

# Royal Historical Commission

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## Annual Report 2008

The Commission held its sessions on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 25<sup>th</sup> October and 13<sup>th</sup> December. The Committee met on the same dates.

### 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, publish critical studies concerning these sources and make work tools available to historians”.

Advances in historical science and the general evolution over the past 175 years have led us to interpret the form of these directives with a certain amount of flexibility, while continuing to respect their spirit. Besides the traditional editing of texts from our past, the Commission is well aware of the contributions of electronic publishing and the constitution of databases (cf. 6.3, 6.4, 6.5). It also organises symposiums relating to the missions it has been attributed (cf. 6.1, 6.5). It continues to show its concern for developing partnerships and collaborations, both on a national and international level (cf. 6.4, 6.5). The result is an unquestioned renown in wide variety spheres. The fact that it is a founding member of the Porta Historica network (cf. 6.5) bears witness to the special recognition of its peers. Besides this particular group of people, the Commission also reaches a wider public, within and beyond our borders, thanks to its website (cf. 3).

### 2. Composition of the Commission

The Commission is composed of Messrs Jean-Marie Duvosquel, Chairman; Gustaaf Janssens, Vice-Chairman; Claude Bruneel, Secretary and Treasurer; Guy Vanthemsche, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer; Ludo Milis, Jean-Louis Kupper, Jean-Marie Cauchies, Claude de Moreau de Gerbehaye, Jozef Van Loon, Mrs. Thérèse de Hemptinne, Messrs Herman Van Gothem, Bruno Demoulin, Karel Velle, Jo Tollebeek, Mrs. Valérie Piette, Messrs Jean-Marie Yante, members; Henri Haag, Jan Craeybeckx, Jean-Jacques Hoebanx, Jan Goossens, Walter Prevenier, Baron Van Caenegem, Messrs André Joris, André Goosse, Reginald De Schryver, honorary members.

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and Assistant Secretary and Treasurer form the Board. Mr. Jean-Luc De Paepe, Administrative Secretary, helps to manage the Commission.

The Commission regrets the loss of one of its honorary members, our fellow member Pierre Cockshaw, who died in Forest on 15<sup>th</sup> March. During the session of 13<sup>th</sup> December, the Commission elected Mr. Jean-Marie Yante, professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, as a member.

### 3. Website

The website (<http://www.crhistorie.be> of [www.kcgeschiedenis.be](http://www.kcgeschiedenis.be)) is hosted on the server of the Royal Library of Belgium, which kindly takes care of its maintenance. The site presents the history, composition, objectives and achievements of the Commission in a detailed and illustrated manner, in French, Dutch and English. It features the complete catalogue of publications. It can be consulted either by searching via the authors' names, words in the title, or keywords. The latest volumes and new items are the subject of a presentation accompanied by a summary.

Since May 2005, when we started to keep statistics on a regular basis, we have recorded more than 150,000 visits. A third of these were made during the past year. During this time, 106,000 pages were consulted from different parts of the world. According to the details on "hits" per country established between July and December, Belgium is responsible for 43.2%. This is followed by America with 29%, essentially from the United States and Canada, and European states other than ours (20.2%). The Russian Federation counts for approximately 5%. Asia is limited to 2%. The scores from Africa on the one hand, and Australia and New Zealand on the other, are less than 1%.

After seven years in existence, it was necessary to make technical adaptations to the site. It was also an opportunity to redesign it and add to the contents. The Commission decided to coincide this update with the celebration of its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009 (cf. 6.1). The contents will be enriched in a variety of ways. The *Bulletin's* complete tables (from 1834 to the present day) will allow searches to be made based on authors' names, words from article titles and words from the registers of the edited documents. It should be noted that the printed annual tables were not cumulative and were stopped for budgetary reasons in 1983. In addition, the first five digitized works of titles that are out of print, but in high demand, will also be accessible. The operation was made possible thanks to the kind collaboration of the State Archives. This approach marks the first steps of a direction the Commission intends to develop. Finally, the site will offer access to a variety of databases (cf. 6.3, 6.4, AMSAB, Narrative Sources, *Thesaurus diplomaticus*).

### 4. Publications and distribution

The Commission publishes an annual Bulletin and volumes divided into various series (in-4°, in-8° collections, Recueil des Actes des Princes Belges, documents relating to the international status of Belgium since 1830, sources concerning the history of Belgium during the Second World War, work tools, and not forgetting the Thesaurus diplomaticus in the form of a CD-ROM). These collections currently include more than 200 titles, many of which comprise several volumes.

These publications, of a high scientific value, concern previously unpublished texts relating to our national past, kept in Belgium or abroad. The Commission is particularly conscious of the imbalance with regard to the contemporary period, particularly the present day. This situation can be explained through the considerations particular to the past and the evolution in the conception of the chronological field of history. Hence, the first work of this sort, dedicated to the Belgian revolution and the Ten-Day Campaign was only published in 1912! Over the past few years, our body has multiplied its efforts to put this situation right. Thus in 2008, it published – as we shall discover below – two volumes

relating to the 19th and 20th centuries. Other initiatives and collaborations have also met this concern (cf. 5, 6.4). In this domain too, the Commission always ensures it maintains the high scientific level of its publications, despite the competition from other publishers and media who do not necessarily share the same objectives. The exemplary quality of the works it supports is more important than their quantity.

The volume of contemporary sources, which of course continues to grow, imposes choices that are further reinforced by budgetary constraints. This selection is just as necessary for documents from previous centuries, even if the amount is smaller. Not all the documents offer the same interest nor their publication the same relevance. Subsequently, the Commission has established internal rules that set the priorities. Four commissioners are responsible for reporting on the quality and appropriateness of all publications. They particularly take into account originality, representative value, the contribution of the proposed documents as regards the expansion of the problem or the methodology.

### **Three works were printed in 2008:**

- **Véronique LAMBERT, *De Oorkonden van het Sint-Donatianskapittel te Brugge, 9<sup>de</sup> eeuw-1300, deel I, XVIII-531 p. (Collectie in-4°)***. The author edited 517 charters, which are kept in Bruges' Episcopal Archives as well as in many other Belgian and foreign deposits. This work not only involves acts from the chapter, but also all those in which the latter or one of its members was involved. A brief technical introduction explains the editing principles that were followed. This will be completed with a more in-depth study in volume II. The latter will also include the bibliography and the tables.
- **Lieve GEVERS, *Jezuiten, bisschoppen en flaminganten. Documenten uit kerkelijke archieven over de controverse rond het taalregime in het katholiek middelbaar onderwijs, 1900-1906, LII-176 p. (Collectie Groot in-8°)***. The editing of 76 documents sheds light, for the first time, on the difficult debate conducted in ecclesiastical environments as regards making Flemish the official language in sectarian teaching in the north of the country, following the Coremans bill in 1901. The author particularly focuses on the position of the Jesuits and, to a lesser extent, also on the Josephites, not forgetting the changing front of the episcopate and the consequences of appointing Désiré Joseph Mercier as the Archbishop of Malines. It also sheds a welcome light on the role of a certain number of Catholic politicians.
- **Nicole CAULIER-MATHY en Nicole HAESSENNE-PEREMANS, *Une vie au fil des jours. Journal d'un notable politicien et naturaliste, Michel-Edmond de Selys-Longchamps (1823-1900), 2 vol., LXV-1747 p., 25 ill., 2 genealogische tafels (Collectie Groot in-8°)***. The Communal Commission of the History of the Region of Liège (town of Liège) granted a subsidy to print this work. The author, who began his journal at the age of ten and continued until his death, was a squire near Waremmes, an anticlerical liberal senator while also a deeply faithful Catholic, a man of science, president of the Belgian Entomological Society, and member of the Belgian Royal Academy. It is composed of brief notes, for personal use, written on a daily basis. They reflect the multiple facets of the daily existence of an aristocrat at that time, the prevailing mentality in this milieu, the lifestyle, society relations, shows and leisure pursuits, hunting, and concerns of a vast real estate owner. The text also reveals the baron's passion for zoology and botany. Finally, it reveals the political observations of the man who became the communal adviser of Waremmes in 1843 and senator as from 1855, occupying these two mandates

until the end of his life. It is therefore quite an extraordinary document, rich in information on Belgian social, political, religious and scientific life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- **Vol. 173, 2007, fasc. 1-4 of the *Bulletin***, comprises 323 pages. Besides the administrative part (sessions held in 2006 and report on 2005), this volume includes five articles.
  - It opens with a brief moving and personal account by the late lamented Bryce Lyon (Brown University). Through the prism of friendship, the American historian evokes a number of personality traits of the great medievalist from Ghent: *François Louis Ganshof: Medieval Historian and Friend* (p. 5-14 and a facsimile, *with an Editorial Note, by Ludo Milis*). Besides its intrinsic interest, this contribution opens a path the Commission intends to develop by placing greater emphasis on “ego-documents”.
  - Alexis Wilkin has returned to a file that was opened in 1958 by Denise Van Derveeghde, and is examining the *Datation et analyse du contexte de rédaction du Polyptyque dit de 1280 de la cathédrale Saint-Lambert de Liège* (p. 15-45) once again. The date she had established of circa 1280 is not valid for the entire source. It is in fact a composite document, retranscribed during the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The initiative of this copy is undoubtedly linked to the development of the authorities in Liège. Perhaps it also meets the concern to properly manage a patrimony that may be subject to economic difficulties.
  - While the nobility in the county of Flanders was the subject of a fundamental study for the period ending in 1300, its descendants from later periods have not benefited from the same interest up until now. An initial step in this direction has been taken by Frederik Buylaert, Jan Dumolyn, Pieter Donche, Eric Balthau, Hervé Douxchamps: “*De adel ingelijst. ‘Adelslijsten’ voor het graafschap Vlaanderen in de veertiende en vijftiende eeuw*”. The authors are editing seven lists dating from 1362 to 1481, available in the form of originals and copies from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Established for military purposes, these lists provide a census of the nobility and those – though not strictly so – who are nevertheless considered to be socially related to the group. These documents also contribute to an improved knowledge of the political, economic and cultural history of the county of Flanders, and are of a certain amount of interest to genealogical studies.
  - Salome Sticken (1359-1449) is the most well-known of the female disciples of Geert Grote, the founder of *devotion moderna* in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Lieve De Mey and Kathrien Heene, *Een opmerkelijke biografie van een moderne devote: de Vita et conversacio Salome priorisse in Diepenven* (p. 189-229), are editing a Latin version, taken from a manuscript from the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which is kept at the Royal Library of Belgium. They are beginning the comparison and search for interactions between the vernacular versions, by the sisters themselves, and the versions in Latin written by clerics.
  - Finally, Toon Quaghebeur is editing the text of the provision according to which the Governor-General of the Netherlands intended to put an end to the conflicts between episcopal jurisdictions and the secular courts of justice: *Het decreet van 7 november 1695 van gouverneur Maximiliaan Emmanuel van Beieren aan de Raad van Brabant tegen de recursus naar de seculiere rechtbanken door clerici* (p. 231-256). From that moment on, the lay courts

could no longer acknowledge legal actions brought before them by clerics, unless they related to discipline or faith. This decree was the subject of different interpretations in Rome and Madrid. The question is all the more sensitive since it falls under the scope of the intense controversy that opposed Jansenists and anti-Jansenists on an international level at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

It should be noted that EBSCO Publishing has included the *Bulletin* in its database, which is available in university libraries worldwide. This initiative provides the Commission's publications with a much wider readership.

## 5. Publications: proofs or awaiting composition

- Alain Dierkens and David Guillardian, *Actes des comtes de Louvain, puis Ducs de Brabant (début du XI<sup>e</sup> s. - 1190)*.
- Maurits VAN DURME, *Inventaire détaillé des copies Gachard et Morel-Fatio prises sur les documents de Simancas et conservées aux Archives générales du Royaume à Bruxelles*.
- Guy VANTHEMSCHE, *Le Congo belge pendant la première guerre mondiale. Les rapports du ministre des Colonies Jules Renkin au roi Albert I<sup>er</sup> (1914-1918)*.
- Guy VANTHEMSCHE and Patricia VAN DEN EECKHOUT, *Bronnen voor de studie van het hedendaagse België 19<sup>de</sup>-20<sup>ste</sup> eeuw*, a reviewed and developed version of the edition that was published in 1999 (Brussel, VUBpress, 1.439 p.). In the future, the Commission will also publish a French translation in its collections.

Other studies are currently under examination by the commissioners or in a preparatory phase:

- Emmanuël FALZONE, *Le compte d'exécution testamentaire de maître Grégoire Nicolai, chanoine du chapitre de l'église cathédrale Notre-Dame à Cambrai et official de l'évêque (1469-1470 n. st.)*.
- Stéphanie LAMBOT, *Corpus des inscriptions médiévales de Belgique*.
- Alain LOTIN, *Un témoin de la vie et des comportements du peuple lillois au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle : les mémoires de Chavatte, ouvrier tisserand*.
- Daniël VANACKER, *De oorlogsbrieven van Jean Pecher (1914-1918)*.
- Jean-Louis VAN BELLE, *Deux livres d'expéditions de marbres d'un marchand de Beaumont-Rance en Hainaut (1769-1784)*.
- The 2008 *Bulletin*, which is due to appear very shortly, contains the following contributions:
  - Henri HAAG, *Le Mémoire de L. Arendt et les Conseils des ministres d'août 1914*.
  - José Eloy HORTAL MUÑOZ, *La visión de un ministro « castellanista » sobre la situación de los Países Bajos al final del siglo XVI ; los « advertimientos » de Esteban de Ibarra*.
  - Gustaaf JANSSENS, *Paul-Henri Spaak en het begin van de Belgische onafhankelijkheidspolitiek (1936-1937)*.
  - Steven VANDERPUTTEN, *Het turbulente verleden van de Luikse prinsbisschoppen door de ogen van een inwoner van het oude graafschap Loon: Petrus Treckpoels Chronijk van Luyk (circa 1498-1507)*.

- The 2009 *Bulletin* is designed as a jubilee edition to celebrate the Commission's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is currently at the printer's. This volume recalls the life of the Commission over the past 25 years and contains biographical notices relating to members and their original contributions.

## 6. Current activities, collaborations on a national level and international relations

6.1 The Commission will celebrate its **175<sup>th</sup> anniversary** in 2009. Several initiatives are underway to celebrate this event:

- the publication of the 2009 Bulletin in the form of a jubilee volume (cf. 5),
- updating the presentation and improving the contents on the website (cf. 3),
- access via the website to a cumulative table of the *Bulletin's* volumes since the beginning, from 1834 to the present day (cf. 3),
- introduction of a biennial prize in the name of Henri Pirenne (1862-1935), a renowned international historian who was also active as the secretary of the Commission from 1907 until his death. The award is aimed at rewarding an author for his/her substantial editing of texts, whether original or not, relative to the history of Belgium. The work may relate to the Middle Ages, modern times or the contemporary era,
- organisation of an international symposium on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April on the theme of *Digital edition of sources in Europe: achievements, (juridical and technical) problems and prospects*. It will bring together the partners of the European *Porta Historica* project (cf. 6.5),
- organisation on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2009 at the Palais des Académies of the *Chancelleries princières et scriptoria du X<sup>e</sup> and XIV<sup>e</sup> century* symposium.

6.2 The **Brice and Mary Lyon Prize** was created thanks to the generosity of this American historian who died in 2007. The prize, worth EUR 250, aims to encourage young researchers in the editing of scientific archival documents and manuscripts. By rewarding them in this way, the Commission officially provides confirmation of their merit, which they can then use to add value to their curriculum vitae. The prize was awarded for the fourth time in 2008. The winner was Mr. Frederik BUYLAERT, the youngest author of the collective article "*De adel ingelijst. 'Adelslijsten' voor het graafschap Vlaanderen in de veertiende en vijftiende eeuw*", published in the 2007 *Bulletin* (cf. 4).

### 6.3 Current main research projects that are not part of a partnership:

- Mrs. Carol Chattaway, Doctor of History at the University of London, is preparing the editing of two personal property inventories established upon the death of Philippe le Hardi (1404) and that of Marguerite de Male (1405). There are plans for an online edition.
- Mrs. Godelieve De Mey is continuing to finalise the third volume of the *Actes de Thierry d'Alsace, Count of Flanders (1168-1177)*, under the direction of our fellow member Thérèse de Hemptinne.
- Mr Alain Marchandisse, Senior Research Associate at the University of Liège, is responsible for finalising the editing of the cartulary from the Abbaye d'Aulne.

- Mrs. Katrien Vandewoude is continuing with the index (names of people, places, professions) of the accounts for the town of Bruges (1302-1319), edited by our late fellow member Carlos Wyffels. Owing to the interested party's professional obligations and the increased difficulties inherent to increasingly delicate identifications, this particular piece of work is taking a long time to finalise. The financing of this work was facilitated thanks to a subsidy from the communal authorities and a subsidy from the Province of West Flanders. There are plans for an electronic edition.
- Mr Maurits Van Durme, the 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 continuing to finalise the *Index alphabétique* (vol. II, N-Z) of names relating to the four published volumes; the work is proceeding very slowly owing to his advanced age. Although the Commission has offered the support of an assistant, he has unfortunately declined. Our fellow member Gustaaf Janssens is regularly checking the state of progress of this table.
- Under the direction of our fellow members Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Claude de Moreau de Gerbehaye, Mr. Jean-Pol Weber is finalising the various texts left by the late Roger Petit on the tax system in Luxembourg between 1360 and 1565. A first volume could be submitted to the Commission for examination this year. On the basis of one delivery a year, the work will end in 2011.
- Numerous other proposals have been sent to the Commission in the form of books or articles. However, it is currently too early to report on this work, which is still at project stage or not yet in a state of finalisation.

The majority of research sponsored by the Commission is the result of voluntary collaborators whose participation is indeed valuable and essential. However, their contributions are often quite rightly focused on their personal interests. Subsequently, in order to fulfil its active role in the development of historical science, the Commission must also accomplish more co-ordinated projects, on a larger scale and often spread over a longer period of time. To achieve this, it will inevitably have to resort to paid scientific collaborators. Hence, Mr. Philippe DEMONTY has been put in charge of continuing the Nouveau Wauters for the years 1200 to 1250. He is carrying out his mission with the backing of a support committee composed of our fellow members Thérèse de Hemptinne, Walter Prevenier and Jean-Louis Kupper. The version relating to the period prior to 1200 was the subject of a CD-ROM in 1999, under the title *Thesaurus diplomaticus*. This digitised list of charters relating to the former Southern Netherlands, kept in numerous deposits in Belgium and abroad, fundamentally renews and completes the contents of the volumes elaborated in the 19th century. Mr. Demonty presented the state of progress of his research to the Commission during the meeting on 1st March. On 31st December 2008, the database had 33,336 analyses, 17,974 texts registered in full and 4,435 digital images. The bibliography has 3,623 titles. The Commission would like to make this work tool accessible to everyone, at the lowest possible cost, or, if possible, free of charge. It therefore plans to put the contents online and provide access via its website within the next few years.

#### **6.4 Collaborations on a national level**

- The Kingdom's General Archives and the State Archives in the provinces: the partnership, which began in January 2007, to digitize the indexation of the

diplomatic correspondence between Vienna and Brussels (1740/1748 – 1790), is continuing in a fruitful manner. Since the beginning of the project, 335 microfilms (more than 50,000 views) kept in the Kingdom's General Archives have been processed and the necessary controls carried out in Vienna. Furthermore, an agreement was made between the Kingdom's General Archives and the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv for the digitization of the microfilms in 2009.

- AMSAB - (Institute of Social History in Ghent): the co-operation contract relates to the indexing of the minutes from the 'Bureau' and the 'Conseil Général du Parti Ouvrier Belge' for the period 1892 to 1940, and putting this information on both institutions' websites. Following the Commission's session on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2008, two representatives and the director of AMSAB presented the provisional result of the work aimed at preparing and finalising the electronic edition.
- Universiteit Gent (Prof. J. Deploige and Guy De Tré): an agreement has been concluded with this university with a view to producing a new software program to improve performance as regards the consultation of the *Narrative Sources* database. It lists the narrative sources of the Netherlands in mediaeval times (Prof. Deploige). The contract came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 for a duration of two years. It will be possible to consult it via the Commission's website. The Commission is represented by our fellow members Ludo Milis and Thérèse de Hemptinne on the support committee.
- Université libre de Bruxelles (Prof. Alain Dierkens and Mr. David Guillardian): preparation for the editing of the *Actes des comtes de Louvain, puis Ducs de Brabant (début du XI<sup>e</sup> s. - 1190)* is coming to an end. Publication is planned for the end of 2009 (cf. 5).

### 6.5 Collaborations on an international level

The Commission is participating as a founder member in the European project *Porta Historica. A Network of Editors of Historical Sources*, initiated in May 2006 by the Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis (ING, The Hague). The other partners are the Institut für Mittelalterforschung (Vienna), which is a section of the Österreichische Akademie für Wissenschaften, the École Nationale des Chartes (Paris) and the Institute of Historical Research (London). The Commission is represented by our chairman Jean-Marie Duvosquel and our fellow member Thérèse de Hemptinne, who has been retained as a member of the Board until 2010. They participated in the meeting in London from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008 in the company of our fellow member Karel Velle, who presented the Commission's editions in a detailed manner and its first steps into the digital publication of works that are out of print. This fruitful exchange has awakened an interest in sharing experiences, in particular with the Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis (ING). The meeting in April 2009, following the congress, will be organised by the Royal History Commission (cf. 6.1).

On a European level, the Commission is also participating in the renowned *Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi* project, sponsored by the International Union of Academies (IUA). In agreement with Belgium's two Royal Science Academies, it is responsible for publishing several texts in the *Series Belgica*. The Commission has created a work group for this purpose. It is composed of our fellow members Thérèse de Hemptinne, Jean-Louis Kupper and Walter Prevenier. The latter agreed to succeed the late Pierre Cockshaw.



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. In accordance with the statutory provisions, our fellow member Claude Bruneel was replaced on the Board of Directors of the Institut Historique de Rome by our fellow member Bruno Demoulin.

## **7. Premises**

In accordance with an agreement concluded between the Chairman and the Permanent Secretary of the Belgian Royal Academy, the Commission left the two rooms it had been occupying since 1993, on the second floor of the former royal stables. The furniture was transferred into a new room situated on the ground floor of the same building, which was kindly made available to the Commission. An agreement specifying the exact nature of the fees still has to be put into writing.