

# Royal Historical Commission

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## Annual Report 2005

The Commission held its sessions on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 25<sup>th</sup> June, 8<sup>th</sup> October and 10<sup>th</sup> December. The committee convened on these same dates as well as on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 20<sup>th</sup> June and 28<sup>th</sup> September.

### 1. Objectives

The mission attributed to the Commission when it was founded in 1834 was confirmed by the Royal Decree of 1<sup>st</sup> April 1976. Its purpose is to “research, record, edit or analyse written sources which are of interest to the history of Belgium, to publish critical studies concerning these sources and to make work tools available to historians”.

At its chairman’s behest, discussions are currently underway to meet these objectives on a broader level, considering the evolution of society and historical science in particular. The Commission has become well accustomed to publishing texts other than in a written format and it now wishes to extend its electronic publications. However, a broader interpretation of its mission has led it to envisage activities such as symposiums on themes particular to the Commission. It is also interested in gathering the filmed accounts of contemporary, political and other members of Belgian society for strictly historical purposes, though this requires a certain amount of preparation. At the same time, it is seeking to increase co-operation with other State scientific institutions (the Kingdom’s General Archives, the Royal Library) or private ones (Archief en museum van de socialistische arbeidersbeweging – Instituut voor sociale geschiedenis, or AMSAB, etc.), and universities. This gradual expansion of the Commission’s policy should be made concrete especially during the events planned for 2009 to celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its creation. For this occasion, it has decided to create an annual prize.

In its *Bulletin* and its series of volumes (collections in-4°, in-8°, collection of acts of Belgian princes, documents relating to the international status of Belgium since 1830, sources concerning the history of Belgium during the Second World War, work tools, the Thesaurus Diplomaticus on CD-ROM, etc.) the Commission edits previously unpublished texts relating to our national past that are kept in Belgium or abroad. These collections currently include more than 220 titles covering all periods of history.

The Commission’s website ([www.crhistorie.be](http://www.crhistorie.be) or [www.kcgeschiedenis.be](http://www.kcgeschiedenis.be)) offers a detailed and illustrated presentation of its history, objectives and achievements in French, Dutch and English. Its current composition and the list of former members can also be found here. The complete catalogue of publications is featured on the website, and it is possible to make a search according to the author’s name, words in the title or keywords. Finally, there is a presentation and summary of the latest volumes and new items. This site is hosted by the Albert I Royal Library’s server. Since the regular collection of statistics, i.e. since last May, there have been 11,685 hits and 32,234 pages have been consulted. Requests for information in reference to the site confirm the extent of its audience, both on a national and international level.

All the eras and the different domains of our past are taken into account in our current publishing policy. However, the Commission intends to focus particularly on modern times. The relative imbalance the latter suffers within its collections can be explained, amongst other things and contrary to the other periods, by the range of distribution channels available for the study of present times.

The role of the Commission is not, however, limited to the publication of texts, that is both rigorous and of a high scientific quality, relating only to our national past. In a well-thought-out manner, it also intends to help stimulate and take the lead in historical science, while keeping up-to-date with developments on an international level through its members numerous official or personal contacts.

The range of documents likely to be published is obviously vast, and constantly increasing in the domain of contemporary history. Of course, not all the archives and manuscripts have the same degree of interest. Both the scientific importance as well as the constraints resulting from limited material resources impose choices. The Commission principally retains texts that fall under little known or little exploited source categories. The contributions it publishes serve as a model; they are likely to extend the field of historical research by encouraging other researchers to follow suit. Rigorous selection criteria govern selection. In accordance with the regulations, the four commissioners responsible for examining the manuscripts each time, obviously verify not only the scientific quality of the proposed contribution, but also its relevance with respect to the Commission's objectives.

Abiding by these rules, the Commission likes to welcome young researchers who will one day take the lead. Having their work published in the Commission's collections is great encouragement for them and a testimony of scientific recognition worth mentioning in a CV. And it is within this context that the Bryce and Mary (†) Lyon Prize was created. Thanks to the sponsorship of Mr. Bryce Lyon – an honorary professor at Brown University (USA) and also an associate member of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium – who has always maintained close links with the Commission, a prize of encouragement for the sum of EUR 250 is awarded each year to the youngest researcher, under thirty years old, whose work has been included in the Commission's collections over the past year. The rules are available on the Commission's website. The prize was awarded for the first time in 2005. The winner was Miss Julie Versele (ULB), for publishing the *Rapport de Gerónimo de Roda sur le fonctionnement du Conseil des Troubles aux Pays-Bas, suivi de suggestions pour sa réforme (s.d.-1571 ?)*.

Finally, within the current budgetary context – the amount of the subsidy has remained at the same level as in 2003, when it was already reduced by 10 % - the Commission felt it necessary to proceed cautiously. It took care not to overly jeopardise the work in progress. Certain pieces of work were postponed in order to be able to accept new propositions. As always, though in an increasingly difficult context, the Commission is seeking partnerships or external financial support that will not compromise its independence.

## 2. Publications

Two volumes dated 2005 were published in January 2006. The slight delay is due to technical reasons.

- **Godfried Croenen, *De oorkonden van de familie Berthout (1212-1425)*, LXXXII-485 pagina's (Collectie in-4°).** A huge amount of work, of an exemplary nature, has gone into reconstituting the particularly rare archives of a seigniorial family. The file dedicated to this important Brabant lineage throws significant light on the political, economic and social history of the nobility of the former Low Countries in the Middle Ages. It also enriches our knowledge of legacy practices and matrimonial conventions at the time. Furthermore, we should mention the author's contribution to our knowledge of diplomatic techniques (minutes, chirographs, etc.).
- **Willem Pieter Blockmans (in samenwerking met Justine Smithuis), *Handelingen van de Leden en van de Staten van Vlaanderen. Excerpten uit de rekeningen van steden en kasselrijen en van de vorstelijke administratie. Regering van Filips de Goede (1419-1467). Deel III. Overzichtstabel en Indices*, XIII-152 pagina's (Collectie in-4°).** This work tool will help to optimise the consultation of the first two volumes of this collection. Besides the index of names and people, places and materials, the work provides a summary table of the meetings of Flemish members and states (date, place, participation, subject). This volume marks the end of a series started in 1959 by our fellow member Walter Prevenier (the first of which covered the period 1384-1405), continued by the late lamented Antoine Zoete (period 1405-1419) and prolonged by Willem Blockmans (period 1419-1506).
- **Vol. 171, 2005, fasc. 1-4 of the *Bulletin***, will be published in the next few months (cf. 3, publications being proofread). The authors of the numerous articles that could be included are working on the final corrections, following the comments and suggestions made by the commissioners after examining the texts. We should emphasise here that as these contributions are voluntary, the Commission can only exercise moral pressure regarding these authors who are often occupied in other professional activities. The rate at which the texts are finalised essentially depends on them).

## 3. Publications undergoing correction or work pending

The demanding scientific requirements of the Commission and, in particular, the availability of the author, who works on a voluntary basis and is occupied with new professional commitments, explains the delay in finishing Véronique Lambert's publication of *De Oorkonden van het Sint-Donatianskapittel te Brugge, 9de eeuw-1300* (Collection in-4°).

### Texts to be published in the Bulletin:

- Cauchies (Jean-Marie), *Deux ordonnances de cour et de gouvernement de Maximilien et Philippe le Beau (1495)*.
- Flammang (Véronique), *Le dénombrement de la seigneurie d'Hallines (Pas-de-Calais) en 1440*.
- Namazova (Alla) (in samenwerking met mevrouw Françoise Thomas), *Guide des documents relatifs à l'histoire de la Belgique conservés dans les archives des institutions publiques de Russie*.

- Sartorius (Francis) en De Paepe (Jean-Luc), *Correspondance des agents diplomatiques belges en poste à Paris et Versailles (3 mars - 5 juillet 1871)*.
- Soen (Violet), *Een vredesgezant worstelt met de Pacificatie van Gent. De vreemde wendingen van de vredesmissie in de Nederlanden van Jan van Noircarmes, baron van Selles (1577-1580)*.
- Vanderhaeghen (Olivier), *Lettres de Patrice-François de Neny, chef-président du Conseil privé des Pays-Bas autrichiens, à Nicolas Spirlet, abbé de Saint-Hubert (1763-1773)*.
- Weis (Monique), *Du baume diplomatique sur les ravages de la guerre. Les correspondances entre le duc d'Albe et le duc de Clèves en 1568*.

#### 4. Activities in progress and international relations

Currently at different stages of progress, the following pieces of research are amongst the Commission's priorities:

- Mrs. Nicole Haesenne-Peremans and Mrs. Nicole Caulier-Mathy (University of Liege) are preparing the *Journal* (1830 and 1855-1880) of Baron Michel-Edmond de Selys-Longchamps, senator, naturalist and member of the Academy, for publication. This publication will benefit from a subsidy from the Commission Communale d'Histoire de l'Ancien Pays de Liège.
- Mr. Alain Marchandisse, an FNRS qualified researcher at the University of Liege, is in the process of finalising the editing of the cartulary from the Abbaye d'Aulne.
- Mr. Alfred Minke, professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, and head of the State Archives section in Eupen, is responsible for editing the *Annales gallo-limbourgeoises, 1794-1814*, a manuscript written by a noteworthy villager. It is particularly interesting as regards the history of attitudes in our regions. The manuscript should be submitted in Spring 2006.
- Mr. Guy Thewes (Musée du Luxembourg) submitted the manuscript of an extensive article: *Un territoire indéfendable ? L'état des forteresses aux Pays-Bas en 1725 d'après un mémoire anonyme*.
- Mr. Georges Declercq, in charge of classes at the VUB and ULB, has begun revising the manual of E.I. Strubbe and L. Voet, *De chronologie van de Middeleeuwen en de Moderne tijden in de Nederlanden*, in the form of addenda and corrigenda.
- Despite his advanced age, Mr. Maurits Van Durme, author of the series of volumes *Les Archives de Simancas et l'histoire de la Belgique (IX<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, is slowly but courageously continuing to put the finishing touches to the second volume (letters N-Z) of the alphabetical index of names relating to the four published volumes. Through regular contact, our fellow member Gustaaf Janssens is supervising the state of progress of this table. He is also the scientific guarantor for other works begun by Mr Van Durme, some of them well advanced. The printer has already made a first draft of the *Inventaire détaillé des copies Gachard et Morel-Fatio prises sur les documents de Simancas et conservées aux Archives générales du Royaume à Bruxelles*. The verification of a complex manuscript and index has yet to be carried out.
- Despite many voluntary collaborations, certain long-term activities have to be carried out by paid researchers. Thus, Mrs. Godelieve de Mey, under the direction of

our fellow member Thérèse de Hemptinne, is working on finalising the third volume of the *Actes de Thierry d'Alsace, Comte de Flandre (1168-1177)*.

- Mrs. Katrien Vandewoude hopes to finish the index of the volumes of the accounts of the town of Bruges (1302-1319) this year, edited by our late fellow member, Carlos Wyffels. The financing of this work was facilitated thanks to a subsidy from the local authorities and a subsidy from the Province of West Flanders.
- Mr. Stijn Meersseman is finalising the index for the *Recueil de documents de l'industrie drapière en Flandre*. The volume should come out in 2006, as should the anastatic copy in large in-8° format of the much sought-after *Les dénombrements de foyers dans le comté de Hainaut (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, currently out of print, by our late and lamented fellow member Maurice-A. Arnould, whose publication dates from 1956.
- Mr. Philippe Demonty, one of the Commission's scientific partners, is continuing to work on *Thesaurus diplomaticus* (usually called "Nouveau Wauters". The version including texts dating from 1200 was made into a CD-ROM in 1999). A support committee was formed and is composed of our fellow members de Hemptinne, Kupper and Prevenier. This digitised list of charters relating to the former Southern Netherlands, stored in numerous places in Belgium and abroad, completes and entirely renews the contents of the volumes elaborated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The current objective is to extend the chronological framework up until 1250. Today, the documentary part for the period between 1200 and 1250 includes 19,300 analyses, with 3,500 titles in the bibliography accompanying the notices. This undertaking is the result of a partnership between the secretary of the National Committee for Latin Mediaeval Dictionaries, Mr. Paul Tombeur, professor emeritus at the Catholic University of Louvain, and director of the *Centre Traditio Litterarum Occidentalium*, and our fellow member Walter Prevenier, professor emeritus at the University of Ghent. A geographic extension is envisaged through a collaboration with the Atelier de Recherche sur les Textes Médiévaux (ARTEM) in France.
- Negotiations are continuing with AMSAB to distribute the reports of the Committee and General Council of the Belgian Labour Party (1894-1940) on CD-ROM. Despite several reminders, the draft contract submitted to our potential partner is still being examined by its services.
- The discussions entered into between the Commission and Mr. Philippe Raxhon (University of Liege), spokesman for the expert historians of the "Commission Parlementaire Lumumba", continued. We are keenly waiting for a text to be submitted. It will of course be published in accordance with the rights of all parties concerned and according to the conditions laid down by the president of the House of Representatives.
- Mrs. Marie-Elisabeth Henneau, professor at the University of Liege, has offered to develop a collection entitled "Voix et silences de femmes". While the Commission cannot envisage committing itself to the publication of monographs, it is however prepared to accept any critiques it receives, according to the usual rules.
- The Commission has also given its agreement, in principle, to a collaboration between the Kingdom's General Archives and a researcher, Mr. Dirk Leyder, who has offered to compile the index of the diplomatic correspondence between Brussels and Vienna under the premiership of Prince Starhemberg for the years 1770 to 1783.
- The Commission has taken note of our fellow member de Moreau de Gerbehay's submission of a draft relating to a toponymic database project (Topodex). This database should make it easier to identify place names and thus facilitate the task of researchers who compile such indexes.

- Finally, within the context of discussions on the commemorative events for the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its creation, the Commission has decided, on the one hand, to print a special volume evoking the life of the Commission during the past quarter century and, on the other hand, to harmonise the *Bulletin's* former tables, compiled in various eras according to variable criteria. Although abandoned for many years owing to a lack of means (index according to authors names, articles, subjects, documents published), it now intends to continue with them. A version including everything since volume I will be published electronically. It will optimise content searches and thus enhance the value of the immense heritage contained in the 170 volumes available to researchers. Furthermore, a project for a symposium on the theme of the relevance and topicality of scientifically edited texts is currently being examined.

The **international influence** of the Commission is confirmed in different ways. First of all, through its publications which can be found in the main national and university libraries in Europe and America. Our collections include the works of foreign authors interested in our past, such as Bryce Lyon mentioned above. The Commission also promotes the publication of correspondence between renowned Belgian historians and their foreign colleagues. Within this context, Jo Tollebeek published *Writing the Inquisition in Europe and America* in 2004. *The correspondence between Henry Charles Lea and Paul Fredericq (1888-1908)*, CXXVI-117 p.

Its active presence on various committees and bodies also contributes to the Commission's international recognition. On a European level, it is involved in the vast undertaking of the *Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi*, sponsored by the International Academic Union. In agreement with Belgium's two Royal Academies, it is responsible for publishing several texts in the *Series Belgica*.

The Commission appointed our fellow member Gustaaf Janssens to examine the possibilities of working with the *Instituto neerlandés* in Madrid. The purpose would be to compile a guide of the archives kept in various Spanish institutions, relating to the history of the former Netherlands. Unfortunately, a recent change in the Institute's management has currently put the discussions which had begun on hold.

Our chairman, Ludo Milis, is participating in the progress of the works of the *Repertorium Fontium Historiae Medii Aevi* (Nouveau Potthast).

Our fellow member, Herman Van Goethem, and the administrative secretary, Mr. Jean-Luc De Paepe, are representing the Commission on the National Committee of Historical Sciences, affiliated to the International Committee of Historical Sciences.

Our fellow member, Claude Bruneel, is representing the Commission on the Director's Committee of the Belgian Historical Institution in Rome.

At the request of our fellow members, de Hemptinne and Prevenier – both members of the Commission Internationale de Diplomatie, the Commission Royale d'Histoire – they will take part in a survey led by the Commission Internationale de Diplomatie. It concerns the assessment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the situation in recent years as regards studies and publications within the field of diplomatics.

Another sign of this international recognition is the introduction of the above-mentioned annual prize of encouragement, thanks to the generosity of the American historian Bryce Lyon.