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Welcome to the Council Chamber



Today, solemn occasions such as weddings, anniversaries or official receptions take place in the Council Chamber. Moreover, the stained glass window is one of the most impressive 'collection pieces' of the Yper Museum.



Creation

Around 1307, 'the Aldermen's Chamber' was built here. Before that, the aldermen met in the Belfry. Was the new chamber built because in 1303 nine aldermen were thrown out of the tower? An interesting assumption, but still uncertain.

window! The room gained a lot of splendour: stained glass, tapestries, a fireplace, statues and beautiful murals: at the bottom the Flemish counts and countesses from Louis of Nevers to Charles the Bold. At the top, the evangelists John and Mark.

In 1611, the city bought 26 so-called Spanish chairs. The city arms were painted on the leather covering of these chairs. The back of today's chairs bears an ornate Y.

In 1794, the French army wreaked havoc: stained glass windows and statues were destroyed, the magnificent wall paintings disappeared behind a layer of chalk. The French Republicans did not care about the noble images!

Use

The Aldermen's Chamber has had a turbulent history. Initially, it was used as a court of law: where the aldermen passed judgement (up to 60 livre paris), as a reception room and as the seat of the then municipal council: the 'grooten raedt'. From the time of French rule (1794), the military draft was organised here and during the annual fair, market vendors were allowed to set up their goods.

Under Dutch rule, the room became a military depot, and then things went from bad to worse: a dumping ground for old iron and broken furniture, sporadically also a polling station. Only in 1842 was there some improvement: the Société des Beaux-Arts provided temporary accommodation for the Municipal Museum (then rather a cabinet of curiosities). From 1869, the room was upgraded to a reception and wedding hall.

Decoration

The room gets richly decorated several times. After the fire of the "Stedehuis" in 1498, the room received a pointed arch-shaped window. You can still clearly recognise this shape in the current



It was not until the 19th century that honour was restored. The large window on the west side was boarded up to make a glass dome. During these works, the murals were rediscovered by chance. François Böhm restored them for the first time.

Thanks to Mayor Vandennepeereboom, who became Minister of the Interior in 1861, restoration took place. And not a franc is spared, thanks to

generous subsidies from the government. The roof, the panelling and the old wall paintings were carefully restored.

There will be an impressive mantelpiece, decorated with wooden statues. In the centre is Our Lady of Tuine. New murals by Godfrey Guffens and Jan Swerts were painted on the long walls. Everything is very colourful!

The new stained glass window depicts the arms of the Ypres guilds.

14-18 et l'entre-deux-guerres

In 1914-1918, the hall was completely destroyed. Nevertheless, some statues and a piece of the panelling were saved.

It was not until the 1960s that reconstruction took place. Since then, the hall has received prominent people, such as Queen Elisabeth.



Today

In terms of structure, the room is very similar to the pre-war condition. However, the mantelpiece and the wall paintings did not return. The present late-Gothic sculptures are on permanent loan from the Brussels Museums of Art and History.

The works on the walls are Charles Degroux's designs for murals in the Cloth Hall. He was first awarded the commission, but died before he could paint. Ferdinand Pauwels replaced him. Fortunately, Degroux's beautiful designs can still be seen here. They depict the most important historical facts of Ypres' history. The baptism of Clovis, Robert of Bethune's giving of works of art as security for a loan granted to him by the town of Ypres, the public reading of a charter by Louis of Nevers that forbade the weaving of cloth in the Ypres area, the Siege of Ypres in 1383. You will also see St Amand, St Benegga, the chronicler John of Ypres, Count Charles the Good, Countess Joanna of Constantinople and Count Thierry of Alsace.

The beautiful stained glass window shows us the history of Ypres in a nutshell. Discover it on the overleaf!



The stained glass window

After a rough sketch, the stained-glass window is drawn on cardboard at actual size. Brys then draws the design on solid drawing paper. He cuts this paper into as many pieces as there are glass particles. Each piece is then placed on coloured glass and cut out. This is a very labour-intensive process and not without risk. Thick glass breaks easily. The coloured glass pieces are then outlined with black paint. After ten hours of drying, all the individual pieces, sprinkled with chalk powder, go into the glass oven at around 600°C. After twelve hours of cooling, everything can be soldered together.



Arno Brys (°Sijsele, 1928) started designing the stained-glass window in 1968. It was finished two years later and in 1970 the stained-glass window was placed in the council chamber. Brys is known as a draughtsman and designer of costumes, giants, floats and sets of, among others, the Holy Blood Procession in Bruges.

In the middle of the stained-glass window, two noble figures, the Count and Countess of Flanders, Baudouin IX and Mary of Champagne, are showing off. Their splendid dress is full of heraldic symbols. Legend has it that they laid the first stone of the Cloth Hall. Whether the legend is true, we do not know.

Straight through Ypres flows the leperlee. In the Middle Ages, this river was navigable. Ideal for a city with a cloth industry! Today, the river only flows underground through the city.

The blue figures next to Mary and Baudouin are the Ypres guilds and craftsmen. Whenever there is a need to fight, they take up arms. Here they arm themselves in defence of the count and countess. Note the many different flags. Each group shows with this flag which profession they exercise.

Saint Martin is the patron saint of the cloth city of Ypres. As the legend goes, he donates a piece of his cloak here. In Ypres, Saint-Maarten, not Saint Nicholas, brings presents to the children on 11 November.

The flags you see here show us the other great trading cities of Europe. Ypres is in the same league as London, Aachen, Paris, Bordeaux, Genoa, Florence and Poperinge!

In the Middle Ages, most houses were built of wood. Today, one can still admire a wooden façade in Ypres.

Below you see the various steps involved in making that beautiful Ypres cloth. You can see the people of Ypres carrying away the wool, spinning, weaving, fulling, drying, dyeing, cutting, measuring and selling it.

Through the leperlee, boats can sail into the city centre and bring in the beautiful cloth.

Le vitrail est également plein de détails uniques. Admirez les chats têtus d'Ypres, les bouffons vaniteux, les regards furtifs, où l'amour s'épanouit ...