THE DUTCH RUSH: HISTORY AND MYTH OF THE *EQUISETUM* TRADE

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ABSTRACT

In England in the early 19th century at least two products went by the commercial name Dutch Rush, *viz.* the Rough Horsetail *Equisetum hyemale* L. used in cabinet making and similar crafts, and the Common Club-rush/Bulrush *Schoenoplectus lacustris* (L.) Palla used in matting and chair manufacturing. Some authors did not heed the scientific names and confused the properties and geo-cultural backgrounds of both products. Thus the myth took hold that *E. hyemale* was in culture in the Netherlands and that is was deliberately planted and cared for to protect that country from the sea. Scarce but widespread evidence of trade reveals that this species was economically insignificant. The idea that it owes its common name to imports from Holland could be correct; however, other parts of North and Central Europe, especially the upper Rhine Valley, are more likely to be the original sources from where the Dutch obtained the plants. North America can be reasoned to be an alternative origin, but evidence for this hypothesis is still lacking.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the sixteenth century, many authors in a number of Western European countries have reported the use of *Equisetum hyemale* L. by various trades (e.g. Fuchs, 1543; Gerarde, 1597; Bock & Sebisch, 1630; Pexenfelder, 1670; Ruppe & Haller, 1745; Anon., 1749; Pernety, 1771; Krünitz, 1785; J. E. Smith, 1802; Headrick, 1813; Stewart, 1815; Phillips, 1818; Hooker, 1821; Gill, 1822). Material evidence of its use is found in inventories of workshops (e.g. Giskes, 1979) and characteristic scratches from its siliceous skin on antique woodcraft (Esterly, 1998). In addition, several authors during the past two centuries showed that the vernacular name "Dutch Rush" used in England relates to large-scale imports from Holland¹ (Pratt, 1846; Francis, 1851; Johnson & Sowerby, 1856; Moore, 1861; Pratt, 1866). Up to the present day the statement is repeated frequently (Weeda *et al.*, 1985; Øllgaard & Tind, 1993; Page, 1997). The apparent source to which this can be traced back is Edward Newman (Newman, 1842, 1844), who also noted that the species was cultured in Holland and played an important role in the defence of the coast against the eroding action of the sea:

"... for this purpose it is imported, under the name of "Dutch Rush" in large quantities, from Holland, where it is grown on the banks of canals and on the sea ramparts, which are often bound together and consolidated by its strong and matted roots."

¹Wherever the toponym Holland is used, literal citations excepted, it is to be understood in the strict sense, i.e. the western part of the Netherlands, or the present provinces Noord-Holland and Zuid-Holland.

Name	Source
Shave-grass	(discussion in this paper)
Dutch Rush	(discussion in this paper)
Rough horsetail	From the French/Latin <i>asprella</i> (de Winter, 2012), introduction unknown
Dutch shave-grass	species list of Scarborough (Hinderwell, 1811)
Holland rushes	In advertisements (Glover, 1843; Measom, 1861)
Dutch reed	rarely (Bailey, 1756; Martin, 1813; Henslow, 1839; Trimmer, 1842)
polishing rushes	customs' duties lists (Burn et al., 1831; Parnell, 1831; Ellis, 1837)
shave weed	(Aubrey, 1848)
shauynge gyrs	(Turner, 1538)
dyßhewaßhynges	(Turner, 1538)
Pewterwort	e.g. (Withering, 1776; Targioni Tozzetti, 1813; Wilkinson, 1858)
scouring[-]rush	American (Law Olmstedt et al., 1924)

Table 1. Vernacular names used in British English

This is at odds with the ecological preferences of the species, as well as with both its historical and present day distribution (de Winter, 2007). These problems can be summarised under three main points:

- 1. the alleged abundance of *E. hyemale* in Holland finds no evidence in its current distribution in that country, nor is it supported in historical Dutch reports;
- 2. the reported occurrence and even cultivation of *E. hyemale* along canals and the practice of using it for the solidification of dykes, dunes, or any kind of coastal protection constructions finds no reference in Dutch literature, nor in the present distribution and habitat preferences of European *E. hyemale*;
- 3. the plant detailed by Newman by its size and number of ridges suggests American *E. hyemale* subsp. *affine* (Engelm.) Calder & Roy L.Taylor rather than European *E. hyemale* subsp. *hyemale*, which casts doubt on the continental origin of the merchandise.

If these doubts are well-founded, then the question must be addressed as to whether *E. hyemale* really was imported from Holland to England, and where the origin should be sought of the plants sold on London markets.

HISTORY OF THE NAME "DUTCH RUSH"

A number of vernacular names have been used for *E. hyemale* in English, but most of them never became popular and have disappeared into oblivion (Table 1). The oldest historic one is "shave-grass", which was first recorded in the 14th century: "*Cauda equina, cauda Caballina idem est. angl,* schauegres" (Anon., 1350-1400; Lancaster, 1887; Murray, 1971). To *shave* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *scafan* through the Old English *shaven*, and Middle English *schaven/schafen* (Flexner & Hauck, 1993), whence there is a direct relation with the Old High German *scafthawi* (Graff, 1838) and the Dutch stem *schaaf* - as in *schaafstro* (de Winter, 2012). Although the verb "to shave" at present is predominantly used to refer to the process of removing the beard, the general meaning is to make a surface smooth (Webster, 1913). The name is continuous through Turner (1538) and Gerard (1597). "Shave-grass" has been largely replaced now by the more official "rough horse-tail" (Bolton, 1790; J. E. Smith, 1802), and "Dutch Rush".

The latter name has been in use since around 1700 and first appears in manuals of practical trades (C.K., 1701; Artlove, 1730; Barrow, 1735; Anon., 1754; Dossie, 1758). Eighteenth century dictionaries show a more conservative attitude towards this emerging name and strictly print "shave-grass". The name "Dutch Rush" therefore remains dormant in written language until the second edition of the cryptogamic volume of William Withering's *Botanical Arrangement* was published (Withering, 1792), in which the name "Dutch Rush" is used equivalent to "Shave-grass". The *Botanical Arrangement* was an immediate and sustained success that would see many reprints (Lee, 2001). Inclusion in this work apparently made the name "official" and acceptable for use in subsequent publications (Figure 1). This pattern strongly suggests that since the onset of the eighteenth century something has changed that made people name the product by its origin rather than its purpose. Just assuming that the increasing trade with the low countries flooded the market with Dutch horsetails seems unsatisfactory as an explanation. A size and/or quality difference as suggested by Newman might have changed the perception and initiated the desire to distinguish the new product by name.

IMPORTS OF HORSETAILS INTO BRITAIN

Even though *E. hyemale* is not especially rare in Britain (Wardlaw & Leonard, 2005), it was certainly felt so (Camden, 1722; James, 1745). Since urbanisation and industrialization in England started long before the invention and acceptance of sand paper in the mid 19th century, it is conceivable that here, more than elsewhere in Europe, the discrepancy was felt between urban demand and rural supply. Especially the reconstruction of London after the fire (1666) may have elevated the demand.

The earliest account of exports from the Netherlands are found in a manuscript of the late 17th century by John Aubrey (Aubrey, 1847): "Watchmakers and fine workers in brasse use it after smooth filing. They have it from Holland". This can be dated more exactly, for in a letter to John Ray of August 5, 1691 he writes: "Shave-weed used by artists (which they have from Holland)" (Aubrey, 1848).

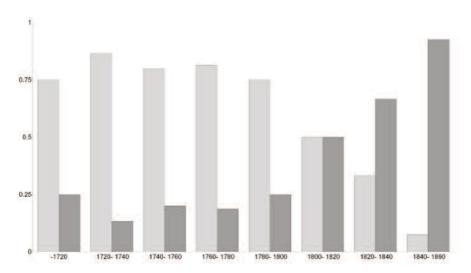


Figure 1. Relative usage of the names "Dutch Rush" (darker bars) and "Shave-grass" (lighter bars) in English literature from 1720-1860. Counts made per 20 years periods, based on 178 printed publications, not including advertising.

The demand declined when glass paper came into use, but it never completely disappeared. In the USA it was still advertised in 1938 (Kaliban's Grocery and Market, 1938). Nowadays some still prefer it to scrape their clarinet reeds (Intravaia & Resnick, 1965; Taillard & Dalmont, 2012).

Testimony of imports into England, which lasted more than one and a half centuries, exists in lists of import duties of the English customs (Burn *et al.*, 1831; Parnell, 1831; Ellis, 1837), but is absent in earlier legislation (e.g. Steel, 1796). Often the horsetails could be imported, transported, and exported tax-free (de Martens & Murhard, 1836; Anon., 1837; MacGregor, 1843; Anon., 1849a, 1853, 1858) or they were not considered important enough to justify their own category (Koninkrijk der Nederlanden, 1816, 1822). As a consequence, no accounts of their trade were kept and they do not show in yearly statistical surveys (Departement van Financiën, 1848). England and Holland were the two countries with the worst kept statistics on agriculture and trade (MacGregor, 1843). Yet, although far from complete, a few statistics of the early period remain, covering the imports into the port of London and allowing sampling of the existing data of imports of *E. hyemale*. However, in all of them the horsetail trade is conspicuous by its absence, *viz.* in January 1683 (Houghton, 1728), from May to October 1735 (Anon., 1735), and from January to June, 1776 (Whitworth, 1777b, 1777a).

In the nineteenth century Dutch newspapers meticulously reported freight loaded and unloaded per port, frequently even per ship. Any product of trade of any importance would be expected to be listed. Nonetheless horsetails are not mentioned by any of their known names. With one exception, however: in the second half of 1855, 142 inland navigation barges with in total 6050 bundles of shave-grass arrived in Brussels (Anon., 1856). Estimating the total volume of *Equisetum* transported requires acquaintance with the size of such a bundle, which we do not know. A rough estimate for a bundle of 80 cm perimeter (as is used at present for bulrushes: de Vries, 2008) would be 500 – 1000 stems. Given that dense stands have 200 – 500 stems per m² (Rutz & Farrar, 1984), the annual production for Brussels only would have required the depletion of c. 0.6 – 3 ha. Such small amounts could easily have been found on Belgian territory, but apparently for reasons of quality or cost, long-distance transport per ship was more attractive.

In the mid-nineteenth century, exports of reeds and rushes to Britain exceeded those to Belgium by about 50% (Departement van Financiën, 1848) and if the export of horsetail may be estimated proportionally to this, the economic value must have been insignificant. John Yeats, an English commercial-geographer, who lived in Holland in 1845/46, compares E. hyemale, which "is occasionally imported from Holland" with Scirpus lacustris L. (now Schoenoplectus lacustris (L.) Palla), saying that "Many vessels laden with this rush arrive annually in England from Holland and Belgium, bringing thirty or forty tons of rushes each voyage. This is a very large quantity considering the lightness of the material. More than 1,000 tons of bulrushes are annually imported into the United Kingdom" (Yeats, 1870). It should be noted, though, that these figures stem from the second half of the nineteenth century, when the use of E. hyemale was already on the decline in favour of sandpaper, of which mass production in London had started by 1833. But also much earlier, in 1827, international horsetail trade was but marginal. From an example record of the net produce of customs duties it can be deduced that the total value of polishing rushes legally imported into Britain must have been £13.25 for that year (Parnell, 1830).

CULTIVATION AND CARE IN HOLLAND: COAST PROTECTION

Newman's statement, that the Dutch grew *E. hyemale* "on the sea ramparts, which are often bound together and consolidated by its strong and matted roots" (Newman, 1844), is repeated with slight variations in later literature. The authors obviously have copied each other in sequence, rephrasing the allegation without adding new observations:

"it is grown on the banks of canals and on the sea ramparts, which are often bound together and consolidated by its strong and matted roots" (Newman, 1844)

"The Dutch are well acquainted with the value of its long and matted roots in restraining the wasting effects of the ocean, which would soon undermine their dykes were it not for the *Equisetum hyemale* which is planted upon them" (Francis, 1851)

"the plant is of immense value in its native country from the extraordinary length and interlaced growth of its root-fibres, which mat together and consolidate the loose and swampy soil in which they grow, and thus form one of the most effectual water-dams of so level a land." (Wilkinson, 1858)

"this species is planted to support embankments, which it does by means of its branching underground stems" (Moore, 1861)

Along long stretches of the coast of Belgium and Holland, and the outward coasts of the islands in the North, belts of natural and semi-natural sand dunes protect the country from the sea. The hybrid *E.* × *moorei* Newman (*E. hyemale* × *E. ramosissimum* Desf.) is found in great numbers at several locations in the dunes of Zuid-Holland and southern Noord-Holland. It was first reported by Du Mortier in 1825 (as *E. trachyodon* A.Br.) near Beverwijk (Du Mortier, 1869), where it still can be found today. It is locally abundant between Scheveningen and Hook of Holland, where it has been known since the late 18th century (Anon., 1796; van Hall *et al.*, 1832). It is surprising that J.E. Smith (1793) did not note it when visiting the place. Leiden (L) has a number of specimens collected in the West of Holland during the 19th century; however, until 1870, when the first collection was made from the fore-dunes south of Scheveningen, all the collections originate from the interior dunes around Haarlem.

In 1797, Jan Kops set out to report on the state of the dunes of Holland. He was an eager botanist, paid special attention to any plants that could be used to control shifting sand and, as an agronomist working for the ministry, was also keen to find plants that could be made profitable in any way (Baert, 1943). If Newman with "the consolidation of sea ramparts" referred to the fixation of shifting sands in the dunes, it is hard to imagine that this would have escaped Kops's attention. Yet Kops explicitly states that no other means are known to him to fix the dunes than marram (*Ammophila arenaria* (L.) Link), straw, and reed mats (Kops, 1798; van Eys et al., 1799). Neither earlier (Montin, 1771; Le Francq van Berkheij, 1780; van Geuns, 1789) nor later authors (Spengler, 1891; Vuyck, 1898) of technical treatments about sand fixation mention *Equisetum* for this purpose, even though Le Francq van Berkheij lists "Paardestaart, *Equisetum*" among the plants of the fore-dunes. Despite the present abundance of the hybrid in the dunes of southern Holland never, from the 18th century to the present, has its distribution been said to be deliberately promoted by man, and the remarks of Francis and Newman above cannot be attributed to it.

Where dunes are weak or absent, dykes have been built to protect the land, as in the topographically complex estuarine area of Zeeland and Zuid-Holland, along the rivers, along the entire coast of the Wadden Sea, and, before 1932, along the Zuiderzee and its inlets. Sea-dykes must be protected by a hard surface since no vascular plant can form mats firm enough to protect the dyke's surface from the action of the waves. At the onset of the 19th century such hard-shells were not yet customary.

Reed and rushes were recognised as effective agents to break the action of the waves and to prevent erosion of the banks of lakes (Meese, 1768), but they grow neither in seawater, nor at the high water limits of rivers. Sea-dykes were protected by stapling bundles of straw, eelgrass and rushes to the dyke-surface to form a soft shell that had to be renewed every autumn (Bréval, 1726; Schraver, 1807).

Inland river dykes consist of a core of sand or clay, covered with a water resistant layer of clay and finished with a grass-covered top layer (Fliervoet, 1992). Mats of superficially rooting herbs protect the surface against erosion, but deep-rooting plants weaken the construction (de Haan *et al.*, 2001; 2003) and can perforate the water resistant clay mantle (Technische Adviescommissie voor de Waterkeringen, 1985), without adding much to the stability (Sykora & Liebrand, 1987). High growing dense stands of *E. hyemale* could outcompete lower herbs that offer better protection. Finally, frequently grazed or mown low vegetation is less than optimal for this woodland species and at present it is not found on dykes, nor are there collections in the National Herbarium from such places. The hybrid *E. × moorei* has a number of stations along the river Rhine, but it is still rare on dykes. Altogether both technical and historical evidence for Newman's statement appear to be entirely lacking.

OVER-REPORTING OF DUTCH RUSH DUE TO DUTCH RUSHES

The likely source of the delusion is the 18th century bestseller, *The Gardeners Dictionary* (Miller, 1754, *Ed. 4*) that depicts how species of rush "grow on the Sea-shores, where they are frequently watered by the Salt-water. These two Sorts² are planted with great Care on the Banks of the Sea in Holland, in order to prevent the Water from washing away the Earth; which, being very loose, would be in Danger of removing every Tide, if it were not for the Roots of these Rushes; which fasten themselves very deep in the Ground, and mat themselves near the Surface, so as to hold the Earth closely together. Therefore, whenever the Roots of these Rushes are destroyed, the Inhabitants immediately repair them to prevent farther Damage." This paragraph is quoted from the section on *Juncus* as "*Juncus acutus*".

Miller must have meant the glaucous bulrush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* (C.C. Gmelin) Palla that was cultured in great numbers in the brackish water of the Maas estuary, and possibly to some extent *S. maritimus* (L.) Lye, which was not cultured, but common in the more seaward parts of the estuary and known for its even greater capacity of promoting the sedimentation rate of silt than the former (Clevering & van Gulik, 1990; Weeda *et al.*, 1994).

Miller's handbook on wild and cultivated plants went into eight editions³, and was copied (e.g. MacFarquhar & Gleig, 1797; Knight, 1833), and translated into French, German and Dutch. As Miller's text was copied over and over during more than a century, gradually elements changed, and new ones slipped in (Table 2).

Noteworthy is Loudon's addition that combines the name Dutch rush, and its usability for scouring metals (Loudon, 1829). Rushes (for making chairs) were imported from the Netherlands into England in large quantities (Yeats, 1870). Inevitably, they were

²i.e. *Juncus acutus, capitulis sorghi* C.B.P. & *J. acutus maritimus Anglicus* Park.

³Cited here is the fourth edition of 1754, but essentially the same text is found in the Dutch translation of 1745 (Miller, 1745) and therefore in earlier English editions not seen by the author.

Table 2. The evolution of Miller's account on bulrush-culture to Newman's account of *E. hyemale*

Period Interpretation

- 1724 The first and second Sorts grow on the Sea Shores, where they are frequently to washed by the Salt Water. These two Sorts are planted with great Care on the
- 1754 Banks of the Sea in *Holland*, in order to prevent the Water from washing away the Earth; which, being very loose, would be in Danger of removing every Tide, if it were not for the Roots of these Rushes; which fasten themselves very deep in the Ground, and mat themselves near the Surface, so as to hold the Earth closely together. Therefore, whenever the Roots of these Rushes are destroyed, the Inhabitants immediately repair them to prevent farther Damage. In the Summer-time, when the Rushes are fully grown, the Inhabitants cut them, and tie them up into Bundles, which are dried, and afterward carried into the larger Towns and Cities, where they are wrought into Baskets, and several other useful Things, which are frequently sent into *England*. These Sorts do not grow so strong in *England*, as they do on the *Maese*, and some other Places in *Holland*, where I have seen them upward of four Feet high (Miller, 1754).
- 1797 The *conglomeratus*, and *acutus* or marine rush, are planted with great care on the banks of the sea in Holland (MacFarquhar & Gleig, 1797)
- 1829 *J. acutus* and *maritimus* are planted on the sea-embankments of Holland, and also in some parts of our own coasts, and in America. The roots run deep into the sand, and form a matted body which holds it together. In Holland, when the plants are fully grown and in flower, they are cut down, dried, and bound up like corn. The *J. acutus*, being very rough, is used for scouring copper and other vessels, and is one of the plants imported into this country for that purpose, under the name of the Dutch rush. The other species, and often both, are plaited into mats, baskets, chair-bottoms, ropes, etc. (Loudon, 1829)
- 1833 (...) are made of bulrushes; these grow in this country, naturally but not very commonly, in deep slow streams. The demand for them is greater than the home supply, and a considerable quantity is imported from Holland. (Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1833)
- 1842 *Equisetum hyemale*: for this purpose it is imported, under the name of "Dutch Rush," in large quantities, from Holland, where it is grown on the banks of canals and on the sea ramparts, which are often bound together and consolidated by its strong and matted roots. Bundles of this imported Dutch Rush are exposed for sale by many London shopkeepers. (Newman, 1842)

sometimes designated as "Dutch rushes", an adjective combination that never made it to a taxonym.

Traders used the name indiscriminately for both *E. hyemale* and *Schoenoplectus*. In advertising in the first half of the century, it is rarely made explicit which kind of rush is offered (e.g. "Dutch polishing rushes" or "Dutch bull rushes"). In less than half of such advertisements the context, such as chairmakers' or cabinet-makers', revealed the nature of the product offered (Table 3). It must have been this ambiguous use of the name that

Advertisements where product defined as:	Number	
Equisetum	4	
Schoenoplectus	8	
Unknown	13	
Total	25	

Table 3. Advertisements with "Dutch Rushes" or "Holland Rushes" from before 1850.

Sources: Bury and Norwich Post: 29 Nov 1815; Carlisle Journal: 09 Mar 1833, 24 Aug 1833; Carlisle Patriot: 28 Oct 1820; Chelmsford Chronicle: 03 Oct 1783; Chester Chronicle: 23 Mar 1849; Hampshire Advertiser: 15 Sep 1832; Hampshire Chronicle: 26 Jul 1819 2x; Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle: 23 Jul 1832; Hampshire Telegraph: 02 Mar 1829, 25 Apr 1831; Hull Packet: 07 Jan 1801, 03 Mar 1801, 27 Feb 1835; Kentish Gazette: 07 Jan 1845; Liverpool Mercury: 13 Jun 1823, 17 May 1844; Norfolk Chronicle: 09 Dec 1815; Salisbury and Winchester Journal: 19 Sep 1803, 26 Feb 1821; Stamford Mercury: 21 Apr 1848; The Ipswich Journal: 22 Jun 1805, 14 Sep 1805; The Times: 08 Sep 1831

led Newman to his misunderstanding. Evidently, when writing about *E. hyemale*, he did not make the distinction and copied unreliable sources without checking.

CULTIVATION AND CARE IN HOLLAND: HARVESTING FOR EXPORT

Whereas in English literature it is often stated that Dutch Rushes were cultivated and exported by the Dutch (Newman, 1842, 1844; Francis, 1851; Moore, 1861; Pratt, 1866), the continental literature remains almost taciturn about any culturing activities. The earliest mention of such a trade in Dutch literature is found in the *Flora Batava* (Kops & Van der Trappen, 1846), published shortly after Newman's publication in The Phytologist (Newman, 1842).

In the Netherlands, E. hyemale is not an abundant species. In the east of the country several healthy populations exist, but it is hard to imagine that these could have supported prolonged harvesting for both domestic and export markets. In Holland in the strict sense, i.e. the western part, E. hyemale is virtually absent, but the hybrid E. \times moorei is quite common in the dunes and along railroads (de Winter & Lubienski, 2012). It would be conceivable that present day populations are not representative for the abundance in the 18^{th} and 19^{th} century. Both habitat destruction and harvesting might have caused such a decline. De Gorter (1781) had found the species in forests in the county Zutphen and Kops & Van der Trappen (loc. cit.) say it is abundantly found near Zutphen, at a number of locations in the West, the latter almost certainly to be attributed to the hybrid, and at some riverine locations for many of which the same applies. In the 17th century, Comelin (1683) saw it in stagnant-water ditches near the river Vecht near " $den\ Bergh$ ", at the border of the firm, sandy soil of Utrecht and the fen areas of Holland.

E. hyemale is a species of moist woodlands. The area of woodland in the Netherlands has not declined since 1800, but has actually increased (Bijlsma, 2003), as before that time much had been cleared. Older sources often associate the species with ditches rather than woodland, which may be explained by its habit of persisting long after the trees

⁴presumably Nederhorst den Berg, about 25km SE. of Amsterdam

have been felled. Altogether it seems unlikely that the magnitude of the population would have permitted large scale harvesting to support an export trade over a long time and it must be questioned whether this country has ever been the source of such trade.

Comelin (loc. cit.) noted that at *den Bergh* it was collected for turners to polish with it⁵. But later, from 1806, a number of annual reports have been compiled about the Dutch agriculture, including products gathered from uncultivated lands, such as reed (*Phragmites*), rushes (*Schoenoplectus*) and herbs (Kops, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1816, 1819, 1821, 1822c, 1822b, 1822a, 1829). No mention is made of any production or harvesting of Equisetums.

Nozeman (1783) expresses his amazement that *E. hyemale* is imported into the Netherlands from Spain (see below), rather than collected from local stocks. Subsequent botanists agree: "This plant does grow in some places of our home country, in woods and sandy lands, but it is, as far as I have been able to find out, not used" (van Hall, 1854).

"The shave-grass that the cabinet-makers use does not originate from our land, but is imported from elsewhere. From [the Netherlands] it is further transported to England, where it, completely undeserved, is designated by the name Dutch Rushes" (Oudemans, 1862; likewise: de Vries *et al.*, 1870).

An interesting phenomenon is that, analogous to the English "Dutch Rush", in the Netherlands it was sometimes called "Spanish rush" (Noel Chomel & De Chalmot, 1778; Van Meerten-Schilperoort, 1830; 1843; van Hall, 1843). The epithet "Spanish" intermittently used in the Dutch names of the species does not indicate a Spanish origin. Though it is found in Spain (Prada, 1986; Salvo Tierra, 1990), it occurs too infrequently to allow any significant yield (C. Fraser-Jenkins, pers. com.). Also, historically and regionally the predicate has been applied to at least thirty other species (Heukels, 1907), which seem to have little in common, though for quite a few of them it might be interpreted as "conspicuous" or "foreign".

A few authors hold the view that that the Netherlands does or could produce commercial horsetails: "This wood [Zalkerbos] also furnishes very good shave-grasses to polish wood" (van der Aa, 1851), without revealing his source nor the scale of the exploitation. In almanacs beggar boys were urged to collect shave-grass (among other products of nature) to earn their own living (Heldring *et al.*, 1837; Heldring, 1845). This may denote more about the low value and little enthusiasm to collect the stems in the Netherlands. Altogether, the conclusion seems justified that if Dutch-produced horsetails were ever imported into England, this must have taken place longer ago than the memory of the 19th century writers cited above, therefore no later than the first half of the 18th century.

CONTINENTAL TRADE AND ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

Even if the plants have never been cultivated in the Netherlands, nor commercially harvested from the wild, it is still possible that Dutch traders imported them into London from other continental or overseas sources. The question then is where they would have originated.

There is evidence of horsetail trade elsewhere in Europe. Tariffs of the Zollverein

⁵Comelin's habitat description is more typical for *E. fluviatile* L. with which *E. hyemale* was often confused, and so was his description: *Equisetum foliis nudum, non ramosum sive junceum*. B. pin. *Hippuris foliis* & nuda Tab. *Equisetum majus aquaticum prim. icon* J. Bauh. Belg. *Groot Paarde-staart*. However, his observation on collecting the plant shows that he was at least partially correct.

(customs union, 1818-1871) name *Schachtelhalm* in near complete lists of items transported through the German lands (Anon., 1824; de Martens & Murhard, 1836; Anon., 1849a, 1849b, 1853, 1858). Likewise, Russia levied a small duty on horsetails (MacGregor, 1850), as did Norway, (Arntzen, 1830), France (Dujardin-Sailly, 1813) and Austria (Klenner, 1822; Anon., 1824, 1838), whereas Illyria (Anon., 1836) let them pass for free

A number of more incidental sources can be found too. According to an early 19th century encyclopedia, *E. hyemale* was a lucrative product and exports from the southern French department *Bouches-du-Rhone* amounted to 10,000 francs annually (Leman, 1826). The amount in francs suggests the figure applies to statistics postdating 1795, when this currency had been introduced. The 1802 overview of this department, however, makes no mention at all of such an export (Michel, 1802). Moreover, it is stated that the department is very poor in woodland, a condition that has not changed to the present, and this explains the near absence of *E. hyemale* in those parts (J. le Paslier & C. Déliry, pers. com.). Duval-Jouve also expressed his doubt about the figures he had from de Villeneuve (de Villeneuve, 1821), but after investigating the matter he found that they referred to *E. ramosissimum* and *E. palustre* L., of which at least 30,000 bundles were sold each year for kitchen usage (Duval-Jouve, 1864). Local trade in Provence was provided by vendors crying "Leis fretadous de coussooudo" (Achard, 1785), who were not likely to be selling the hard skinned *E. hyemale*, since their merchandise would have ruined the kettles.

Abundant sources of E. hyemale were found in the forests along the Rhine, where specialised collectors took it to sell it to carpenters and cabinetmakers, or to plait rings of them (the so-called *Schaftheukränze*, Figure 2) to clean kitchen utensils and floors (Kirschleger, 1857). These rings, also called *Schlutte* (Acker, 1982), are identical to the one depicted by Bock (1630) and described by Bauhin: apud nos ancillae circulos (qualis figurae adpositus,) ad suppellectilem expoliendam conficiunt⁷ (Bauhin, 1658). Long distance commercial trade of E. hyemale for use by craftsmen to polish wood and metal has been reported from south-west Germany, where they were imported into Württemberg in great masses from the Rhine valley in Baden (von Martens & Kemmler, 1882). French collectors apparently drew a heavy toll on the population, since Hausser (1894) complained that "a few decades ago" at Neubreisach the traders took cartloads of E. hyemale, but that at the time of his writing they would have come in vain. Plants collected near Strasbourg (dept. Bas-Rhin) were sold in Nancy, 120 km to the west (Braconnot, 1828; Kirschleger, 1857) and to Paris (Duval-Jouve, 1864). Halfway between Strasbourg and Paris, in the Orient Forest near Troyes, it was available for collecting, but, to the amazement of the Troyans, traders did not know this, or preferred to pull it in other places (des Étangs, 1841). Plumier tells us, presumably from Lyon⁸, that it is "a plant brought to us from the mountains". In southern France commercial trade existed where Villeneuve functioned as the hub selling horsetails collected in the Lot-valley to the market in Bordeaux (de Saint-Amans, 1821).

Yet one other possible origin should be considered, *viz*. North America. For this route I have found no historical data, unless it would account for the surprisingly large export

^{6&}quot;scouring pads of horsetails"

⁷at ours the maids make wreaths (illustrated adjacent) to polish the furniture

⁸The printer as well as the religious authorities approving the book resided in Lyon.

volume of "reeds" from the USA (Wolcott, 1795). However, the species is abundant in the USA to the extent of becoming a nuisance (Millhollon, 1987), and the larger American subspecies would explain observations of Newman and contemporaries on the size of the marketed horsetails.

Newman expressed uncertainty about the Dutch Rushes of the London markets being conspecific with English *E. hyemale*, and was supported in that opinion by other, not explicitly named, botanists. His doubts arose from the "much larger size than any British examples of *E. hyemale*" and "the much greater number of striæ, amounting in some instances to thirty-two" (Newman, 1844). Large size and high number of ridges (Figure 3) better conform to the American *E. hyemale* subsp. *affine* which has 14 – 50 ridges than the European subspecies with 14 – 26 ridges (Hauke, 1963). Johnson (Johnson & Sowerby, 1856), however, disagrees, stating that "British plant from Gamlingay Bog, Cambridgeshire, cultivated in my garden for thirty years, frequently rivals the imported "Dutch Rushes" in these respects, the number of ridges and smaller tubes varying from twenty to twenty-eight in the larger stems". In the Zalkerbos near Zwolle, the only Dutch population which historically has been associated with usage of the plants as smoothing agents, currently has stems of 1.20m tall with 25 – 26 ribs. Although such thick specimens of *E. hyemale* subsp. *hyemale* are memorable in itself, there is still a gap between Newman's 32 ridges, and the Dutch and Johnson's 26-28 ridges.

In the Netherlands, Van Hall (1854) wrote: "This plant does grow in some places of our home country, in woods and sandy lands, but it is, as far as I have been able to find out, not used, and it is by far not as heavy as the one that occurs in commerce and is brought in from elsewhere". Herman van Hall, a student of Kops, was co-author of earlier volumes of the Flora Batava (Kops & Van Hall, 1828, 1832, 1836, 1844) and therefore likely to be very well aware of the note given there, that *E. hyemale* is exported to England. His 1854 remark reads as if he has double-checked the fact, while bearing in mind that a different, larger taxon might be involved. Oudemans (1862) agreed: "The reason why, both at ours and in England, the foreign shave-grass is preferred, seems to be the latter's thicker stems".

DISCUSSION

At the onset of the eighteenth century, the name Dutch Rush for *E. hyemale* had become so established that it started to show up in print, at first with authors addressing the artificers and amateurs who would actually be using it and, almost a century later, also in the scientific botanical literature. Something must have happened with the product for people to dub it with that new name. Later authors ascribe the name to imports from Holland, but they all might have been deluded by the *Schoenoplectusus/Equisetum*-misconception, with the possible exception of John Smith (1802), who published in advance of the earliest date so far discovered that shows the entanglement. The best argument that Dutch import does explain the name is given by Aubrey's 1691 letter. While he writes that the shave-grass comes from Holland, he does not use the name Dutch Rush, and therefore this is not likely to be an *ad hoc* explanation of that name.

As for the scale of the imports during the 150 years between Aubrey and Newman, again we must sift through the mystery caused by the *Schoenoplectusus/Equisetum*-misconception. All the imports of Dutch Rush, in "great quantities" or similar wording, are likely to be ascribed to bulrushes. In the eighteenth century, the Netherlands counted over 4000 ha of land with culture of bulrushes (Maas, 2000) and this was an important export product. In 1827, 1600 loads of 63 bundles of bulrushes were declared at the

British customs, accounting for over 360 times more duty revenues than received on polishing rushes (calculations based on Parnell, 1830). If, in spite of Yeats's opinion, *E. hyemale* would have been of any observable economic significance, one would have expected it to have been seen in the exceedingly detailed port statistics, where it is not. Evidently, half a year could pass without any horsetails being legally imported. In accordance with these incidental observations, it is absent from English and Dutch trade statistics. The possibility that significant amounts of rushes have deliberately been kept from import registration is not very likely. Smugglers concentrated on low-volume contraband where the import duty exceeded the intrinsic value. It is not unreasonable to assume that anything that was taxed was also smuggled, but 20% is a low tariff compared with that levied on alcohol and tobacco, so the incentive for smugglers to bring in shave-grass must have been slight, given that at some points in British history, smuggling carried the death penalty (Richard Platt, pers. com.). The conclusion must be that even if Holland has been an important source in the horsetail trade, the trade as a whole served but a niche market.

The emerging pattern of several disjunct historic observations is that of trade routes from scattered source regions into the most accessible larger centres of population. For unknown reasons source populations closer at hand were ignored. Like Oudemans, De St.-Amans (loc. cit.) thinks it a matter of quality: "Celle des bords du Lot est belle et plus estimée". Sustained exploitation sometimes resulted in depletion of local stocks. In the upper Rhine Valley an infrastructure of collectors and transporters had developed who transported E. hyemale overland to France and downstream by river, as suggested by the toll-treaties of German rivers (Anon., 1837, 1853). The Dutch had virtually monopolised navigation on the river Rhine (MacGregor, 1843). When brought all the way down to the sea, goods would have ended up in the port of Rotterdam, ideally situated for further transport to Belgium and England. Since the species was "rather common in whole Europe, even in Russia, and especially in Sweden" (de Chalmot & Chomel, 1792), it may have been that the collectors took the product from wherever it was available in north-west Europe, including the eastern part of the Netherlands and Russia (which then included Poland). Tariffs categorising horsetails are available from many north and central European countries.

During the Napoleonic wars around 1800, reciprocal trade embargos caused interruptions in the supply of indispensable commodities. Since the French invasion of the Netherlands in 1794, bulrushes from Holland had become difficult to obtain (Anon., 1819) and consequently become expensive: "during the non-commercial intercourse between Holland and Great Britain, which lasted a number of years, a great scarcity existed in (...) Dutch Rushes, which were not to be had during the war, except in very precarious chance lots, occasionally smuggled over, at any price" (E. Smith, 1841). The same will have happened to E. hyemale from the continent and it may be hypothesised that in circumvention a new supply route from the United States was opened. The aberrant size of the plants reported by nineteenth century authors indicates the North American subspecies rather than the slenderer European form. If the shipping cost had allowed a profitable transport, the availability would have been virtually unlimited from the largely uncultivated American lands where the species is abundant. However, doubt exists whether the economic opportunities were recognised: "The rushes used for rubbing down are a valuable article, and grow abundantly in various parts of the United States, they are found in our own neighbourhood in the State of New Jersey; though extensively used in Europe they are scarcely known to our workmen" (Gill, 1828).

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the white hotel. Equisetum hyemale, Dutch rush, scouring rush, 12x. Visit. Discover ideas about Nature Plants. February 2019. Karl Blossfeldt - Dutch Rush tips. Botanical Prints + Natural History Prints from StudioBotanika. coral- great for uranium dating and recording oxygen isotopic data:) Loveliest of lovely things are they, On earth, that soonest pass away - but does it float. (CWFP: Special Exhibit: Karl Blossfeldt, Urformen der Kunst Equisetum hiemale) original image used by belle northrup in article entitled an approach to the problem of costume and personality to depict "YANG force." notice the vertical movement of line. belle northrup yang line type & movement includes = "vertical" & "straight" lines. Equisetum hyemale (commonly known as rough horsetail, scouring rush, scouringrush horsetail and, in South Africa, as snake grass) is a perennial herb in the fern Phylum Pteridophyta. It is a native plant throughout the Holarctic Kingdom, found in North America, Europe, and northern Asia. In nature Equisetum hyemale grows in mesic (reliably moist) habitats, often in sandy or gravelly areas. It grows from between sea level to 2,530 metres (8,300 ft) in elevation. The Dutch rush: History and Myth of Equisetum -trade. Article. Full-text available. Jan 2015. Wim de Winter. In England in the early 19th century at least two products went by the commercial name Dutch Rush, viz. the Rough Horsetail Equisetum hyemale L. used in cabinet making and similar crafts, and the Common Club-rush/Bulrush Schoenoplectus lacustris (L.) Palla used in matting and chair manufacturing. Analysis of the Plant Ecology Database (ACKDAT), now available on the Internet with updated plant names, sheds new light on the potential uses and limitations of computerized Acocks data. Read more. Article. Abiotische kansrijkdom natuurontwikkeling van grote begeleid-natuurlijke eenheden in Nederland: een January 1994. Hans Farjon. A.H. Prins.