



NEWSLETTER N° 1, May 1998

Dear Map Friend,

It has taken some time to create the basis for the official launching of the Circle's activities. However, its establishment as a non-profitmaking Association under Belgian law (ASBL in French) is now well underway, and it is hoped that in the next Newsletter, scheduled for September, a functioning Committee and its Members can be presented to you.

In the meantime, and in order not to lose any of the momentum created during the first meeting at the end of March, it was felt appropriate to issue this note so as to keep all those interested in the BIMCC informed about what happened so far, and what is planned next.

The beginnings

The idea of creating an Association of map enthusiasts in Brussels first emerged during the 1997 International Symposium organized in Budapest by IMCoS, the London-based International Map Collectors' Society. Wulf Bodenstein, IMCoS member in Brussels, accepted the challenge and started setting up the Circle. The first problem was finding a suitable meeting place, and he was fortunate in being given access to one part of the College Saint Michel, conveniently accessible by public transport and offering private parking facilities, where a large assembly room with a long table and ample seating capacity could be rented, through the good offices of Brother René Hanssen.

In cooperation with Philippe Swolfs, the Belgian Representative of IMCoS, a hand-out in four languages (English, French, Dutch and German) was then prepared, inviting to a first, informal meeting. This was distributed to about one hundred addressees susceptible to

being interested in the new venture. Participants were encouraged to bring along an item from their collection which they found particularly interesting or which they wished to find out more about from specialists in attendance; as it turned out, many people *did* show up with maps, atlases and books with maps. There was excellent support from IMCoS, especially through the columns of its Journal, and with a great deal of personal engagement and a good measure of improvisation the inaugural meeting was set up in a relatively short time.

First Meeting of the BIMCC, 31st March, 1998

As from 6.00 p.m. that day, 34 people of seven different nationalities gathered in the assembly room of the College St. Michel where, after informal introductions around some drinks and sandwiches, the proceedings were opened by Philippe Swolfs who had agreed to chair this first meeting. English had been adopted as the working language. A warm welcome was extended to all who had accepted to join in this new venture, and especially to the nine participants from outside of Belgium, among whom a strong UK delegation with three IMCoS Officers and Francis Herbert, the Curator of Maps at the Royal Geographical Society. Hans Kok, the IMCoS Netherlands Representative, was present, as was the former Belgian Representative Itzhak Sperling whose wife kindly assumed the charge of collecting the admission dues.

The presentations

Joost Depuydt of the University Library (Leuven) was the first to be given the floor. He recalled that a number of events were being staged this year to mark the 400th anniversary

of the death of Abraham Ortelius. His brief exposé emphasized Ortelius' rôle as a humanist, interested in the study of ancient history through numismatics and historical toponymy. The Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp will have an exhibition on Ortelius as of November this year. Lisette Danckaert, former Curator of Maps at the Royal Library in Brussels, added that an exhibition on Ortelius was being prepared there also.

Bart Van der Herten (Leuven University) then spoke about a project to reproduce, in facsimile book form, a large (3.61 x 6.14m) wall map of Brugge, originally painted by Pieter Pourbus between 1561 and 1571, of which however only the copy by Pieter Claeissens has survived. The book is due to be published in August this year (more about this under the heading "BIMCC visit to Brugge" below).

Karel Kinds presented two items from his collection: a Mercator Atlas Minor (1616) in remarkable condition, and a volume containing two very rare atlases: the *Itinerarium Belgicum* (F. Hogenberg), and an edition of a Metellus atlas of which only three copies are known. He also informed the meeting about the new Foundation for Historical Cartography of the Netherlands which intends to collect funds to encourage and sponsor certain projects of those who have a non-professional interest in historical Dutch cartography. The Foundation will hold a map fair in Breda (NL) on 23/24 October 1998.

Wulf Bodenstein passed around a curious map of ancient Egypt showing its provinces and their protective deities; the dealer's statement that this was a map by Coronelli was to be refuted, as Lisette Danckaert pointed out, since the map carried a caption in Dutch, hardly a Coronelli feature.

John Barrett had prepared himself most thoroughly for the presentation of Joannes de Laet's map of Nova Francia, considered to be one of the foundation maps of Canada and a mile-stone in the cartographic description of the Americas in the 17th century. He mentioned that the reference to Novum Belgium on the map related to the strong contingent of protestant Walloons in the Dutch West India Company.

Out of Africa, and other places

Caroline Batchelor was next to show and comment upon three items from her collection: a town view of Loango from Dapper's famous *Description of Africa*, and the maps of Congo and Angola, and *Nigritarum Regio* (West Africa) from Ogilby's "Africa." In passing she mentioned Ogilby's astonishing career from dancing master to

Royal Cosmographer. Caroline also quoted from an article in *The Times* relating to the recent discovery of a section of the oldest map of London (ca. 1550) on the back of a copperplate that served as support for an oil painting; this had been unearthed in a Dessau art gallery in Germany, a surprising find indeed.

Hans Kok introduced an interesting "military" map of New York of 1776, published by Le Rouge in Paris and showing the battle lines of the "Provinciaux" and the Royal (British) troops under General Clinton, a development followed with keen interest in France.

Reiner Kaivers had brought with him a book published in 1749 which in fact was a German translation of an English History of the World. It contained numerous finely engraved maps among which those of the continents were of particular interest (California as an island ...). One of the most curious exhibits came from Itzhak Sperling: it was a folio sheet comprising two map segments printed side-by-side, but head- to-tail! As Itzhak subsequently discovered, the two segments were used to complete a six-sheet map of the Holy Land by Janssonius; to find them together, upside-down, is an unusual occurrence, he explained.

J.-P. Schartz was next to expose a map of Flanders by Eugène Fricx who published his maps in Brussels at the beginning of the 18th century. Although quite a well-known item, the map is still very popular with collectors. Underlining the topical interest in the famous cartographer from Antwerp, Philippe Swolfs had brought along a fine copy of the famous "oval" map of Flanders from the 1592 edition of Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, based on Mercator's Flanders map of 1540. P.J. van Puffelen concluded the round of presentations with a very interesting double sea chart of the west coast of the Iberian peninsula by Jacob A. Colom of ca. 1668.

First conclusions

Wulf Bodenstein then outlined the aims of the BIMCC (see extra insert) and expressed his satisfaction at the very positive response to the invitation for this first meeting; a good balance had been achieved between specialists from the most diverse backgrounds, bringing together collectors, academic personalities, and professionals of the trade whose expertise in the field was welcome (any business activities being excluded). It was gratifying to see that a large majority of participants seemed to have enjoyed the meeting, and the questionnaires handed in at closing time (9.30 p.m.) attested to general appreciation and continued support.

Aims of the Brussels International Map Collectors' Circle (BIMCC)

- 1° Provide an informal and convivial forum for all those with a specialist interest in maps, atlases and books with maps
- 2° Organize lectures on various aspects of historical cartography, on regions of cartographical interest, on documentation, paper conservation, and related subjects
- 3° Organize visits to exhibitions, and to libraries and institutions holding important map and atlas collections.

Visit to the Royal Library

The next morning visitors from abroad were invited to the Royal Library in Brussels, where the Curator of Maps, Hossam Elkhadem, had agreed to expose some of the Map Room's treasures to them as a special favour. Cadastral maps by cartographers Popp and Vandermaelen were on display, together with a number of beautifully preserved manuscript maps and atlases. Undisputed highlights were, however, the unique set of gores of a celestial and a terrestrial Mercator globe, and the only known copy of a Chinese celestial chart by Verbiest. These rarities hardly ever come on display, and the visitors expressed their gratitude for the privilege being accorded to them. A tour of the vaulted archives concluded this memorable visit.

Forthcoming Events

The Circle proposes to organize the following events - unless otherwise stated they will take place at 24, Boulevard Saint Michel, 1040 Brussels and will be conducted in English:

- 10th October 1998: visit to Brugge (see item below)
- 12th December 1998: in the morning, Conference on Ortelius (1527 -1598), his life, his work and his cartographical environment. Speakers will include Joost Depuydt ("Ortelius as a Humanist") and, subject to confirmation, Marcel van den Broecke ("Ortelius' production of maps and atlases") and Rodney Shirley ("Title pages and world maps by Ortelius"). Other speakers may still join the team. After lunch a guided tour of the Ortelius exhibition at the Royal Library by H. Elkhadem is foreseen.
- January/February 1999: study session on paper conservation - introduction to the handling of maps and old documents, aspects of restoration and preservation, the preparation of passe-partouts and related subjects, with the participation of Hans Kok, Guy de Witte and other professionals - planned for one whole Saturday afternoon.
- end March 1999: BIMCC evening on the lines of our first meeting this year.

Please bear in mind that the above is a tentative schedule and is subject to modification. All necessary details will follow in subsequent Newsletters.

Visit to Brugge - Exhibition of the Wall Map of the "Brugse Vrije" by Pieter Pourbus (1571)

Our second activity this year will be an excursion to Brugge on 10th October. Starting this summer, the Municipal Museums of Brugge will honour its most famous artist of the sixteenth century in the exhibition "Van Memling tot Pourbus". Connected with this important cultural event but displayed in a different location, the City Archives of Brugge will have on show some very important cartographic products of the latter artist, Pieter Pourbus (1524 - 1584). Among them are painted maps that represent parts of the ancient County of Flanders, the fragment of the original wall map of the "Franc de Bruges" by Pourbus (1571) and its large copy by Pieter Claeissens (1601). Several archivist records concerning this huge painted map have survived and tell its history. It was the city magistrate of the Brugse Vrije who gave the order to make a detailed survey of its large territory to the painter Pieter Pourbus in 1561. Covering a region that extends from Veurne to Eeklo - nearly half of the present province of West-Vlaanderen - took him about a decade. In 1571 he delivered his cartographic masterpiece to the seat of the Brugse Vrije, where it remains located till the present day. Both its medium (canvas) and its size (3.61m high and 6.14m wide!) made this map extremely vulnerable for extensive use, so that only a part of the original map survived the sixteenth century. An order for a copy on the same scale and size was given to the Brugge painter Pieter Claeissens who delivered the faithful and even more precise map that will be at the centre of the exhibition. Three exceptional qualities of this map are its metrical accuracy, its fine pictorial appearance - it represents every single farm, village, mill and so on - and its enormous size. No other painted wall map of those

dimensions is known in sixteenth century northern Europe.

We will meet on Saturday 10th October at the City Archives in Brugge (address: Burg 11a, 8000 Brugge) at 11h00. For those arriving by car, the nearest parking is at Pandrijtje. Our guide through the exhibition will be Bart Van der Herten whom many of you met at our BIMCC evening. He is the editor of the forthcoming publication on this map, entitled *Het Brugse Vrije in beeld. De groote Kaart geschilderd door Pieter Pourbus (1571) en gecopieerd door Pieter Claeissens (1601)*. This book contains a facsimile in colour of the original fragment of Pourbus as well as a half-size facsimile in colour of the copy by Claeissens and is preceded by a scientific introduction of about 50 pages written by ten authors. BIMCC participants may acquire the book during the exhibition at a discount of 15% (bringing the shop-price of 5.300 BEF down to 4.500 BEF). The book may also be ordered as of the beginning of September directly from the publisher, Leuven University Press, Blijde Inkomstraat 5, 3000 Leuven (fax: 016/32.53.52) who will accord the same discount if you quote the BIMCC.

After the visit to the exhibition there will be an opportunity to meet each other and have a chat over a glass of wine or beer in a nearby Café. Lunch arrangements will be left to individual participants - there is no shortage of good, reasonably priced restaurants in the

vicinity. Incidentally, those who would like to visit the Memling exhibition in the afternoon would be well advised to reserve their ticket in advance (phone 050/44.66.44), on account of the expected heavy demand.

Our event will be free of charge, but **advance booking is required**: please submit the enclosed subscription form **before 20th September**. This is a unique chance to receive a dedicated introduction to this outstanding wall map and to take a closer look at the other magnificent cartographic documents on display. We hope many of you will be able to come to Brugge, it promises to be an enjoyable and informative outing.

Membership

Details are currently being worked out regarding membership fees and other modalities; they will be announced in the next Newsletter when the formalities for the Circle's official establishment will have been accomplished, providing it with statutes, a bank account and so on . It will all fall into place then!

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