

# First West-European Get-together of Telephone Collectors

by Jan Verhelst

Belgium has a number of collectors, but there is no real collectors club. However, the collectors all know each other.

Leo De Boeck, the owner of a private telephone museum ([www.leofoon.be](http://www.leofoon.be)) came up with the idea to organize a get-together of everybody who is involved in telephone history in Belgium. Jan Verhelst suggested inviting people from neighboring countries. Invitations were issued and thirty-two persons attended the get-together at the Leofoon museum at Steenhuffel, Belgium on August 31st, 2019. They included twenty-three Belgians (fourteen collectors and nine partners) and nine people from neighboring countries (three from Germany, two from the Netherlands, two from the UK, one from Ireland, and one from France).

People, who knew each other by mail, met each other for the first time in real life. Much was discussed and ideas were exchanged.

**Andy Emmerson** (UK) gave a demonstration of an electronic version of a speaking clock, with samples of a great number of speaking clock voices from all over the world. An electronic speaking clock is an ideal tool for every telephone museum since the electromechanical speaking clocks are difficult to maintain in working order.

**Frank Garnier** (the Netherlands) gave an explanation about C\*NET, the international telephone network superimposed on the inter-



Fig. 1 - Participants at the first West European Telephone Collectors get-together



Fig. 2 - International contacts



Fig. 3 - The international group visiting one of the museums in Warneton, Belgium. (Source: Alain Groult)  
From left to right: Jan Verhelst (BE), Dietrich Arbenz (DE), John Mulrane (IRL), Daniel Castrijck (museum owner, BE), Andy Grant (UK), Andy Emmerson (UK), Alain Groult (FR)

net that connects telephone collectors worldwide.

We had a good time together with

a nice barbecue. Some “social” pictures can be seen at <http://fotos.kulentuur.be/#!album-55>

It was interesting to see that people got in touch. On Figure 2 you see:

- At the left: Frank Garnier (Holland) has a chat with Andy Grant (England)
- To the right: Arwin Schaddelee (Holland) is discussing a special phone setup with Henning Dürkop (Germany).

Several international visitors were interested in visiting telephone museums and collectors in the neighborhood. In the days prior to the get-together, a guided tour to several museums was organized. These people attended:

**Andy Emmerson**, UK, President and founder of THG,

**Dietrich Arbenz**, Germany, Member of the board of the German club SIG,

**John Mulrane**, Ireland, Vice-President TCI and Editor of the THG Journal,

**Alain Groult**, France President French club “Association A. Cochéry.”

**Andy Grant**, Telephone collector from London,

Under guidance of Belgians **Stefan Biesemans** (TCI and THG member),

**Fons Vanden Berghen** (world expert on 19th century telegraphy, THG member) and **Jan Verhelst** (TCI and THG member), four museums and one famous collector were visited. ☛

Some “social pictures” can be seen at <http://fotos.kulentuur.be/#!album-54>

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