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CISTERCIAN NUNNERIES IN THE LOW COUNTRIES:  
THE MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS

*Thomas Coomans*

‘CONVENTS WERE FOUNDED, monasteries built, cloisters filled, virgins throng there, widows hasten there and married women, with the husband’s consent, renounce the bonds of the flesh to fly to spiritual nuptials.<sup>1</sup> This is how Jacques de Vitry described the impressive spiritual impulse of the feminine branch of the Cistercian Order in the early thirteenth century. It culminated in the Low Countries and, more particularly, in the county of Flanders, the duchy of Brabant, and the principality of Liège. No less than eighty-five Cistercian nunnery-

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1. *Fundabantur coenobia, aedificabantur monasteria, replebantur claustra, confluabant virgines, currebant uiduae et mulieres conjugatae, de consensu maritorum suorum, carnale matrimonium in spirituale commutabant: Acta sanctorum, octobris* (Paris: 1883) 13:101. English translation in Jean de la Croix Bouton, ‘The Life of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century Nuns of Citeaux’, *Hidden Springs: Cistercian Monastic Women*, edd. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, Cistercian Studies 113 (Kalamazoo, 1991) 1:21.

ies were founded during the Middle Ages in the Low Countries, that is to say, in the territory of present-day Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, and northern France (see Fig. 32).

A general history of this movement still needs to be written.<sup>2</sup> The traditional historiography has focused mainly on the foundation process of the nunneries, on their patrons, and on how the early communities were either integrated into the Cistercian Order or became beguinages.<sup>3</sup> Apart from monographs on abbeys and some regional studies,<sup>4</sup> interest has also been shown in the spiritual work and life of the Cistercian saints who lived in the

2. There is only a very helpful and systematic series for Belgium: *Monasticon belge*, begun by Ursmer Berlière and completed by the Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 8 vol. (Bruges-Liège: 1890–1993). The quality of the Dutch *Monasticon* is unfortunately quite poor. Cistercians are included in Michael Schoengen, *Monasticon Batavum*, 3: *De Benedictijnsche orden benevens de Carmelieten en de Jesuiten*, Verhandelingen der Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde 45 (Amsterdam: 1942).

3. For example: Theo Luyckx, 'Gravin Johanna van Constantinopel en de godsdienstige vrouwenbeweging in Vlaanderen gedurende de eerste helft der XIII<sup>e</sup> eeuw', *Ons geestelijk erf* 17 (Tielt-The Hague, 1943) 5–30; Roger De Ganck, 'The Integration of Nuns in the Cistercian Order, Particularly in Belgium', *Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 35 (1984) 235–247; G. J. van Bussel, 'Het stichtings- en incorporatieproces van de Cisterciënzerinnenabdij *Locus imperatricis* (Binderveld) bij Helmont, 1237–1246', *Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 38 (1987) 165–190; Geert Berings, 'Cinq abbayes cisterciennes en Flandre française: fondation et histoire des premières décennies', *Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 45 (1994) 63–87; Roger De Ganck, *Beatrice of Nazareth in her Context*, 3 parts in two volumes, Cistercian Studies 121–122 (Kalamazoo, 1991).

4. Recent examples: Marie-Élisabeth Henneau, *Filles de Citeaux au pays mosan* (Huy, 1990); Daniel Verhelst and Eduard Van Ermen, 'De Cisterciënzerinnen in het hertogdom Brabant', *Bernardus en de Cisterciënzerfamilie in België 1090–1990*, edd. Maurits Sabbe, Matthijs Lamberigts and Frans Gistelinck, Documenta Libraria 11 (Louvain, 1990) 271–293; C. Tromp, *Groninger kloosters*, Groninger historische reeks 5 (Assen-Maastricht, 1989) 27–44; Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre, 'Histoire et institutions des abbayes cisterciennes (XII<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)', *Monastères bénédictins et cisterciens dans les Albums de Croÿ, 1596–1611* (Brussels, 1990) 109–186; *Les Cisterciens en Namurois, XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, ed. Jacques Toussaint, Musée des arts anciens du Namurois 12 (Namur, 1998); Martine Pieteraerens, Luc Robijns and Geert Van Bockstaele, *Van Beaupré tot Zwijveke: Cisterciënzers in Oost-Vlaanderen 1200–1999* (Ghent, 1999); Thomas Coomans, ed., *La Ramée. Abbaye cistercienne en Brabant Wallon* (Brussels, 2002); Benoît Chauvin, *Marquette-les-Lille, à la redécouverte de l'abbaye de la comtesse Jeanne* (Marquette-lez-Lille, 2002).

Low Countries in the thirteenth century: among them, Beatrice of Nazareth, Ida of Léau, Alice of Schaarbeek, Ida of Louvain, Ida of Nivelles, Julianne of Cornillon. More recent is scholarly interest in the fifteenth-century reform movements that embraced not only Cistercian nunneries but also a large part of the monastic life in the Burgundian Low Countries. A reassertion of the spiritual life of women in the Middle Ages, notably through gender studies, also has aroused interest in nuns and nunneries.<sup>5</sup>

It is only right therefore that a work devoted to the art and the architecture of Cistercian nuns should include a contribution from the Low Countries. Our aim here is to make more concrete the architectural environment of the medieval Cistercian nuns by collecting the scarce remains, organizing them typologically, and trying to define the evolution from the early-thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth century.

## A DISPARATE AND UNRECOGNIZED HERITAGE

Except for the remarkable churches of Roermond and La Cambre, as well as the refectory and the hospital of the Bijloke, most medieval remains are little known and in a bad state of conservation. During the religious war in the last third of the sixteenth century—which ended in 1609 with the break-up of the Low Countries into north and south—all the abbeys and nunneries were sacked. In the north, nearly all the monasteries were completely destroyed and the building material, including the foundations, re-used. For this reason, foundation walls have not always been found during excavations but often only traces of them.<sup>6</sup>

In the south, some nuns no longer felt secure in the countryside and moved to cities rather than restore the ruins. But most abbeys in the southern Low Countries were rebuilt during the seventeenth

5. A first European meeting on 'Citeaux et les femmes' took place at Royaumont on November 12–13, 1998.

6. Elizabeth den Hartog, 'The Site of the Former Abbey Church of Leeuwenhorst near Noordwijkerhout in the Netherlands', *Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 50 (1999) 187–195.

and the prosperous eighteenth century. The destruction caused by the French Revolution and the dissolution of 1797 was at least as drastic as that in the northern Low Countries two centuries earlier. All the abbeys were sold and the monastic buildings were destroyed, but not the farm buildings within the precinct. Most of those large eighteenth-century farmsteads are preserved—notably at Argenton, Aywières, Herkenrode, Hocht, Oplinter, La Paix-Dieu, La Ramée, Solières, Valduc, Val-Notre-Dame, Vrouwenpark, etc.—and some are still in use today.<sup>7</sup>

In the nineteenth century, nuns of the Cistercian family were able to reoccupy only the ancient sites of Bijloke and Soleilmont, the former serving as a hospital and the latter as a school. Since then both communities have moved to other sites. The present-day Trappistine houses of Clairefontaine and Nazareth, while they use the names of old abbeys, are recent foundations on new sites. Today, Cistercian nuns do not occupy any of the sites of the eighty-five medieval Cistercian nunneries.<sup>8</sup>

In this devastated landscape it is thus not surprising that most medieval buildings have disappeared on such a large scale. Even those that remained have not all survived. A fire at Christmas 1963 destroyed Soleilmont, the most complete late medieval nunnery. In other cases, the surviving buildings often were restored severely once or twice, with serious consequences for their authenticity and their interpretation today.

Studies of the architecture of Cistercian nunneries in the Low Countries in general and of their medieval buildings in particular are not numerous, especially when they are compared to those devoted to the architecture of Cistercian monks' abbeys. For the Netherlands, the useful inventory of Cistercian architecture made

7. Thomas Coomans, 'Le Patrimoine rural cistercien en Belgique' *L'Espace cistercien*, ed. Léon Pressouyre, Mémoires de la section d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art 5 (Paris, 1999) 281–293.

8. Some sites are occupied by other communities: Marche-les-Dames (Petites Sœurs de Bethléem); Val-Notre-Dame (Sœurs de l'Assomption, school); Vrouwenpark (Monfortains, school); Saint-Rémy (Cistercian monks, since 1464).

by Marga Jetten in 1986 remains unpublished.<sup>9</sup> The dissertation on monastic brick architecture before 1300, which Gerrit Vermeer defended in 1999, contains a chapter on Cistercian nunneries.<sup>10</sup> In the Belgian area, the few attempts at a synthesis are all inspired by the work on Cistercian nunneries of Jean-Jacques Bolly, but are restricted to the county of Namur.<sup>11</sup> From 1967 until the present day, Bolly and other scholars have perpetuated the idea of a so-called 'plan type' for medieval nunneries.<sup>12</sup> This sterile theory is contradicted by the material evidence, both architectural and archeological. As we will see, a great variety of architectural designs and building types exist from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century and make the subject much more subtle and fascinating.

Besides architectural analysis, excavations have brought to light very interesting and useful information, but far from all of it has been published. Some important and relevant excavations have been made at Mariëndaal, Grijzenvrouwenklooster, and Ter Hunnepe/Mariënhorst in the Netherlands, Beaupré-sur-la-Lys, Marquette and Fontenelle in northern France, and Clairefontaine, La Paix-Dieu and Vrouwenpark in Belgium. In a recent inventory of all excavations on Belgian Cistercian sites, no less than eight-

9. Marga Jetten, 'De Architectuur van de Cisterciënser- en Cisterciënserinnenkloosters in Nederland', M.A. thesis, University of Nijmegen, 1986. An abstract can be found in Nina Herweijer, Herman Lubberding and Jan de Vries, *Zusters tussen twee beken. Graven naar klooster Ter Hunnepe*, Archeologische wetenschap voor Nederland, 1 (Amsterdam, 1998) 17–24.

10. Gerrit Vermeer, 'Kloosters van baksteen. De architectuur van de hervormingsorden in Nederland tot omstreeks 1300', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1999, 124–129 and 168–192.

11. Jean-Jacques Bolly, 'L'Architecture des abbayes de moniales cisterciennes dans l'ancien comté de Namur', M.A. thesis, Catholic University of Louvain, 1966.

12. Jean-Jacques Bolly [and Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre], 'Architecture, cadre de vie et environnement des abbayes cisterciennes', *Albums de Croÿ* (as in n. 4), 187–238 (215–227); literally reproduced in *Les Cisterciens en Namurois XIII<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Jacques Toussaint, Monographies du Musée des arts anciens du Namurois 15 (Namur, 1998) 150–158.

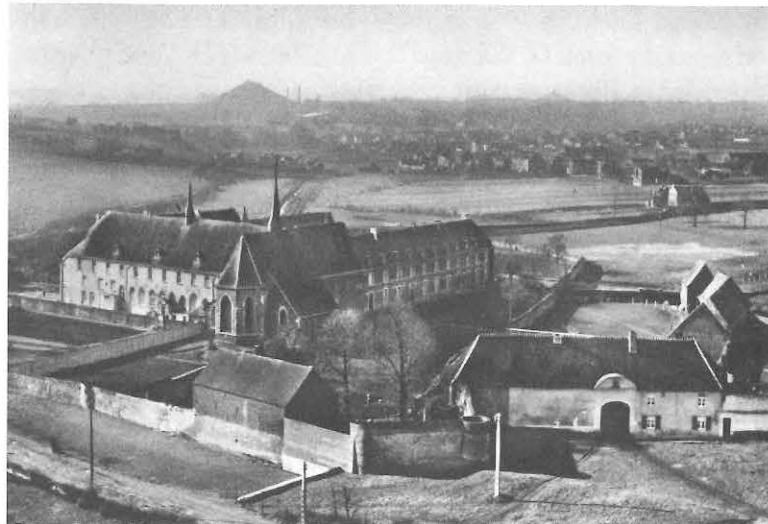


Figure 1. View of the abbey of Soleilmont from the northeast before the fire of Christmas 1963. In the background the growing industrial city of Charleroi changes the landscape drastically (Nels postcard, 1937)

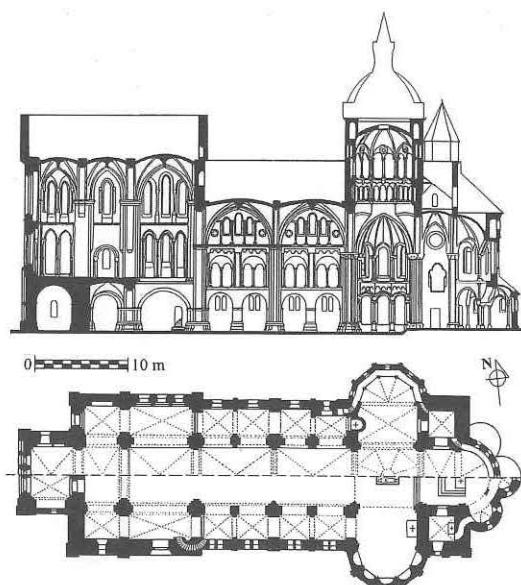


Figure 2. Church of the Munsterabdei at Roermond. Section and plans of the ground level and the gallery. Reconstruction of the original state (After P.J.H. Cuypers)

teen nunneries are mentioned.<sup>13</sup> In the future, new excavations will provide the most helpful method of obtaining new knowledge regarding medieval Cistercian nunneries. Nearly all the sites are identified. Because they are mostly rural, many of them remain intact underground and can survive in this way for many centuries.

## CHURCHES

The general literature on the medieval architecture of Cistercian nunneries in Europe focuses mainly on their churches. Defining a typology of ground plans has been the main area of research in different countries. Following the work of Marcel Aubert,<sup>14</sup> Anselme Dimier, after having collected his famous series of plans of Cistercian churches,<sup>15</sup> in 1974 proposed a classification of nuns' churches.<sup>16</sup> According to the author himself, this pioneering work constituted an essay based on very incomplete documentation. For the Low Countries, the collection contains the plans of only eight of the eighty-five medieval churches of women's monasteries: four in Belgium, three in northern France and one in the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup> The dating is very approximate and there is no building chronology. But the greatest limitation, when only working with plans, is

13. Bijloke, La Cambre, Clairefontaine, Groeninge, Hemelsdale, Herkenrode, La Ramée, Maagdendale (Audenarde and Flobecq), Muizen, Nazareth (Lier), Nieuwenbos, Olive, Paix-Dieu, Rozendaal, Valduc, Vrouwenpark, and Zwijveke. See Marc Brion, 'Cisterciënzer-archeologie in België', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Ghent, 1999.

14. Marcel Aubert, *L'Architecture cistercienne en France* (Paris, 1943) 2:173–205.

15. Anselme Dimier, *Recueil de plans d'églises cisterciennes*, 4 vol., Commission d'histoire de l'ordre de Cîteaux 1 and 6 (Grignan-Paris, 1949–1967).

16. Anselme Dimier, 'L'Architecture des églises de moniales cisterciennes. Essai de classement des différents types de plans', *Cîteaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 25 (1974) 8–23.

17. Medieval churches of La Cambre (I.61), Flines (I.114), Roermond (I.255), Blandecques (II.33), Marche-les-Dames (II.175), Marquette (II.190), Olive (II.224), Soleilmont (II.296). Some plans of Belgian churches from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> cents.: Bijloke (I.37), Clairefontaine (II.64), Doornzele (II.78), Groeningen (II.115), Refuge (II.246), Ter Hagen (II.312), and Waarschoot (II.333).

to negate aspects as fundamental as space, structure, volume, light, and decoration. So, for example, everybody has interpreted the still existing church of La Cambre as having a transept, whereas, in fact, it has no crossing but a later-built north chapel (Fig. 11).

Since Dimier, new classifications have been made, notably for the German and French churches.<sup>18</sup> But the most remarkable, without any doubt, is the work, published in 1990,<sup>19</sup> of Hans Rudolf Sennhauser and his team on the twenty-one Swiss nunneries. From meticulous archeological analysis of the architectural remains to a synthesis which includes the evolution of liturgy and the location of the nuns' choir within the church, the study of Sennhauser must be considered as exemplary both for its method and for its results.

Even so, it is at present impossible to undertake such a work regarding the Low Countries. The very few surviving churches (Roermond, Loosduinen, La Cambre, and Maagdendale) as well as the significant remains or ruins (Marche-les-Dames, Soleilmont, Hocht, and Mariënkamp) are almost always analyzed superficially. Good measurements are still missing and some places are not accessible.<sup>20</sup> In the following pages, we will try to sketch an evolution, not only from the eight aforementioned medieval churches, but also with the help of the results of some relevant excavations.

18. Ernst Coester, 'Die Cistercienserinnenkirchen des 12. bis 14. Jahrhunderts', *Die Cistercienser: Geschichte, Geist, Kunst*, edd. Ambrosius Schneider et al. (Cologne, 1977) 363–428; *Idem*, *Die einschiffigen Cistercienserinnenkirchen West- und Süddeutschlands von 1200 bis 1350*, Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelrheinischen Kirchengeschichte 48 (Mainz, 1984); Michel Desmarchelier, 'L'Architecture des églises de moniales cisterciennes, essai de classement des différents types de plans', *Mélanges à la mémoire du père Anselme Dimier*, ed. Benoît Chauvin (Arbois, 1982) 5:79–121.

19. Hans Rudolf Sennhauser, dir., *Zisterzienserbauten in der Schweiz. Neue Forschungsergebnisse zur Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte 1: Frauenklöster*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Denkmalpflege an der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule Zürich 10.1 (Zurich, 1990).

20. Hocht is private property and completely closed; Marche-les-Dames is a monastery with an enclosure.

## GREAT FUNERARY CHURCHES

The Munsterkerk, or Minster, at Roermond, one of the finest medieval churches in the Netherlands, is both a fascinating and a problematic building (Fig. 3). It underwent a very radical restoration between 1844 and 1891 by P. J. H. Cuypers—the Dutch Viollet-le-Duc—who made the building more medieval than it ever had been, notably by adding towers and repainting and refurnishing the whole interior. The motivations of the architect and the meaning of his neo-gothic restoration are analyzed in numerous works,<sup>21</sup> but a study of the medieval church still has to be made.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, we can summarize by saying that the Munsterkerk was less a Cistercian church than a funerary monument framed by a Cistercian community. Since 1240, the tomb of the founders<sup>23</sup> had occupied the crossing of the trefoil-shaped choir, which is dominated by a high dome (Fig. 4). Count Gerard IV of Gelre and his wife Margaret of Brabant founded the Munster in 1218. Gerard's mother, Richardis, became the first abbess of a community of forty noble nuns. Work on the abbey started with the three radiating chapels of the east apse, dedicated in 1220, and then continued to the west despite the early deaths of Gerard in 1229 and of both his wife and his mother in 1231. In all likelihood the church was completed in the third quarter of the thirteenth century.

Three separate parts compose the church (Fig. 2): the trefoil choir flanked by two east towers and crowned by a dome; a short basilical nave of two double bays with tribunes; and a monumental westwork, or Westbau, with a western pseudo-transept and a high

21. For example: A. J. C. van Leeuwen, *De maakbaarheid van het verleden, P.J. H. Cuypers als restauratiearchitect* (Zwolle-Zeist, 1995) 50–63; J. J. F. W. van Agt, 'Roermonds Munsterkerk voor en na Cuypers', *Opus Musivum: een bundel studies aangeboden aan Professor Doctor M.D. Ozinga* (Assen, 1964) 85–113.

22. References can be found in Hans Erich Kubach and Albert Verbeek, *Romanische Baukunst an Rhein und Maas: Katalog der vorromanischen und romanischen Denkmäler* (Berlin, 1976) 2:965–970. See also the booklet by F. P. J. Slenders and M. K. J. Smeets, *Waar het koepeldragend Munster rijst. Historisch overzicht betreffende de Onze Lieve Vrouwe Munsterkerk* (Roermond, 1984).

23. G. H. A. Venner, *De Grafmonumenten van de Graven van Gelder* (Venlo, 1989) 29–54.

gallery. The Munsterkerk has a length of only fifty-eight meters. It is thus not very large, but the visitor is immediately struck by the refined proportions and the architectonic decoration of the walls, inside and outside. The church is entirely vaulted with rib vaults which in each part are progressively higher. This feature and the evolution of the rich architectonic decoration, from late romanesque to early gothic forms, suggest three successive changes in the architectural concept. All three belong to the architecture of the lower Rhine area, and, in particular, to that of Cologne, in accordance with the architectural evolution there during the first half of the thirteenth century.

The nuns had access only to the upper floor of the church. Their choir was in the gallery of the westwork, from where they could reach the galleries above the aisles that probably had been used as a choir before the completion of the westwork (Fig. 4). At the eastern end of those galleries, small apses with altars are connected with the great apses of the transept facing the count's tomb. There is no doubt that it was the will of the patron that a burial church be built, with explicit imperial references rather than a church only for Cistercian nuns.

The case of the abbey church of Flines is identical, but with the difference that it refers to the French royal gothic style. This Cistercian nunnery was founded in 1234 by Margaret, the daughter of the Latin emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin IX. After the death of her sister Johanna in 1244, she became countess of Flanders and Hainault, and transferred the abbey to its final site in 1253. In 1280, Johanna was buried in the choir of Flines. Completed in 1285, the church, which unfortunately was destroyed during the French Revolution, is known from a late ground plan.<sup>24</sup> According to this source, it had a cathedral shape, that is to say, a choir with ambulatory and five radiating chapels, a transept with eastern chapels and a square crossing, and a nave of eight bays with aisles. There were no towers at the western front and the total inner length of the church was about sixty-six meters.

24. Dimier, *Recueil* (as in n. 15), 1:pl.114; *Albums de Croÿ* (as in n. 4), pp. 378–380.

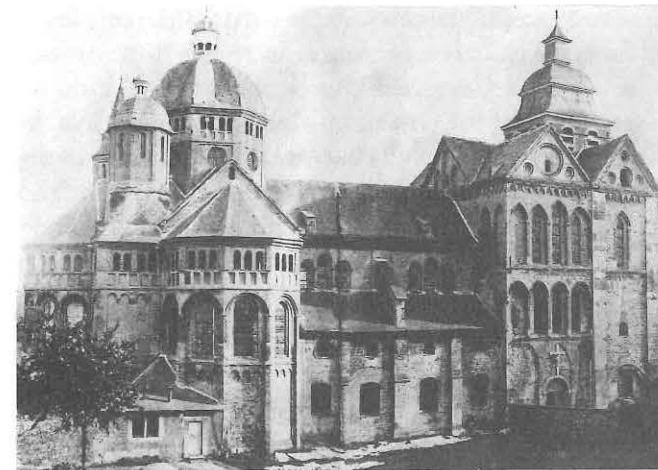


Figure 3. Church of the Munsterabdei at Roermond. View from the north, before the restoration and the addition of new towers (Copyright RDMZ 74658, 1863)



Figure 4. Church of the Munsterabdei at Roermond. Left: view to the crossing and the choir; right: view from the crossing and the tomb of Count Gerard IV of Gelre to the gallery in the westwork (Copyright RDMZ 163846, 1974, and 3423, 1914)

From these two exceptional cases we cannot draw the conclusion that all the funerary churches of princes were not in accordance with what we expect a Cistercian church should be. We do not know, for example, what the church of Marquette looked like. Joanna of Constantinople, who was buried there with her husband Ferrand of Portugal, founded it in 1226. Nevertheless, we may not ignore the phenomenon of the funerary churches and we cannot fail to note that the General Chapter was not able to refuse to associate Cistercian communities with such projects.<sup>25</sup> Kings and princes were too important as patrons, protectors, and benefactors. The same is particularly true of Louis IX's cathedral-shaped church at Royaumont as well as the westwork of the church of Villers-en-Brabant, where Duke Henri II of Brabant and his second wife Sophia of Thuringia, the daughter of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, were buried.

#### THE VARIOUS DESIGNS OF THIRTEENTH-CENTURY CHURCHES

There are sufficient remains of thirteenth-century churches to illustrate the variety of designs in use: single-nave churches with a straight chevet or with an apse; churches with a transept; churches with aisles. One of the main questions for historians is the location of the nuns' choir in the church: whether it was on the ground floor or in a gallery. Besides the Munsterkerk of Roermond, already mentioned, two other cistercian nuns' churches of the thirteenth century survive: Loosduinen and Maagdendaal. Furthermore, significant remains may be seen at Marche-les-Dames and Mariënkamp as well as the ruins of Hocht. Others have been brought to light, notably in the excavations of Olive, Ter Hunnepe, Mariëndaal, Grijzenvrouwenklooster, Vrouwenpark, and Clairefontaine.

25. Thomas Coomans, 'Cistercian Nuns and Princely Memorials: Dynastic Burial Churches in Cistercian Abbeys of the Medieval Low Countries', *Sépulture, mort et symbolique du pourvoir au Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Margue (Luxembourg, 2005), forthcoming.

The nunnery of Loosduinen was founded by Count Floris IV of Holland and his wife Machteld of Brabant. She was a sister of both Henri II of Brabant and Margaret of Gelre, who had a great love for the Cistercians. The site in the dunes, close to The Hague, belonged to a former villa of the counts and had been given to Machteld as a dowry. It was founded before 1230 and the community was incorporated in 1233. Not only Machteld, who died in 1267, but also many women and children of the count's family, were buried at Loosduinen during the thirteenth century. Margreth, countess of Henneberg, one of Machteld's daughters, was buried there in 1277, together with her legendary three-hundred sixty-four children,<sup>26</sup> who made Loosduinen world-famous in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Nevertheless, Loosduinen never became a funerary church of the counts themselves. The nave and a western tower of the church, which is now used as a Protestant parish church, are still preserved (Figs. 5 and 6),<sup>27</sup> but the choir was destroyed along with the other abbey buildings in 1573–1575. Despite professional excavations, no evidence has been found as regards the shape of the east end. It was probably part of the first building phase of the nave to be completed around 1240. The three east bays offer an interesting elevation that belongs to the first brick architecture in Flanders, having been developed by the Cistercian monks of Ten Duinen and Ter Doest. Typical is the clerestory, with an interior passageway at the level of the lancet windows.<sup>28</sup> The nave has an inner width of 9.20m and a height of 13.2m, and is now covered by a new ceiling that replaces a wooden barrel vault built after the sack of the church in 1573–1575. We do not know how the roof looked originally but there is evidence of vaulting. Great arches on the lateral walls, only in the three oldest

26. J. Bondeson and A. Molenkamp, *Eens door Europa vermaard. Gravin Margaretha van Henneberg en haar 365 kinderen; een Loosduinse legende van lang geleden* (The Hague, 1995).

27. Willem E. den Hertog, *De Abdij van Loosduinen, Cisterciënzerinnenklooster van 1229–1572* (The Hague, 1997) 87–125; Vermeer (as in n. 10) 124–129.

28. A similar design can be seen in the choir and transept of the church at Lissewege (first half of the thirteenth century) near Ter Doest, in the neighbourhood of Bruges.

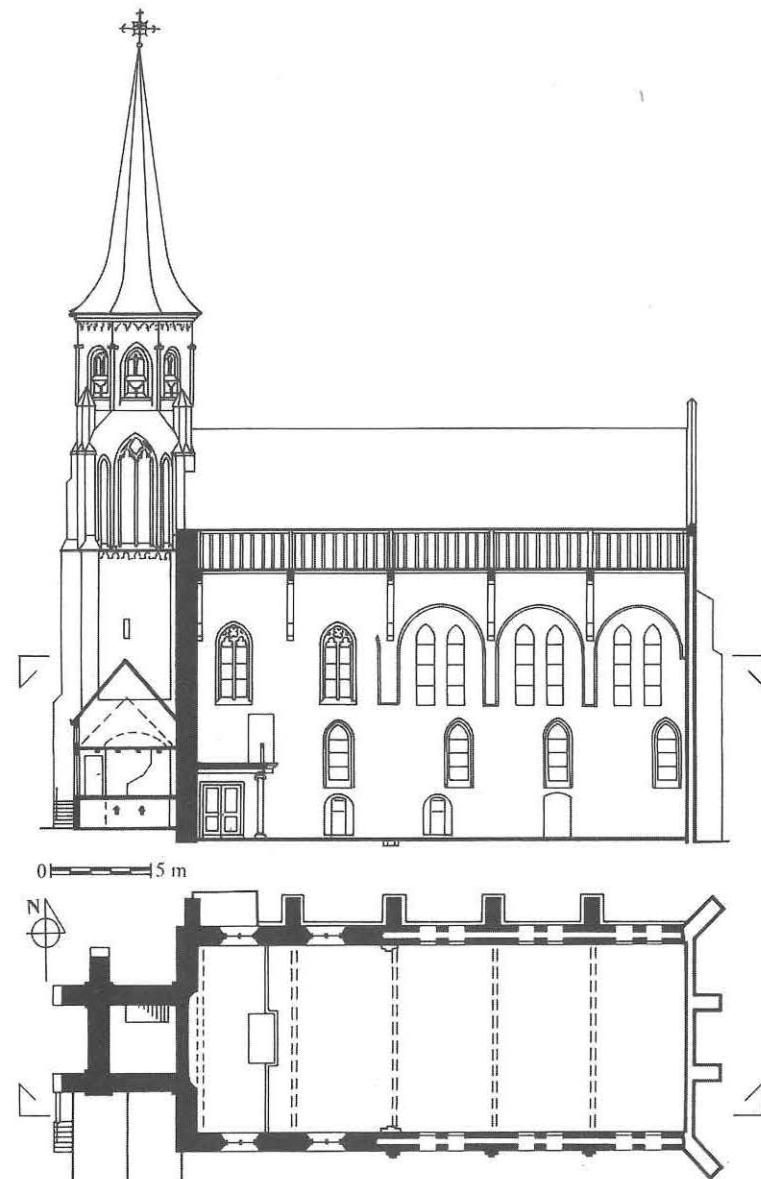


Figure 5. Church of Loosduinen. Section and plan of the present state (Drawing THOC after A. Mulder and P. Bolt)

bays, reveal that the builders intended to cover the nave with brick rib vaults (Figs. 5 and 6-b).

Before the end of the thirteenth century, a second building campaign added two more bays to the west and a tower which was probably completed in the very early fourteenth century. The two bays have single high windows with traceries and no more interior passageway. There are no traces of vaults on the walls. We think this extension could be related to a relocation of the nuns' choir to a gallery at the west side, reachable through the upper floor of the tower that was connected to an adjacent building forming the western range of the cloister. Not only the openings in the tower and the superposition of two levels of windows, but also the bases of two pilasters found against the nave's walls<sup>29</sup> and placed there to support the gallery, provide evidence of a two-storey design. The western gallery and the richly decorated octagonal brick tower are undoubtedly linked with the patronage of the counts of Holland, one of whom—Willem II, a son of Machteld—had become king of the Romans in 1247. The decoration of the tower refers to the main front of the Great Hall of the counts of Holland at The Hague, built in the years 1285–1295 and located less than ten kilometers from Loosduinen.<sup>30</sup>

The concept of the church of Maagdendale at Pamele (Audenarde) is completely different. It lies on the imperial bank of the Scheldt, which was for centuries the boundary between France and the Empire. A good archeological study of this building is still lacking.<sup>31</sup> From 1835 to 1966 it was used as an army barracks. Today it is part of the new administration center of Audenarde, which is partially built on the site of the cloister.

The church of Maagdendale was a basilica, with an apse, a tran-

29. On the excavations: Herrius Halbertsma, 'Loosduinen', *Nieuwsbulletin van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond* (1971) 43–45.

30. Aart J. J. Mekking, 'Die Aula Palatii in Den Haag', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 60 (1997) 308–333.

31. Only a short note in the inventory: 'Abdij van Maagdendale', *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen. Inventaris van het cultuurbezit in België, Architectuur 15n1: Provincie Oost-Vlaanderen, stad Oudenaarde*, (Turnhout, 1996) 122–128.



Figure 6-a. Church of Loosduinen. North side of the nave and west tower in 1975. (Copyright RDMZ 166916)

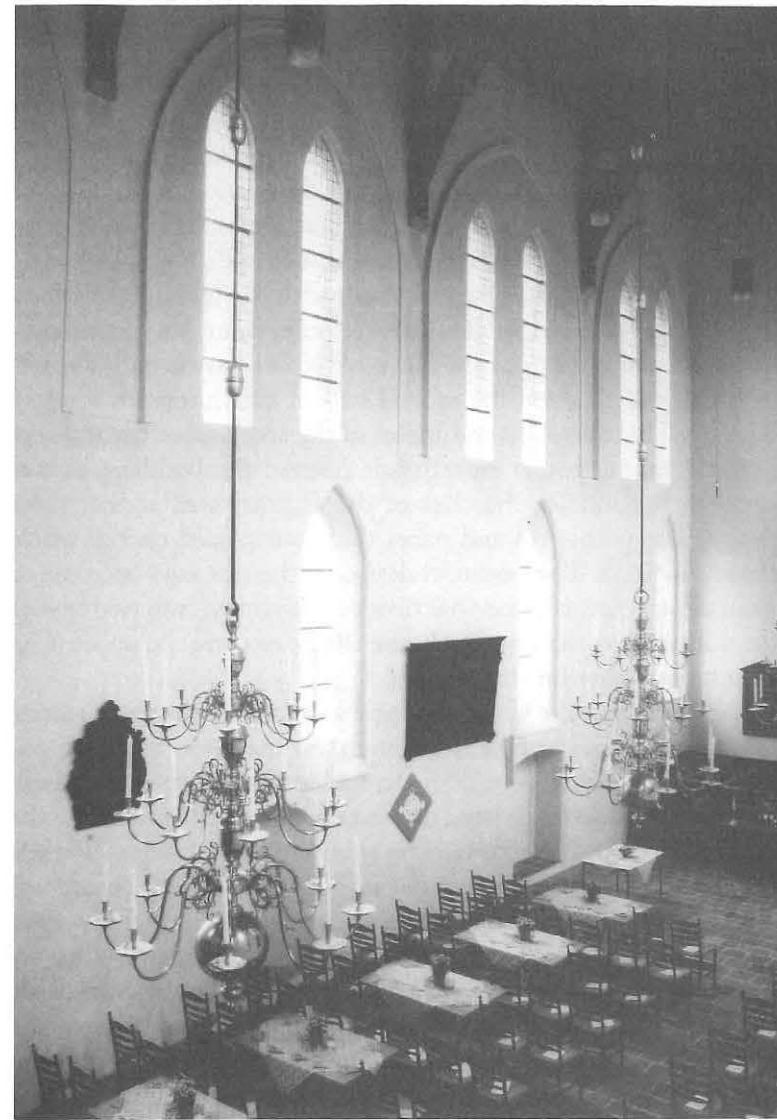


Figure 6-b. Church of Loosduinen. Inside to the east in 1999 (Copyright THOC 1999)

sept, and a nave flanked with aisles (Fig. 8). Unfortunately, the east chapels of the transept and the aisles were destroyed in the eighteenth century, but the traces of the blocked-up arches provide evidence of the general design. The sanctuary, with its polygonal (3/8) apse, and the transept belong to a first building campaign, which started immediately after the foundation in 1233. The transept has short arms and their facades were pierced by a great oculus at the south and a large lancet at the north, both blocked up today. This part of the church is built with the famous grey stone of Tournai, the quarries of which are only about forty kilometers upstream along the Scheldt. The nave of five bays is built entirely in brick, and dates to the second half of the thirteenth century. The small buttresses on the angles of the apse and of the transept indicate that a timber barrel vault covered the building, as was usual in the smaller churches of the Tournai area at that time. A very late gothic rib and panel vault was placed on the whole church in 1638. The beautiful design of the ribs may be admired from close range as a floor has divided the church into two storeys for military use: the lower to house the horses and the upper (Fig. 7) as a dormitory for the privates!

We think that the Cistercian type was used in this case to stress the monastic function of the church. At the same time, the patron, Baron Arnulf IV of Pamele, had a new parish church built a few dozen meters eastwards, certainly by craftsmen from the same workshop. It is the famous church of Our Lady of Pamele designed by the architect Arnold of Binche in 1234. The concept of this building—with an ambulatory, a polygonal (5/10) apse, an octagonal tower on the crossing, threelight windows, stone rib vaults, and a fine decorated triforium—is totally different from the Cistercian one. Both churches are on the right bank of the Scheldt, the ‘imperial’ side of the boundary for centuries and in the diocese of Cambrai. On the left bank, which was in Flanders and the diocese of Tournai, Saint Walburge, the other parish church, also received a new choir during the second quarter of the thirteenth century. Once again, the design is totally different. Saint Walburge is a ‘hall’ choir, considered to be the oldest in



Figure 7. Church of Maagdendale at Audenarde. Inner view to the east and the late gothic vaults of 1638, seen from the nineteenth-century upper floor used as military dormitory (Copyright IRPA-KIK 32108B, before 1914)



Figure 8. Church of Maagdendale at Audenarde on the banks of the river Scheldt.  
(Copyright THOC 2004)

Flanders. This short sketch of the situation in Audenarde during the thirteenth century illustrates how a Cistercian nunnery could be integrated into one of the most industrial cities in Flanders, near one of the busiest rivers in Europe.

There are at least three other thirteenth-century nuns' churches with transepts: Vrouwenpark, Hocht, and Salzinnes. The northern half of the church of Vrouwenpark, nearly fifty meters long, is known from two excavations, in 1955 and 1997–1999. The first of them brought to light a polygonal (5/10) apse and a splendid keystone of the rib vault of the apse, decorated with a foliage mask and an image of the Coronation of the Virgin, was discovered.<sup>32</sup> The second excavation cleared the northern wall of the nave and a chapel that could be the north arm of a transept.<sup>33</sup> As in

32. Frans Van Molle, 'Een gewelfsleutel uit de abdijkerk van Vrouwenpark bij Leuven', *Bulletin de la Commission royale des monuments et des sites* 6 (Brussels, 1955) 71–84.

33. Ward Caes, 'Archeologische site Vrouwenpark te Rotselaar. Beschrijving van de belangrijkste structurele resten uit de eerste opgravingscampagne, 1997',



Figure 9. Ruin of the church of Hocht. Apse and sacristy from the north-east  
(Copyright IRPA-KIK 19823A, before 1940)

Maagdendale, the nave was built in two stages: local, dark-brown, iron sandstone was used in the eastern part and in the transept arm, which dates from around 1270, while the western part of the nave is built in brick.

Along the Meuse, in the neighbourhood of Maastricht, a part of the abbey church of Hocht (Fig. 9) survives.<sup>34</sup> After the dissolution, it was artificially ruined and became a folly in a romantic park. The result is surprising. The stone walls of the choir, made

*Haachts Oudheid- en Geschiedkundig Tijdschrift* 12 (Haacht, 1997) 287–300; Bart Minnen, Ward Caes and Peter Hooft, 'Het archeologisch onderzoek van de kerk en het kerkhof van de cisterciënzerinnenabdij Vrouwenpark (Rotselaar, België, 1997–1999)', *Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 51 (2000) 167–183.

34. J. Coenen, 'Het koor der abdijkerk van Hocht', *Verzamelde opstellen uitgegeven door den Geschied- en Oudheidkundige Studiekring te Hasselt* 4 (Hasselt, 1928) 32–43; *Idem*, 'Het kasteel en de ruïne van Hocht', *Limburg: Maandschrift gewijd aan geschiedenis, oudheidkunde, kunst, folklore en letterkunde* 26 (Hasselt, 1946–1947) 147–158.

of two straight bays and a polygonal (5/10) apse, are preserved to a height of about five meters; the windows are blocked up to the same height, and the inner side of the choir is filled up with earth. In this way the apse and its buttresses are used as a supporting wall for a high terrace, or belvedere, with a view on the Meuse valley. On the north side, the sacristy is still roofed. Traces of shafts, corbels, and ribs can be seen on its walls facing the church. This tells us both that the church was covered with rib vaults and that it had a transept. These remains are probably of the late thirteenth century, after which the initial monks' community moved to Val-Dieu and was replaced by nuns in 1218.

The abbey of Salzinnes (Val-Saint-Georges) on the banks of the Sambre a few kilometers upriver from Namur is now gone completely, but it is possible to define the design of the church thanks to archival and iconographic sources.<sup>35</sup> It was a single-nave church with a large transept with two chapels in each arm. A polygonal (3/8) apse replaced the straight chevet around 1725. The short nave of four bays was covered by a timber barrel vault and received light from a high clerestory, which suggests the presence of a nuns' gallery. Once more the historical context of the foundation and the role of the patrons could explain an 'unusual' concept for a nuns' church, here characterized by the transept with four chapels. Philippe, count of Namur, the aunt and tutor of Johanna and Margaret of Flanders, founded the abbey in 1203. Johanna later became a generous benefactor by giving notably both money and relics for the foundation of chapels in 1238.

Besides these churches with transepts, smaller single-nave churches existed, that is to say, churches without aisles. We have already discussed the church of Loosduinen, but some thirteenth-century fragments can be seen at Mariënkamp and Marche-les-Dames, or have been excavated, notably at Clairefontaine I, Olive, Grijenvrouwenklooster I, Ter Hunnepe, and Mariëndaal.

35. Jean-Jacques Bolly, 'Salzinnes', *Namurois, XIII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> s.* (as in n. 4), 170–173.

Of medieval Mariënkamp—today in the center of Assen, the capital of the Drenthe province—the only thing that survives is a part of the southern wall of the church, close to the cloister.<sup>36</sup> This wall, 1.80m wide, is built with the famous so-called 'monks bricks' (the Dutch kloostermoppen, or Flemish moeffen) that each measure about 35/30 x 17/15 x 10/8 cm and are typical of early brick architecture from Flanders to Friesland. In the late thirteenth century the size of bricks generally evolved to smaller and handier dimensions. The wall of Mariënkamp is blind except for two doorways, one on the ground floor and the other on a higher level. The former has brick moldings and linked the church with the northwest corner of the cloister. The latter is oblique and has three steps in the thickness of the wall. It was the access to a wooden nuns' gallery, traces of which are visible in the wall. Excavations and analysis of the foundations of the surrounding buildings make it possible to ascertain the general inner dimensions of the church: about 41m by 9.40m. The shape of the chevet remains unknown, but the screen could be located nearly halfway down the total length. Four masonry bases were found in the middle of the church. They are the foundations of the posts of a square wooden bell tower, which is mentioned already in 1418.

The excavations of Clairefontaine, in progress since 1997,<sup>37</sup> have brought to light the bases of an interesting structure belonging to the vaulted undercroft of the nuns' gallery. Church I had an inner width of 10.50 m. The western part, or nave, was divided into a lower vaulted ground floor composed of flanking aisles and six bays of a length of 14.50 m, and a high gallery above. The nuns' choir thus had a surface of around 150 square meters. Further to the east, the sanctuary is reduced to a width of 6m and is on the same level as the undercroft. Count Henri II of Luxembourg founded Clairefontaine

36. Arnold J. M. den Teuling and Kees van der Ploeg, *Van klooster tot museum. De geschiedenis van het gebouwencomplex van het Drents Museum* (Assen, 1986) 9–57 (19–23).

37. Johnny De Meulemeester, et al., 'Arlon/Autelbas: l'abbaye cistercienne de Clairefontaine', *Chronique de l'archéologie en Wallonie* 8 (2000), 177–181; 9 (2001) 175–179; 10 (2002) 2004–209; and 11 (2003) 156–161.

in 1247, to honour a vow made by his mother, Countess Ermesinde, who was buried in the church.<sup>38</sup> During the fifteenth century, the gallery was destroyed and the eastern part of the church enlarged. This type of single-nave church, with a western gallery above a vaulted undercroft which was used as a burial place and sometimes wrongly called 'crypt', can still be seen in some German nunneries of the thirteenth century. The churches of Sankt Thomas an der Kyll and Rosental, both in the Eifel region close to Luxembourg, as well as the churches of Frauenthal and Heydau, are well-preserved examples of the typology of the 'Nonnenchöre über westlichen Krypten oder Unterkirchen'.<sup>39</sup> A similar design was excavated at Ter Hunnepe and could have existed in the nunnery of Sint-Servaas at Utrecht, where the founder, Bishop Wilbrand of Utrecht, was buried in 1233.<sup>40</sup>

Turning to Marche-les-Dames, we find a simple single-nave church with flat eastern end and an inner area of 215 square meters (26.75 x 8 m).<sup>41</sup> The drastic restoration of 1904–1905 makes it possible to appreciate only the general dimensions of this small thirteenth-century church, which was almost certainly covered by a simple wooden barrel vault (Fig. 10). The three lancets of the chevet are a credible reconstruction of the original windows. It is impossible to locate the nuns' choir. A similar rectangular-shaped plan was excavated in 1897 at the nunnery of L'Olive.<sup>42</sup> Heavy buttresses, which suggest that the presbytery was covered by stone vaults, strengthened the flat eastern end. According to Dimier's plans,<sup>43</sup> the church of Blandecques was also a single-nave church



Figure 10. Church of Marche-les-Dames. South front shortly after the restoration of 1904. (Copyright IRPA-KIK 41971B)

38. Camille Joset, *L'Abbaye noble de Notre-Dame de Clairefontaine, 1216–1796* (Brussels, 1935) 59–71.

39. Coester, 'Die Cistercienserinnenkirchen' (as in n. 18), pp. 384–393 and 403–407.

40. Debatable hypothesis of Vermeer (as in n. 10), 176–178, founded only on the placement of the buttresses of the church, as drawn on the seventeenth-century plan. The single-nave church has a polygonal (5/10) apse.

41. 'Marche-les-Dames, ancienne abbaye Notre-Dame du Vivier', *Le Patrimoine monumental de la Belgique 5/1: Province de Namur, arrondissement de Namur* (Liège, 1975) 405–410; *Namurois, XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup>* (as in n. 4), pp. 164–166.

42. Dimier, *Recueil* (as in n. 15), 2: pl. 224.

43. *Ibid.*, 2: pl. 33.

with flat eastern end, but its inner surface area of 400 square meters ( $40 \times 10$  m) was nearly twice as large as that of Marchelles-Dames.

Three single-nave cistercian churches were excavated in the Netherlands: Grijzenvrouwenklooster I in the Groningen area in 1943; Mariëndaal near Utrecht in 1956–1957; and Ter Hunnepe near Deventer in 1967–1996. All three were brick buildings of small dimensions built during the second half of the thirteenth century. Grijzenvrouwenklooster I had an inner surface of about 115 square meters ( $23 \times 5$  m) and terminated in the east in a semi-circular apse.<sup>44</sup> The single-nave church of Mariëndaal<sup>45</sup> also terminated in a round apse and had an axial tower behind the west front. The inner area was about 270 square meters ( $38 \times 7.10$  m) and the shape of the foundations suggests that the apse was vaulted. Three foundation bases, placed in the axis of the building, locate the posts on which the timber floor of the nuns' choir rested. This upper floor covered the two western thirds of the inner space. The same design with three axial foundation bases was brought to light at Ter Hunnepe.<sup>46</sup> But here the gallery was on a vaulted undercroft of three bays and two naves, according to the foundations of pilasters found along the walls and a sketch of the ruin from about 1690.<sup>47</sup> Completed in the year 1270, the church of Ter Hunnepe had initially a rectangular inner surface of 273 square meters ( $26 \times 10.5$  m) terminating in a flat chevet that was replaced by an apse in 1386.

44. Unpublished excavations cited by Jetten (as in n. 9) and by Vermeer (as in n. 10), pp. 181–182.

45. Coen L. Temminck Groll, 'De opgraving van het cisterciënserklooster Mariëndaal bij Utrecht', *Jaarboekje van Oud-Utrecht* (Utrecht, 1958) 61–72; W. Stooker, 'Het Cisterciënserklooster Maria Ten Daele', *De Timmerwerf* 38 (Utrecht, 1957) 3–6; W. Stooker and Coen L. Temminck Groll, 'De opgraving van Mariëndaal in Zuilen', *De Timmerwerf* 43 (Utrecht, 1958) 3–6.

46. *Zusters tussen twee beken* (as in n. 9); Jan de Vries, 'Het archeologisch onderzoek van het cisterciënser vrouwenklooster Mariënhorst—Ter Hunnepe—bij Deventer (Nederland)', *Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 41 (1990) 294–309.

47. Vermeer (as in n. 10), pp. 185–189.

## LATE MEDIEVAL SINGLE-NAVE CHURCHES

Despite the serious alterations and the restorations of the 1930s, the church of La Cambre at Brussels is the best-preserved and most significant church of a Cistercian nunnery in the Low Countries (Fig. 11).<sup>48</sup> After having been part of a military school, it is now in use as a parish church. Founded around 1200, the noble abbey of La Cambre was one of the favorite nunneries of the dukes of Brabant, who were generous benefactors and protectors. Today La Cambre is within Brussels, but in the Middle Ages it was on the edge of the Forêt de Soignes, once the hunting territory of the dukes of Brabant. The building of the present church started with the apse around 1340, and was completed with the west front around 1400. In a letter of 1362 Abbot Jean of Clairvaux 'heartily wished to see the church completed in one's lifetime'.<sup>49</sup> In 1395 the abbey sold a quarry in the neighborhood of Brussels, which means that there was no more need of stone and that the masonry of the church had been completed.

La Cambre is a single-nave church ending in an apse flanked by an oratory on the south side and a chapel on the north (Fig. 12). On the plan, the oratory and the chapel give the impression of forming a transept (Fig. 11). This is wrong. There is no crossing; the oratory is the remains of a thirteenth-century building (church?), and the north chapel is a later, fifteenth century, addition. These two lateral rooms were separate from the nuns' choir and had specific liturgical functions. The oratory was reserved for the nuns' private devotion and located on the corner of the cloister, whilst the north chapel was not part of the enclosure and was open to the public through a walk along the north side of the nave.

The church has a total inner surface of 594 square meters ( $54 \times 11$  m) and is divided into two parts by a great triumphal arch (Fig. 13). To the east was the sanctuary with the high altar, preceded by

48. Baron de Ryckman de Betz, Maurice de Thibaut de Maisières and Georges Dansaert, *L'Abbaye cistercienne de La Cambre, étude d'histoire et d'archéologie* (Antwerp, 1948) 284–303.

49. *Toto cordis desiderio dictam ecclesiam nostris temporibus feliciter consumari.* Cited in Ryckman et al., p. 296, n. 2.

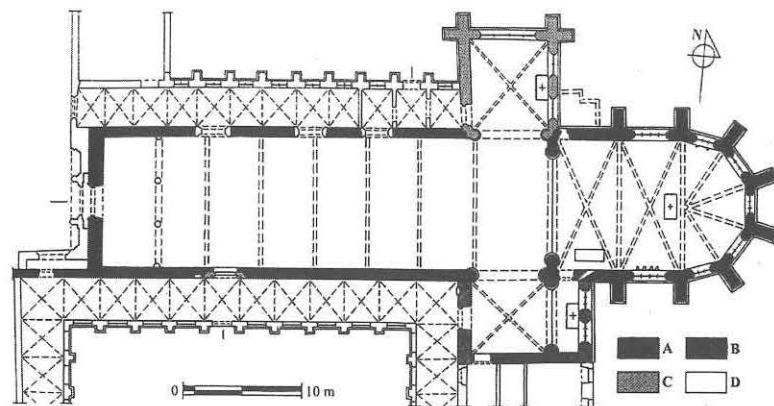


Figure 11. Church of La Cambre. Plan with chronological indications: (A) 13<sup>th</sup> c.; (B) 14<sup>th</sup> c.; (C) 15<sup>th</sup> c.; (D) later (Drawing THOC after M. Thibaut de Maisières)



Figure 12. Church of La Cambre. North side and front of the north chapel  
(Copyright THOC 1997)



Figure 13. Church of La Cambre. Inner view to the east (Nels postcard, 1935)

some steps. At the west were the choirs for the nuns and the lay sisters, now the nave.<sup>50</sup> To mark a sacred place for the liturgy, stone vaults covered the sanctuary of which buttresses strengthened the polygonal (5/10) apse, while the nave had a timber barrel vault and no buttresses. Both burned down during the sack of 1581 and were at first replaced with a ceiling. In 1657 the sanctuary received a new baroque vault more in keeping with the increasing cult of Saint Boniface's relics that were preserved there. Boniface had been bishop of Lausanne and after his resignation in 1247 he returned to Brussels, his native town, and served La Cambre as confessor up to his death in 1261. In the fourteenth century, his body was placed in a high tomb against the south wall of the sanctuary, near the sedilia, the seating for the officiating clergy. Traces of the medieval furniture can still be seen on the walls of the apse. Besides the sedilia, there were a tabernacle, a lavabo and an alcove.

50. The layout of the neo-gothic stalls now in the sanctuary is completely wrong.

In the eastern bays of the nave was the nuns' choir, followed by the choir of the lay sisters to the west. The former could be reached from the cloister through the oratory, the latter by a doorway in the south wall. There is no evidence of a nuns' gallery. The western front has a beautiful and refined design (Fig. 14). Above the axial doorway, which is hidden behind an eighteenth-century porch, a large window with reconstructed tracery pierces the center of the façade. Remarkable is the decoration of the gable, consisting of four trefoil niches with statues of the Virgin, Saint Bernard, Mary Magdalene (?) and John the Baptist.<sup>51</sup> Both the statues and the architectonic decoration, which is carved in pale honey-colored limestone, belong to the Brabant late-gothic style. As far as we know, the presence of statues on the façade of a Cistercian nunnery is a unique feature. In the oratory and in the somewhat later north chapel, the ribs of the vault rest on carved corbels with allegoric animals on top of human heads, also typical of fifteenth-century Brabantine sculpture.

Before the fire of 1963, when the abbey of Soleilmont was nearly completely destroyed, the design of the church was of particular interest on account of at least three different medieval building phases.<sup>52</sup> It was a small single-nave church of about 30m length, terminating at the east side by an apse and flanked by two chapels (Fig. 1). Parts of the lateral walls of the nave dated from the thirteenth century and determined once and for all the width of the nave, 7.25m. In the late fifteenth century, the original straight chevet was replaced by a polygonal (3/8) apse which received light from large tracery windows. A few decades later, in the early sixteenth century, the western part of the nave was rebuilt and opened by high lancet windows to the north and the west. These changes



Figure 14. Church of La Cambre. West front with sculptures and eighteenth-century additions (Copyright THOC 1998)

51. Joseph de Borchgrave d'Altena, 'Les Sculptures du pignon de l'église Notre-Dame de La Cambre', *Annales de la Société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* 40 (1936) 226–229.

52. Philippe Buxant, 'Les Bâtiments conventuels de l'ancienne abbaye Notre-Dame de Soleilmont', *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain* 19 (1986) 115–119; *Le Patrimoine monumental de la Belgique. Wallonie, 20: Province de Hainaut, arrondissement de Charleroi* (Liège, 1994) 111–117.

could have been connected with a relocation of the choir from a gallery to ground level; the new windows made it impossible to have a gallery. A wooden barrel vault with apparent tie-beams and king posts covered the nave (Fig. 15). On the north side, the Saint Anne's chapel had the only doorway to the outside and was thus the only place accessible to lay people. To the south, a narrow oratory was extended to the west by a kind of service aisle where there was the doorway to the cloister.

Soleilmont illustrates the practice of partial additions and changes to a thirteenth-century nucleus. Most spectacular certainly was the replacement of the flat chevet by an apse with tracery windows. By bringing more light and redefining both the space and the liturgy, it must have 'transfigured' the sanctuary on which the nuns focused for a long part of the day. The sacral dimension of the sanctuary was stressed by the fact that only the apse was vaulted. Blue-painted vaults sprinkled by golden stars commonly referred to heaven. At Ter Hunnepe, the excavations revealed a replacement of the flat chevet by a polygonal (5/8) apse, and archives mention a new consecration of the altar in 1386. This practice was probably more common than we think—with some compromise, the nuns could still use the church during the building work—and surely will be confirmed in the future by new excavations. In the late Middle Ages, colored stained glass windows became more and more common in nunneries. Accounts, when preserved, often mention gifts of benefactors for windows in the church and particularly in the apse. As far as we know, the only remains of medieval glass from nunneries in the Low Countries come from the church of Herkenrode.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike Soleilmont, the church at La Cambre was completely newly planned. The same was the case at Grijzenvrouwenklooster II, where a new single-nave church of seven bays and a polygonal (5/8) apse literally were built around the thirteenth-century

53. Now in the cathedral of Lichfield and in Saint Mary's Church, Shrewsbury. Recently a window preserved in an English private collection was given back to Herkenrode. See Yvette Vanden Bemden and Jill Kerr, 'The Glass of Herkenrode Abbey', *Archaeologia* 108 (1986) 189–226.



Figure 15. Church of Soleilmont. Fifteenth-century choir and wooden barrel vault before the fire of 1963 (Copyright IRPA-KIK 83713A)

church.<sup>54</sup> As is indicated by the buttresses, this new fifteenth-century church was entirely vaulted and had an inner space of about 372 square meters (40m x 9.3m). The place of the nun's choir is not located.

It is important to link the fifteenth-century architectural and liturgical changes with the reforms that occurred in nunneries at that time. As a feature of enclosure, the location of the nuns' choir in a gallery or on the ground floor had repercussions on the movement of the nuns in the monastery, the priest in the church, and lay people from outside. The laity could have had access to the area under the gallery or, when there was no gallery, to a lateral chapel—as at La Cambre or the late Soleilmont. The excavations of Clairefontaine have revealed another example of a change in the location of the choir. The thirteenth-century gallery on a vaulted undercroft, described earlier, was destroyed during the fifteenth century and the church lengthened to the east by a new choir. In other cases, accounts mention work made on galleries, for example at Leeuwenhorst and at Vrouwenpark during the fifteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

All this illustrates the great variety both of liturgical organization inside of the church and of the scale, design and concept of the buildings. As we have indicated, our information remains very scarce or is nearly non-existent for some aspects as crucial as, for example, furniture and decoration.

### CLOISTERS AND LAVABOS

There is no cloister preserved with its complete medieval structure with galleries, bays, decoration and lavabo. Only the cloisters of Soleilmont, La Cambre (Fig. 16), Bijloke, and Marche-les-Dames are still surrounded by four galleries. They are all post-medieval, but it is likely that they reproduce the shape of the original configuration. In other cases, excavations have revealed the dimensions.

54. See n. 44.

55. De Meulemeester *et al.* (as in n. 27); Vermeer (as in n. 10), p. 182; Minnen, Caes and Hooft (as in n. 33), p. 176.

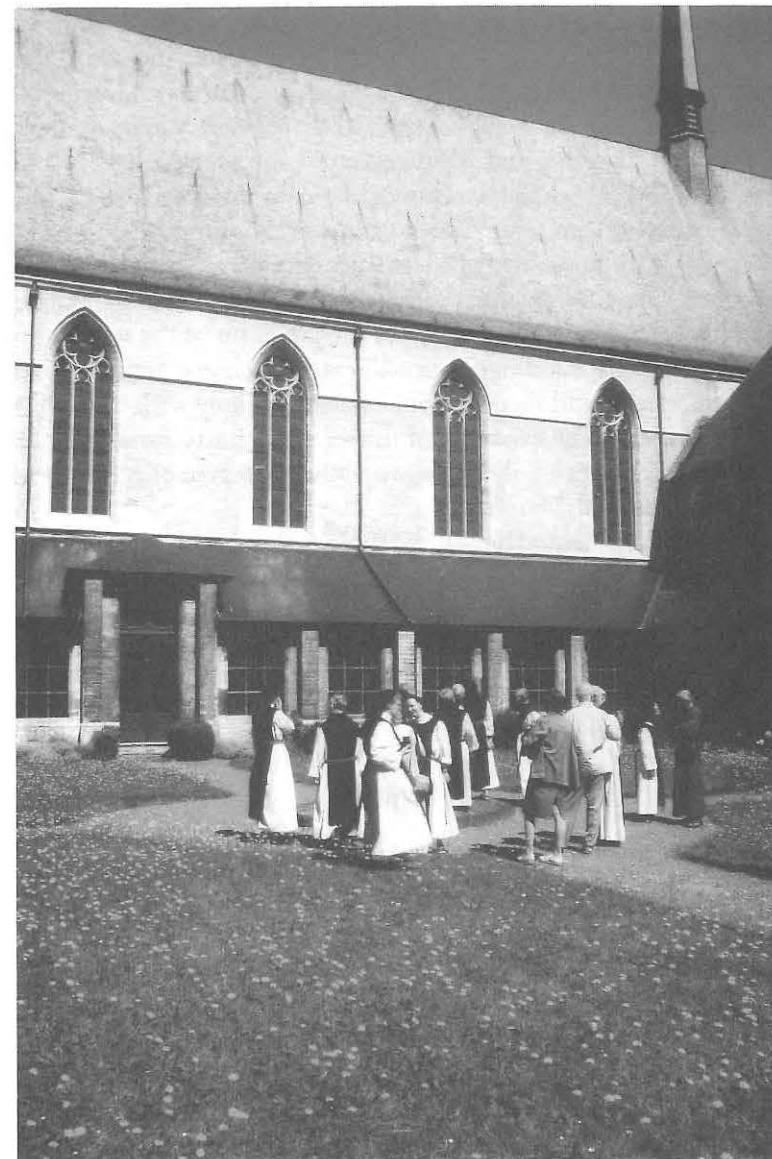


Figure 16. Cloister of La Cambre. View of the garth and the south side of the church (Copyright THOC 1999)

The known cloisters are mostly rectangular, seldom square or trapezoidal. If we examine the total surface area, including the galleries, we can distinguish large cloisters of nearly 1350–1400 square meters from small cloisters of 750–850 square meters. Bijloke, La Cambre, and Mariënkamp belong to the first group; Ter Hunnepe, Marche-les-Dames, Soleilmont, Beaulieu-sur-la-Lys, Clairefontaine, and Mariëndaal form the second.<sup>56</sup>

As far as we know, the galleries were covered mainly by wooden structures that made them particularly vulnerable both to bad weather—fragile spots were always the junctions of the roofs with the surrounding buildings, especially at the corners, and windows with traceries—and to alterations made to comply with new fashions and styles. The existence of thirteenth-century stone or brick vaulted galleries can only be shown with any degree of certainty at Roermond and at Mariënkamp.<sup>57</sup>

A well-documented but sad example of this is the cloister of Soleilmont.<sup>58</sup> The thirteenth-century configuration is unknown, but two rare dedication stones with French inscriptions are reminders of the reconstruction of the cloister in the late fifteenth century: the western and southern galleries in 1476, followed in 1496 by

56. Dimensions, including the galleries (east-west x north-south). Bijloke: 37 x 37.7 = 1395 m<sup>2</sup>; Mariënkamp: 39.3 (?) x 35 = 1375 m<sup>2</sup>; La Cambre: 36.7 x 37.3 = 1368 m<sup>2</sup>; Roermond (irregular because of the transept's apse): 36 x 30 = 1080 m<sup>2</sup>; Soleilmont: 29.8 x 28.7 = 855 m<sup>2</sup>; Beaupré-sur-la-Lys: 26.6 x 30.9 = 822 m<sup>2</sup>; Marche-les-Dames: 25.5 x 30.9 = 788 m<sup>2</sup>; Ter Hunnepe: 26.6 x 29.5 = 784 m<sup>2</sup>; Mariëndaal: 30 x 25 = 750 m<sup>2</sup>; Clairefontaine: 20 x 25 = 500 m<sup>2</sup>.

57. Roermond: traces of the south gallery on the refectory wall, destroyed in 1924; Jan Kalf, *De sloping van het oud-klooster te Roermond* (Utrecht, 1924). Mariënkamp: traces of two different brick vaults (thirteenth and fifteenth centuries) of the north gallery on the church wall; see Teuling and van der Ploeg (as in n. 36), pp. 24–25.

58. Buxant (as in n. 52), pp. 118–120.

the eastern and northern ones.<sup>59</sup> The latter had benches or seats for the collatio. This cloister was first restored after the religious wars in the late sixteenth century and redecorated with stuccowork in the eighteenth century. The discovery of two blocked bays in the chapter with late medieval tracery led, in the years 1937–1939, to the complete reconstruction of a ‘homogeneous’ neo-gothic cloister that reproduced the chapter bays—and thus the destruction of all traces of the older galleries. This new cloister was burned down in the fire at Christmas 1963.

Also interesting is the cloister of the Bijloke at Ghent, rebuilt in the seventeenth century and covered by fine stucco vaults (1662) after having been destroyed by the Calvinists. This new brick cloister re-used the stone foundations of the medieval one. The chronicle gives the succession of the building phases by relating them with abbacies: eastern gallery between 1384 and 1423; southern gallery between 1423 and 1433; and western gallery between 1433–1465. According to this precise literary source the eastern gallery windows were glazed.<sup>60</sup> In the central bay of the southern gallery, which is not in front of the entry of the refectory, the fountain house is built out into the cloister garth.

At La Cambre, the cloister is a reconstruction made in the years 1932–1934 of what it was in the eighteenth century, but an attractive mural lavatorium of the second half of the thirteenth century is still preserved, flanking the east side of the refectory doorway. Two great recesses in the wall frame two high stone benches where the higher of two basins were placed (Fig. 17). By means of spouts,

59. I. Van Spilbeeck, ‘Les Cloîtres de Soleilmont, pierres commémoratives, découverte archéologique’, *Documents et rapports de la Société paléontologique et archéologique de Charleroi* 19 (1893) 267–271. Stone of 1496: *lan d' le nativite n(ot)re S(eigneu) Jh(e)u(s) c(hri)st M(iii)j c(iii)j xx et xxvi fu mis la p(re)mier piere du nouueaulx dortoir des Dam(m)es en labbie de Soleamo(n)t avoecq / an(n)exes ij pans de cloistre et les fourmoirie [seats] desdy pa(n)s soubs le ta(m)ps Dam(m)e Jehen(n)e de Tsegny [Jehanne de Trazegnies] abbesse dudy / Soleamont. Stone of 1476: *lan de le nativite n(ot)re s(eigneu)r J(esus) Christ m iij LXXVJ fut mis la pr(e)mire piere du fon/ dement du dortoir des cuer avec ii p(ans).**

60. *In de Oostzyde heeft sij den pand ghemaect metten glaesveynsters*, cited in Leo Van Puyvelde, *Un Hôpital du moyen âge et une abbaye y annexée: La Biloc de Gand, étude archéologique* (Ghent, 1925) 77.

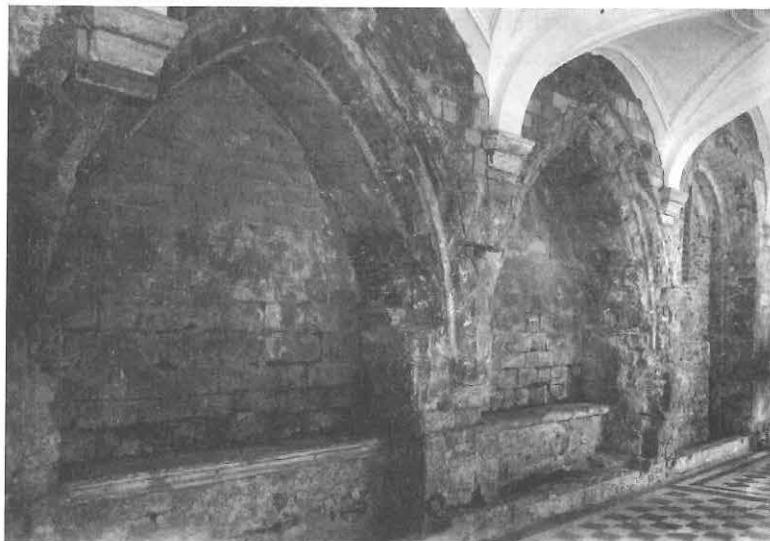


Figure 17. Lavabo of La Cambre. The two recesses (13<sup>th</sup>-c.) and the doorway to the refectory in the south gallery (Copyright IRPA-KIK 83727A, before 1943)

water fell down into the lower basins on the level of the pavement. The upper and lower basins are not preserved, but the plumbing was still visible before the restoration.<sup>61</sup> Such a rectangular upper basin, originally in front of the refectory entrance, is known at Soleilmont.<sup>62</sup> It is nearly two meters long and has three gargoyle heads alternating with heraldic shields, which date the basin to the first half of the sixteenth century (Fig. 18).

The gallery at the north side of the church of Loosduinen recently has been reconstructed in order to provide a service communication to new facilities. In spite of its new aspect, this gallery allowed the re-opening of the two original doorways to the church—one of them flanked by a fine niche for a candle—and it correctly evokes the general volume of the initial gallery. The same

61. *L'Abbaye cistercienne de La Cambre* (as in n. 48), pp. 280–282.

62. I. Van Spilbeeck, 'Lavabos du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Documents et rapports de la Société paléontologique et archéologique de Charleroi* 17 (1891) 523–526.



Figure 18. Lavabo of Soleilmont. Upper basin with three gargoyle heads, first half sixteenth century. (Copyright IRPA-KIK 83773A, before 1963)

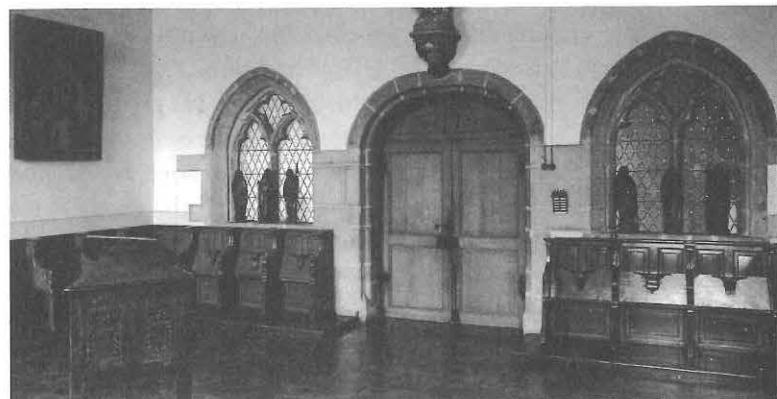


Figure 19. Chapter house of Soleilmont. Inside to the west, 1496 (Copyright IRPA-KIK 83727A, before the fire of 1963)

may be said of the east gallery of Mariënkamp at Assen, which was nearly completely rebuilt in the late nineteenth century.

Although we can assert that all the late medieval nunneries had a central cloister, as did the monks' abbeys, we know little about the first plans of the thirteenth-century nunneries. Did they all have a cloister with galleries or did they use other systems to define an effective enclosure in accordance with statuta 7 of 1225 and 16 of 1228? Trying to answer this question is impossible at the present time because the few excavations of nunneries that have been made concentrate on their churches rather than their cloisters.

## THE EAST RANGE

Despite the destruction of nearly all the medieval chapter houses of Cistercian nunneries in the Low Countries, there is a great deal of evidence regarding the identification of the east range. A 'classical' example was brought to light recently at Beaupré-sur-la-Lys.<sup>63</sup> The building measures 41 by 12.5m and is dated 1220–1230. The ground floor consists of a sequence of four rooms (going north to south, starting from the church): the sacristy; the staircase to the dormitory; the chapter house; and the nuns' common room, the last bay of which is disturbed by a later addition. As the abbey is located close to the river Lys, a reredorter must have existed in the vicinity of the building. The foundations of buttresses at the east side and of a central row of two columns in the chapter house, and four columns in the common room prove that all the rooms were vaulted, as were the contemporaneous French nuns' buildings of Maubuisson, Fontaine-Guérand, and other houses.<sup>64</sup>

Parts of the original walls survive at La Cambre. The common wall with the aforementioned oratory near the church belongs to the first half of the thirteenth century and is considered the oldest wall of the abbey.<sup>65</sup> In this section, a doorway links the northeast corner of the cloister to the choir via the oratory. Above the door, a cornice resting on roughly carved corbels ends the wall; this indicates the position of the primitive roof. A more interesting detail is the square window, now blocked up, at the upper level of the dormitory's end wall. Through this opening, the sacristan had a view into the church from her cell in the dormitory.

The east range of Bijloke at Ghent<sup>66</sup> is a large brick building erected in the early fourteenth century, according to a testament

63. Nathalie Vanbrugghe, 'Beaupré-sur-la-Lys, quand une abbaye ressurgit', *Les Dossiers d'archéologie* 229 (Dijon, 1997) 98–101.

64. Aubert (as in n. 14), 2:196–205.

65. *L'Abbaye cistercienne de La Cambre* (as in n. 28), 277–279.

66. Van Puyvelde (as in n. 60), pp. 55–62; Frans Van Hove, 'Étude de reconstruction de l'état primitif des bâtiments existants de l'ancienne abbaye de la Byloke à Gand', *Bulletin de la société d'histoire et d'archéologie* 39 (Ghent, 1931) 5–25 (6).

of 1316 made by the abbey's confessor, who bequeathed money 'to contribute to the construction of the new dormitory'.<sup>67</sup> It occupied the entire upper floor and had a surface area of around 485 square meters (50 x 9.70 m). A serious alteration took place at the end of the sixteenth century, following the destruction of the old church by the Calvinists in 1579. Rather than rebuild a new church on the site of the former, the nuns decided to convert two-thirds of the east range into the new church, preserving the outer walls and the frame but destroying the inner walls and floors. In this way the chapter house and the main part of the dormitory disappeared. Only the southern bays of the range are intact, but they are sufficient to disclose the original layout (Fig. 21). The dormitory received light from a repetitive rhythm of small rectangular windows piercing the long sides and corresponding to the individual beds. The arches on the inner side of the walls correspond to the tiebeams of the timberwork. A wooden barrel vault, which still bears traces of colored decoration, covered the entire dormitory. The southern facade of the east range has a splendid trefoiled gable reproducing in brick the form of contemporaneous wooden house gables. A large buttress in the axis corresponds to the chimney of the common room or warming house while its flue passes between the two high windows of the dormitory's south end (Fig. 22). The stairs to the dormitory occupy the first bay of the adjacent south range, which is part of the same rebuilding campaign of the abbey.<sup>68</sup> Some borings in the east wall have made it possible to locate the doorway of the chapter house and another staircase in the center of the east range.<sup>69</sup> This staircase led to the common room that was located on a mezzanine floor between the dormitory and a succession of small, low storage rooms on the ground floor (Fig. 21). North of the staircase, the chapter house occupied the height corresponding to both the mezzanine floor

67. *Insuper, do, lego domine abbatisse et conventui de Byloka in auxilium novi dormitorii sui faciendi centum aureos magnos....* Cited by Van Puyvelde, p. 118.

68. See the following section.

69. On this point, the reconstruction of Van Hove, pp. 6–15, is more credible than the one by Van Puyvelde, pp. 55–61.



Figure 20. East range of Marche-les-Dames. East side with the pulpit of the refectory, first half of the sixteenth century. (Copyright IRPA-KIK 41974B, shortly after the restoration of 1904)

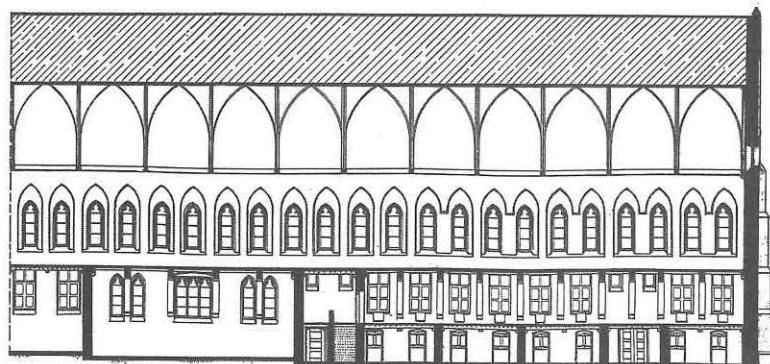


Figure 21. East range of the Bijloke at Ghent. Section, reconstruction of the chapter and the dormitory (Drawing F. Van Hove, 1929)

and the ground floor. This complex design is confirmed by the traces of windows on the east wall.

Besides the exceptional monastic building of Bijloke, only two other eastern ranges survive, at Soleilmont and Marche-les-Dames.<sup>70</sup> Despite the ruin of the former by the fire of 1963 and the thorough alteration of the latter by a heavy restoration in 1875, it is possible to appreciate the general design of these similar late medieval buildings. The chapter house of Soleilmont was nearly square, vaulted by three barrel vaults; three windows on the eastern side (the central one somewhat wider and higher than the others) faced three apertures to the eastern gallery of the cloister. Two pointed-arch windows, divided into two by trefoiled tracery, flanked the doorway (Fig. 19). This chapter house was built in 1496, together with the east gallery. An exceptional desk made for the new chapter room of Soleilmont around 1500 is still preserved.<sup>71</sup> South of the chapter house a refectory of about 80 square meters (11.8 x 6.7 m) was followed by a pantry and a kitchen. The whole ground floor rested on a basement divided into a vault under the chapter house, for the abbesses' burials, and cellars under the refectory and the kitchen, which had a well. The only stairway to the dormitory, which occupied the entire upper storey and was covered by a timber barrel vault, was situated between the chapter house and the church. The excavations at Ter Hunnepe brought to light a succession of four cellars that had once been vaulted, and a cesspit at the southern end.<sup>72</sup> This fifteenth-century east range thus had a basement, but it is impossible to reconstruct the design of the ground floor.

At Marche-les-Dames, two levels of cross-windows indicate that the stone east range is from the first half of the sixteenth century (Fig. 20). The most important components of the east range

70. *Namurois, XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> s.* (as in n. 4), 164–169 and 174–176; 'Marche-les-Dames' (as in n. 41), 405–410; Buxant (as in n. 52), 120–123.

71. Thomas Coomans, 'Le Pupitre de la salle de chapitre de Soleilmont et l'abbesse Jeanne de Trazegnies (vers 1500)', *Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 52 (2001) 367–384.

72. *Zusters tussen twee beken* (as in n. 9), 84–86.

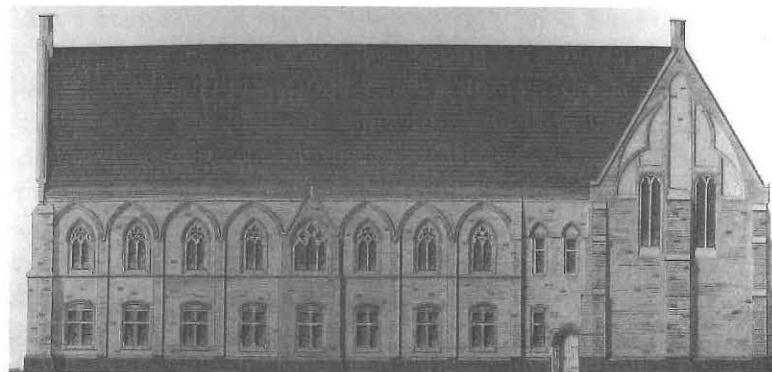


Figure 22. East and south ranges of the Bijloke at Ghent. South wall of the refectory and south gable of the dormitory (Drawing E. Serrure, 1881)

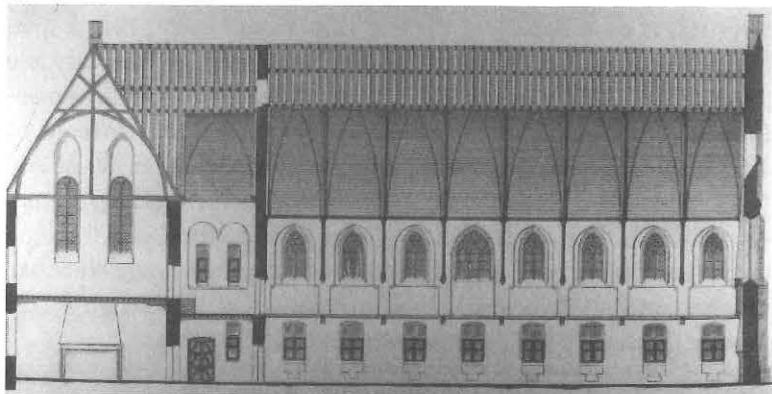


Figure 23. East and south ranges of the Bijloke at Ghent. Section of the refectory and cross-section of the dormitory (Drawing E. Serrure, 1881)

are a square chapter house and a large room of about 142 square meters (18.2 x 7.8 m) which can be identified as a refectory by the presence of a pulpit. This last is an oriel with three lancets around a small platform reachable by four lateral steps.<sup>73</sup> The dormitory on the upper floor still has its wooden barrel vault, and a latrine block was in all likelihood located at the north end of the range.

Both Soleilmont and Marche-les-Dames combine in the same building a chapter house, a refectory, and a dormitory. This original and late medieval design could be related to a reform movement among Cistercian nunneries in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; initiated at Marche-les-Dames in 1406 it was followed by Soleilmont in 1415.<sup>74</sup> The concentration of all monastic functions in only one building adjacent to the church placed great stress on strict enclosure. Unfortunately, nearly all architectural information on the eighteen other nunneries that joined the reform is lacking, as is evidence on the four nunneries that were converted into abbeys for men.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, it is not possible to generalize from the two remaining examples, all the more since the iconographic and archival documents we have for all the nunneries are mostly later than the destructions caused by the religious wars.

### THE REFECTORY RANGE

The monastic building opposite the church traditionally housed the refectory and the kitchen. One of the main reasons for this location was the need for a supply of water, which naturally came from the lowest point of the valley. The church, on the other hand, required deep and stable foundations and was thus settled at the opposite side of the cloister.

73. A similar pulpit, dated 1554, can be seen in the refectory of the former Crosier convent of Ter Apel in the province of Groningen.

74. Joseph-Marie Canivez, *L'Ordre de Cîteaux en Belgique des origines (1132) au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Forges-lez-Chimay, 1926) 24–31; Lefèvre (as in n. 4), pp. 156–174, repeated in *Namurois, XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (as in n. 4), 47–54.

75. Moulins (1414), Jardinot (1441), Boneffe (1462), St Remy (1467). Only the abbey of Félixpre became a nunnery (1467).

The south range of Bijloke at Ghent (Figs. 22 and 23) is undoubtedly the finest medieval refectory of any Cistercian nunnery in all Europe.<sup>76</sup> It was built just after the dormitory wing and can be dated to 1325–1330. The building is parallel to the southern gallery and houses two cellars, a passage and the kitchen on the ground floor, and a huge refectory occupying the whole upper floor. In the eastern bay of the building, at the junction of the south and east ranges, is located a staircase that leads both to the refectory and to the dormitory. The western end of the building is closed by a free facade, which is a masterpiece of gothic brick architecture in the Low Countries (Fig. 24). The gable is decorated by a great inscribed trefoil enclosing a composition of geometric forms, two rose windows and simulated pointed-arch windows with brick traceries. We do not know the reason for this exceptional decoration or its iconographic meaning. In contrast to house facades, we see here buttresses and an axial chimney corresponding to the fireplaces of the kitchen and the refectory placed one on top of the other.

Inside, the refectory is a large single-nave hall with an area of 310 square meters (31 x 10 m), covered with a wooden barrel vault (Figs. 23 and 30). Wooden ribs resting on imbedded stone shafts—ended by corbels carved with rich foliage decoration, among which are two foliate masks—divide the space rhythmically into eight bays. Each bay received light on both sides from a pointed-arch window with gothic tracery. Because of the location of the room on the upper floor, large windows could also be opened on the cloister side, above the pentice of the gallery. The fifth bay of the south side is a little different from the others and forms a recess marked outside by a small gable. This was the place of the lectern. During a thorough restoration in 1924 the entire refectory was decorated in a neo-gothic style in order to highlight the original figurative scenes, notably a beautiful representation of

76. Van Puyvelde (as in n. 60), 63–75; Van Hove (as in n. 66), 15–17; ‘Bijloke-hospitaal en Bijlokeklooster van cisterciënzerinnen’, *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen. Inventaris van het cultuurbezit in België, Architectuur 4nb: Stad Gent, zuid-west* (Ghent, 1981) 133–134.



Figure 24. Refectory of the Bijloke at Ghent. West front, 1325–30 (Copyright IRPA-KIK 75879A, shortly after the restoration of 1924)

the Last Supper, still preserved, on the two small sides.<sup>77</sup> The two rose windows and a large fireplace mark the wall at the reverse of the famous brick gable. To the left of it is a recess that was part of an ingenious vertical hatch to the kitchen below.

In monastic tradition, the usual location of the refectory was parallel to the cloister, on the ground floor or at a higher level. At Ghent one still can visit the refectories of the great Benedictine abbeys of Saint Bavo and Saint Peter, which are of the same type as the one at Bijloke. The former is of the late twelfth century; the latter was rebuilt in the early fifteenth century on an upper floor, after having been on the ground floor from the twelfth century or earlier.<sup>78</sup> This illustrates both the survival of a building type throughout the Middle Ages, and also the considerable changes that could occur. It also makes it difficult to interpret the foundation and define the function of excavated ground plans.

Previous authors have attempted to identify the southern range of Cistercian nunneries as being the building of the lay sisters, while locating the refectory in the eastern range, in continuation of the chapter house.<sup>79</sup> This theory is based on the two aforementioned late-medieval east ranges at Soleilmont and Marche-les-Dames, which were built in the context of monastic reform in the county of Namur. At any rate, this design does not apply in a general way to all medieval Cistercian nunneries. Often the presence of a refectory in the eastern wing is a result of the decision taken in 1666 by Pope Alexander III, who prescribed two separate refectories, one, called the winter refectory, used for the common and silent meals, and another for meals on feast days, called the summer refectory. The older, spacious refectory was used for feast days, and the 'winter refectory' had to occupy a smaller room close by, for example, the common room.<sup>80</sup> At Bijloke a new refectory with fine baroque

77. See the section below on colored interiors.

78. We refer here to the studies of the archeological service of Ghent, led by Marie-Christine Laleman, and regularly published in the review *Stadsarcheologie: bodem en monument in Gent*.

79. See n. 12.

80. The same happened in mens' abbeys of all religious orders.

stucco-work was built in 1715 within the medieval one, but on the level of the cloister gallery. As a result there was not only a change of level, but also serious damage caused to the building.<sup>81</sup>

It is our considered opinion that the range opposite the church was the refectory wing, with a kitchen and possibly cellars when the refectory was on an upper floor. The recent excavations at Beaupré-sur-la-Lys have brought to light the plan of a mid-thirteenth-century north range, which consists of a succession of four square rooms with buttresses. According to the aforementioned theory, the range was identified as being the lay sisters' wing,<sup>82</sup> while we think it is the vaulted undercroft of the refectory.<sup>83</sup>

Two more thirteenth-century refectories can be located in the south range. We have already seen the lavabo recesses in the south gallery at La Cambre next to the door of the refectory, which is all that remains of the building (Fig. 17). During the destruction of the south range of Roermond in 1924, parts of the original structure of the refectory suddenly reappeared. They had been hidden behind later masonry. Because of the very bad condition of the remains, the Dutch Service for Heritage decided to record them before completing the destruction.<sup>84</sup> The walls were decorated with blind, round arches resting on painted shafts and high quality late-romanesque capitals with carved foliage. This quite uncommon decoration has led some authors to postulate that the room was the chapter house,<sup>85</sup> or part of a hall of the counts of Gelre destroyed by Emperor Otto IV in 1213, shortly before the foundation of the abbey on the same site.<sup>86</sup>

81. During the restoration of 1924, the stucco-work of 1715 was removed to another room in order to reconstruct the fourteenth-century refectory.

82. Vanbrugghe (as in n. 63), pp. 96–101. The author simply omits considering the question of the refectory.

83. As were also the thirteenth-century refectories of Parc-aux-Dames, l'Eau, and others. See Aubert (as in n. 14), 2:202.

84. Jan Kalf, *De sloping van het oud-klooster te Roermond* (Utrecht, 1924).

85. On some measurements of 1924: 'aanzicht van den westelijken muur met blindbogen van de kapittelzaal' (RDMZ. 62716).

86. Aart J. J. Mekking, 'De Munsterabdij te Roermond en haar zogenaamde refectorium tot omstreeks 1500', *De Maagdouw, tijdschrift voor Limburgse geschiedenis en oudheidkunde* 93 (Maastricht: 1974) cols. 97–114.

## THE WEST RANGE

The questions surrounding the western range are even more problematic than those for the other claustral buildings. Was it the site of the cellar and the lodging of the lay sisters, in the same way as happened in the monks' abbeys? Or was there no building behind the western gallery of the cloister, as has been suggested in some studies?<sup>87</sup> The architectural and archeological evidence is almost completely non-existent.

An impressive vaulted room survives uniquely at Vrouwenpark. In all likelihood it was a cellar or a storage place (Fig. 25). Now completely isolated, this cellar touched the southwest corner of the church and was probably part of a longer and higher building. It is a rectangular room with a surface of some 85 square meters (12.70 x 6.68 m) covered by six groin vaults supported on two columns. The windows are very small, and two doors give access to the room: a small one leading to the cloister on the east side, and a large one opening to the north side, behind the facade of the church. This large doorway had two door panels that opened inwards and were closed by a crossbar which slid into the thickness of the wall. The masonry of the building consists of three different varieties of stone. The walls and part of the vaults are of the local, dark-brown, 'iron sandstone'. Carved limestone from the Tournai area is used for the two columns and the molded bases as well as for the capitals with linear carved leaves characteristic of early gothic foliage. Finally, yellow sandstone from the Brussels area was used only for the upper part of the vaults. The great regularity of the construction and the carefully cut ashlar masonry prove that the so-called secondary buildings were also the work of skilled craftsmen. The absence of brick, the use of groin vaults, and the design of the capitals date this cellar to the middle of the thirteenth century, that is, one generation earlier than the first building phase of the stone church.

Here mention must be made of the excavations made in 1943 by the University of Groningen at Grijzenvrouwenklooster at Midwolda. On the northwest side of this thirteenth-century church a

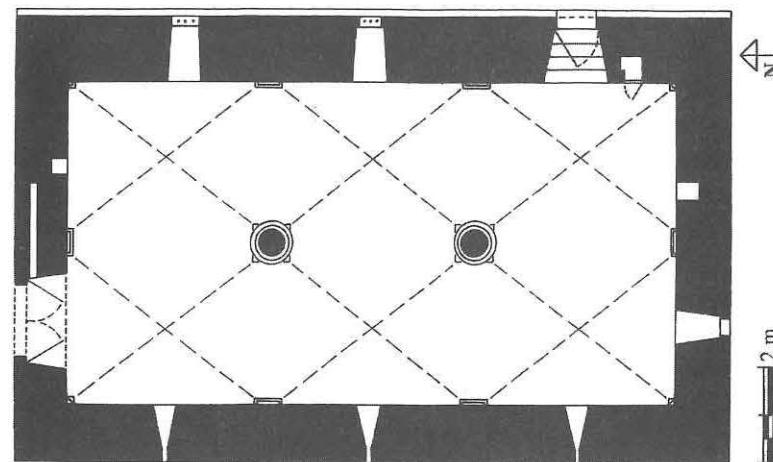
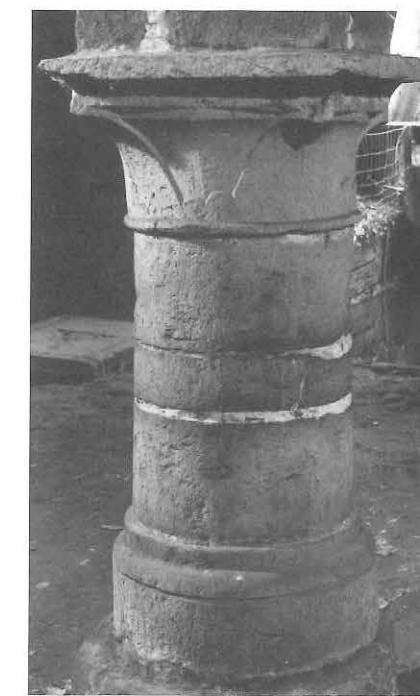


Figure 25. West range of Vrouwenpark. Plan of the thirteenth-century cellar and detail of a column (Drawing THOC 1995 and Copyright IRPA-KIK 146164B)



87. Bolly [and Lefèvre] (as in n. 12), 215–219.

part of the foundation of a long rectangular building was found, while on the southwest side of the fifteenth-century church were discovered the foundations of a 46m long gallery, perfectly aligned with the front of the church. This means that, at the western part of the abbey, buildings existed on both sides of the church. Further interpretation of this excavation is hazardous.<sup>88</sup>

At Bijloke an upper floor seems to have existed above the western cloister walk. This is where the dormitory of the lay sisters should have been. An account from the second quarter of the sixteenth century mentions the replacement of the black cloth curtains between the beds of the lay sisters by wooden partitions.<sup>89</sup>

The location of the nuns' choir on a gallery in the western part of the church necessitated a staircase to the cloister or a communication with the upper level of the west range. Such an opening was visible on the south wall of the western block of the church of Roermond after the destruction of the west range and before the restoration of the church's facings. At Loosduinen there is also evidence of a communication through the upper level of the western tower to a building on the north side of the tower.<sup>90</sup> Such a communication also existed at Clairfontaine. It is not impossible therefore that in some abbeys a nuns' dormitory could have been located on an upper floor of the west range. This hypothesis is based only on necessity and convenience for the night prayers in those houses that had a nuns' gallery. Further research on this is necessary.

### THE ABBESS'S LODGING

Abbesses depended on an abbot and on a confessor for the spiritual direction of the community's life, but for secular business and material administration they had a large degree of autonomy. The abbess's status evolved in a way parallel to that of abbots. Abbesses

88. Unpublished report of Herrius Halbertsma (ROB Amersfoort: 1943) cited by Jetten (as in n. 9).

89. Cited by Van Hove (as in n. 66), 20.

90. Under the roof of the house close to the tower, an arch and traces of an earlier roof can still be seen (Fig. 5).

of noble houses with great estates were, of course, a special case. In the late Middle Ages, many abbesses had coats of arms, a personal seal, and servants; they lived in their own lodgings with their own kitchen, and they were buried in fine carved tombs. The case of the abbesses of Leeuwenhorst is well documented and recent research has analyzed in depth the details of their daily life.<sup>91</sup>

At Herkenrode, a part of the lodging built by Mechtilde de Lechy, abbess from 1519 to 1548 survives.<sup>92</sup> It was a comfortable residence, planned around a courtyard and located about a hundred meters east of the cloister, with which it was linked by a long covered gallery. In 1974, the Regular Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre opened a retreat house there and completed the ruined buildings by contemporary additions and an attractive modern chapel. The most significant old rooms are at the southeast of the court and serve today as the parlor (Fig. 26). Both have a fine lierne vault, a fireplace, two cross-windows with window seats, and exceptional late-gothic painted decoration. The complete basement of the east range, consisting of four cellars, covered by flat rib vaults supported on stone columns, has been preserved. In the middle of the west side, a square staircase is built out into the courtyard. The lower flights of stairs are still covered by late-gothic vaults, the panels of which are brick, and stone ribs rest on delicate figural corbels. This large and refined staircase indicates that the east range of the lodging was certainly the most important, which is confirmed by the gothic pedestal of an oriel window on the opposite side. It was part of the abbess's private chapel which, as we know from the archives, was dedicated in 1538. The abbess's kitchen, where a huge mural fireplace may still be seen, was at the north of the east range.

More modest, and more in accord with Cistercian ideals, was the late medieval abbesses' lodging of Soleilmont, built around

91. We refer to the numerous articles on Leeuwenhorst by Geertruida de Moor and her synthesis book: *Verborgen en gebogen. Het cisterciënzerinnenklooster Leeuwenhorst in de Noordwijkse regio (1261–1574)* (Hilversum, 1994).

92. 'Kuringen, voormalige abdij Herkenrode', *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen. Inventaris van het cultuurbezit in België, Architectuur 6n1: Provincie Limburg, arrondissement Hasselt* (Ghent, 1981) 434–453.

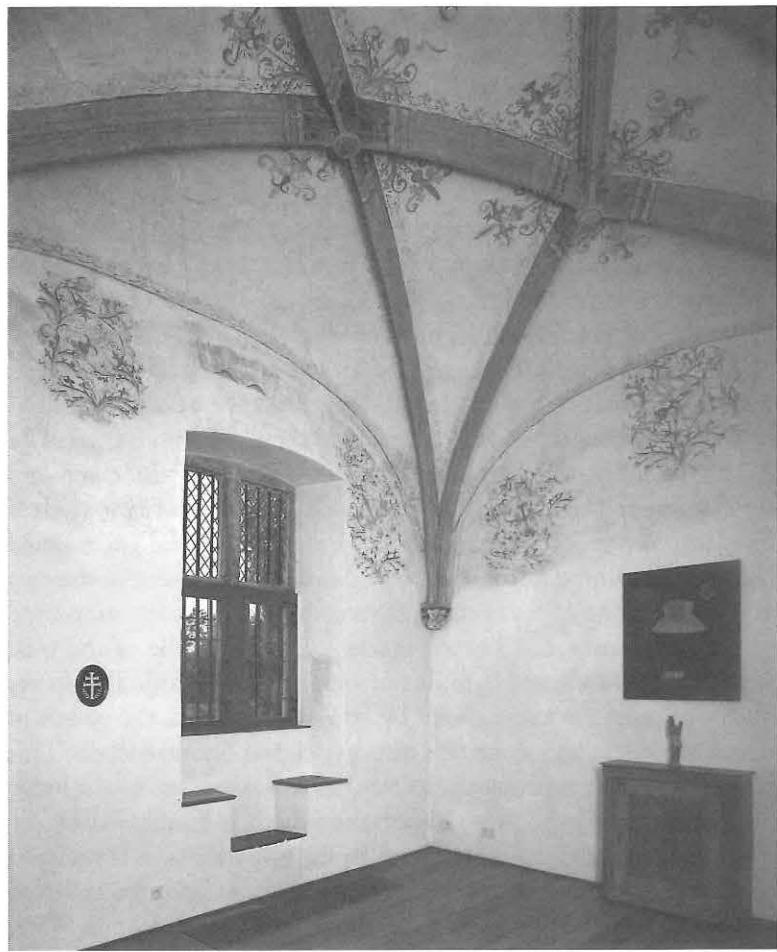


Figure 26. Abbesses' lodging of Herkenrode. Vaulted room with painted decoration, 1519–48 (Copyright VIOE, Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, Monumenten en Landschappen, photo Oswald Pauwels, 1993)

1500 and unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1963.<sup>93</sup> It was located on the northwest side of the cloister, at the continuation of the church, and was known as the *domus abbatialis et confessoris*. The double lodging, in fact, two parlors, was separated by a transverse passage that provided the only link from the cloister to the inner court, close to the church entrance. Here the abbess lived with her community around the cloister, controlled the entrance of the enclosure, and could conveniently welcome guests coming to the church. This configuration and location on the edge of the enclosure and in continuation of the church seems to have been highly usual, if we refer to buildings reproducing it late in the eighteenth century. Examples include in particular Marche-les-Dames, Argenton, La Cambre, and Soleilmont, which was extended in 1732.

#### GATEHOUSES, MILLS AND OTHER BUILDINGS

Nunneries were enclosed by a precinct wall, which defined an area in all likelihood subdivided by other walls into an inner and an outer court, in the same way as at abbeys of monks. Owing to the destruction of the religious wars, the reorganization that followed, and the dissolution of 1796, the medieval organization of the inner space is no longer discernible. Parts of the outer walls, some gatehouses, agricultural buildings and mills are still preserved in those cases where nunneries became farms after the dissolution. Some significant groups of buildings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries survive in Belgium, notably at Argenton, Aywières, Herkenrode, Hocht, Oplinter, La Paix-Dieu, La Ramée, Solières, Valduc, Val-Notre-Dame, Vrouwenpark, and other places.<sup>94</sup> Those buildings illustrate the richness of the restored rural economy after the religious troubles. At Herkenrode, we can read on the front of the barn, under the arms of an abbess, the inscription: LABONDANCE.DE.DIEV (the abundance of God) which gives the date 1656.

93. Buxant (as in n. 52), 131–134.

94. Coomans, 'Le Patrimoine' (as in n. 7).

The late gothic gatehouse erected by Mechtilde de Lechy in 1531 still stands a few dozen meters to the west of the barn (Fig. 27). This solid but elegant reception building, symbolically crowned by four brick step-gables and a central spire, is visible from afar. It marks the entrance to the great abbey of the noble Cistercian sisters of Herkenrode, at that time the most illustrious and prestigious nunnery of the prince-bishopric of Liège. From 1317 onwards, miraculous hosts were kept in the church of Herkenrode, which had become a celebrated pilgrimage site, confirmed by a famous indulgence letter issued by the pope in 1363.<sup>95</sup> Pilgrims entered the abbey through the vaulted entrance portal, which has two passageways, a small one for pedestrians and a large one for carts and processions. Between the two was a niche with a statue of the Virgin on a pedestal emblazoned with the arms of the prince-bishop of Liège—thus celebrating the two protectors of the abbey. We think that the great room on the upper floor was used as a reception hall and for secular business.

Gatehouses with double passageways can be seen on many drawings and etchings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but except for the one at Herkenrode, no other medieval gatehouse of a Cistercian nunnery survives. Here one should mention the excavations of the medieval gatehouse of Ter Hunnepe and the double passageway at Salzinnes, both destroyed in the 1910s.<sup>96</sup> The eighteenth-century gatehouse at Soleilmont integrates older walls, according to the date 1490 written with black bricks in the masonry.<sup>97</sup> Some surviving sections of the precinct are linked with the gatehouse and include a low, round, flanking tower of the fifteenth century (Fig. 1).

95. St Truiden, Provincial museum for religious art. See *Filles de Cîteaux au pays mosan* (as in n. 4), 73; and *Saint Bernard et le monde cistercien*, edd. Léon Pressouyre and Terry N. Kinder (Paris, 1990) 170 and 224.

96. *Zusters tussen twee beken* (as in n. 9), 64 and 79–80; *Namurois, XIIIe–XVIIe siècles* (as in n. 4), 173.

97. *Le Patrimoine monumental de la Belgique. Wallonie*, 20: *Province de Hainaut, arrondissement de Charleroi* (Liège, 1994) 247–248.

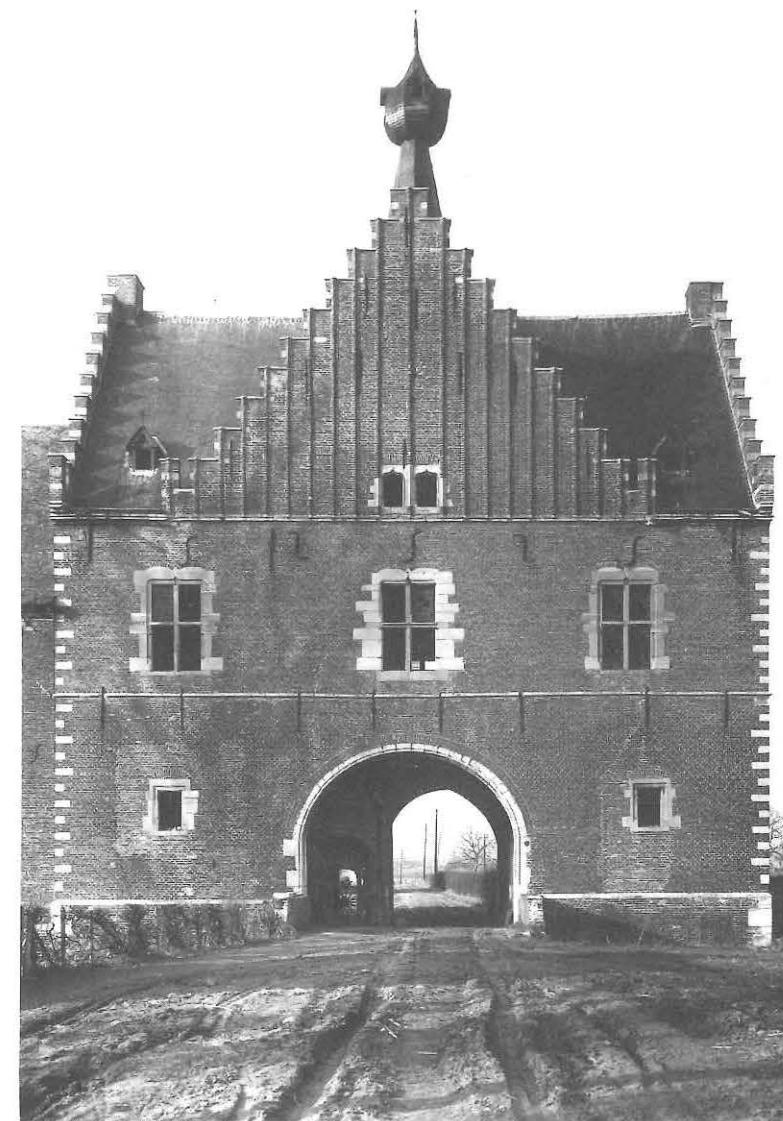


Figure 27. Gatehouse of Herkenrode. Outer front, 1531 (Copyright IRPA-KIK 37546A, before 1940)

According to the Rule of Saint Benedict (RB 66:6-7), the workshops and the water-driven mills had to be located inside the precinct, in what we now call the outer court. This was the case at Herkenrode, Val-Notre-Dame, Soleilmont, La Paix-Dieu, Valduc, La Ramée, and other places where post-medieval mills survive, in all probability rebuilt on sites of which the dams, leats, and falls belong to medieval layouts.<sup>98</sup> The corn mill of Salzinnes, the last domestic medieval mill of a Cistercian nunnery, disappeared a long time ago, before 1860.<sup>99</sup> Sometimes old pictures of abbeys show very impressive mill complexes and illustrate the pre-industrial activities even close to a nuns' cloister. A view of Blandecques from around 1460 shows no less than five water mills situated on the river Aa.<sup>100</sup> The mill of Vrouwenpark recently has been located some 600 meters to the south of the cloister.

The last excavations of Ter Hunnepe in 1993–1995 have brought to light the plan of a medieval brick grange within the precinct.<sup>101</sup> With an inner surface of 255 square meters (28.10 x 9.10 m), this home grange was nearly as large as the church. The post holes of an earlier timber aisled building were found underneath the level of the brick grange. The foundations of three circular ovens in the middle of the timber workshop made it possible to identify it as the abbey's bakery, which had been destroyed by a fire in the early fourteenth century.

98. Laëtitia Vandenheede and Thomas Coomans, 'Les moulins à eau de l'enclos monastique entre Ardenne et Flandre', *Moulins abbatiaux entre Rhin et Escaut / Abdijmolens tussen Rijn en Schelde / Abteimühlen zwischen Rhein und Schelde*, ed. Thomas Coomans, Clavis kunsthistorische monografieën 19 (Utrecht, 2001) 69–100.

99. Alphonse Becquet, 'Le Moulin de Salzinnes', *Annales de la Société archéologique de Namur* 5 (1857–1858) 175–178; *Namurois, XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (as in n. 4), 193–194.

100. Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1489. See *Saint Bernard et le monde cistercien* (as in n. 95), 244–245, no. 123.

101. Herman Lubberding, 'Onderzoek naar het noordelijke bijgebouw', *Zusters tussen twee beken* (as in n. 9), 90–99.

## THE BIJLOKE HOSPITAL

Even though, strictly speaking, it is not a monastic building, the hospital of Bijloke must be mentioned in a work on Cistercian nunneries. The great hall of the hospital, with its unique trefoiled timberwork, is rightly considered to be one of the finest medieval buildings of European hospital architecture. Also unique is the link between a hospital and a Cistercian nunnery, both situated at the edge of Ghent, which was one of the largest towns in medieval northern Europe. The transfer of an existing hospital from the city center to a place called Biloche on the bank of the river Lys upstream, and the foundation of a Cistercian community to minister to it, were sponsored by the count of Flanders, Ferrand of Portugal, and his wife, Johanna of Constantinople. This took place in 1228–1234. The double vocation, both contemplative and active,<sup>102</sup> led to many problems, notably as regards strict enclosure. Theoretically, only the lay sisters and servants were allowed to work in the hospital and have contact with lay people, while the nuns lived in the cloister and worked in the pharmacy preparing medicines. Different precincts enclosed the hospital and the convent.

Three buildings of the medieval hospital are still preserved, all rectangular and oriented east to west.<sup>103</sup> First, the great hall, with an area of 867 square meters (55.10 x 15.75 m), is the main building of the complex (Fig. 28). Shortly after its completion it was flanked on the south by a chapel of some 100 square meters (14.10 x 7.35 m). Later a second infirmary hall having an area of 250 square meters (25 x 10 m) was erected a dozen meters to the east in the axis of the great hall. The buildings, surrounded by neogothic extensions in the nineteenth century, kept their medical

102. (...) *prefatum monasterium gandavense pro conservatione specialiter et regimine hospitalis*. Charter of 1229, cited in Van Puyvelde (as in n. 60), 17.

103. Van Puyvelde, pp. 11–52; Antoine De Schryver, 'L'Abbaye et l'hôpital de la Bijloke à Gand', *Congrès archéologique, Flandre 120* (Paris, 1962) 116–128; 'Bijlokehospitaal en Bijlokeklooster van cisterciënzerinnen' (as in n. 76), 124–128; Th. Coomans, *L'architecture hospitalière en Belgique*, edd. Marian Buyle, Sigrid Dehaeck, and Jacques Deveseleer, M&L-cahier 10 (Brussels, 2005), 152–155.

function until 1982 and were still served by Cistercian nuns.<sup>104</sup> A complete restoration occurred in the 1990s, when the great hall became a concert hall. Before and during this work, an exemplary multidisciplinary archeological study revealed much new information regarding the building<sup>105</sup> and its timber roof.

The roof has been dated to 1251–1255 by dendrochronological analysis.<sup>106</sup> This exceptional trussed-rafter roof culminates at a height of eighteen meters and has a trefoiled shape which makes a span of nearly sixteen meters possible (Fig. 29). Unfortunately it has lost the paneled barrel vault that stressed the general trefoil shape and hid the rafters and the purlins. At regular intervals, ten principal rafters, having an additional tiebeam under the upper arch, crossed the paneled vault and rhythmically divided the hall into eleven bays. In their axis, buttresses strengthen the lateral walls. The iron anchors were placed in the seventeenth century to give greater stability.

The walls of the great hall are constructed of an interesting mixed masonry: Tournai stone outside with large bricks for the inner facing. Analysis has made it possible to reconstruct how the lateral windows looked originally and how they provided both lighting and airiness to the huge room. They were divided into two lancets surmounted by a quadrilobe. This latter, and the upper part of the lights, were glazed, while the bottom was only shuttered. The eastern front is pierced by three large pointed-arch

104. Because their specific work was quite incompatible with claustral life, they became an independent congregation in 1870.

105. Patrick Hoffsummer, Marie-Christine Laleman and Patrick Raveschot, 'Bijlokekaai, Ziekenzaal', *Stadsarcheologie. Bodem en monument in Gent* 15/1 (Ghent, 1991) 56–57; M.-C. Laleman and P. Raveschot, 'Renovatie en onderzoek in Gent: de ziekenzaal van de Bijloke', *Toerisme in Oost-Vlaanderen* 41/3 (Ghent, 1992) 76–80; M.-C. Laleman and P. Raveschot, 'L'Hôpital de la Bijloke à Gent: premier bilan de la recherche archéologique', *Actes du 51<sup>e</sup> congrès de la Fédération des cercles d'archéologie et d'histoire de Belgique* (Liège, 1994) 2:129–135.

106. *Les Charpentes de toiture en Wallonie: typologie et dendrochronologie (XI<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Études et documents, monuments et sites 1 (Namur, 1995) 88–89, 125–127; *Les charpentes du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Typologie et évolution en France du Nord et en Belgique*, ed. Patrick Hoffsummer, Monum-Cahiers du Patrimoine 62 (Paris, 2002), 192–193 and 268–270.



Figure 28. Hospital of the Bijloke at Ghent. Western front of the great hall flanked by the chapel, mid-thirteenth century (Copyright IRPA-KIK 3837A, around 1925)

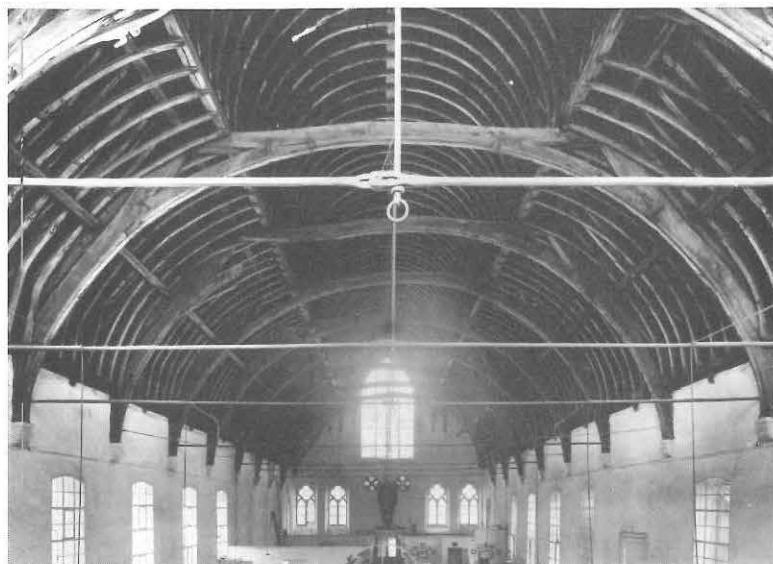


Figure 29. Hospital of the Bijloke at Ghent. Inner view to the west and trussed rafter roof of 1251-1255 (Copyright IRPA-KIK 3837A, before 1940)

windows, which have lost their traceries. The height of the central window corresponds to the upper arch of the trefoiled roof. Underneath, traces of an axial wooden gallery and niches could be identified with the location of a high altar that was the focal point of the hall. This altar was the so-called 'Saint Anna's Attic' (*Sint-Annazolder*) mentioned by late medieval sources. In one of the small niches a lavabo was found, which confirms the liturgical use of the gallery.<sup>107</sup> The monumental western front with central doorway offers a beautiful but barely restored design of windows, oculus and arcades decoration (Fig. 28).

The chapel on the south side of the hall was added in the third quarter of the thirteenth century. It has three bays and was originally covered by a wooden roof that is now hidden by vaults added later. The chapel received light from high windows, among which

107. Hugo Vandenborre, 'De oude ziekenzaal van de Bijloke. Onderzoek en behandeling van nissen', *Stadsarcheologie* ... 19/1 (Ghent, 1995) 34-39.

the eastern and the western ones, later blocked up by brick masonry, still retain medieval traceries. A meticulous analysis of the plaster fragments on the walls brought to light remains of seriously altered medieval wall paintings.<sup>108</sup> Only some medallions with apostles' figures could be identified.

The second infirmary hall is separate from the great hall and is known as the 'house of the sick' (*Craekhuys*).<sup>109</sup> Later it was reserved for the dying. This brick hall is covered by a panelled barrel vault of timber that has been dated 1509 through dendrochronological analysis.<sup>110</sup>

#### COLORED INTERIORS

Anyone today who visits successively the church of La Cambre and the refectory of Bijloke will be confronted with two completely different interiors. The former has a white plastered nave covered by a wooden barrel vault contrasting with a choir where the bare stone masonry, the white painted vaulting, and the colored tile pavement receive light from darkly colored, figural Art Deco stained glass windows (Fig. 13). The latter is colorful, from its red walls, decorated with stenciled motives, simulated hangings, and great figural scenes on the two short sides, to the two-colored labyrinth composition of the pavement and the dark red and white ribs (Fig. 30). The windows have simple white glass but the toric jambs are underlined strongly by colored stripes and chevrons. Both interiors are the result of radical restoration undertaken at the same time but they represent two diametrically opposed schools of thought.<sup>111</sup> La Cambre is an interesting mixture of taste for plain materials, a

108. Guido Everaert and Marie-Christine Laleman, 'Vondstmeldingen', *Stadsarcheologie* ... 18/2 (Ghent, 1994) 51-54; Lode De Clercq, 'De kapel van het Bijlokehospitaal: onderzoek naar de binnenafwerking', *Stadsarcheologie* ... 19/2 (Ghent, 1995) 10-18.

109. Guido Everaert, Marie-Christine Laleman and Daniel Lievois, 'De tweede ziekenzaal van de Bijloke', *Stadsarcheologie* ... 17/4 (Ghent, 1993) 5-23.

110. Patrick Hoffsummer and David Houbrechts, 'Het Craekhuys van de Bijloke in Gent: dendrochronologische analyse van houtmonsters', *Stadsarcheologie* ... 17/4 (Ghent, 1993) 24-29.

111. La Cambre in 1926-1928 and Bijloke in 1924.

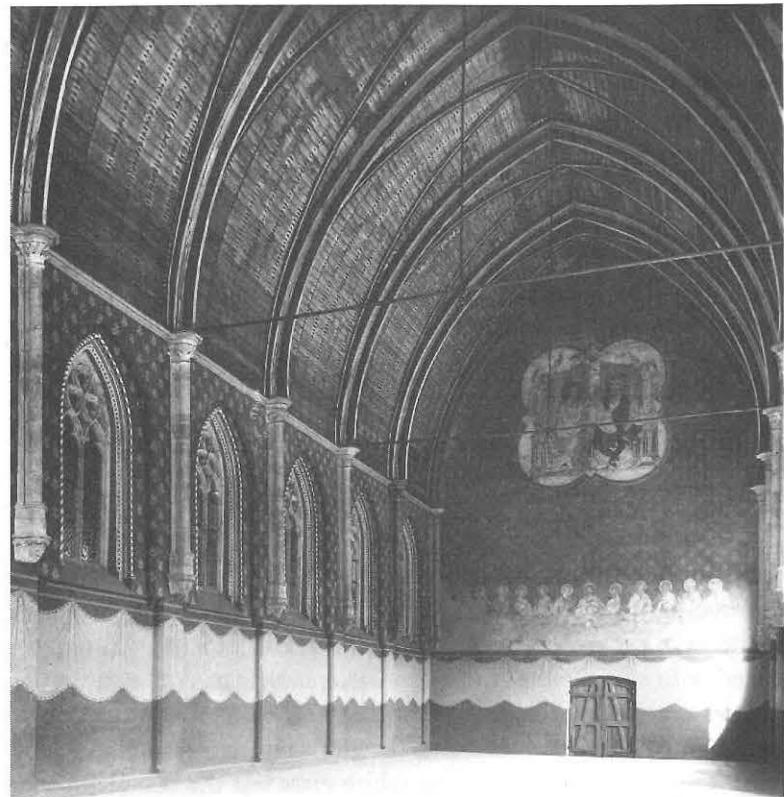


Figure 30. Refectory of the Bijloke at Ghent. Inner view to the east of the restored wall paintings and the Last Supper above the doorway (Copyright IRPA-KIK 75866A, 1925)

false idea of Cistercian ‘decorative poverty’, and Art Deco; Bijloke is a radical neo-gothic reconstruction of some authentic remains. Both are excessive interpretations and what they teach us above all is what restorers thought a medieval interior had been like—all the more pronounced as the original furniture has completely disappeared.

New interest in medieval wall paintings has had the effect of making us now better informed.<sup>112</sup> The discoveries are accompanied with great regard for authentic remains and respectful restoration. In the context of this study on medieval Cistercian nunneries, the best example is the restoration of the abbesses’ quarters at Herkenrode in 1984.<sup>113</sup> Fine, and very well-preserved, late gothic polychromy was discovered under many later coats in the two vaulted rooms. The ochre-yellow ribs run across the white walls and vaults, which are decorated by fine foliage, especially around the sculpted bosses (Fig. 26). There are small shields with colorful heraldic motifs on the corbels, establishing that they are from the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

At Bijloke, only the figural wall paintings of the refectory are original and date from the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>114</sup> On the west side, the monumental standing figures of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Christopher are painted on either side of the fireplace hood. On the east side, in a huge quadrilobe, we can see Christ blessing the Virgin and sitting with her on a gothic bench (Fig. 30). A depiction of the Last Supper is painted lower down, a reminder to the nuns at every mealtime. This figural decoration was quite usual in monastic refectories, including Cistercian ones.<sup>115</sup> Still, at Bijloke, the chronicle mentions that ‘the dormitory was so richly decorated and painted that it seemed like a palace’.<sup>116</sup> Remains of wall paintings were also found in the chapel of the hospital.<sup>117</sup>

112. Marjan Buyle, Thomas Coomans, Jan Esther and Luc Francis Genicot, *Architecture gothique en Belgique*, Architecture en Belgique 2 (Brussels, 1997) 205–233; Anna Bergmans, *Middeleeuwse muurschilderingen in de 19de eeuw. Studie en inventaris van middeleeuwse muurschilderingen in Belgische kerken*, KADOC Artes 2 (Louvain, 1998).

113. Marjan Buyle and Anna Bergmans, *Middeleeuwse muurschilderingen in Vlaanderen*, Monumenten en Landschappen Cahier 2 (Brussels, 1994) 132–133.

114. *Ibid.*, 110–111.

115. There was another medieval Last Supper in Ghent, painted about 1375 in the refectory of the Dominicans (*Het Pand*).

116. *Sy heeft den dormter soo eerbaerlick doen maken met al dat er aan cleeft ende doen schilderen soo dat den dormter scheen een paleys te wesen*, cited by Van Puyvelde (as in n. 60), 88.

117. See n. 108.

Churches were also entirely painted inside, but the few that remain have been heavily restored. We have already seen how the Munsterkerk at Roermond was restored drastically during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>118</sup> The interior was completely repainted, repaved, and refurnished in 1850, and in the view of the restorator P. J. H. Cuypers, had become a homogeneous interior. Between 1959 and 1966, at a time when neo-gothic was no longer appreciated and had not yet become fashionable again, the main part of the inner decoration was taken away (Fig. 4). In the choir, the restorers were surprised when, underneath the neo-gothic decoration, they exposed fragments of the original decoration. It consists of a white coat with red lines, stressing the structure of the chapels and of the apse. The fine carved capitals and corbels had almost certainly been painted as well. Some figural paintings in red were found on the arches of the radiating chapels and in the crossing, providing evidence of a completely decorated thirteenth-century church interior.

The recent excavation of the church at Vrouwenpark brought to light many fragments of the original wall decoration, an imitation of regular masonry made by false joints painted on a monochrome mauve background.<sup>119</sup> The splendid keystone of the apse, decorated with a foliage mask and a Coronation of the Virgin, still retains its fine thirteenth-century polychrome.<sup>120</sup>

Color was not confined to the walls; the floor was tiled with mosaic pavements. Medieval tiles are found at all the excavation sites of Cistercian nunneries in the Low Countries. They are mostly monochrome and sometimes decorated with geometric forms or inlaid motifs like rosettes, fleurs-de-lis, lions, heraldic emblems, or even figures. Until now, the finest medieval decorated tiles in Cistercian nunneries are those at Mariëndaal, Fontenelle and Beaupré-sur-la-Lys.<sup>121</sup> We have no indication about medieval colored stained glass and furniture except for the windows

118. See n. 21.

119. Minnen, Caes and Hooft (as in n. 33).

120. Van Molle (as in n. 32).

121. Temminck Groll (as in n. 45), 68; Vanbrugghe (as in n. 63), 96–101; Philippe Beaussant and Vincent Maliet, ‘Les pavements de l’abbatiale de Fontenelle à Maing’, *Revue du Nord* 65 (1983) 123–147.

of Herkenrode and the desk of Soleilmont already mentioned,<sup>122</sup> and the remarkable burial effigies of Gerard IV of Gelre and his wife Margaret of Brabant, placed in the crossing at Roermond in 1240. Some medieval altars are preserved at Roermond and altar stones were found during excavation. Mention also must be made of the medieval sculpted tombs of abbesses from chapter houses or churches, notably those at Soleilmont, Leeuwenhorst, Florival, Vrouwenpark, Beaupré-sur-la-Lys, Fontenelle and others.

## CONCLUSION

Whoever travels on the national road between Aarschot and Louvain today can see a lovely little mushroom-shaped folly in dark brown stone masonry with a thatched roof (Fig. 31). This early nineteenth-century neo-gothic tea house, on the edge of a Romantic landscape garden, is built on the site of the former Cistercian nunnery of Vrouwenpark. Thirteenth-century capitals, corbels, ribs, and shafts are easily recognizable in the masonry. Re-used as rough building material, these spolia are also medieval architectural remains!

But of the eighty-five medieval nunneries which once existed in the Low Countries, the most significant medieval buildings to visit today are those at Roermond, the Bijloke, La Cambre, and Herkenrode. Nevertheless the medieval remains we have gathered together give an interesting overview of the great variety that characterizes nunnery architecture. There are not only differences in size, in building material and in sites, but the organization of the various monastic functions around the cloister seems to have varied much more than was the case in abbeys for men. This makes any attempt to define a medieval ‘plan type’ illusory. We have seen that some rooms, as, for instance, the refectory or the common room, were sometimes located at an upper floor. When excavations bring to light the foundations of undercrofts, it is difficult to hazard a guess as to what happened above.

122. See nn. 53 and 71.

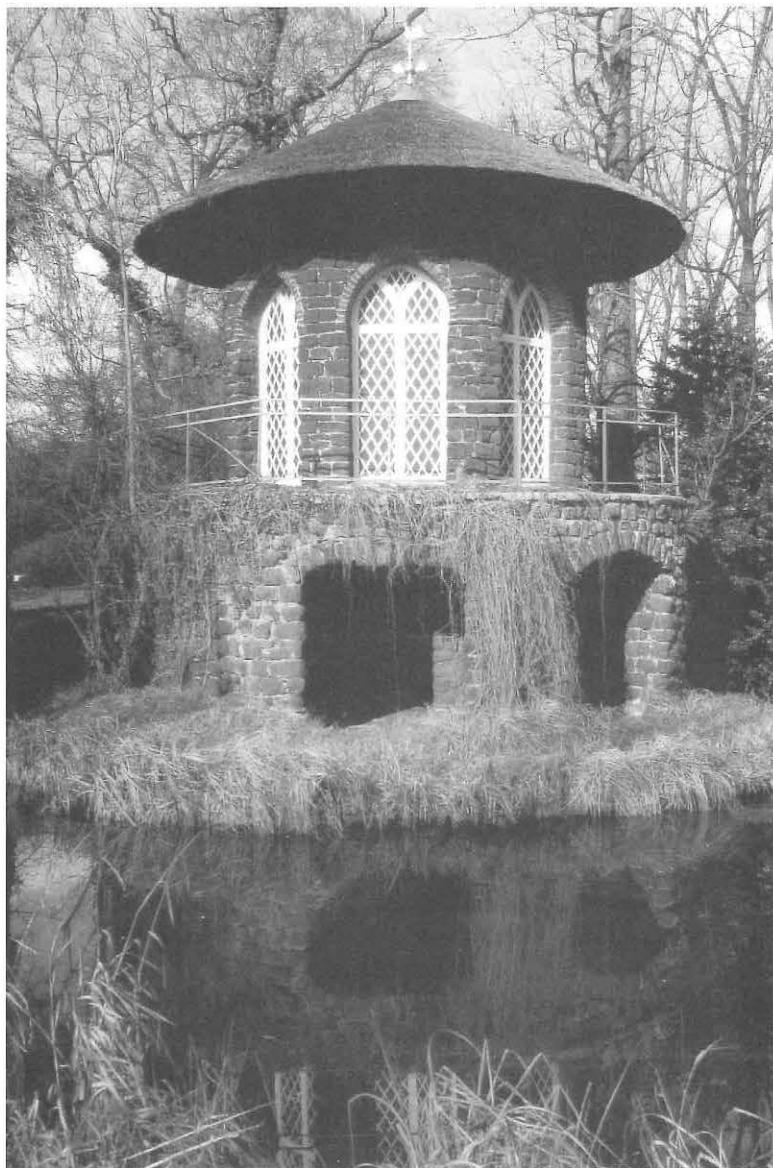


Figure 31. Park of Vrouwenpark at Rotselaar. An early nineteenth century folly entirely built with material from the ruined medieval church (Copyright THOC 1997)

The greatest diversity is surely to be found in church types. This also means that liturgy was adapted to each material situation. The most spectacular, of course, is the location of the nuns' choir quite systematically on a gallery. Investigations in the narrative and the archival sources almost certainly would provide new information on this important point as well as on the move of the location of the nuns' choir into the church below.

We have also stressed the role of the founders and patrons of the nunneries. It is evident that being buried in a Cistercian church, in particular that of a nunnery, was favoured by princes in the thirteenth century. Several princes and princesses founded burial churches of which some became real necropoles (Flines, Marquette, Gaefenthal, Clairefontaine, Loosduinen, Herkenrode and Roermond).<sup>123</sup> Considering the link between the patron and the choice of meaningful architectural concept, we would suggest that one ought to differentiate 'Cistercian architecture' from 'architecture for Cistercians'. The latter seems to be more in accordance both with the remains we have examined—which include the churches of Roermond and Flines, as well as the hospital of Bijloke—and with the instructions of the General Chapter, that is, strict enclosure as defined in statuta 7 of 1225 and 16 of 1228.

Many architectural aspects and functions of a medieval Cistercian nunnery have not been discussed in this overview: the place of the lay sisters and the novices, both in the church and in the monastery; the health and sanitation facilities; the water supplies and networks; and many others. We must humbly admit that our knowledge of those aspects is at the present time nearly non-existent. Only new excavations will provide further information.

123. Thomas Coomans, 'Moniales cisterciennes et mémoire dynastique: églises funéraires princières et abbayes cisterciennes dans les anciens Pays-Bas', *Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses*, 56 (2005) forthcoming (a thematic issue on *Burial and Patronage*, edd. Jackie Hall and Christine Kratzke); Coomans (as in n. 25).

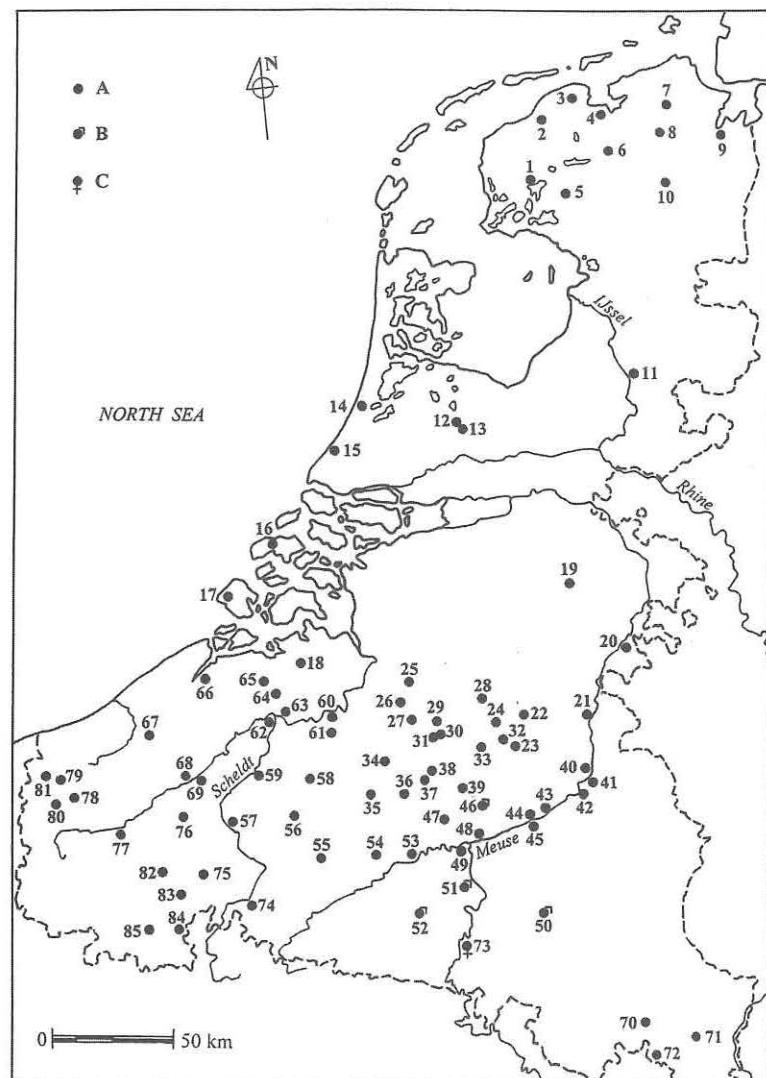


Figure 32. Map of the Low Countries with the locations of: (A) the Cistercian nunneries; (B) the nunneries that became monks' abbeys in the fifteenth century; and (C) the abbey that became a nunnery (THOC 2000)

## NUNNERIES IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

### THE NETHERLANDS

#### Friesland

1. *AULA DEI / GODSHOL*, Scharnegoutum, Wijmbritteradeel
2. GENEZARETH / NAZARETH, Hallum, Ferwerderadeel
3. Sto. / O.L.V. TENDALE, Hartwerd, Oostdongeradeel
4. GALILEA / VROUWENKLOOSTER, Burum, Kollumerland

#### Groningen

5. MARIEBOSCH, Luijneberd, Heerenveen
6. TRIMUNT, Marum
7. KLEIN ADUARD / SINT ANNA, Sint Annen, Ten Boer
8. JESSE, Essen, Haren
9. GRIJZEVROUWENKLOOSTER, Midwolda

#### Drenthe

10. MARIËNKAMP, Assen

#### Overijssel

11. MARIËNHORST / TER HUNNEPE, Colmschate, Deventer

#### Utrecht

12. MARIËNDAAL, Zuilen, Utrecht
13. SINT-SERVAES, Utrecht

#### Zuid-Holland

14. LEEUWENHORST / TER LEE, Noordwijkerhout
15. LOOSDUINEN, Loosduinen, s-Gravenhage

#### Zeeland

16. BETHLEHEM, Elkerzee, Middenschouwen
17. WATERLOOSWERVE / O.-L.-VROUWE KAMER, Agtekerke, Marekerke
18. TER HAGEN, Zuidhorpe, Axel

#### Noord-Brabant

19. BINDEREN / KEIZERINNENPLAATS, Helmond [NIEUW-MARIENDAAL, Ethen, Heesbeen]

#### Limburg

20. MUNSTERABDIJ, Roermond

#### BELGIUM

##### Limburg

21. HOCHT, Lanaken
22. HERKENRODE, Kuringen, Hasselt
23. TER BEEK, Metteren, Sint-Truiden
24. ROTEM, Halen [HEMELSDALE, Ophoven, c. 1250 > Dalheim, Germany] [OETEREN, in 1275 > Orienten]

##### Antwerpen

25. NAZARETH, Lier
26. ROZENDAAL, Sint-Katelijne-Waver
27. MUIZEN, Mechelen

##### Vlaams-Brabant

28. SINT-BERNARDSDAL, Diest
29. VROUWENPARK, Rotselaar
30. O.-L.-V.TER WIJNGAARD, Leuven
31. TER BANK, Leuven
32. ORIENTEN, Rummen, Geetbets
33. MAAGDENDAAL, Oplinter, Tienen
- Bruxelles / Brussel
34. LA CAMBRE / TER KAMEREN, Brussels and Ixelles
- Brabant Wallon
35. WAUTHIER-BRAINE, Braine-le-Château
36. AYWIÈRES, Couture-Saint-Germain, Lasne

37. FLORIVAL, Archennes, Grez-Doiceau
38. VALDUC, Hamme-Mille, Beauvechain
39. LA RAMÉE, Jauchelette, Jodoigne

#### Liège

40. VIVEGNIS, Oupeye
41. ROBERTMONT, Liège
42. VAL-BENOÎT, Liège
43. LA PAIX-DIEU, Jehay-Bodegnée, Amay
44. VAL-NOTRE-DAME, Antheit, Huy
45. SOLIÈRES, Ben-Ahin, Huy

#### Namur

46. BONEFFE, Boneffe, Éghezée
47. AREGENTON, Lonziec, Gembloux
48. MARCHE-LES-DAMES / VIVIER N.-D., Namur
49. SALZINNES, Salzinnes, Namur
50. SAINT-RÉMY, Rochefort
51. MOULINS, Warnant, Anhée
52. JARDINET, Walcourt

#### Hainaut

53. SOLEILMONT, Fleurus and Gilly, Charleroi
54. L'OLIVE, La Louvière
55. ÉPINLIEU, Mons
56. SAULCHOIR, Kain, Tournai
57. REFUGE / ABBETTE, Ath

#### Oost-Vlaanderen

58. BEAUPRÉ, Grimminge, Gerardsbergen
59. MAAGDENDALE, Pamele / Oudenaarde
60. ZWIVVEKE, Dendermonde
61. TEN ROOSEN, Aalst
62. BIJLOKE, Ghent
63. NIEUWENBOS, Heusden, Destelbergen
64. DOORNZELE / AUREA CELLA, Evergem
65. OOSTEKLO, Eeklo

#### West-Vlaanderen

66. SPERMALIE, Sijsele, Damme
67. HEMELSDALE, Werken, Kortemark
68. GULDENBERG, Wevelgem
69. GROENINGE, Kortrijk

#### Luxembourg

70. CLAIREFONTAINE, Autelbas, Arlon

#### GREAT-DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

71. BONNEVOIE

72. DIFFERDINGEN

#### FRANCE

##### Ardennes

73. FÉLIPRÉ, Givet

#### Nord

74. FONTENELLES, Maing
75. FLINES, Râches
76. MARQUETTE, Marquette, Lille
77. BEAUPRÉ-SUR-LA-LYS, La Gorgue, Merville
78. WOESTINE, Renescure, Hazebrouck-Nord
79. RAVENSBERGHE, Merckeghem, Wormhoudt

#### Pas-de-Calais

80. BLANDECQES, Saint-Omer
81. BONHAM, Sainte-Marie-Kercque, Audruicq
82. LA BRAVELLE, Annay
83. NOTRE-DAME-DES-PRÉS, Douai
84. LE VERGER, Oisy-le-Verger
85. LE VIVIER, Wanquet