Fig.1.

Dear family,

(Fig 2) Based on the municipal basic administration of 2007 the most frequent family names in the Netherlands are de Jong (>87000), Jansen (>76000) and De Vries (>73000).

(fig 3) But we are a small family

(Fig 4) Seventy years ago only 229 Dormans relatives were living in the Netherlands, of whom 98 % in Limburg.

(Fig 5) Ten years ago 370 Dormans relatives were living in the Netherlands. Most of them were still living in South Limburg, mainly in the cities of Sittard-Geleen, Maastricht and Heerlen.

Fig 6. As you can see, Dormans relatives are spread over the whole country now.

At this moment 13 persons with the birth-name Dormans are living in the USA. Of course the family is bigger, as the children of Dormans women are true cousins, although they don’t have the name Dormans. In about 1870 a certain John Dormans moved from Germany to Chicago. He had 3 sons and 2 daughters. So, more Dormans in the USA ?

(fig 7) In Heerlen also the oldest known founder Mathias married in October 1597 with Catharina van den Nesschen.

(fig 8). Original marriage act of Thijs Dormans and Trijn van der Nesschen.

Around 1600 the catholic church started to register her activities, since the ecclesiastical Council of Trente, Italy had decided in 1563 that the catholic church will registrate marriages and births. So, before 1600 genealogical research will be very difficult. The archives in Heerlen starts for instance in 1588. At this moment our family tree counts 14 generations. One generation counts about 30 years, so the known time span of our family tree is 420 years.

(Fig.9) The name Mathias is frequently present in the first generations. Both the great-great-grandfather, grandfather as well as the father of Mathias Dormans, born in 1734 in Schinnen are called Mathias, while three sons were baptized Mathias, as the former born son Mathias meanwhile died.

(Fig 10) The three most popular first names in the Netherlands during the last 25 years are for boys: Daan, Bram and Sem, and for girls Emma, Sophie and Julia. In the family Dormans through the centuries that was totally different.

(Fig.11) In our pedigree the most popular first name for boys are Jan, Johannes, Peter and Joseph. For girls the most popular first names are Maria, Anna, Johanna and Hubertina. In earlier times it was a tradition to denominate the oldest son to the grandfather from fathers side, the oldest daughter to the grandmother from mothers side. The second son was denominated to the grandfather from mothers side, the second daughter to the grandmother from fathers side.

(fig 12) Nearly all data of our family I have collected in the State Records in Maastricht. Here I could find and seek the baptism, marriage and funeral data of all Limburgian municipalities. I was glad that our family was fairly home-loving, so nearly all research could be done in Maastricht. I have also traced many Dormans relatives in Limburgian municipalities by searching in phone books (in 1988 internet didn’t exist). Many letters, phone calls, and visits later I have got a friendly view of our family. Once I phoned a relative in Sittard. After introducing my self, and my genealogical research, I asked for his family data to complete my collection. No, was his answer. After many words finally I could persuade him to give his family data by saying that just 15 minutes ago I phoned his brother Peter in Brunssum, who has given me all his family data. His reaction was: “ Oh, if Peter has done that, you can have mine data too!

John Dormans invited me for this evening. I have met his father Paul via the already called State Records in Maastricht. There, visitor cards have to be filled in. When I checked in with my family name, at that moment two visitor cards with our family name were present. On my question if I was allowed to copy the home address of the other person (probably we were doing the same research), Paul appeared to live in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He had only one day to search for additional family data. After extensive correspondence with him we exchanged our data.

(Fig 13). In 1991 I have visited his family in Fort Wayne, where I met John too and his brother David.

(Fig.14). Of course we are related, and our branches come together in the fifth generation about 1715 where the American branch originates from Mathias born in 1715, and my branch originates from his brother Peter, born in 1720.

All persons present here today share two things: their family name and the wish to derive from the high noble family in the French city of Dormans near Reims.

(Fig 15). Many times I have heard this wish, also from my father. Each time I went to the State Records in Maastricht for genealogical research my father asked me: Do you have find a link with the French family ? In several houses in South-Limburg I found the arms of the French family de Dormans, even in a stained glass window.

Fig.16. To illustrate how noble the French family de Dormans from 1300 till 1550 was, the following titles and functions were present several times: Lord of Dormans, earl, knight, knight of Malta, bishop, archbishop, cardinal, chancellor of France, ambassador of France, prime-minister, minister of justice, president of the parliament and president of the court of auditors, and

state attorney.

I wanted to know if our family derived from the French noble family de Dormans. What to do ? I didn’t know any person in the city of Dormans, so in October 1989 I wrote a letter in French to the mayor of the town Dormans. I was waiting for one month, but I didn’t receive an answer, till the evening of the 5th of December, in the Netherlands well known as Saint Nicolas evening, on which we give presents to each other. I received a large poem, in which a future was outlined as a knight of a French castle. The present was a cardboard castle with two towers.

(Fig.17) Inside the castle I found a French letter addressed to me from the mayor of the city of Dormans. My wife and our two sons had held back this letter for 1 month to give me finally this letter as a present at the 5th of December.

The French answer concluded that we don’t derive from the French family as this French family extinct in about 1550. The last Lord of Dormans had only daughters. A close relative had 2 daughters and 5 sons: one son didn’t get children, the other four were bishop. The pedigree of the French family I have published in 2011, as at that moment all international family data could be searched for on internet. Nowadays at home you can find all family data of ecclesial and municipial archives, in memoriam cards, notarial acts and court reports on internet.

(fig 18) Sometimes you get special questions. During a visit to a Dormans relative I was shown a picture with the question: do you know this man ?

 I had never seen that picture before. I asked: ” What do you know about this man ?” He only said: “he was a close relative of my grandfather”. The picture shows a soldier with the text: goodbye, 1893. The picture was made by a photographer in Harderwijk. The man on the picture looks about 20 years old. In my file I was able to find two persons born about 1873, and a close family relative of the grandfather: a brother and a cousin. But a final answer I couldn’t give. One year later my sister in law Sytske, a professional genealogist, indicated, that in Harderwijk there was a colonial navy yard from where all soldiers to the Dutch East Indies departed. In The Hague there is an extended military record, where you can find all details. There I finally found Pieter Hubert, the oldest brother of the grandfather. He signed in for 6 years at the navy, and departed on the 21th of October 1893 with the steamship Prins Alexander, with Fl. 300,- gilders signing bonus. After 3 years he returned back with the steamship Conrad, died on the ship at 16th January 1896, and got a burial at the Mediterranean sea.

(Fig. 19). Grandfather born in Ambij in 1893, has never seen his oldest brother, born in 1873.

When I offered my family book to relatives, once I got the following reaction: I’am just retired, and had planned to search for family in past centuries. Now you are offering a finished book ! Fantastic !

(Fig 20) Curious but very illustrative for the catholic south of our country in the 18th century, was the following story. Searching for a Dormans in the books with the baptismal certificates in Schinnen I remarked something strange. On each page there were 10 baptismal certificates, of which one, or sometimes 2 or 3 were written upside down. Had the priest drunk to much wine ? Reading those baptismal certificates It was clear to me what was going on.

(fig. 21) detail up side down. Birth act.

It concerned all illegal children who were reported as such by the text “illegitimus filius for a illegal sun, or illegitima filia for a illegal daughter”. But the priest wanted to act as a wake-up call for the parents by register the baptismal certificates upside down. However, as a reassurance, no Dormans was registrated up side down.

In earlier times the Dormans family was fairly home-loved by their profession: many of them were farmer and were linked to the farm and country. The description of this profession varied during times from agrarian farmer, peasant, in the French time about 1800 to cultivateur and paysan. The grandfather of John was a wine merchant, but all other ancestors were farmers. My grandfather was also a farmer, like all his ancestors. The profession of the brothers Lambertus and Pieter Hubert born about 1810 was carpenter, joiner or cabinet maker. Also the son, grandson and great-grandson of Lambertus were carpenter. As a good South-Limburgian family I expected two other professions. In the city archives of Maastricht I found 4 persons, born about 1900 in Amby and Heer, who were mineworker. The expected priests in all those catholic families I didn’t find: only one person, the uncle of John Dormans, Joseph who was priest in Canada.

Finally I will mention some facts, that have nothing to do with our family, however they are very nice to know.

(Fig 22) The British Railways have a station in South-England with the name Dormans, near the village Dormansland.

(fig 23) In North-England near Newcastle there is a village Dormanstown.

(fig 24) Finally I can recommend the following restaurant in Northern Ireland.

(Fig 25). What Douwe-Egberts coffee is in the Netherlands, is in Kenia the coffee brand Dormans.

Thank you.