

# Royal Historical Commission's

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## Annual Report 2009

True to tradition, the Commission met four times last year, more specifically on 14 March, 13 June, 10 October and 19 December. The Committee met on the same dates.

### 1. General introduction

2009 was a special year for our Commission, because this year was its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was established in 1834, barely a couple of years after the foundation of the Belgian State, with a double purpose. On the one hand, publish unpublished sources based on *state of the art* critical scientific methods; on the other hand, make tools available which support or make even possible historic studies. The Commission has conscientiously carried out its objective over all those decades. Jubilee years are always good occasions to look back and to take stock of the delivered work; but they are also an incentive to look at the future and to reflect on new developments which they not only need to meet, but preferably also anticipate. For both moments of reflection - looking back and forward - the necessary time was taken over the past year.

An excellent record of the *delivered work* was drawn up by our fellow member Claude Bruneel, who over the course of no less than ten years filled the position of Secretary and Treasurer. His study, entitled “*De Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis in de laatste vijftwintig jaar (1985-2009)*”, published in the jubilee issue of the *Bulletin* of our Commission (cf. 3.2), offers a detailed overview of the Royal Historical Commission's work over the past quarter century. There is not much point in summarising his findings in this annual report; the outlines of the Commission's activity will be discussed in the pages below. The *look into the future* (more specifically dealing with the increasingly important digitisation of archive documents) was discussed during an international symposium organised by the Royal Historical Commission in April 2009 together with the “Porta Historica” network (cf. 5.1). For the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary an international symposium about “*Kanselarijen en scriptoria*” was also organised. We already mentioned that this year the *Bulletin* was dedicated entirely to the anniversary (cf. 3.3). To add lustre to the latter, the Commission introduced a new prize, the Henri Pirenne prize; it was awarded for the first time in 2009 (cf. 7).

### 2. Composition of the Commission in 2009

The Commission regrets the loss of one of its members. Our fellow member Jean-Jacques Hoebanx, born on 28 March 1920, died on 23 February 2009. This discreet man and excellent medievalist was very devoted to the Commission; in spite of his advanced age he continued to follow its activities very closely and attended the meetings as much as possible. The many articles he published in our *Bulletin* are clear proof of his dedication over many years. He was elected as a member on 20 June 1981, was vice-chairman from January 1987 to February 1990 and was chairman from February 1990 to January 1993.

Contrary to 2007 and 2008 (when no less than five new members joined the Commission), the composition of the Royal Historical Commission has not changed over the past year. Only the composition of the Committee has changed. Our fellow member Claude Bruneel,

who in 2009 completed a second five year period as Secretary and Treasurer, expressed the desire to no longer fill this position. On 13 June he was succeeded by Guy Vanthemsche, previously Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. The latter position has been given to our fellow member Jean-Louis Kupper (who was chairman from 2002 to 2005).

### 3. New publications

**3.1** A number of years ago the Commission resolved to pay more attention to the contemporary period (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century). Coincidence has it that three publications this year refer exactly to this previously somewhat neglected period.

The first initiative concerns a sizable electronic publication, or rather “unlocking”, i.e. the digitisation and the online availability of the minutes of the *'Bureau'* and the *'Raad van de Belgische Werkliedenpartij'* (1894-1940). Previous annual reports already shed light on the aim and the realisation phases of this undertaking. This very important series of sources, which was believed to be lost for a long time, was discovered about twenty years ago by collaborators of the AMSAB - Institute of Social History in Ghent. This archive institute also microfilmed the minutes, which could be consulted thanks to a provisional index. These documents were often consulted by the researchers, but it made sense to make these archives available on a broader (and international) scale by digitising them entirely. With the help of the Royal Historical Commission this objective was at last achieved: since 2009 it has been an important part of the Belgian historical document database which is available online via [www.amsab.be](http://www.amsab.be) and [www.kcgeschiedenis.be](http://www.kcgeschiedenis.be). The archivist of AMSAB-ISG who was responsible for these minutes and previously for the provisional indexing, Mr Michel Vermote, supervised the digitisation operation and brought it to a good end. He has now also devised a detailed electronic unlocking machine which allows easy consultation of the minutes. And he also wrote a methodological and historical introduction to these sources which will be published in the next *Bulletin*.

**3.2** In 2009, the Commission also published two “classic” printed works. First of all *'Bronnen voor de studie van het hedendaagse België 19<sup>e</sup>-20<sup>e</sup> eeuw'*, edited by Patricia Van den Eeckhout and Guy Vanthemsche. This sizable book (more than 1,630 pages) is the second revised and extended edition of a book published in 1999 by VUB-Press. It provides a panoramic and critical annotated overview of all (unpublished, published and digital) sources produced by Belgian society, from the last years of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Commission therefore believed this new edition could have a place in its series of publications to further develop both the aspect “making tools available which support historic studies” and the opening toward the contemporary period. More than seventy authors, connected to several universities, research centres and archive institutes in Belgium collaborated in this book. It classifies the sources per producing institute: first the public, then the private institutes, sources of private persons and families and finally the sources of the media. The book concludes with an overview of the different types of unwritten sources. On 23 November 2009 this book was presented to the press in the Palais des Académies in the presence of a representative of Prime minister Herman Van Rompuy. Originally, the Prime minister had accepted to attend the press showing but ultimately he could not make it because a number of days earlier he had been appointed President of the Council of the European Union.

A second book that was published by the Commission also refers to the contemporary period. Guy VANTHEMSCHE was responsible for the critical publication of the reports about Belgian Congo which minister of Colonies Jules Renkin wrote during World War I for King Albert I. (*Le Congo belge pendant La Première Guerre global. Les rapports du ministre des Colonies Jules Renkin au roi Albert 1<sup>er</sup> (1914-1918)*, series in-8°, XXXII-240 p.). These documents shed a special light on the Great War in central Africa and the policy of the Belgian government vis-à-vis the recently acquired colony. Particularly the military, diplomatic and economic aspects were discussed in Renkin's reports; the minister paid little attention to the social aspects. With this source publication the Commission hopes to provide a modest contribution to the revival of colonial historiography in Belgium.

**3.3** We already mentioned that in 2009 the *Bulletin* of the Royal Historical Commission was dedicated to the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The current Commission continues a tradition in doing so because after every additional quarter century of its history it publishes a special issue of its bulletin. The – over this period dead and still living – members are briefly presented in it; and every member publishes an original article in which a specific source is presented and published with critical annotations. The 175<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Bulletin* (2009, 657 p.) therefore also follows this model. We already mentioned that our fellow member Claude Bruneel opens the volume with an extensive history of the Commission over the past twenty-five years (“*De Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis in de laatste vijftienvintig jaar*” p. 37-66). The outlines of this most recent phase of its history are clearly explained. This is followed by biographical notes about the lives and the work of the commission members who died over this period (L.-E. Halkin, M.A. Arnould, A.-E. Verhulst, A. Van Loey, O. Jodogne, C. Wyffels, J. Buntinx, J. Bovesse, G. Hansotte, M. Hoebeke, P. Cockshaw, J.-J. Hoebanx) (p. 69-134), as well as a short presentation of the current members (p. 135-159). However, the largest part of this volume is taken up by the different contributions which the latter wrote especially for this occasion (p. 161-654). The complete list of articles, with a short summary in French, Dutch and English is available on the Commission's website (cf. 8).

#### **4. Current publication projects**

In 2009, a number of works and articles were subjected to the full evaluation process by the Commission members and were modified by the authors based on their comments and advice. These studies are therefore currently at the printer's and will see the light in 2010. We will only list these publications here because they will be discussed more extensively in the next annual report. It concerns, in the first place, the continuation of an important long-term publication project, more specifically the publication by our fellow member Thérèse de Hemptinne and our late fellow member Adriaan Verhulst (†), with the cooperation of Lieve De Mey, of the next part of *De oorkonden der Graven van Vlaanderen (juli 1128-september 1191). II. Uitgave. Band III. Regering van Filips van de Elzas (Tweede deel: 1178-1191)*. Two other books are also practically ready: on the one hand Alain Lottin, « *Chronique mémorial des choses mémorables par moy Pierre-Ignace Chavatte* » (1657-1693). *Le mémorial d'un humble tisserand lillois au grand siècle* and on the other hand Jean-Louis Van Belle, *Deux livres d'expéditions de marbres d'un marchand de Beaumont-Rance en Hainaut (1769-1784)*.

The already announced work of the late 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* has been delayed for technical reasons and could not be completed over the course of 2009. Our fellow member Gustaaf Janssens is taking care of the further completion of this publication. Under the direction of our fellow members Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Claude de Moreau de Gerbehaye, Mr Jean-Pol Weber is continuing his work on the tax system in Luxembourg between 1360 and 1565, based on the texts left by the late Roger Petit. It is expected that the first volume could be published over the course of 2010.

Regarding the articles awaiting composition: the contribution of Jelle Haemers, *Geletterd verzet. Diplomatiek, politiek en herinneringscultuur van opstandelingen in de laatmiddeleeuwse en vroegmoderne stad (casus: Gent en Brugge)*, will appear in the *Bulletin* of 2010, as well as a number of other studies which are currently being revised by the authors.

The conclusions of the symposiums specified below (cf. 6) will also be published over the course of 2010.

## **5. International and national collaborations**

**5.1** Previous annual reports have reported extensively on the foundation and significance of “Porta Historica”, an international network of institutions editing historical sources which was initiated by our Dutch sister society ING (Instituut voor Nationale Geschiedenis). The fact that the Royal Historical Commission is one of the founding members of this network shows that the activities of the Commission are well thought-of and are valued in another countries. In 2008 a number of meetings were organised, first in The Hague and then, on 2-4 December, in London. A number of Commission members attended this meeting, i.e. our fellow members de Hemptinne, Velle, Prevenier, Duvosquel and Milis. Ideas were exchanged regarding the vision and strategy of electronic publications, the expansion of the network and the organisation of the dissemination of information (website, circulation of texts, etc.). It was also agreed that the Commission would host the subsequent meeting. This was held on 30 April 2009 and was preceded by a scientific symposium about the digital publication of sources (cf. 6). The meeting of the board of Porta Historica agreed that the next meeting will be held in Paris in the course of 2010.

**5.2** A number of the Commission's other external collaborations are situated in Belgium.

One refers to an important electronic database of medieval texts. This is because in 2007 the Royal Historical Commission entered into a collaboration with Universiteit Gent (medieval history department): both partners submitted a subsidy application to the Herculesfonds of the Flemish Community, reserved for the funding of expensive equipment for scientific research. The requested (and allocated) funds were for the production of software which would allow the efficient consultation of the “Narrative Sources” database. This database lists the narrative sources of the Southern Netherlands (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century). The project had been brought to a good conclusion by the end of 2009. A trial version of this database was launched to test the new search options. After possible adjustments, this unique collection of documents will be easily accessible on the internet to everyone in the course of 2010.

The agreement reached with the State Archives with a view to the digitised indexation of the diplomatic correspondence between Vienna and Brussels (1740/48-1790) continued in 2009. A mid-term review, provided to the Commission by the person

hired for this (cf. 9), says they are making good progress. The concrete result - the publication of the first part of this index - has been announced for February 2010.

The agreement with the AMSAB-ISG was, as already mentioned, successfully concluded in 2009 when the digitised edition of the minutes of the '*Raad*' and the '*Bureau van de Belgische Werkliedenpartij*' (cf. 3.1) was made accessible.

The agreement with the Université Libre de Bruxelles with a view to the editing of the Acts of the Dukes of Brabant (cf. previous annual reports) is still running and shall, hopefully, in 2010 result in this long expected publication.

## 6. Symposiums organised for the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary

**6.1** On 28 and 29 April 2009, the Royal Historical Commission was the hosting and organising institute for the international symposium on the theme of *Digital edition of sources in Europe: achievements, (juridical and technical) problems and prospects*. It brought together the partners of the European Porta Historica network (cf. 5.1).

After an introduction by our fellow member Ludo Milis (who also took care of the general conclusions), Donald Haks (Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis and initiator of Porta Historica) gave a general lecture on the challenges of the electronic publication of sources ("Quantity, Quality and the Public. The electronic edition of Historical sources"). The representatives of the other partner institutes of Porta Historica went on to discuss various specific aspects of digital source editions. Marianne Pollheimer and Martin Haltrich (both of the Zentrum Mittelalterforschung of the Austrian Academy for Sciences) talked about "Carolingian manuscripts in Austrian libraries. Compilation of a palaeographic online-database following the insights and analyses of Bernhard Bischoff". Jonathan Blaney and Jane Winters (Institute for Historical Research) shed light on the British experience ("The British History Online digital library: a model for sustainability?"). From Germany came Mark Mersiowsky (Monumenta Germaniae Historica), who discussed the "Monumenta Germaniae Historica online: actual states of affairs, projects, visions". Florence Clavaud (Ecole Nationale des Chartes) then spoke about "The Electronic Editions of the Ecole des Chartes: aims, principles, tools, prospects". Isabelle Draelants (ARTEM) talked about "Online medieval sources produced in Nancy. An annotated corpus of the encyclopaedic Latin texts of the thirteenth Century and their Sources: the « Sourcencyme » program". Patrick Sahle (IDE) held a lecture on "How Far Will You Go? Levels of Transition in Digital Scholarly Editing". And Jeroen Deploige (UGent), Bert Callens (UGent-TELIN) and Philippe Demonty (Royal Historical Commission) ended with a presentation entitled "Remedying the obsolescence of digitalised surveys of medieval sources. Narrative Sources and the Thesaurus Diplomaticus".

These lectures will be published in the *Bulletin* of the Commission in 2010. Summaries of the presentations and even a number of full texts are already available on the Commission's website (cf. 8).

**6.2** On 11 and 12 December 2009 a second international symposium was organised in the Palais des Académies. This scientific event was also organised to celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Commission. A number of prominent experts from the Netherlands, France and Germany joined their Belgian colleagues in Brussels to exchange ideas about *Chancelleries princières et scriptoria du X<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

Following an introductory lecture by our fellow member Walter Prevenier, first the general theme "Chancelleries princières et scriptoria" was discussed. The following lectures were held: "*La genèse des scriptoria lotharingiens (IX<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> s.)*", by Jens Schneider; "*Van privaatoorkonde naar vorstelijke oorkonde. De oorkonden van de eerste graven van Vlaanderen, inzonderheid voor de Sint-Pietersabdij te Gent (10de-11de eeuw)*", by Georges Declercq and "*Monastieke identiteit en maatschappelijk gedrag in de twaalfde-eeuwse "cartularium-kroniek" van Hesdin*", by Steven Vanderputten. Then "*Bisschoppelijke kanselarijen en kathedraalkapittels*" was discussed, with consecutive presentations about "*La chancellerie des évêques de Liège (Xe-XIIIe s.)*", by Jean-Louis Kupper; "*Chancellerie épiscopale, chancellerie canoniale: unicité ou pluralité des institutions à Cambrai au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*", by Nathalie Barré; "*La chancellerie des évêques de Thérouanne au XI<sup>e</sup> s.*", by Benoît-Michel Tock and "*De bisschop, de heren en de stad. Het oorkondewezen in Utrecht ca. 1250-ca. 1320*", by Jan Burgers. After a general discussion, Thérèse de Hemptinne, Alain Dierkens and David Guillardian gave a presentation on the state of affairs with regard to the edition of the "*Akten der Belgische Vorsten*".

The second day of the symposium first discussed the theme of "*Vorstelijke en heerlijke kanselarijen*". The following lectures were held: "*Actes princiers et naissance des principautés territoriales: les pouvoirs laïques entre Meuse et Rhin (fin X<sup>e</sup> - début XII<sup>e</sup> s.)*", by Michel Margue; "*Actes princiers et naissance des principautés territoriales: du duché de Basse-Lotharingie au duché de Brabant (XI<sup>e</sup> - XIII<sup>e</sup> s.)*", by Alain Dierkens and David Guillardian; "*De grafelijke kanselarij in Vlaanderen en Henegouwen tijdens het regentschap van Filips van Namen (1206-1212)*", by Els De Paermentier and "*Gouverner sans chancellerie? Le recours à l'écrit chez les comtes et les barons du nord de la France aux XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> s.*", by Jean-François Nieuws. The last theme of this symposium concerned the aspects "Organisation: personnel and management", based on the following lectures: "*Dou commant monsigneur, P. de Songnie. Henegouwse kanselarijkrachten in dienst van de graven van Henegouwen, Holland en Zeeland (1299-1345)*", by Valeria Van Camp; "*Meten is weten? De toepassing van het Groningen - Intelligent Writer Identification System op Hollandse kanselarij-oorkonden, 1299-1345*", by Jinna Smit; "*Les documents diplomatiques de la cathédrale Saint-Lambert de Liège antérieurs à l'incendie de 1185*", by Alexis Wilkin; "*Archives, archivage et archivistique à la collégiale de Saint-Omer à la fin du Moyen Âge à la lumière d'un inventaire de 1480*", by Jean-Charles Bédague and finally "*Bewaren of weggooien, afschrijven of verplaatsen? Het papieren cartularium van de graven van Holland en Zeeland en de zorg voor het grafelijke archief in 1299*", by Eef Dijkhof. After a new discussion round, the general conclusions of this symposium were presented by our fellow member Thérèse de Hemptinne, who was also responsible for the general organisation of this fruitful scientific meeting. Some seventy participants attended the symposium - in this sense one can say it was a success - including many young researchers, which gives hope for the future of scientific text edition and medieval studies in Belgium. The texts of the lectures will be published in the *Bulletin* of the Commission next year.

## 7. Henri Pirenne Prize

To celebrate its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Commission decided to introduce a new prize: the Henri Pirenne Prize, after this great Belgian historian who was the Royal Historical Commission's secretary and treasurer for almost thirty years (from 1907 to 1935). The rules of the prize can be consulted on [www.kcgeschiedenis.be](http://www.kcgeschiedenis.be), but we will briefly

summarise the aim and a number of important provisions. The prize is aimed at rewarding the author, regardless of nationality, for his/her substantial editing of texts, original or not, considered to be exemplary and relative to the history of Belgium. The prize will be awarded every two years for a work relating either to mediaeval history, the history of modern times or contemporary history. The aim of this initiative is to highlight the Commission's activities, but especially also to encourage young historians to continue the difficult, sometimes ungrateful, but in any case essential job of unlocking sources.

Mr Godfried Croenen can boast being the first laureate of the Pirenne Prize. The Commission awarded the prize for his publication of *De oorkonden van de familie Berthout (1212-1425)*, a work that was published in 2006 in the in-4° series of the Royal Historical Commission. The members of the jury of the Commission underlined the exemplary character of this edition. It is based on a meticulous reconstruction of particularly rare archives of an important noble family of Brabant. The book also gives an in-depth explanation of the political, economic and social history of nobility during the Middle Ages in the former Low Countries and increases our knowledge of the customs for drawing up testaments and marriage contracts from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Croenen's work also increases our knowledge of diplomatic techniques (minutes, chirographs, etc).

## 8. Website

To make the electronic window of the Commission to the world more attractive, it had already been decided to expand the digital offer and to improve the presentation of the website. Over the past year, we took the next step in that direction. The design of the site had already been modernised; in 2009 an important search tool was made available to internet users, more specifically the digital table of contents of the *Bulletin* (from 1834 to date). It can be searched via different (possibly combined) angles: name of the author, title of the contribution, year of publication, keyword. The website also provides a short summary of the content of the articles of the last five years. Another novelty: the entire, digitised text of a number of old publications of the Royal Historical Commission, which are sold out, is now also available. This offer, for now, is still limited to five works (more specifically *Œuvres de Jacques de Hemricourt*, 3 parts, 1910-1931, by C. De Borman, A. Bayot and Ed. Poncelet; *Les dénombrements de foyers en Brabant (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, 2 parts, 1912-13, by J. Cuvelier; *Dénombrements des feux des duché de Luxembourg et comté de Chiny. Tome I*, 1921, by J. Vannérus; *La Chronique de Gislebert de Mons*, 1904, by L. Vanderkindere and *Les Annales de Saint-Pierre de Gand et de Saint-Amand*, 1937, by Ph. Grierson). However, the Commission intends to further develop this digital library, with the valued help of the State Archives. Access to the digital version of the minutes of the Belgische Werkliedenpartij (1894-1940) was already discussed in this report (cf. 3.1); this search option was also added to the website in 2009. And finally the website also contains the presentations and the full texts of the lectures held at the “Digital Sources” symposium, discussed under 6.1.

The website is visited regularly. Between the start of February 2009 and the end of January 2010 it was visited 247,663 times in all. Average daily visits varied from 373 (in July 2009) to 2,126 (in February of that year).

## 9. Scientific collaborators

To the Commission's great satisfaction, Mr Philippe Demonty has been a paid external collaborator for several years. The aim of this collaboration has already been discussed in detail in previous annual reports. He is currently finalising the *Nouveau Wauters* for the years 1200 to 1250. In this phase he is focused mainly on finding the electronically available documents and publications and integrating them in the work. The aim is also to link this work tool to the *Narrative Sources* database, discussed above (cf. 5.2). Mr Demonty has already contacted the team in Ghent developing this initiative.

Mrs Catherine Thomas is responsible for the digitised indexation of the diplomatic correspondence between Vienna and Brussels (1740/48-1790), in co-operation with the State Archives. This subject was already discussed above (cf. 5.2).

Mrs Katrien Vandewoude-Vandermaesen is continuing her work on the indexation of the edition of the accounts of the city of Bruges (1280-1319) published by the late Carlos Wyffels, Member of the Commission. The work is proceeding very slowly, because of the practical difficulties the collaborator has encountered regarding the (among others) identification of the surnames.

To her great satisfaction the Commission was again able to count on Mr Stijn Meersseman over the past year who previously had been responsible for drawing up the index on the *Recueil de documents de l'industrie drapière en Flandre* (cf. the 2006 annual report of the Commission in the *Bulletin*, 2008, p. 413). This time round he was responsible for the indexation of the reference work *Bronnen voor de studie van het hedendaagse België 19<sup>e</sup>-20<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (cf. 4).

The collaboration with Mrs Lieve De Mey was terminated in 2009: the part of *De oorkonden der Graven van Vlaanderen (juli 1128-september 1191). II. Uitgave. Band III. Regering van Filips van de Elzas (Tweede deel: 1178-1191)* to which she collaborated under the direction of our fellow member de Hemptinne, is currently at the press.