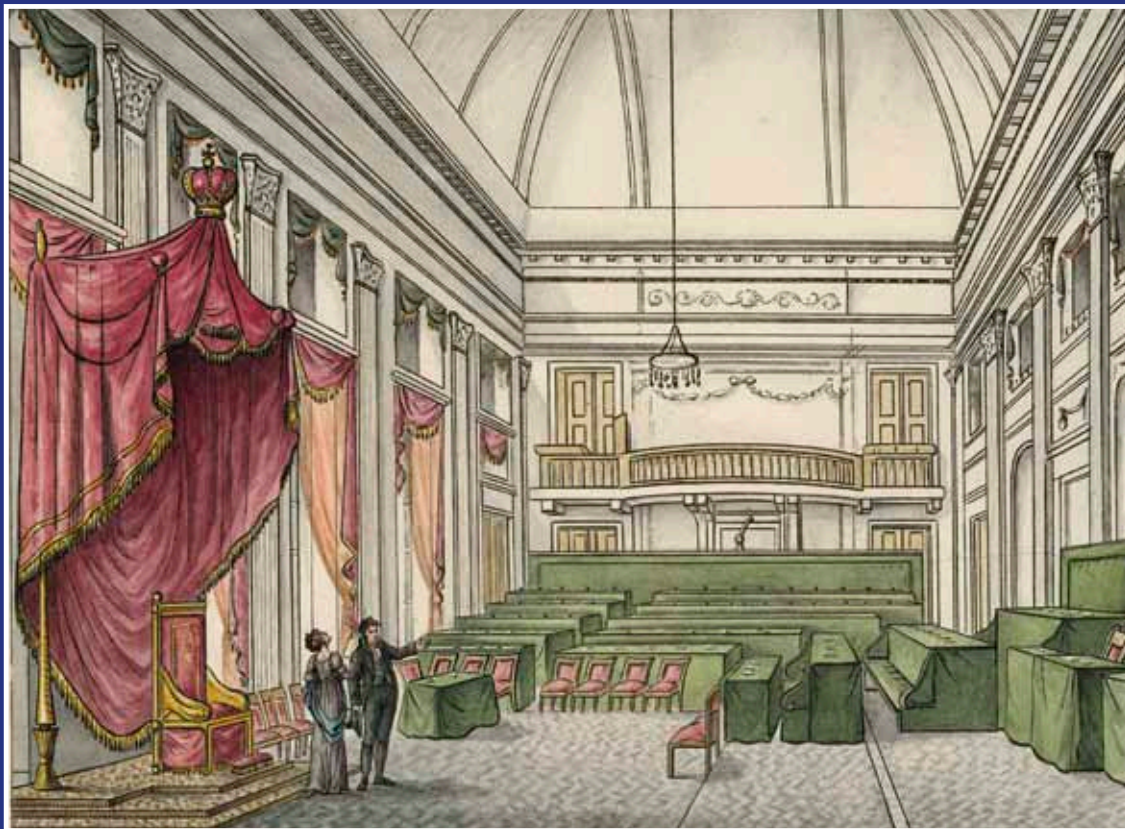
After Napoleon Bonaparte had seized power and proclaimed himself Emperor of the French, in 1806, he installed his brother Louis Napoleon as King of Holland. Louis initially lived at the Binnenhof, but eventually decided that The Hague was unsuited for serving as a residence and moved to Utrecht and, later, Amsterdam. In 1810, Napoleon deposed his brother and annexed the Netherlands to France. The buildings on Binnenhof were now converted into a school for military cadets. The Balzaal served as a dining hall for some time, but later became a military hospital. The French soldiers held drills in the Ridderzaal.

Constitutional monarchy

The French period ended in 1813. In November of that year, the son of the last Stadtholder William V, the hereditary prince of



French soldiers in the Ridderzaal



The Balzaal becomes the assembly hall of the House of Representatives, 1815

Orange-Nassau, returned to the Netherlands. He was granted the title of Sovereign of the Netherlands and was inaugurated in 1815 as King William I of the new Kingdom of the Netherlands. From 1815 to 1830, the Southern Netherlands (most of modern Belgium) were also part of this kingdom. The kingdom gained a constitution and the States General was reinstated. At the request of the Southern Netherlands, two Houses were installed: the Senate, which was chosen by the King, and the House of Representatives, which was elected by the wealthy citizens of the country. Until the secession of the Southern Netherlands in 1830, the States General assembled on alternating years in Brussels and The Hague. Both Houses continued to exist after the Belgian Revolution. The House of Representatives convened until 1992 in the former Balzaal, while the Senate met in private sessions in the Trêveszaal.

1848 saw a far-reaching revision of the Dutch constitution, drafted by Johan Rudolph Thorbecke (1798-1872). Ministerial responsibility was introduced and the power of the sovereign was restricted. Henceforth, the Senate would be elected by representatives of the provinces. They were assigned the former hall of the States of Holland as a meeting hall. In addition, the meetings became public. The other buildings at the Binnenhof were also reassigned to state institutions.

The Second World War

During the German occupation of the Netherlands (1940-1945), the Senate and the House of Representatives were abolished, while the Queen and the Dutch Government sought exile in London. The administration of the Netherlands was controlled by the German *Reichskommissar* Arthur Seyss-Inquart, who gave an address in the Ridderzaal during his installation on 29 May 1940. He set up his office on Plein. The German intelligence agency also moved into several buildings in and around the Binnenhof, turning the area into the administrative centre of the occupying forces.

After the Netherlands' liberation on 5 May 1945, parliamentary democracy was restored. In response to the rapid growth of the Dutch population, in 1956, the membership of the House of Representatives was increased from 100 to 150. As a result, more space was required by the delegates and their staff to work and meet in.

Building and renovating

The history of the Binnenhof is, in fact, one big train of construction, conversion, renovation and restoration projects. Time and time again, old spaces needed to be adapted to contemporary needs. There have also been moments of decline, decay and threatening destruction. In the nineteenth century, it was

even considered pulling down the Ridderzaal and several other buildings. In 1863 (when the Netherlands had been an independent nation again for fifty years), there were plans to build a new palace for the parliament along the Hofvijver. This plan was never carried out, but did lead to the demolition of the Hofkapel. This chapel was where the children of the Counts and later of the Stadtholders had been baptised, where marriage services were performed and where a large number of dignitaries had found their final resting place. The site of the chapel was used for office space that is currently being used by the Dutch Senate. Thanks to all the modifications, a variety of architectural styles can be found at the Binnenhof. The most recent and far-reaching renovation took place at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s. In that period, an entirely new assembly hall for the House of Representatives was erected on the south side of the Binnenhof. During the new construction project, a whole range of existing buildings were also connected to one another.



Interior of the Hofkapel, around 1878

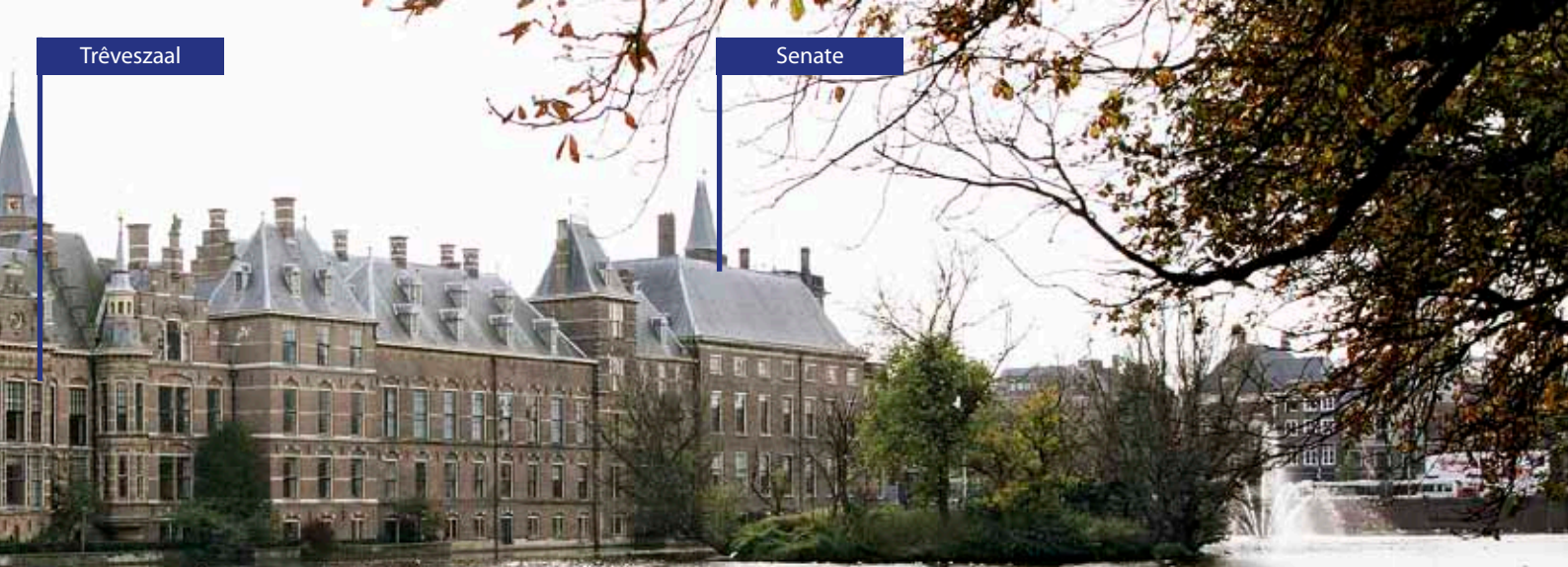
Torentje

Ridderzaal



Trêveszaal

Senate



Localising history *what can be found where?*

1. House of Representatives

The parliament of the Netherlands is called the States General. It consists of two Houses: the Senate, known as the Eerste Kamer or Upper House, and the House of Representatives, known as the Tweede Kamer or Lower House. Although the name might suggest otherwise, the Lower House has more authorities than the Upper House. The House of Representatives has 150 members, who are elected directly by the Dutch people. The elections are based on a system of proportional representation. Normally, they are held once every four years, but early elections can be called if the Cabinet falls prematurely. The House of Representatives is required to collaborate with the government on the drafting of legislation, but it also monitors whether the government implements the laws correctly. The delegates convene three times a week, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Since 1992, the House of Representatives has assembled in a large, semicircular hall on the south side of the Binnenhof. The contours of the hall can be clearly made out from Hofplaats. The hall is part of a sizeable complex, since a lot of space is required





Assembly hall of the Senate



Assembly hall of the House of Representatives

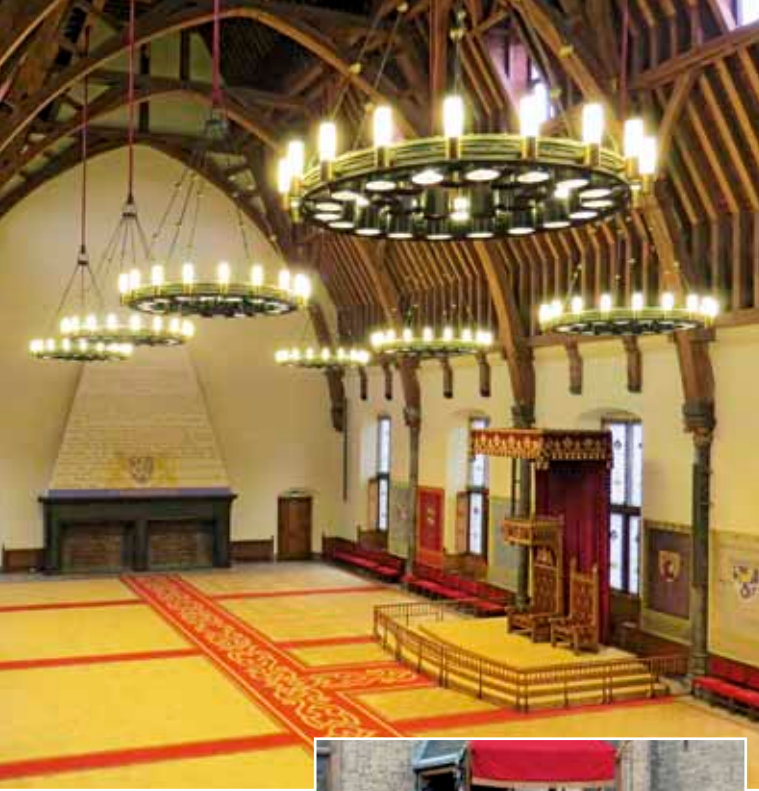
for the parliamentary delegates and committee meetings. The various buildings of the House of Representatives all come together in the covered Statenpassage (Central Passageway), which runs from Plein to Hofplaats.

2. Senate

The Senate is located on the north side of the Binnenhof – at number 22 to be precise. Since 1849, the Dutch Senate has convened in the former hall of the States of Holland, which is located on the first floor and can be seen from the Lange Vijverberg on the opposite side of the Hofvijver. In this hall, one finds a large painting of King William II (1840-1849), offered to the Senate as a gift by the monarch. The Senate has 75 members, who are chosen by the members of the States-Provincial. These elections must be held no later than three months after the provincial elections. The senatoren (senators), as the members of the Upper House are also occasionally called in Dutch, meet every Tuesday for their plenary meeting. In contrast with the House of Representatives, the Senate cannot change bills; it can however reject them.

3. Ridderzaal

Once a year, the Ridderzaal forms the epicentre of Dutch parliamentary democracy. This is on the third Tuesday of Sep-



The Ridderzaal and
the arrival of the
Golden Coach



tember. On this day, which is called Prinsjesdag (Budget Day) in the Netherlands, the King travels in the Golden Coach from Noordeinde Palace to the Ridderzaal, where he takes place on the royal throne. Here he reads the 'King's Speech' in the presence of the members of the Dutch Upper and Lower Houses. Such an assembly is called a Joint Session of the States General. The 'King's Speech', which is written by the government, describes the government's policy plans for the coming year. Another Prinsjesdag tradition is the presentation of the national budget and the Budget Memorandum (an explanation of that budget) by the Minister of Finance.

4. Mauritstoren

The Mauritstoren is the tall square tower located next to the Senate's meeting hall. It is best viewed from the Buitenhof. One of the rooms in this tower is the Ministerskamer (Ministers' Room), which is used by the Ministers and State Secretaries to prepare for the treatment of bills in the Senate.

5. Johan van Oldenbarnevelt

The stone plaque in the wall on the former site of the Hofkapel (north side of the Binnenhof) commemorates the execution in 1619 of Grand Pensionary Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, who had come in conflict with Stadtholder Prince Maurice. On the oppo-

site side of the Hofvijver, on Lange Vijverberg, one can find a statue of the Grand Pensionary, looking in the direction of the site in front of the Ridderzaal where he was put to death.

6. Trêveszaal

The Trêveszaal, which was taken into use in 1697, has served as the assembly hall of the Council of Ministers for dozens of years. The Ministers each have a regular seat at the large oval table. The Council of Ministers discusses and establishes the government's policy. Besides Ministers, the Netherlands also has State Secretaries, who bear responsibility for part of the policy within a Ministry. They are only allowed to attend the meeting of the Council of Ministers at the invitation of the Council. Together, the Ministers and State Secretaries are called the Cabinet. The entrance to the Trêveszaal is found at Binnenhof 19, between the Mauritspoort and the Binnenpoort. On Friday, the weekly meeting day of the Council, there is a to-and-fro of Ministers. The Trêveszaal is situated on the building's first floor and can be seen from the other side of the Hofvijver. The hall is part of the Ministry of General Affairs, which is headed by the Dutch Prime Minister.



Mauritstoren

Statue of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt at the Hofvijver



Trêveszaal

7. Torentje

The octagonal Torentje (Little Tower), which overlooks the waters of the Hofvijver, also belongs to the Ministry of General Affairs. The Torentje dates from the fourteenth century. Initially, it served as a summer house for the Counts of Holland, but it was later converted into a fortified tower. Since 1982, the Torentje has been the office of the Dutch Prime Minister, who is also known as the Premier. He presides over the Council of Ministers and is responsible for the coordination of government policy. In addition, he serves as the face of the Cabinet. Every Friday, after the meeting of the Council of Ministers, the Prime Minister presents the Cabinet policy at a press conference and in a regular television feature. The Netherlands Government Information Service (RVD), which handles media communication and public information about the Royal Family on behalf of the Cabinet, is also set up on the premises of the Ministry of General Affairs.



Torentje

Dutch Prime Ministers since 1945

W. Schermerhorn	1945-1946	P.J.S. de Jong	1967-1971
L.J.M. Beel	1946-1948	B.W. Biesheuvel	1971-1973
W. Drees	1948-1958	J.M. den Uyl	1973-1977
L.J.M. Beel	1958-1959	A.A.M. van Agt	1977-1982
J.E. de Quay	1959-1963	R.F.M. Lubbers	1982-1994
V.G.M. Marijnen	1963-1965	W. Kok	1994-2002
J.M.L.Th. Cals	1965-1966	J.P. Balkenende	2002-2010
J. Zijlstra	1966-1967	M. Rutte	2010-

8. Council of State

At Binnenhof 1, one finds a room that is used by the Council of State, the highest advisory body to the Dutch government. The other offices of the Council are located in the former Kneuterdijk Palace. The Council is mainly made up of former Members of Parliament, ex-Ministers and jurists. The Council must be consulted by the Cabinet on legislative bills before they are presented to parliament. Officially, the King presides over the Council of State, but in practice, the Council is chaired by its Vice-President. The Council is also the highest court of appeal in administrative disputes and in disputes between citizens and government.



Offices of the Council of State



Fountain with William II and the Ridderzaal

9. Binnenhof 1A

Until 1992, Binnenhof 1A housed the main entrance to the former assembly hall of the House of Representatives, which was located to the left on the first floor of this wing. This was previously the Balzaal, which had been built by Stadtholder William V. Today, the hall is once again used for meetings, conferences and concerts.

Near the entrance of Binnenhof 1A, one can find the Roll of Honour 1940-1945, a roll of those who died for the Netherlands in World War II. The honour roll has been placed on top of a memorial table and contains the names of some 18,000 members of the Royal Netherlands Army, the Royal Netherlands Navy, the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) and members of the resistance of the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies. Every day, a page of the honour roll is turned.

10. Fountain

Binnenhofplein is graced by a fountain surmounted by a gilded statue of William II, the Dutch Count and King of the Holy Roman Empire who ordered the construction of the Ridderzaal. The inscription on the fountain reads: 'In memory of William II – Roman King – Count of Holland – Supporter of City Freedoms – Patron of the Arts – Founder of the Castles in The Hague and Haarlem.'



Grondwetbank

11. Stadhouderspoort and sculptures

In the old days, the only person allowed to use the Stadhouderspoort, the western gateway between the Binnenhof and the Buitenhof, was the Stadtholder. To the left of the gate, there is a statue of King William II; to the right, a modern sculpture of Willem Drees, who as Prime Minister shaped the post-war reconstruction of the Netherlands.

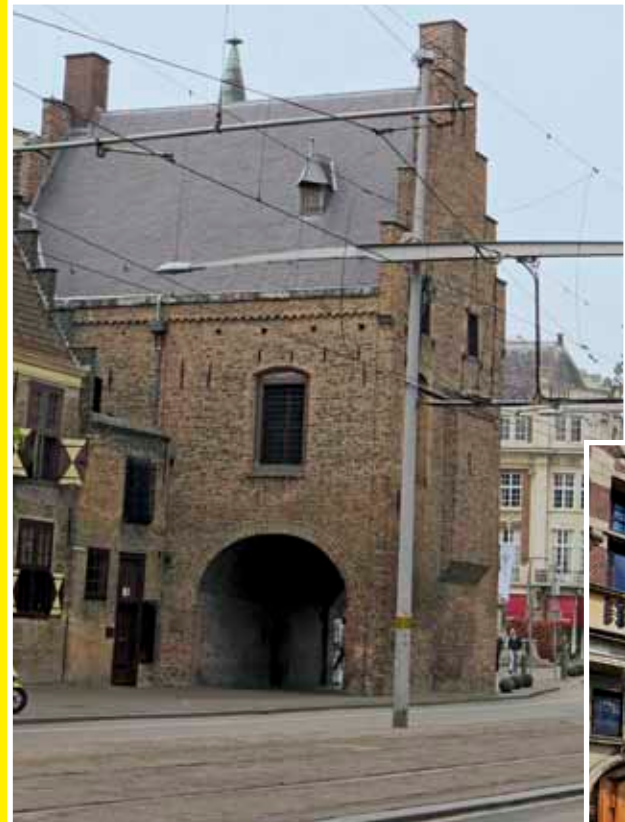
12. Grondwetbank

The Grondwetbank (Constitution Bench) is situated on Hofplaats. Article 1 of the Dutch constitution has been engraved on the bench: 'All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted.' The Municipality of The Hague presented the Grondwetbank to the House of Representatives as a gift in 1992, on the occasion of the opening of its new construction. Article 1 was added to the Dutch constitution in 1983, at the same time as a number of other basic rights.

13. Gevangenpoort

The Gevangenpoort (Prison Gate) was originally built as one of the three outermost gateways of the Binnenhof. From around 1420, the Gevangenpoort was also used as a prison of the Court of Holland. The coat of arms of Hollandia can still be seen on the wall. Suspects were confined in the Gevangenpoort, and tortured into a confession, after which the penalty was imposed: branding, flogging or the scaffold, for example. Cornelis de Witt, Regent in Dordrecht, was also imprisoned here on suspicion of conspiring against Stadtholder William III. Upon being released in 1672, he was collected by his brother Johan de Witt, who served as Grand Pensionary of Holland from 1653 to 1672. A few dozen metres from the gate, they were killed by members of the shooting club and subsequently hung and mutilated by a furious mob that mainly consisted of dissatisfied citizens and Orangists. Nowadays, the Gevangenpoort is a museum with a collection of torture devices. A statue of Johan de Witt has stood on the adjacent Plaats since 1916.

To the left of the Gevangenpoort lies the Prince William V Gallery, named after the last Stadtholder of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands (1588-1795). In this building, William V brought together a number of important paintings from his collection. There are currently some 150 works on show.



Gevangenpoort



Historical Museum
of The Hague



King's Cabinet

14. The Historical Museum of The Hague

The Historical Museum of The Hague is located on the vaults of the former north-eastern gateway, on the corner of Korte Vijverberg and Toernooiveld. The Museum documents elements of the history of The Hague, in the form of paintings, jewellery, furniture, models, doll's houses, medallions, etc.

15. King's Cabinet

The Netherlands is a kingdom, a monarchy. And the Netherlands has a constitution. This is why the Netherlands is called a constitutional monarchy. In such a system, the power of the sovereign is limited by the constitution. In the Netherlands, the King's function is mainly ceremonial and symbolic, but he is part of the government. He is brought up to date on a (bi) weekly basis by the Prime Minister. The King's Cabinet, which is housed in a building just outside the Binnenhof on Korte Vijverberg 3, handles the official support of the King and serves as a link between the monarch and his Ministers. In the nineteenth century, the building was the residence of the well-known Protestant politician Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer. During the Second World War, Anton Mussert, the leader of the National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands (NSB), held office here. On 7 May 1945, Mussert was arrested and taken away through a door to the rear of the building.



Mauritshuis



The former lodging of the Amsterdam delegates



The former lodging of the Rotterdam delegates

Kings and queens

Willem I	1815-1840
Willem II	1840-1849
Willem III	1849-1890
Emma (regentes)	1890-1898
Wilhelmina	1898-1948
Juliana	1948-1980
Beatrix	1980-2013
Willem-Alexander	2013-

16. Mauritshuis

The Mauritshuis, built between 1633 and 1644, served from 1685 on as a kind of hotel where guests of the States General were accommodated. It is currently a museum, exhibiting paintings by leading painters of the Dutch Golden Age like Frans Hals, Jan Steen, Rembrandt, Paulus Potter and Johannes Vermeer. From the Mauritshuis, one has a good view of the high-rises of a number of Ministries near The Hague's Central Station.

17. Plein

The main entrance to the Dutch House of Representatives is found on Plein (Square), the former site of the kitchen gardens of the Counts of Holland. Plein itself was laid out in the seventeenth century. Before the construction of the new premises

of the House of Representatives, the building of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands stood on the site of the main entrance. At the time of the Dutch Republic, numbers 4 and 23 housed the lodgings of the delegates of the States of Holland of Rotterdam and Amsterdam respectively. The coats of both cities can still be clearly made out. During the Second World War, *Reichskommissar* Arthur Seyss-Inquart held office in the Amsterdam lodgings. At the centre of Plein stands a statue of William of Orange, 'Father of the Fatherland', who led the Dutch Revolt against the King of Spain in the second half of the sixteenth century. The elongated building to the rear of the statue is Sociëteit De Witte, a venue for 'conviviality and a permissible opportunity to be out and about'. Nowadays, Plein very regularly serves as a backdrop for demonstrations and protest meetings.

18. Former Ministry of Colonies

To the right of the main entrance of the House of Representatives on Plein are the former offices of the Ministry of Colonies, which was built in 1859-1860. Over the past centuries, the Netherlands had a number of colonies, of which the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia) was by far the most important. After fierce struggle, the country gained its independence in 1949. New Guinea and Suriname belonged to the Kingdom of the Netherlands until 1961 and 1975 respectively. Today, six Car-

ibbean islands are still part of the Kingdom, of which three – Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten – have an independent status. The other three islands are special municipalities. The building of the Ministry of Colonies is currently used by members of the House of Representatives.

19. Former Ministry of Justice

The building on the corner of Lange Poten and Plein also houses offices of Members of Parliament. Until the end of the 1970s, the Ministry of Justice was located in this building. Also found in the building is the so-called Handelingenkamer (Proceedings Room), where the reports of the parliamentary proceedings are kept.

20. Nieuwspoor

The Nieuwspoor International Press Centre, which has its entrance on Lange Poten, is where journalists, politicians, public information officers and lobbyists come together. Nieuwspoor is of vital importance to reporters as a source of parliamentary news. It frequently hosts press conferences and presentations. And from time to time, politicians leak relevant information to the press here. In these cases, everyone is expected to honour the so-called Nieuwspoor Code: they are permitted to use the



The former
Ministry of
Colonies
building



The former Ministry of Justice



Handelingenkamer

information, but without mentioning the loose-tongued politician by name.

21. Perstoren

On the corner, next to the bulge of the House of Representatives on Hofplaats, stands the Perstoren (Press Tower). This is where the media are set up. Openness and transparency are of key importance in a democracy. And the media play a prominent role in this process: they provide information and contribute to the debate.



Entrance to Nieuwspoor

Press Tower

Buildings old and new around the Ridderzaal: thanks to numerous renovations and restorations, people can still make intensive use of the buildings on the Binnenhof. As a result, they will remain aware of the ongoing relationship between yesterday, today and tomorrow.

At the Binnenhof, Members of Parliament and Ministers engage in politics; in the corridors of the parliamentary maze you can also come across civil servants, political assistants, journalists and lobbyists. Whether you have come here to view the buildings, to attend an assembly of one of the two Houses, to hold a demonstration, to present a petition or to join in the festivities of Prinsjesdag: the Binnenhof is, despite its age, still alive and kicking.

Entrance to the House of Representatives on Plein



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1. House of Representatives
2. Senate
3. Ridderzaal
4. Mauritsstoren
5. Johan van Oldenbarnevelt
6. Trêveszaal
7. Torentje
8. Council of State
9. Binnenhof 1A
10. Fountain
11. Stadhouderspoort
12. Grondwetbank
13. Gevangenpoort
14. Historical Museum of The Hague
15. King's Cabinet
16. Mauritshuis
17. Plein
18. Former Ministry of Colonies
19. Former Ministry of Justice
20. Nieuwspoort
21. Perstoren

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