

THE BRITISH CONNECTION

by

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This paper is an attempt to outline the British connection — in other words it deals with relations between Flanders and Great Britain. The best way to set about this is perhaps to ask ourselves the simplest possible questions, and then to try to give some suggestions for answering them. We do not want to get involved in complicated analyses of international politics or commercial problems but to have a look at what the British Connection has meant in the two countries, and obviously how it has varied in nature and intensity.

The questions which we should pose are, I think, the following : where? who? when and why? I should like to talk first about the question 'where' because although Great Britain has been for a considerable time more or less the same geographically, Flanders, as we know, has always been extremely 'elastic'. Thus what we mean now by Flanders — in other words, the Provinces of East and West Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg and the northern part of Brabant, is not by any means the same as what was meant by Flanders in the middle ages. Then it meant a County — a real County ruled over by a count, who was a vassal of the King of France, for part of his land and of the Emperor for another part. (If you stand on the bridge near Gerard Duivelsteen in Ghent, you can have one foot in what was held from France, and the other in what was held from the Empire). Throughout these years of the County of Flanders, from about the ninth to the end of the fourteenth century, the frontiers were hardly ever stable. Particularly to the south, in other words the border with France, there was constant manoeuvring and, at one time Flemish Counts were in charge almost as far as Paris, and at other times were more or less shut up in Bruges. At the end of the fourteenth century when Margaret of Flanders married Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, Flanders became part of another constellation. Philip's great-grandson, Charles the Bold, or the Rash, according to which way one looks at him, tried to make Flanders part of a new kingdom which would run down between France and Germany to Burgundy, a sort of renewed Lotharingia — but he was rather too ambitious and got beaten and killed trying to persuade the Swiss by force of arms to comply with his plans. Thirty years or so later the Emperor Charles V — Keizer Karel, who was born in the Prinsenhof in Ghent, who was also, among many other things, King of Spain, made Flanders part of the Habsburg Empire. Under his horrible son Philip II, it became part of the Spanish Empire, then of the Austrian, until finally in

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1794 it disappeared, except as some of the French *départements*. In fact this looked like the end of Flanders but obviously it emerged again at the Congress of Vienna to form one part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for fifteen years. Only in 1830 did it emerge as the Flanders which we know now — the Flanders of the Dutch language, the northern part of the Kingdom of Belgium.

It is obvious therefore that our question 'where', as far as this side of the Channel is concerned, could have many different answers. On the other side of the Channel we have to deal separately with England, Scotland and Wales, at least until after 1707 the United Kingdom came into being. Then things perhaps become simpler.

Now to go into the question in a little more detail — Where do we find Flemings in England? Certainly at Hastings!

When William the Bastard was looking for tough soldiers to embark with him to cross the Channel in 1066, he found willing volunteers in Flanders. We can see them in the long ships with their horses and chain mail, on the Bayeux Tapestry. Together with the Norman knights they formed the right wing of the army at Hastings. Against the odds, William became 'the Conqueror'. In May, 1068, his Flemish wife, Mathilda, the daughter of the Count of Flanders, crossed the Channel and was crowned Queen of England at Westminster. Flemish knights were rewarded by William with estates in his new kingdom, some in the Welsh Marches, where very tough men were necessary! In Pembrokeshire they even managed to replace Welsh by Flemish. Another violent emigrant was William of Ypres, who, after having tried to become Count of Flanders, at the beginning of the twelfth century, was exiled to Kent where he was given large estates by King Stephen, in return for commanding the latter's armies. Nevertheless Henry II, busy bringing law and order to the kingdom issued special instructions for the expulsion of the Flemings. William of Ypres stayed in Kent. His compatriots disappeared „as phantoms vanish". Reading about this early period it is surprising how often and in what outlying places we hear of Flemings — they certainly got around. Coming from the land of towns, from the heart of the wool industry where else in England would we expect them to be? The answer is obvious — where there was wool to be bought — Flemish merchants were busy in England even before 1066. By 1100 we know they were going specifically for wool. This was the Flemish speciality — The wife of Bath says in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

„of cloty-making she hadde such an haunt
She passed them of Ypres and Gaunt"
Gaunt is of course Ghent.

And they often had a lively time of it. Both English kings and Flemish counts had a nasty way of clamping down on such usually prosperous 'gages' to blackmail each other or to help them to pay their debts. At the end of thirteenth century we hear of a real Flemish Hansa, or group of merchants, in London. Goods worth £ 1,308 12 S 8 d were confiscated

from other Flemings, in Scotland — in Dundee, Perth and Berwick-on-Tweed. In this early period the trade was in Flemish hands. A famous group of towns of which the chief was Bruges was organised to cope with it. Flemings went to England much more than the other way round. Later this changed. It could be quite an exciting job. When the English kings failed to pay their debts, which sometimes happened, Flemings were forbidden to go to England, and to buy their wool.

They seem nevertheless to have smuggled in quite a lot. Flemings were among the most affluent of the English kings' creditors. We know that one of them, Hugh Oisel of Ypres was rewarded by King John with the freedom of the City of London. We already have Flemings pretty well spread out through England, Wales and Scotland by the end of the thirteenth century. From then onwards it becomes less interesting to try to trace their whereabouts in detail. They were, in fact, all over the place.

But, when we go about in England there seem to be particular areas which have a flavour which we recognise — for instance, East Anglia — Flemings, and particularly perhaps Hollanders, were brought in to help with the draining of the fens. The architecture of a place like King's Lynn has the typical step gabling, brick construction and general neatness of Flemish and Dutch architecture. And what about the old Royal Exchange in London? This was copied by Sir Thomas Gresham from the Bourse in Antwerp, with its motto „for the use of all merchants, of whatever nationality or language”.

Queen Elizabeth I was never averse to stirring up trouble in the lands ruled by her favourite enemy, Philip II. She was happy certainly to receive emigrants from the Low Countries whose religious convictions had brought them to a head-on collision with Philip — ably assisted by the Inquisition. Flemish religious emigrants can be traced thus in the sixteenth century in Canterbury, in London, in Sandwich and particularly in Norwich. One diplomat estimated there to be about 30.000 people. This upset the Low Countries too because these people were among the most industrious weavers, tapestry makers, metal workers and so on — who formed a substantial section of the Calvinist group in Flanders. What, however, was actually worse than their leaving for England, was their coming-back to Flanders. While Philip II was indulging his religious mania in the Escorial and failing to answer despatches from Flanders, his Regent, Margaret of Parma, unable to cope, had decided to be kind to the Calvinists. They rushed back home by the thousand, more enthusiastic, more convinced and infinitely more dangerous. Soon after their return, significantly, in 1566 the Iconoclasts or „image breakers” rushed from Hondschoote northwards to Leeuwarden through Flanders breaking and destroying on their way, any treasures of religious significance with they could lay their hands on.

But the British connection certainly did not always bring trouble — when we visit the villages of Latem and Deurle and Afsnee and the borders of the Leie, and go to see some of the pictures painted by such artists as Leon de Smet, or Valerius de Saedeleer, or Gustave van de Woestijne, it is pleasant to think that some of them found hospitality during the first world war in either London or in England or Wales. Emile Claus and

Leon de Smet went to London ; Constant Permeke, wounded by a grenade, to Devonshire, George Minne, Valerius de Saedeleer and Gustave van de Woestijne to Wales. Hippies had come to Aberystwyth! In spite of surprise at the fact that these Flemish painters whistled in the street and were not obeyed by their numerous children, the Welsh did their best to make them at home. But they suffered terribly from home sickness — de Saedeleer said later „The soul of this landscape remained closed for me” — nevertheless in London his daughters learned tapestry and carpet weaving from William Morris — an art which they later continued at home in Flanders. Only Leon de Smet really liked being torn away from his Flemish countryside. He developed as a portraitist in England and painted such people as Galsworthy, Shaw and Hardy. Van de Woestijne painted, on the other hand „Flanders in Exile”.

But what about trying to answer our question from the other side of the Channel? Where in Flanders do we find the British? Here, obviously, in Ghent in British week, but the tradition is of longer standing than that! Pensioners came to Bruges for instance in the tenth as well as in the twentieth century. In 1038 Queen Emma, the wife of Canute, was forced to flee from England and to seek refuge in Bruges under the protection of the Count of Flanders, as the Anglo-Saxon chronicle says „against the raging winter”, while in the early twentieth century colonels from the British army in India helped their pensions along by retiring to Bruges where the pound was even solidier than in England. There were about 800 there in 1892. Bruges was always a centre for the British. The 'Engelse straat' has existed there since 1333 and was the centre of the English quarter where English merchants formed a 'Nation' or merchant guild with their own chapel dedicated to Saint Thomas Becket. The Scots had their own quarter too, their own 'nation' and their own Saint-Ninian. All these people crossed the Channel of course by boat. Where did they land? Many in Sluis, or in Damme which was at this period still a harbour along the unsilted Zwin. The house in which Margaret of York lodged before her marriage to Charles the Bold in 1468 still stands there in the street beside the town hall, and she had landed at the port of Damme.

But British interest has not been confined to Bruges. Ghent, centre with Ypres and Bruges of the cloth industry also buzzed with mercantile activity, of which some of the loudest came from British merchants. The city was not content to be only a trading centre, however important — she liked to have a finger, or even a fist, in politics too. Hence the independent policies of James van Artevelde. He negotiated, man to man with the English King, Edward III, and was delighted no doubt to be able to proclaim the Englishman, King of France on the Friday Market in 1340. On innumerable later occasions Ghent was host to Englishmen. We will look further at this when we tackle our next question — who? But first what about the rest of Flanders? Antwerp which took over the lead in prosperity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from Bruges had its English 'nation' or merchant gild. This is only to be expected. English and Scottish merchants and financiers flocked to this flourishing port, money

market and centre of fashion. Brussels too had its „British weeks” both in our contemporary meaning and in other ways too. Where did the great ball take place on the eve of the Battle of Waterloo —in Brussels. And this implies that all the small places round it had British soldiers billeted in them and underwent all the complications and miseries of army occupation.

At least in Flanders they were used to it. The country had been used as a battle ground always. Stronger neighbours have always preferred to fight things out on Flemish soil than to have all the muddle at home. French Kings and their allies had the habit of marching smartly up into Flanders to deal with their opponents.

Philip Augustus dealt there with, inter alia, King John and his forces in French Flanders at Bouvines in 1214.

Then John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, brought his British and other troops to Oudenaarde to deal with Louis XIV, in 1708. Once more the tramp of marching feet. Flanders was again the scene of battle. The British connection meant that once more together with innumerable other European armies Flanders became absorbed in greater issues. While British troops defended the United Kingdom in conjunction with other European states, they fought it out in the cock-pit of Europe - Flanders. What did Napoleon do when he had landed at Cannes after fleeing from Elba ? He tore straight northwards collecting troops on the way to fight it out, not on French soil, but again in the Low Countries - this time in Brabant, at Waterloo. Perhaps the best way to get an idea of what the British connection meant at this moment is to read Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair'. About 45.000 dead and wounded, from all the armies, French, British, Prussian, Flemish and Dutch lay on the field on June 18th, 1815 after the battle was over. The Duke of Wellington was received then all over the Low Countries, as the hero of the hour.

The lamentable clash of arms was to be heard very noisily twice more in Flanders, in the twentieth century. A tour round Ypres and Passchendaele, an astonished look at the Menin Gate, the knowledge that the whole town of Ypres was destroyed, shows us, who were lucky enough not to experience this disaster, the community of interest which the connection between Britain and Flanders has meant.

I have been lent by an Englishman living in Ypres a book describing the battles of 1914, 1915, 1917 and 1918. It contains contemporary maps and photographs of the battlefield - Hill 60, Zillebeke, Poelcappelle, Langemarck. When we visit them now, it is, happily, impossible to realize what was going on there during those four years, when the British Expeditionary Force, the Tenth Army, and the Second Army played a major part, with the French and Belgian armies, in stopping the German intention of sweeping southwards through Flanders into France. The list of the Regiments which took part shows how broad the British Connection was : the Camerons, the Dublin Fusiliers, the Gordon Highlanders, the Royal Welch Fusiliers, the South Wales' Borderers, the Sherwood Foresters, the Coldstream Guards and many, many more — from all over the British Isles.

What a good idea to hold British week here in Ghent on the thirtieth anniversary of the liberation of the town by the Seventh Armoured Division. On Sept. 5th the two prongs — the 5th Royal Tank Regiment and the 5th Dragoon guards were in Wetteren. On the 6th negotiating the German withdrawal, and on the 6th also, as we know, was the entry into Ghent, when, according, to some rumours I have heard, there were 4.000 soldiers on the first tank ! In the town hall in the Pacificatiezaal, we have a souvenir of this part of the British connection : „Ter herdenking van de bevrijding van de stad op 6 september 1944 door de 7th Armoured Division in samenwerking met de Weerstandsorganisaties”.

And not only of course armies, but the Navy too has been involved in the connection. On the night of 22nd-23rd April 1918, between midnight and 1 a.m. the warship *Vindictive*, supported by the *Iris* and the *Daffodil*, attacked the U boat base at Zeebrugge while three old fashioned cruisers, the *Intrepid*, *Iphigenia* and *Thexis*, laden with concrete, were sunk in the harbour mouth and an old submarine blown up against the mole. At a high cost in dead and wounded the harbour was put out of action for U boats.

We have suggested a certain number of answers to our first question 'where was there an English connection'. It has given a few pointers which should help us in answering our second - 'who?'. This boils down to two groups, on the one hand the individuals, and on the other the different classes of people. Let us take the classes first — if we look both at our earliest and our late examples we have the soldiers — from those who accompanied William to Hastings, King John to Bouvines, William of Ypres to Kent, Marlborough to Oudenaarde, Wellington to Waterloo, General Allenby to Ypres, Fieldmarshal Lord Gort to Dunkirk, and the 8th Armoured Division back to the liberation of Ghent, Antwerp and further. Some of these soldiers stayed behind. They made, by marrying and setting up home and family on, to them, the other side of the Channel, a stronger connection still.

Then we have the groups of merchants. At first they were busy with wool, then with cloth, later with luxury goods, tapestries, leather work, books, enamels, miniatures, fashions. And the artists — our group in Wales and London, the great numbers of artists from Britain inspired by the Flemish Primitives, at first at their great exhibition in Bruges in 1900 and later during innumerable visits both there and to the *Mystic Lamb* in Ghent or the collections in Antwerp or Brussels. Still later cloth, again, but this time with machinery — the secrets passing clandestinely, smuggled across the Channel in pieces in separate boats.

And the pilgrims — from the moment that Henry II, King of England had got so overwrought that he allowed Thomas Becket, his Archbishop, to be murdered by the barons, a great group of pilgrims added themselves to the travellers across the Channel. In Canterbury you can still see the dents in the steps in the cathedral — they are called the pilgrims' steps — to the shrine. Becket was a great draw, until another Henry — this time the Eighth — could no longer stomach Papal interference with his marriage plans and therefore decided not to have any English saints

any more. Becket's tomb in Canterbury Cathedral was totally destroyed. The procession of pilgrims from Flanders and elsewhere, ceased.

And then, too, diplomats, delegations, members of committees, royals, politicians, the victims of religious persecution, the Calvinists in one direction, the Catholics in the other.

In Bruges we still have, in the 'Engelse Klooster', one of the Schools founded for English girls, by nuns of the Order of Augustine who had first fled from England to Louvain in the sixteenth century. The convent and school were visited both by Charles II and Queen Victoria. There is a charming picture of the girls singing a 'welcoming' song for her and her uncle, Leopold I of the Belgians in 1843.

And now, the tourists — from the children who go happily by boat round Bruges and are not quite sure whether they are abroad or not, to the families revelling in good sand in Blankenberge, or those who visit Biba or Hampton Court, or think what a pity it is that not all our Flemish universities have buildings as beautiful as Oxford or Cambridge, to the élite who hire a grouse moor in Scotland — all of us are, I think, surprised by the closeness of our two countries, by how alike they are in so many ways.

We could compile endless lists of individuals too in answer to our question 'who'? But let us rather pick out some outstanding ones. What about Edward III, his wife Philippa and their son, John of Gaunt, and James van Artevelde? They are all still shadowy — there's still a lot about them we don't know. I do not think that Van Artevelde ever visited England. Edward III was not an unmixed blessing either. At the moment when Van Artevelde needed him most, to convince the not always easy Gentenaars that he was still the boss, Edward remained firmly on board his English ship in Sluis, and Artevelde trotted back to Ghent to be murdered by his own side on the Kalendenberg. But Edward's son John was born to Philippa in St. Baaf's Abbey and spent his early months there until as John of Gaunt he stepped smartly into Shakespeare's play. Another of Edward's sons, Lionel, Duke of Clarence, was born in Antwerp. Some of the 'royals' had a difficult time of it. About Emma, Canute's wife, we know very little. In Bruges, in the Cathedral of St. Sauveur there is an inscription on lead commemorating an English woman named Gunhilde who died there in 1087 but of Emma's stay in Bruges we have no material evidence. Margaret of York, the third wife of Charles the Bold, step-mother of Mary of Burgundy, who is probably depicted as Saint Barbara in Memling's 'Canon van der Paelen' in Bruges found time in her adopted country to make a splendid collection of manuscripts and laid the first stone of the library of the Dominican monastery in Ghent. She sat out the difficult days following the death of her husband near Nancy in the Prinsenhof with her step-daughter Mary while the latter waited for the arrival of her fiancé Maximilian of Austria, who would, she hoped, save her from, among others, the Gentenaars and Louis XI of France. Margaret was intelligent and important. As well as bringing up her step-daughter's children after Mary had died from a riding accident, Margaret was a patron of the arts. It was she who ordered the first book printed in English.

She ordered it from another Englishman — William Caxton, who had installed his printing business in Bruges and lived there for about thirty-five years. Flanders, at this time, and in fact for the next hundred and fifty years produced a standard of living which could be compared with Elizabethan England. In spite of the Iconoclasts, the Spanish Fury, the endless occupations by foreign troops, another of our individuals emerges gloriously — Peter-Paul Rubens. He, like Van Eyck before him was both artist and diplomat. His diplomatic job took him to London, and King Charles I profited from this to commission frescoes for the ceiling of the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall. Rubens also managed, with his quite extraordinary industry, to negotiate on peace between England and Spain — a busy man. Anthony Van Dyck, one of Rubens' pupils, also from Antwerp, left home in 1632 for London and also worked for Charles I, for whom he painted portraits of the members of the royal family and the rest of the aristocracy. In a certain way he was a forerunner of Leon de Smet! Painters of such calibre do not seem to have come in the opposite direction across the Channel, but some writers did. The poet Robert Southey travelled by barge along the canal from Bruges to Ghent, no doubt enjoying the excellent meals served on board.

And what about the Royals? Charles II, while still hoping for the best as far as Cromwell and his throne were concerned, certainly visited Bruges. In the Groeningemuseum there, there is a picture of him decorating his brother the Duke of York after the latter had shot off the feathers from the top of the target and was consequently elected member of the Archery Guild. Even Queen Victoria visited Flanders in 1843.

After the royals, the business men — of these one of the most remarkable was certainly Anselm Adornes. His tomb stands in the Jerusalem church in Bruges. He was born in 1424 in Bruges and traded particularly in Scotland, where he was made a knight by King James III. He was literally stabbed in the back in North Berwick and on his tomb you can see the end of the sword sticking out through his armour. The industrial revolution came earlier too, in Britain than on the continent.

The British were not enthusiastic about encouraging competition and therefore guarded their industrial secrets as fiercely as possible. However another of our examples, Lieven Bauwens went in for successful industrial espionage. According to his own story he made thirty-two trips to England and gradually smuggled out the pieces of spinning and weaving machines. These he set up, *inter alia* in Ghent in the Carthusian monastery the Briel, and the other in Drongen, as well as in France. He also took part in the 'brain drain' and persuaded English craftsmen to come to the continent to put the machines together and make new pieces in the place of those lost in smuggling operations. Bauwens gradually concentrated on producing textile machines, rather than textiles but thanks to the troubles with Napoleon and the end of the Empire, even he went bankrupt in the end.

To continue with our individuals who strengthened the British Connection we come of course back to the soldiers — Marlborough, Wellington, French — all probably too intent on the job really to bother much about Flanders itself.

So we should turn perhaps now to our next question — when? There have, of course, been ups and downs — periods for example, when because of wars or politics the connection was momentarily broken or took on another form — armies. It was difficult, for example, for Flemings to cross to England, and vice versa during the years round the Spanish Armada. People could only cross clandestinely during the two World Wars — of course they did cross. But what is remarkable is less the breaks in the connection than its continuity and intense activity. While what subsequently became the County of Flanders was rather more lost in north sea mists than usual, we do not have records of Channel crossings, but from the eleventh century onwards they start to appear thick and fast. One of the most intensive periods, relative to the size of population, must have been during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when the wool trade and Van Artevelde were in full swing.

Then we have the big groups in the sixteenth, the persecuted from both sides of the Channel taking refuge from enthusiasts anxious to save others' souls by burning them at the stake. Probably the least active period of the British connection was during the seventeenth century when Spain kept her provinces in the Low Countries as isolated from non-Catholic, non-Spanish influence as possible. And then the French were not very enthusiastic about the Connection either, so relations reached probably their lowest point when Flanders became part of Revolutionary and then Imperial France. This was the end of the masses — no more big groups of weavers, mercenaries, merchants, pilgrims, refugees until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Then our graph climbs steeply again: business men, diplomats, students, tourists take their places and we reach the peaks which we are remembering and encouraging this week.

We come now to our last question — why? Why has the British connection been, as we have seen, such a close one. Why do Flemish and British people on the whole get on so well? Why do we, coming from England, find here such a welcome? Is this because of our history, or our character, or is it just because we are all so nice? Obviously geography has a bit to do with it. The Channel is really not an insuperable obstacle even to those plagued by sea-sickness, and now we can fly or hover it, it may seem not to count any more. Nevertheless it *has* counted very much sometimes in the past, and it seems a good idea that we as British people remember how lucky we have been to have it as a barrier between us and less friendly parts of the Continent.

When I try sometimes to analyse our connection I start making lists of *differences* rather than similarities between Flanders and the British Isles. Flemings don't play cricket — they cycle. They drink coffee, on the whole, rather than tea. They eat 'peperkoek' and 'speculoos' for breakfast not bacon and eggs. They don't stand in queues. They like parties which begin at 8 and go on till three in the morning. They say 'Asjeblijf' when they give you something which has a horribly infectious effect on English people and leads them, to the surprise of their compatriots, to saying 'Please' when handing things in England. Many of them are Catholic — but their Catholicism seems of a different sort from the Catholicism

some of us have met in England. They have a different and untranslatable legal system. They also speak a language which muddles us horribly, especially at first. It turns out not to be French — at least, not in general in Flanders, but Dutch, which we thought was only spoken in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Flemish, which we thought might have been spoken by Flemings in Flanders, turns out to be a long list of dialects, of which according to at least one Flemish friend of mine, English is one! They are exuberant. They love good food and drink and parties. British people do too, but they always feel a bit guilty indulging what some of them see as a 'weakness' and one of the English snobberies entirely incomprehensible in Flanders is the idea that the richer and more socially acceptable you may be considered, the less you will often eat.

Such lists of differences give us some pointers towards answering our question 'why' more positively. Language for example — although not many Britishers find foreign languages easy, at least Dutch is not for them one of the impossible ones. And I suspect from the numbers of Flemish friends of mine who speak excellent English that English is far from impossible for Flemings — of course they have an enormous advantage over us — they are used to hearing more than one language all their lives, and are not so excruciatingly embarrassed at trying to speak a foreign one as most Englishmen are. When, too, Flemings go to Britain, the native English and so on, are so exquisitely surprised that they have to make no language *effort*. It is obvious that to ensure a wide reading public for their work it is *sensible* for Flemings to publish in a world language such as English — and *how* pleasant for us.

Then in our suggestions for answering our other questions we have talked of groups of people and individuals who crossed the Channel for various reasons. They help us answer our question 'why', too. Those people came on business, for diplomatic negotiations, to pray as pilgrims, to find a freedom denied them momentarily at home, to admire and paint pictures, to work, to travel, to visit friends, to get help, to fight. The tiny size of Flanders, her lack of natural frontiers, and, a point which should not be forgotten, I think, her position squashed between two extremely powerful and not always perfectly behaved neighbours, France and Germany, has made her happy, usually, for British support.

Throughout her history Flanders has been invaded an incredible number of times from either south or east. The presence of a counter-weight in Europe is for her, a comfort.

What conclusions can we come to from this examination of the British connection? Perhaps that we should form, or even have already formed, a mutual admiration society.