

# Chroniques des Comtes de Flandres

Holkham Ms. 659

Notes written by Dr. W.O. Hassall

Publication no. C00506

MICROFORM ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS  
East Ardsley, Wakefield WF3 2AP, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)1924 825700  
Fax: +44 (0)1924 871005  
MAP@microform.co.uk  
[www.microform.co.uk/academic](http://www.microform.co.uk/academic)

# Chronicle of the Counts of Flanders

Adviser : W. O. Hassall, M.A., D.Phil., F.S.A.

## INTRODUCTION

Holkham MS. 659. 400 x 290mm. This Chronicle of the Counts of Flanders is illustrated in grisaille by the "Master of Mary of Burgundy", a great artist on whom Dr. O. Paecht has published an illustrated monograph. It was produced at Ghent in 1477 and was the last manuscript to be written there by David Aubert. Aubert was born at Hesdin and had produced books at Brussels about 1460 and then at Bruges about 1467 before establishing himself at Ghent about 1474. Previously he had avoided ornamental borders but at Ghent he followed this fashionable practice, though the rectangular borders have their grounds left white and are soberly ornamented with acanthus scrolls. The French translation of the Chronicle of the Counts of Flanders was made in 1476 for Mary of Burgundy during the lifetime of her father, Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. The transcription was made in 1477 after Mary had become Duchess of Burgundy. This manuscript contains the arms and device of Margaret of York, to whom Mary gave it as a present.

Only one third of the illuminations have been hitherto reproduced Nos. 1 and 19 by Dorez and Nos. 5-7 and 12 and 15 by Paecht. The subjects represented relate to medieval history, not to mythical antiquity like the miniatures in the Chronicle of the Counts of Hainault, Holkham MS. 658. As the incidents illustrated may be unfamiliar to many who are not historical specialists, except for such battles famous in English history as Bouvines, Crécy and Poitiers, exact dates have been inserted in the notes.

This manuscript was exhibited in 1959 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, in conjunction with many other examples of the work of D. Aubert drawn from various libraries. This manuscript is very typical of his style of production.

### **Frame 1.**

Charlemagne hands a charter to Eideric, the mythical first Count of Flanders, 792. Each has six supporters. Ten figures between rock and castle in background. Leon Dorez mistook this for a princess receiving an ambassador. fol. 2.

### **Frame 2.**

Count Robert the Frisian (infantry) fights French and Anglo-Norman armies (cavalry) which were supporting his rival for the countship and wins the battle of Cassel, 22 February 1071. Philip I led the French. William FitzOsborn, Earl of Hereford, who had led William the Conqueror's right wing at the Battle of Hastings, was killed. fol. 8.

### **Frame 3.**

Bouchart murders Count Charles the Good in the church of St. Donatien at Bruges, 2 March 1127. fol. 14.

### **Frame 4.**

Imperial and French banners at the Battle of Bouvines where the French defeated the Flemish and German allies of King John. A knight falls on the left. A French mounted archer is on the right. A French knight advances in the centre. 27 July 1214. fol. 58.

### **Frame 5.**

Sitting side-saddle is Countess Johanna of Constantinople, heiress and daughter of Count Baldwin IX of Flanders, and wife of Ferrand of Portugal, who was kept prisoner by the French after the Battle of Bouvines. She watches a "false hermit" kneel beside a gibbet. He is a victim of a campaign against heretics encouraged by Robert, a Friar, which culminated in many being burnt, especially at Cambrai, 1235. In the background there is a crowd in front of a row of six houses. Towns flourished under Countess Johanna (d. 1244). fol. 78.

### **Frame 6.**

Four crowded sailing ships. This shows the departure of St. Louis, King Louis IX of France, on crusade. 1246. fol. 86v.

**Frame 7.**

Four crowded ships approach an armed band on shore. In the background is a rock and Damietta which Louis IX reached in 1249. This scene occurs in a manuscript of the Chronicle of the Counts of Flanders at Angers.

**Frame 8.**

Corpses between two bands of foot. This is the victory of Charles of Anjou over Ghibeline Lombards and Germans at Tagliacozzo, 23 August 1268. In the background is Conradin, the eighteen-year-old grandson of the Emperor Frederic II, King of Jerusalem and Sicily, and the last of the Hohenstaufen. He kneels to be decapitated with a sword in camp, 26 October 1268. The Angers manuscript illustrated this. fol. 107.

**Frame 9.**

Armies with banners. French cavalry confront English infantry with crosses of St. George on breastplates. This shows the reconquest of Bordeaux and Gascony from the lieutenants of Edward I by Robert Count of Artois. Henry III's son, Edmund Crouchback Earl of Lancaster, died on 5 June 1296 while besieging Bordeaux and has a splendid tomb in Westminster Abbey. Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, took over his command until he returned to England at Easter 1298. fol. 121v.

**Frame 10.**

The Flemish commons on foot (left) rout the chivalry of France under Robert of Artois at the Battle of Courtrai (Kortrijk), 11 June 1302. A fallen horse (right corner). The Angers manuscript illustrates this. fol. 137.

**Frame 11.**

Two hosts on foot, some with maces, at the Battle of Mons-en-Pevèle, August 1304. Although the French claimed the victory they could not advance further at the time. The Flemings lost heavily in men, their leader, William of Juliers, being killed. He lies on the right, while an axe descends. fol. 156v.

**Frame 12.**

A procession of the University on foot in front of the gate of Oxford

meets Queen Isabel, the "she-wolf of France", with her mounted host. This is the earliest picture of a royal visit to Oxford. Isabel was on her way west in 1326 before the unspeakably horrible murder of her husband, Edward II, at Berkeley Castle. In Oxford Bishop Orlton preached a suitable sermon before her, first suggesting deposition. fol. 195.

### **Frame 13.**

The French under Philip VI defeat the Flemings, in revolt against Count Louis I de Nevers at Cassel, 23 August 1328. It was a victory of the nobility against the bourgeois. After it Louis executed at least 10,000 rebels. This taught the Flemings to hate their oppressors. The victory was contrary to English interests.

### **Frame 14.**

Edward III does homage to King Philip VI of France for his French fiefs though he refused liege homage (which would have invalidated any claim to the French throne) at Amiens on 6 July 1329. This was shortly before he asserted himself as King of England and imprisoned Queen Isabel. In the background is a central pillar on a low wall between two arches. fol. 207.

### **Frame 15.**

A civilian with a white wand (James van Artefeld) with two followers in a cobbled street at Ghent. A corpse behind and one man attacking another with a curved sword. Background: a receding street. James was a rich burgher, devoted to the interests of the Guild of Cloth Merchants and the glorification of Ghent, who led popular opposition to the Count of Flanders. He made Edward III an ally to secure wool supplies and on 8 February 1340 declared that the Flemings recognised him as King of France. They could thus claim to be faithful to their true lord. fol. 221

### **Frame 16.**

Counter-revolutionary massacre in Ghent market place. By 1342 the men of Ghent were secretly ready to make terms with France, but James van Artevelde still looked for Edward III's support against the Count. In 1345 Edward III suggested making the Black Prince count. Artevelde was pleased but the men of Ghent rose and slew him. fol. 226.

**Frame 17.**

Turbaned Saracens (left) pressed back by footmen of Castile and Portugal (right). One Saracen shield is heart-shaped, bearing a face. This fight, typical of many against the Moorish kingdom of Granada, occurred in 1343. William Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, was said to have been present while on an embassy to Castile from Edward III who vainly sought an alliance. fol. 245.

**Frame 18.**

The Battle of Crécy, 26 August 1346. Three hosts with banners. Arrows and some of the six thousand Genoese cross-bows, scattered on left foreground. Longbows (adopted by the English yeomen from the Welsh) point from right. Background: landscape with trees and a windmill. Here fell the knightly John, King of Bohemia, and Louis, Count of Flanders, ever faithful to King Philip of France. The victory opened the way to Calais. See A. H. Burne, *The Crécy War*, 1955. fol. 255.

**Frame 19.**

The Battle of Poitiers (Maupertuis), 19 September 1356. Surcoats on left with St. George's Cross, on right with Fleur-de-lys. The Cardinal Talleyrand de Perigord returns from an attempt, as papal emissary, to arrange terms with the English. His attempted mediation failed as King John of France, soon to be prisoner, refused the terms offered by the Black Prince. The English cursed the departing cardinal as the negotiations had given the French time to bring up reinforcements. The cardinal's last visit was not, in fact, made on the same morning as that on which the battle began. fol. 267.

**Frame 20.**

Capture of Aurai, 29 September 1364. "Aulroy" (top right) with raised drawbridge is attacked with handguns and three cannon from trenches in front. Cavalry are shown approaching the besiegers from the right, though in fact all fought on foot. England and France were technically at peace but the famous English captains, Sir Robert Knolles and Sir John Chandos, helped Edward III's ally, John de Montfort, defeat an attempt by Charles de Blois and Bertram du Guesclin to relieve the castle of Aurai. Charles was killed and Bertram du Guesclin captured. Thus John de Montfort

gained Brittany and was recognised as Duke by King Charles V ; but Brittany became useless to Edward III as John de Montfort recognised Charles V as his suzerain. fol. 271v.

**Frame 21.**

The army of Ghent (left) drives back the men of Count Louis de Male of Flanders to the gate of Bruges (right), 3 May 1382. This further rebellion of the Flemings against their count was led by Philip van Artevelde, heir of James (see Frames 15 and 16). The Count's haughtiness alienated sympathy, but when he appealed for French help it was forthcoming, as the men of Ghent were hated and feared as general leaders of the common people — and the previous year (1381) had been that of the Peasants' Revolt in England. fol. 282.

**Frame 22.**

Battle of Westrozebeke, 27 November 1382, when the French beat Philip van Artevelde's Flemings. Knights charge from the left. The front rank on right have levelled spears. Ghent held out though Artevelde was slain. English help arrived too late (1383) under Henry le Despenser, Bishop of Norwich, "Conqueror of West Flanders," who ravaged Flanders under the plea of crusading for Urban VI against Clement VII and was disgraced. fol. 284.