

Palm Sunday celebration in Hoegaarden

Commemoration of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem

Images of the Jubilee celebrations (29 March 1931)

1631 - 1931

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004089>

The children with their '**pallemaai**' (boxwood branches tied into bunches) pose for the photographer in Putzeysstraat (on the left, *Help U Zelve* hall/room); the smiling boy on the left is even holding two bunches! No Palm Sunday in Hoegaarden without the kids!

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004093>

Mgr Van Cauwenbergh is welcomed by the apostles in front of the rectory (left) in the Pastorijstraat; his recent consecration as Auxiliary Bishop of Mechelen dates back to 11 February 1931.

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004084>

In the packed Saint Gorgonius church, richly decorated with boxwood garlands for the Palm Sunday blessing, the statue of Jesus on a donkey (the so-called 'Palm Sunday Donkey') is surrounded by the apostles and displayed in the choir, in accordance with tradition until the Second Vatican Council.

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004067>

The Palm Sunday procession leaves the church by the door of the dead; the steps of the main entrance would be too precarious for the disciples carrying the Palm Sunday donkey.

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004068>

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004069>

The bishop wearing his mitre and whose crozier, or pastoral staff, is being carried in front of him - blesses the faithful; he is followed by Reverend Alfons Peeters, director of the monastery to the right, and by priest Karel Verhoeven to the left.

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004070>

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004092>

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004090>

The faithful are kneeling to receive the bishop's blessing; a box arch features in the background and Belgian flags are flown on façades.

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30004066>

Last bend in the Pastorijstraat before reaching the Houtmarkt; boxwood garlands and flags everywhere and, on the left, the procession making its way through the crowd.

Photographic report by Jacques Hersleven, kept in l'Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique (the Royal Institute of Art Heritage): <https://balat.kikirpa.be>

The Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages of Hoegaarden (1741)

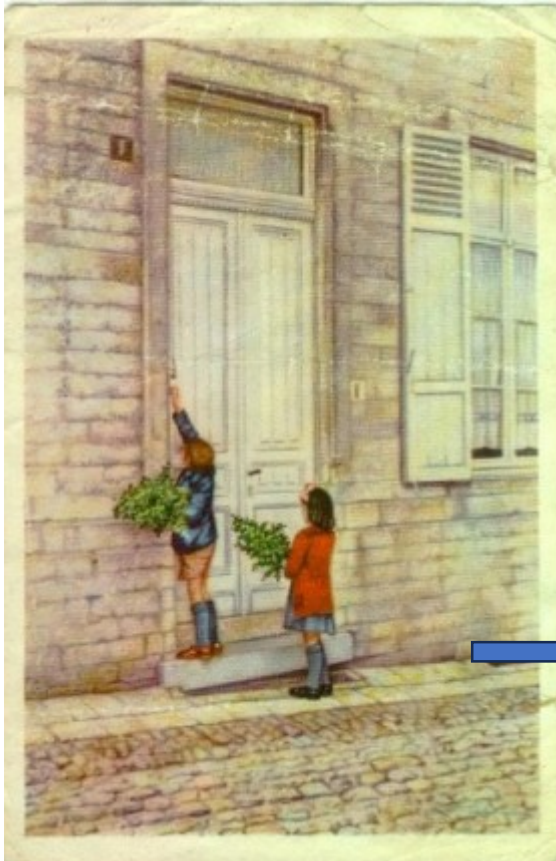
These are the two oldest associations in Hoegaarden and both are still active

Review produced for the Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages of Hoegaarden (1741)

Maurice Dodion and Wasily Pedjko, 2025.

Children are an essential part of Hoegaarden's Palm Sunday procession:

They go from door to door offering blessed box sprigs.

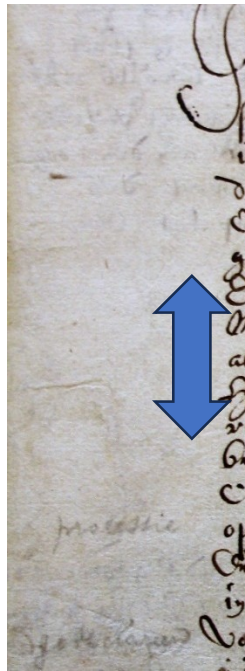


Folklore belge, publication Côte d'Or, 1948, 2nd series, No 148, Hoegaarden - Palm Sunday

1. The Hoegaarden Palm Sunday procession across archives and publications.

Summary of publications on the Palm Sunday procession in Hoegaarden and the Order of the Apostles.

The seventeenth-century book of the Order of the Apostles is probably the only such copy preserved in Europe; Reverend Jozef Niederer referred to it in 1909.



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nseigneur the Priest, Monseigneur Lambert de Pas being the Mayor of the constituted bodies

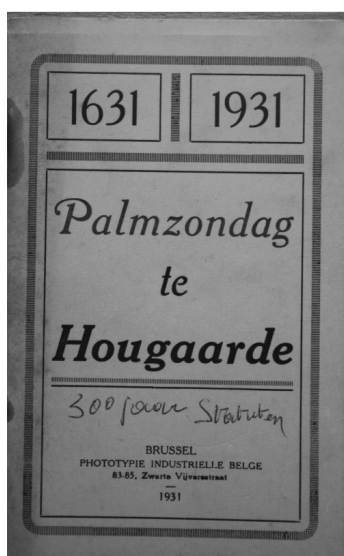
('Vrijheid') of Hougaerden, and with the Aldermen of the aforementioned 'Vrijheid' of Hougaerden, they have ratified and recognised as authentic our Order (Brotherhood) in memory of the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ...'.
There is a manuscript in Hoegaarden dating from the 17th century which contains the statutes of the 'Broederschap ter memorie van de twaalf Apostelen van Christus' (*Order/Brotherhood in memory of the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ*).

1909

The Canons of the Hoegaarden Chapter, the Priest, the Burgomaster/Mayor (= *the representative of the Prince-Bishop of Liège in Hoegaarden, Tourinnes and Beauvechain, residing in Hoegaarden*) and the Aldermen of the Hoegaarden 'Vrijheid' (= *the 'Regency' or 'constituted bodies', with administrative and jurisdictional powers*) gave their approval to the proposed regulations.

Jozef Niederer (1867-1947), teacher at Collège Notre-Dame de Tirlemont 1890-1906 and military chaplain 1906-1924, *Palmzondag te Hougaerde*, -Volkskunde, XX (1909).
The author also commented on the disappearance of the Palm Sunday procession in Tienen.

The commemorative brochure distributed in 1931

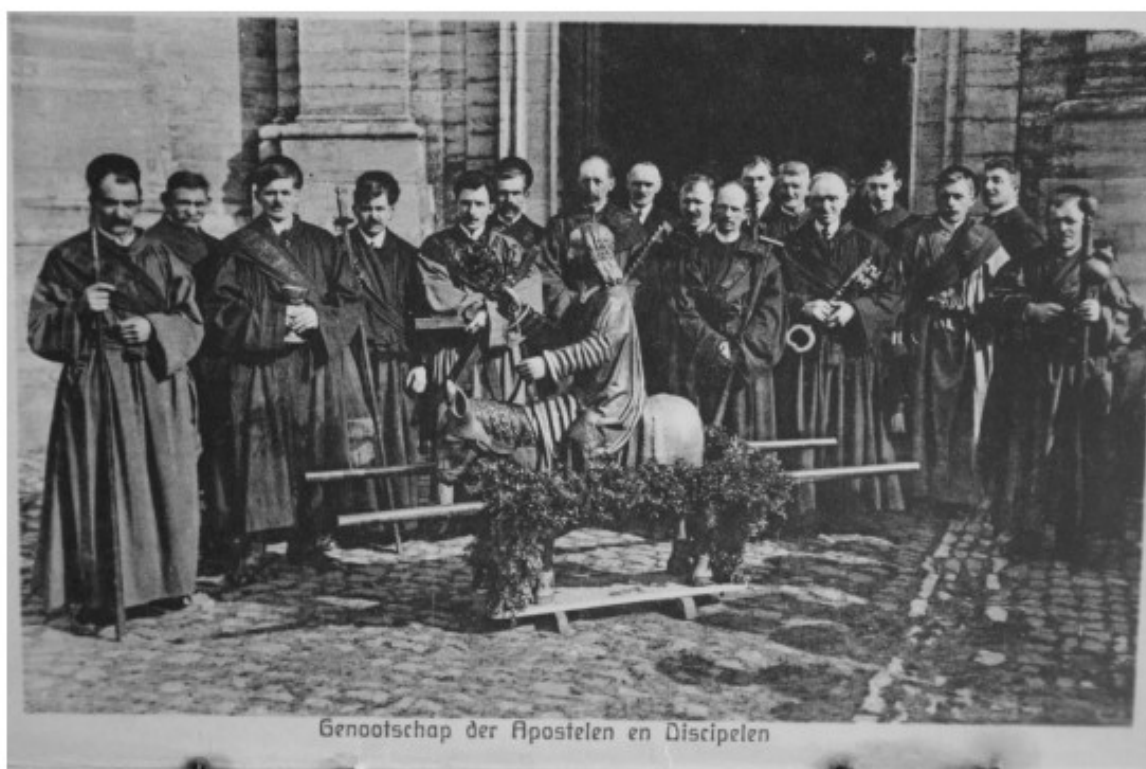


1931



Brochure by Karel Verhoeven (priest from 1922 to 1934)

To mark the 300th anniversary of the "revised" statutes (1631-1931),
The illustrated brochure reproduces the company's articles of association and describes its customs
and practices.



1931 Palm Sunday: Photograph of the 12 apostles, the 4 disciples and the "mombaarvader" or godfather of the apostles
here gathered around the statue of Palm Sunday Christ

Find the brochure on our website <https://geslachten-lignages-hoegaarden.be>



Het palm-ezeltje met het Christus-beeld. Deze figuren zijn uit hout, en in eene plank onderaan, is het jaartal 1631 ingebrand.

TE HOEGAARDEN

Foto hieronder:
De processie tijdens haar omgeng in Hoegaarden's straten.



De processie bij het verlaten der kerk. Mgr. Van Cauwenbergh zegent de geloovige toeschouwers.



DE PALMPROCESSIE

Midden een vruchtbaar land van kruimig-zwellende heuvels en verscheidene akkers ligt het dorp Hoegaarden. Het dorp met zijn stemmig eigen van hoog-krinkelde en laag-



En deze wakkere Apostel, Petrus Kinart, kietten we, met kinderen en kleinkinderen in het deurgat zijner woning. Het was vandaag voor den 67sten keer dat hij als Apostel den omgeng mee deed. Van harte proficiat Petere! En nog lange jaren.

zakende straatjes, met zijn eenvoudige diep christelijke bevolking.

En nu, op Palmzondag, is er daar feest. Een geestelijk feest berustend op een diep folkloristische ondergrond — het trouw blijven aan de eeuwenoude traditie: „de processie der palmwijdung” of „de omgeng der Apostelen”, zooals de menschen van Hoegaarden dat liever heeten.

Wij moeten echter kort zijn en mogen ons jammer genoeg maar bepalen tot een droge opsomming van den gang der gebeurtenissen daar ter plaatse:

Bij het binnenkomen van het dorp bemerkten we al dadelijk dat we niet voor het gewone jaarlijkse feit stonden: een opschrift, dat we hier zoo dadelijk laten volgen, wees er op dat het vandaag 300 jaar geleden is, er de Palmprocessie voor de eerste maal plaats vond.

„1631—1931.” Heden vieren wij feest.

„En sieren om ter meest.

„Ons Apostelen bestaan driehonderd jaar

„Dat kan slechts met Gods hulpe maar.”

Het is dan ook ter dier gelegenheid dat Z.D.H. Mgr. Van Cauwenbergh de palmen wijdde en den „omgeng” mee deed.

Tegen het uur der palmwijdung komen „de Apostelen en Discipelen met hunnen palmestel” onder het galmen der klok ter kerk en plaatsen den estel met Christusbeeld op een voetstuk midden het koor. Op het oogenblik der palmitdeeling komen zij beurtelings ten altaar en ontvangen een takje gewijden palm uit de handen van Monseigneur. Daarna begint de processie: een kleinen optocht door enkele straten in den kring der kerk.

Voorop het kruis, de misdienaars, de geestelijkheid, dan het Christusbeeld, door de Discipelen op de schouders gedragen, en daarna, op twee rijen, de Apostelen.

Op ongeveer een kwartier is processie terug in de kerk. De omgeng is voor een jaarte weer voorbij....

Foto hiernaast: De groep der Apostelen met het beeld.



Deze brochure werd geschreven door *Leontine Wuyts*, geboren te Hoegaarden in 1937; zij woont er nog steeds. Deze geboren en getogen "Hoegaardierster" interesseert zich aan de geschiedenis in het algemeen en die van haar dorp in het bijzonder. Middelbare studies te Tienen. Diploma directie-sekretaresse A6/A1 te Brussel. Zij vervult deze functie in een grote internationale firma. Kennis van vreemde talen, snelschrift en F.H.B.O. Als plaatselijke vertegenwoordigster van VTB-VAB in haar geboortedorp probeert zij Hoegaarden ook buiten zijn grenzen bekend te maken. Tijdens haar vakantie vergezelt zij VTB-groepen naar het buitenland en treedt zij ook op als plaatselijke gids bij ontvangst van groepen te Hoegaarden.
Medewerking van *Jozef van Overstraeten*.

DE VLAAMSE TOERISTISCHE BIBLIOTHEEK

die onder dezelfde leiding staat als de bondsbladen "De Toerist" en "De Autotoerist" van de Vlaamse Toeristenbond vzw., resp. Vlaamse Automobilistenbond vzw., Sint-Jakobsmarkt 45-47, Antwerpen, geeft ten minste iedere maand een brochure uit, dat een of ander toeristisch, technisch, artistiek of wetenschappelijk onderwerp behandelt, meestal in verband met een "aktualiteit", een of andere gebeurtenis, verjaardag, herdenking, enz.

Stichter-hoofdredacteur : *Jozef van Overstraeten*.

Published in January 1975, 16 p.

**Leontine Wuyts (Hoegaarden 1937-2017),
*Hoegaarden and its Palm Sunday procession***

No. 185 Vlaamse Toeristische Bibliotheek

HOEGAARDEN EN ZIJN PALMPROCESSIE



185 MAANDSCHRIFT JANUARI 1975

1975

Hoegaarden en zijn Palmprocessie

Deze Palmprocessie is een van de meest originele en merkwaardige folkloristische manifestaties van ons land.

Het uit eikenhout gesneden czeltje, met het Kristusbeeld, rondgedragen door de vier discipelen en gevolgd door de twaalf apostelen, in lange kleurige gewaden, met op het hoofd het "umbrakel", vormen een oud gebruik, dat alleen te Hoegaarden is overgebleven.

De processiegangers, merendeels kinderen, met de "palmmei" in de hand, volgen na de geestelijkheid en geven van het geheel een unieke indruk.

Wij, Hoegaardiers, zijn allen terecht fier op deze historische ommeegang, die door de eeuwen heen vermaardheid aan onze gemeente heeft gegeven en zeker voor elke toerist de moeite loont om op Palmzondag de verplaatsing naar Hoegaarden te doen.

Ik kan dan ook niet anders dan bij deze gelegenheid een woord van dank te richten aan al degenen die in het verleden alles in het werk hebben gesteld om deze middeleeuwse volksdevotie in al haar eenvoud en piëteit in ere te houden.

Een bijzonder woord van dank gaat ook naar de V.T.B., voor

zijn initiatief om aan deze gebeurtenis een brochure te wijden. Ten slotte druk ik de wens uit dat zowel onze geestelijkheid als alle Hoegaardse kulturele en andere verenigingen niets onverlet zullen laten om de Palmprocessie in de toekomst nog meer luister te schenken.

Het gemeentebestuur zal zeker elk initiatief in die richting met veel entoesiasme steunen.

R. Kerrijn,

A foreword by Mayor
Roger Kerrijn and an
advert for the famous
Hoegaarden beer: the
Pierre Celis' 'blanche'
(white beer) which made
its official comeback in
1968.

oud HOEGAARDS BIER

Het bier dat de eeuwen trotseerde !

Een bier dat de geschiedenis van Hoegaarden bepaalde en de levensstandaard der Hoegaardiers hoog hield.

oud HOEGAARDS BIER

Dit bier wordt nog steeds gebrouwd volgens eeuwenoude tradities met de allerzuiverste produkten : mout, tarwe en hop, in een oude brouwerij.

Een bier dat U gezondheid geeft.

Proost !

BROUWERIJ CELIS Pierre
Vroente 1
3320 HOEGAARDEN
Tel. (016) 76 61 14

1981

INRICHTEND COMITE

De Heer R. KERRIJN, burgemeester

De Heer F. HUON, schepen van Cultuur, Openbare Werken en Ruimtelijke Ordening

De Heer J. MICHEL, schepen van Middenstand, Landbouw en Sport

De Heer R. ROSSEELS, schepen van Financiën, Jeugdbeleid en Milieuzorg

De Heer J. CIPERS, gemeentesecretaris

WERKCOMITE

**The Society/Order of the Twelve Apostles
in the 17th and 18th centuries**

Compiled by L. Van Buyten, lecturer at

K.U. Leuven University

Exhibition-Hoegaarden Town Hall

3 April - 3 May 1981

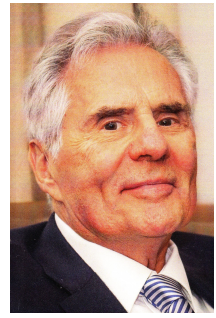


**350 JAAR
PALMZONDAGTRADITIE
TE HOEGAARDEN**

1981

Scientific publication and catalogue of the very first exhibition.

Reeds in een schrijven aan het college van burgemeester en schepenen van Hoegaarden in 1978 hadden we het voorstel geopperd, een tentoonstelling in te richten om aldus een bijdrage te leveren tot de cultuurgeschiedenis van ons volk en die tevens de Hoegaardse traditie in de belangstelling zou plaatsen die ze ongetwijfeld verdient. Het antwoord van het college bij monde van de schepen van Cultuur, de heer Fr. Huon, was onmiddellijk enthousiast, zij het dat hij voorstelde de tentoonstelling samen te laten plaatsgrijpen met de viering van het 1000-jarig bestaan van de gemeente in 1981. Hierdoor werd het ons mogelijk een jubileumtentoonstelling voor te bereiden ter gelegenheid van de 350ste verjaaring van de Palmzondagtraditie.



(Extract from the case put forward by **Dr Willem Loosen** (Hoegaarden 1937- 2023), chairman of the working committee).

In a letter to the Mayor and Members of the Hoegaarden Council in 1978, we put forward the idea of organising an exhibition to contribute to the cultural history of our people, and to draw attention to this specific Hoegaarden tradition, which undoubtedly deserves it.

The Town Council's response, through its Member responsible for culture, Mr Fr. Huon, was unequivocally enthusiastic; however, he suggested that the exhibition be held at the same time as the town's millennium celebrations in 1981. This enabled us to prepare an anniversary exhibition to mark the 350th anniversary of the Palm Sunday tradition.

2006

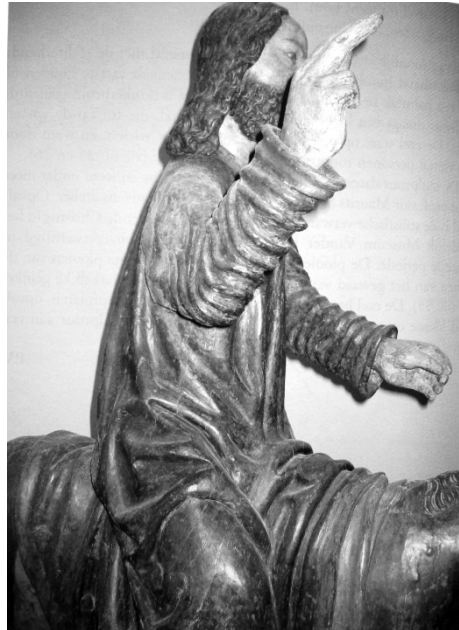
De palmezelprocessie

Een (on)bekend West-Europees fenomeen?



onder redactie van
Luc Knapen & Patrick Valvekens

**A scientific publication and a second exhibition extending beyond local borders (re. the exhibition)
and even national borders (re. the publication).**



*Detail of the pleated arms of Christ's robe on
the palmezel (Hoegaarden's Palm Sunday
statue of Christ riding a donkey)*

DE PALMEZELPROCESSIE

Tentoonstelling



375 jaar Palmezelprocessie te Hoegaarden



Hoegaarden, Gemeentehuis
van 1 tot 30 april 2006

Leuven, Maurits Sabbebibliotheek
Faculteit Godgeleerdheid
van 8 tot 19 mei 2006

De Palmzondagtraditie is te Hoegaarden diep verbonden met de geschiedenis van de bevolking zelf. Minstens twaalf generaties van Hoegaardiërs maakten deel uit van het Apostelengenootschap. Het lidmaatschap was levenslang en vereiste het voldoen aan de statutaire voorwaarden. Men moest van onbesproken levenswandel zijn en de uitoefening van het apostelambt moest gebeuren in een toestand van onthechting. Spijs en drank voor de apostelmaaltijd moesten door de plaatselijke bevolking worden geschonken. Op die manier heeft de bevolking van Hoegaarden zich eeuwenlang gekweten van een weliswaar nederige maar bijzonder inhoudsvolle taak.

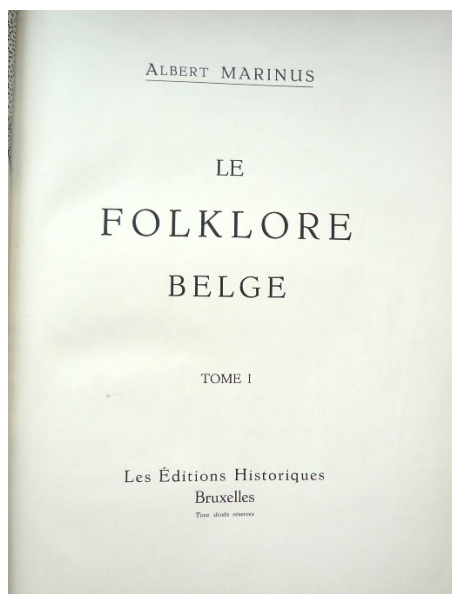
De cultuurhistorische betekenis van dit feit hebben we mede helpen in het licht stellen in 1981. Een woord van dank en formele gelukwensen dient gericht aan het College van Burgemeester en Schepenen van Hoegaarden dat onze oproep in 1978 geestdriftig heeft opgevolgd en tot de Palmzondagviering in zijn breedst mogelijke betekenis heeft bijgedragen. Het enthousiasme dat we ondervinden in binnen- en buitenland onderstreept de waarde van de traditie te Hoegaarden en waarborgt haar verdere instandhouding.

(Extract from the case put forward by **Dr Willem Loosen** (Hoegaarden 1937- 2023))

As in 1981, Chairman of the Working Committee.

The Palm Sunday tradition in Hoegaarden is itself deeply rooted in the history of the local people. At least twelve generations of Hoegaarden residents have belonged at one stage or another to the Order/Brotherhood of the Apostles. Membership was for life and required that the statutory conditions be met. One had to be of irreproachable character and the function of Apostle had to be performed on an empty stomach. Food and drink for the Apostle had to be provided by the local population. And so, for centuries, the people of Hoegaarden carried out a task that was admittedly humble, but particularly significant.

In 1981, we contributed in highlighting the cultural and historical importance of this event. We would like to thank and congratulate the Mayor and Members of the Town Council of Hoegaarden, who responded enthusiastically to our call in 1978 and supported the Palm Sunday celebrations in the broadest sense of the word. The enthusiasm we are seeing both in Belgium and abroad underlines the value of the Hoegaarden tradition and guarantees its future preservation.



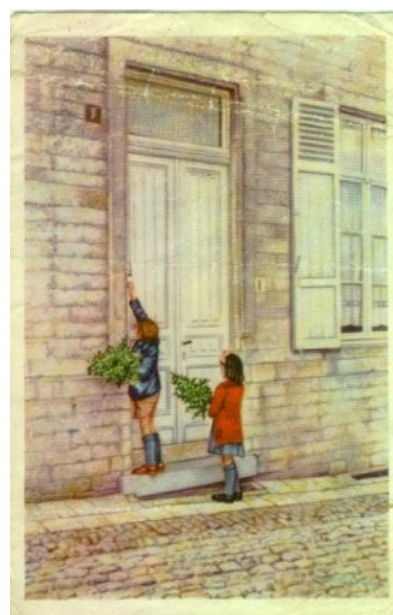
3 volumes, 1930, vol. 3, p. 22

Albert Marinus, *Le folklore belge*, Les éditions Historiques, Brussels, 3 volumes, 1930

Belgische Folklore/ /Belgian folklore, published by Côte d'Or (1947-1950)



Album no. 1, chromo no. 201



Second series, No. 148

Passing through Tommestraat (behind the wall of the *garden gazebo of the Cruysblockhoeve-farm*)

Children pictured in front of the Arendnest at Houtmarkt

Over the years in the 1920s and picture or report in *Le Patriote Illustré*.

1928

Les traditions pittoresques en Hesbaye. - Le dimanche des Rameaux à Hougaerde



1. LA SORTIE DE L'EGLISE. — La Hesbaye, si riche en traditions folkloriques, voit se dérouler à Hougaerde, le jour des Rameaux, une procession dont l'institution remonte à plusieurs centaines d'années, et qui représente l'Entrée triomphale de Jésus à Jérusalem. — 2. LE GROUPE DU CHRIST AVEC SES APOTRES. — Par cette matinée d'avril, Hougaerde est devenu Jérusalem : le Christ, monté sur l'âne des récits évangéliques, fait son entrée solennelle dans le bourg, suivi du cortège des douze apôtres, personnifiés par des notables de la localité.

La Hesbaye a sa large part des souvenirs dont l'histoire et la légende peignent tant de sites de notre pays. Non loin de Léau, qui, voici quelques années, organisa une exposition de folklore si réussie, le bourg d'Hougaerde étale sur la Gête, entre Tirlemont et Jodoigne, ses rues aux allures de petite ville cossée, que domine une remarquable église à clocheton et à double corniche.

Une tradition qui se transmet de génération en génération veut que les fondations de cet intéressant sanctuaire aient été jetées par Alpaïde, fille de Charles Martel, il y a plus de onze cents ans. Quoi qu'il en soit, les habitants de Hougaerde gardent une légitime fierté de la haute antiquité de leur cité, le culte des traditions fleurit chez eux de père en fils, et s'allie harmonieusement avec un bon sens pratique ouvert à tous les progrès modernes.

Hougaerde possède une confrérie des Douze Apôtres qui date de 1631, selon les uns, mais dont les origines remonteraient à 1,500, d'après les autres. L'époque qui suivit les Croisades vit se développer dans nos provinces nombre d'initiatives évoquant la Terre-Sainte. C'est alors qu'aux portes de Bruxelles une vallée prit le nom de Josaphat. La



LA FOULE AU PASSAGE DU CORTÈGE. — Petits et grands, toute la population arbore des rameaux de buis, tenus à la main ou fixés à des hampes, pour saluer le passage du Roi de gloire. Dans la foule, on remarque d'admirables mouchoirs de tête, chales anciens et merveilleux, dont se coiffent encore quelques fermiers.



LA PROCESSION DANS LES RUES DU BOURG. — Les buis des jardins ont été dépouillés de leurs plus belles branches; leur verdure sombre est l'unique décoration de cette glorieuse journée qui précède aux antipodes de la Semaine Sainte. On dirait presque une scène de Séville dans un bourg du Brabant.

confrérie des Douze Apôtres d'Hougaerde daterait-elle de cette période de notre histoire? Dimanche, en tout cas, elle était à l'honneur. Une des tâches qu'elle s'impose consiste à relever de son concours la traditionnelle procession des Rameaux.

L'église d'Hougaerde possède une statue polychrome de Jésus monté sur un âne, faisant son entrée triomphale à Jérusalem. Le Christ, drapé d'une robe rouge, porte une majestueuse barbe noire. Le dimanche des Rameaux, ce groupe sculptural porté sur les épaules de quatre jeunes gens, fait une sortie solennelle, escorté de la Confrérie des Douze Apôtres. Ceux-ci sont représentés par douze personnages vêtus de robes vertes, blanches ou beiges que barre un large sautoir rouge portant, brodé en or, le nom de chaque apôtre. Une petite auréole en carton ingénieusement fixée aux cheveux leur orne la tête. Chacun d'eux tient en main l'attribut traditionnel : saint Pierre a ses clefs, saint Jean son calice, Thadée son épée.

La Confrérie des Douze Apôtres partage les honneurs de la journée avec les enfants de la paroisse.

Dès le grand matin, garçons et fillettes emplissent les rues, porteurs d'énormes bouquets de buis montés sur des bâtons naïvement ornés de papier d'étain, de nœuds tricolores.

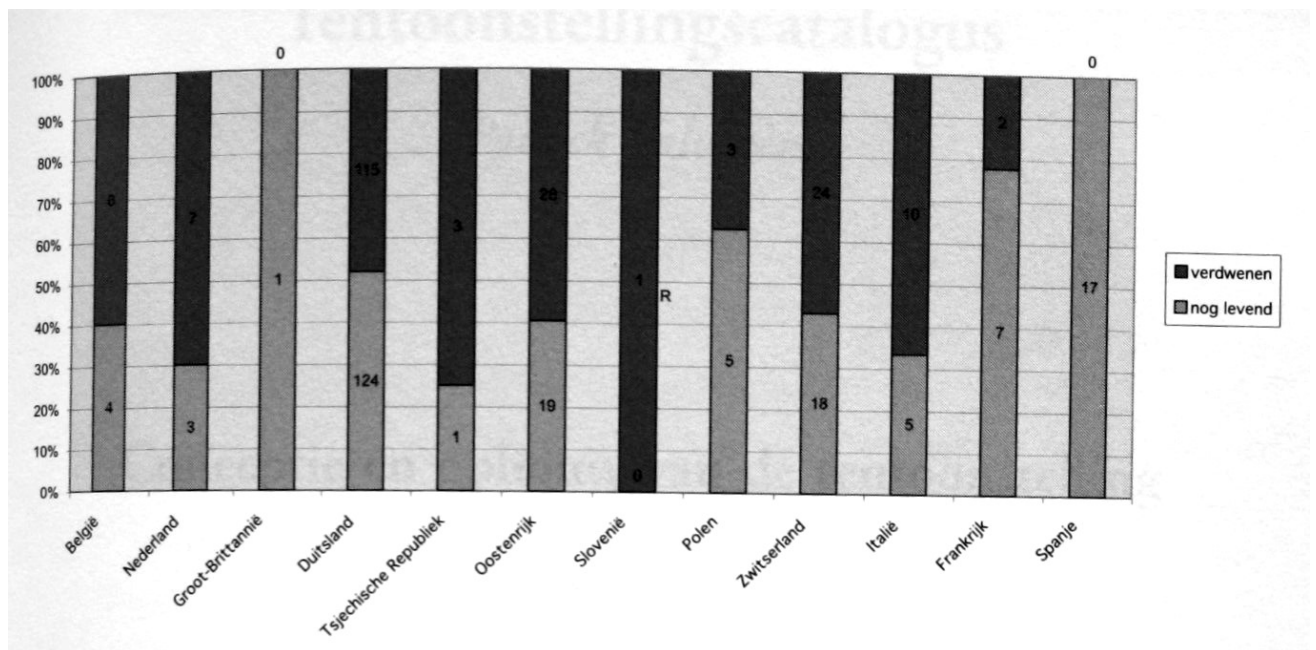
Cette bruyante jeunesse prend le chemin de l'église, où déjà les douze membres de la Confrérie des Apôtres se sont installés dans le chœur, autour de la statue du Christ; après la bénédiction des rameaux, la procession se met en marche.

An entire page was devoted to it in 1928

2. The so-called Palm Donkey ('Palmezel')

Donkey statues that were used on Palm Sunday are still being used in Europe.

(Extract from *Palmezelprocessie een (on)bekend ...*, p. 259)



Belgium :

Hoegaarden (Brabant-Leuven?, 1st quarter 16th century), restoration 1980-1981

Louvain-la-Neuve, U.C.L. museum (circa 1500), foreign origin

Tienen (20th century, 1997)

Private collection, foreign origin

Initially, donkeys were caravan animals, mainly used in the mountains because of their wariness. They were also commonly used for riding, including by women. In ancient times, donkeys were a privilege reserved for the wealthy, but later they became more widely owned.

The donkey is a symbol of humility, poverty and patience, as well as intelligence.

In ancient times, the donkey was also used as a mount by kings. For the purposes of war, the donkey was supplanted by the horse, which was faster and more agile. Not being useful for war, donkeys became a symbol of peace.

Our special Hoegaarden Palm Sunday donkey



Detail of the pleated drape on the robe of the Palm Sunday Christ from Hoegaarden



Hoegaarden's donkey has surprisingly small ears

Jesus Christ riding the donkey blesses with his right hand. The left hand is used to hold the reins. During the annual procession, a sprig of box is slipped into Christ's right hand.

The donkey is dark brown; Jesus is wearing a long dark blue robe (after restoration). The donkey is standing on a wooden plank.

The sculpture dates from the **early 16th century** and is thought to have come from a workshop in Leuven (according to Prof. M. Smeyers).

The stylistic affinity with a Christ Carrying the Cross from the same period, kept in the Vander Kelen Municipal Museum in Leuven, is striking.

The donkey has very small ears.

A complete restoration was carried out in 1980-1981.



Christ carrying the cross - Leuven

Hoegaarden's Palm Sunday statue of Christ riding a donkey ('*Palmezel*') - circa 1950.

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/6496> <https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/6496>

<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/6496>

The Palm Sunday Christ in the choir of St Gorgonius church, decorated with boxwood (1975)



Riding the grey donkey that had not yet been restored, Christ is wearing his red robe.

The restored Hoegaarden Palm Sunday donkey (*palmezel*)



Sculpture, wood (oak), Brabant (probably Leuven), first quarter of the 16th century, 150 cm high; polychrome, restored in 1980-1981: the donkey, now dark brown, carries Jesus Christ wearing a dark blue robe.

St Gorgonius' church in Hoegaarden. Since 2002, a copy of the donkey has been used for the annual procession.

The ancient donkey is in St Gorgonius' Church Treasury; it has been electronically secured since 1997.

**The Hoegaarden Palm Sunday Donkey (*palmezel*) restored
and kept in an area at the rear of St Gorgonius**



Since 2001, following the Palm Sunday celebrations, the old Palm Sunday statue (*'palmezel'*) has been confined to the Treasury of St Gorgonius' church, under the tower.

2002 - The '*Mombaarvader*' (or godfather), André Stockmans, and the new Palm Sunday statue made of polyester.



Palm Sunday 24/03/2002. From now on, a polyester copy is being carried in the annual procession; it weighs 50 kg less than the old statue.

The Palm Sunday donkey, adorned with boxwood, a branch of which is slipped into Christ's right hand, is here seen carried by the four disciples.



Hirsch Pils -pint



Das – the appropriate glass

Hoegaarden from 1960 to 1972.

The Loriers brewery ceased trading in 1960. Artois continued brewing the 'Das' beer in

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The small ears of Hoegaarden's Palm Sunday Donkey are its trademark.



Ears of the Hoegaarden donkey



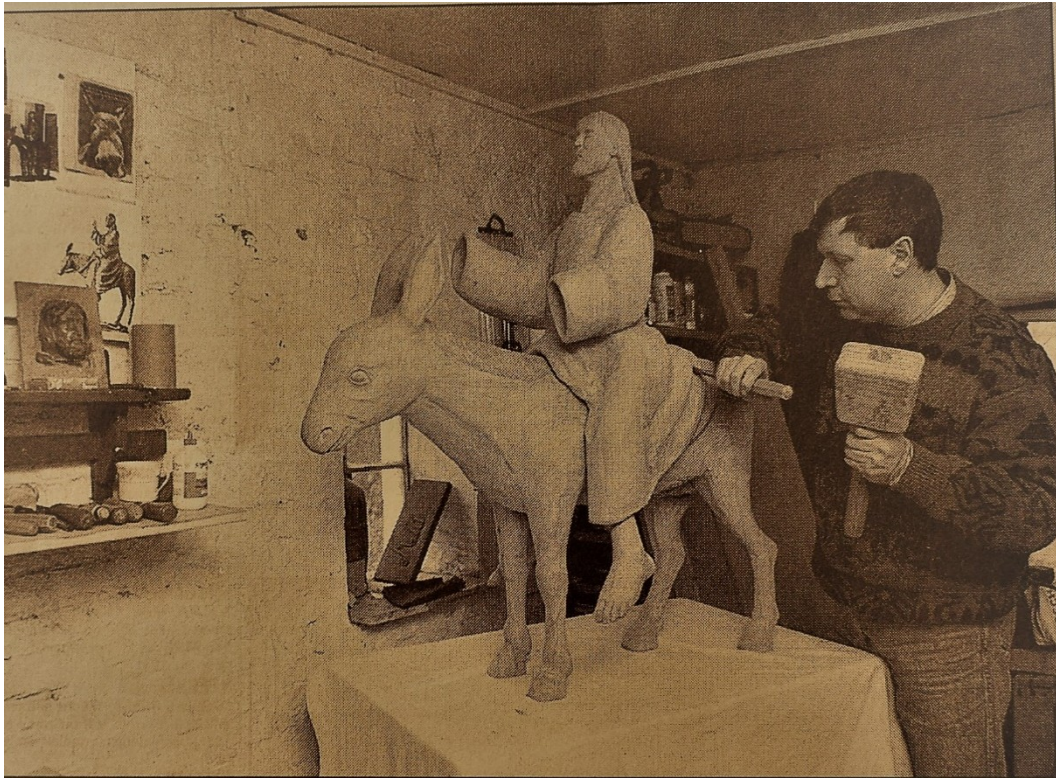
Palm Donkey, Utrecht (18th century)



Palm Donkey, Cologne (c. 1500), on castors
Palm Donkey, Louvain-la-Neuve (c. 1500)

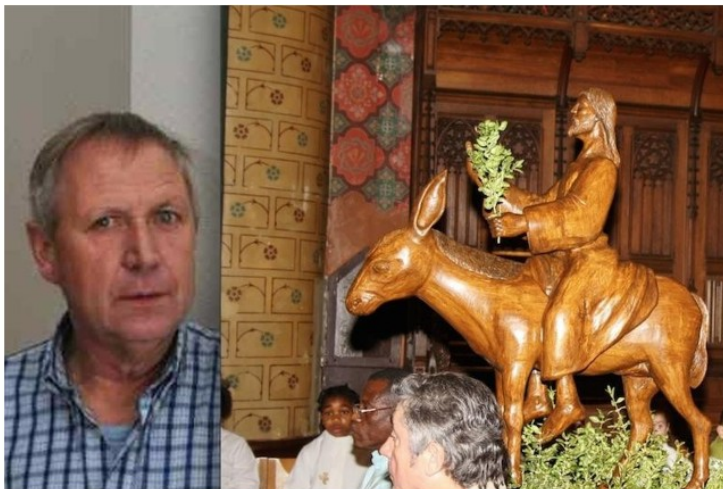


The St Germanus parish in Tienen owns a Palm Sunday donkey again (1997)



(Raymond Billen, Het Nieuwsblad, 07/02/1997)

This Palm Sunday statue of Christ on a donkey is the work of **Frans Vandegaer (1953)** from **Hoegaarden**; it was sculpted at the request of the Saint-Germanus parish in Tienen, of which **Joris Hardiquist (1949-2022)** from **Hoegaarden** was priest-dean; Frans Vandegaer (Vroente) and Joris Hardiquist (Kloosterstraat) used to be neighbours in Hoegaarden.



Frans Vandegaer



Joris Hardiquist

The new Tienen Palm Sunday Christ on donkey statue ('palmezel') is presented by Dean Joris Hardiquest.



Achille Baeken, Het Nieuwsblad, 25/02/1997)

The Tienen Palm Sunday Christ, accompanied by barefoot apostles, was carried along Ranststraat and the market before returning to the church: "*Anno 1698 ... cum imagine Salvatoris insidentis asino, et cum apostolis nudis pedibus incedentibus ...*" (cf. J. Niederer, *Palmzondag te Hougaerde*).

According to priest Hardiquest, the procession was abolished in 1861 because the apostles looked more like carnival buffoons than disciples of Christ.



The adorned Tienen 'palmezel'

3. Children with their bunches of box twigs ('*pallemaai*') are a must and the very essence of the Hoegaarden Palm Sunday procession.

The Palm Sunday procession leaves the church, where the box twigs have just been blessed. It then follows the small processional route; the Palm Sunday **donkey** (with small ears) is **adorned with boxwood**, and Jesus Christ holds a **sprig of box in his right hand**. The statue is carried by four disciples and the 12 apostles follow the procession; at the front, in full view, a child with a bunch of box twigs tied to a stick: the '*pallemaai*'.

1911



(Eugène Damblanc/Damblans (Montevideo1865-Bois-Colombes1945) in '*Le Pèlerin*' of 1911, Palm Sunday procession in Hoegaarden)

(*Le Pèlerin* continues to be published weekly under the title '*Pèlerin*'; this first French Catholic weekly founded in 1873 in Paris, initially focused mainly on pilgrimages (such as the one to Lourdes).

Children with *pallemaai* (bunches of box sprigs) are a must at this truly Hoegaardian event.



1911

"Sprigs or branches of boxwood trees or shrubs that children display during the Palm Sunday procession in Hoegaarden; they are loose or attached to a stick, decorated or not with silver paper, and offered door-to-door after the blessing - preferably after High Mass - in exchange for a monetary reward."

(Urbain Vandermolen, 'De dialecten van de gemeente Hoegaarden en van haar gehuchten en deelgemeenten', 1981)

Buxus

pallemaai (= box, boxwood)

(Ivan T. D. Laloup, *Woordenboek der Hoegaardse taal*, 2011)

Pallem

palm (= box, boxwood)

Pallemaai

palmtakjes, buxus (= sprigs or branches of box)

Pallemàzel

palmezel (= Palm Sunday statue of Christ riding a donkey)

Pallempersèsse

palmprocessie (= Palm Sunday procession)

Pallemzondag

palmzondag (oep pallemzondàg IOEpe d'apostele vajroep in de persèsse = bij palmzondag lopen de apostelen voorop in de processie)

(= on Palm Sunday, the apostles stroll at the front of the procession)

Christian Hennuy, *Lexicon van het Hoegaards dialect*, 2020



1993

2012



(Le Patriote Illustré, 1947)

Buxus sempervirens – box, boxwood, common box - Palmboompje (in Dutch) - Buis (in French)



The flemisch language sometimes uses the word "**palm**" for box. However, boxwood (*Buxus*) has nothing to do with [palms](#). There is a misconception that Box (*Buxus sempervirens*) has Mediterranean origins. Therefore people often mistakenly believe that box thrives in sunny, dry locations.

But in recent years, the box tradition seems to have been under threat. Box, which many people in Hoegaarden grow in their garden especially with an eye to Palm Sunday, has been devoured by the box tree moth. This pest arrived in Europe in 2006 and, by 2018, was present throughout the continent.

That is why members of the Apostles' Society, with the support of the Hoegaarden municipality, went looking for an alternative plant. At the plant market held on 17 March 2024 in the *Tuinen van Hoegaarden*, Apostles sold **Japanese holly also called box-leaved holly (*Ilex Crenata*)**.



Box grows quite slowly and rarely gets the chance to become a tree.
However, there was one in the garden of Henri *Rik* Cipers (Cruysblockhoeve farm).



Rik Cipers (1934-2023)

Alas, the tree has recently fallen victim to the box tree moth.

4. Origin and significance of the Palm Sunday procession

Exhibition from 25 January to 4 May 2025 at the Rijksmuseum Twenthe (Enschede).

'Het geloof gekust' (The embraced faith)

Visitors are given an insight into the experience of individual faith in the Middle Ages.

The museum still has a Palm Sunday Christ ('*palmezel*') dating from the 14th century. The exhibition curators are using this work of art to highlight the fact that, **in the Middle Ages, it was customary for Jesus himself to meet the faithful.**

The Bible tells us that Jesus entered Jerusalem mounted on a donkey. This scene was also reproduced in the Middle Ages as part of a festive procession, this time using **a statue of a wooden Christ mounted on a wooden donkey.**

The faithful stood beside him, waving palms and laying cloaks as he passed, giving him a royal welcome.



Palmezel, eerste helft 14de eeuw, gepolychromeerd lindehout, 185 x 191 x 87 cm, Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede

('Palmezel' dating from the 1st half of the 14th century, polychromed limewood. Dimensions 185cm x 191cm x 87cm. Rijksmuseum Twenthe in Enschede).

Following in the footsteps of this tradition, the painter Pieter Coecke (Aalst 1502 - Brussels 1550) painted **Christ in a church square** somewhere in the Netherlands in 1535. The congregation of believers are not simply spectators in a play. On the contrary, they all take part, waving palms and singing; they can see, hear, smell and touch the Saviour - the faithful are fully integrated into the story.

According to Johan Huizinga in '*Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*' (1919) - available in French under the title 'L'automne du Moyen Âge' or 'Le déclin du Moyen-Âge' - **the identification of the faithful with the biblical story** was all the more intense because there were few other stories and images available at the time.



Entering Jerusalem

(tapestry, Brussels, 1510)

Cartoon attributed to Quinten Metsijs



(woodcut),

Jacobus Kerver, *Biblia sacra*, Paris, 1573

There is evidence of the Palm Sunday procession as early as the 9th century, but not of the Palm Sunday donkey, whether or not it was intended to be carried, or fitted with wheels in order to be pulled.

Wooden statues depicting Christ with a donkey began to appear in Christian art **from the 12th century onwards**. These were generally life-size representations of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

The Palm Sunday procession is thought to have come to Western Europe from Jerusalem.

In the south of France and in Spain, processions were traditionally held with either real palm leaves, or dried or decorated palms.

In Germanic countries, branches of green boxwood or catkins replaced the "*palms*". Walking around swaying green branches at the start of the year was intended to encourage the magic of fertility and was once a widespread custom in European countries; the origins of this custom go back to the dawn of time.

The traditional Palm Sunday celebration in Hoegaarden

Before the actual annual celebration on Palm Sunday, members of the Apostles' Society will have conducted an alms collection and gathered sprigs and branches of boxwood from the local people to decorate the donkey and provide for the children's needs.

The day before the procession, the donkey is taken out of the place of storage in the church and decorated in the courtyard of the rectory.

On Palm Sunday, the apostles dress up in the rectory, where all their equipment is kept in a large trunk (in the past they would meet in their local pub). The '*mombaarvader*' ('godfather' of the apostles) and the disciples simply wear a sash worn from shoulder to hip.

After the blessing, there is a procession with the Palm Sunday Christ and all the children, followed by Palm Sunday High Mass... Theoretically, children were only allowed to sell their boxwood after mass. Several decades ago, a child-friendly solution was found: the consecration of the box and the Eucharist now precede the procession, enabling the children to sell their box sprigs sooner.

Photo of the disciples and apostles with the ornamented donkey (1926). Many children with their "*pallemaai*" (bunches of boxwood) accompany them as they walk along **Pastorijstraat** towards the church for the blessing of the boxwood.



Catharina Van de Graft, visiting from Utrecht, experienced the celebration in 1926 and described it as follows:

'.... In the early hours of Palm Sunday (1926), I took the train from the nearby town of Tienen to this fine Flemish village, albeit located close to the language border (the steam train ran until the end of 1960). But the quiet village still showed no signs of tense festive anticipation. The first sign of Palm Sunday was a child holding a bunch of boxwood tied to a stick, walking down the street at 8.30 a.m., then other young people arrived running towards the church from all sides. And when the church emptied at nine o'clock (after the 8.30 mass), it was only children who sat down and raised their bunches of boxwood as high as they could... Whilst the service lasted a good quarter of an hour, the bourdon, known here as the big bell, began to ring, and through the open door of the church appeared the statue of Christ and the apostles....

After the boxwood was blessed, the bourdon began to ring again and the procession formed with the cross and the altar boys at the head, followed by the clergy, Christ on a donkey with the apostles and behind them, the children holding branches of boxwood. ...

Back in the church, which had previously been empty, it was now packed, this time with adults who had come for the solemn High Mass.

After High Mass, the children go from door to door selling their boxwood...

The apostles change clothes at a nearby inn and have a meal of coffee and cakes, for which everyone pays their own way, while the parish priest makes a contribution'.



Dr C. Catharina Van de Graft, (1874-Utrecht 1969), Dutch folklorist; pioneer in the study of folk art and popular religious culture.

In 1910, she published "*Palmpaasch, een folkloristische studie van palmzondaggebruiken in Nederland*". (A folkloristic study of Palm Sunday customs in the Netherlands).

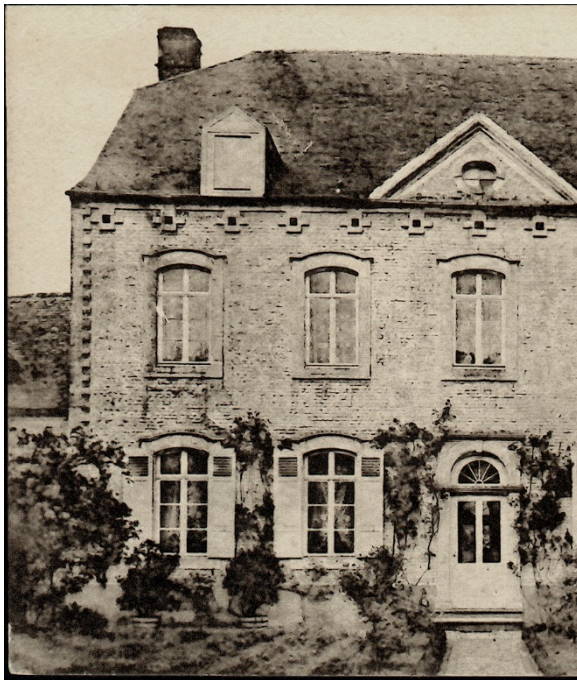
<https://knipperslexicon.nl/public> - HTLM)

In the same study, she also talks about how she was welcomed in the rectory:

'.. I had lunch with the parish priest, who occupies a small Presbyterian palace here, hidden in a large garden behind a vast farm gate with blue-painted casement doors. The building was built by a nobleman between 1750 and 1760, and features richly carved oak doors and banisters... Hougaerde is well worth a visit for this elegant rectory alone... I would like to pay tribute to the Society of the Twelve Apostles of Hougaerde, who have maintained and defended this medieval tradition right up to the present day!

(Utrecht, Dr C. Catharina Van de Graft)

This was the former home of Carolus Van Nerum and Barbe Sweerts dating from 1747. It was bought by the municipality in 1831 and converted into a rectory for the parish priest of Hoegaarden.



Over the years, the celebration of Palm Sunday has undergone a certain evolution and become more dynamic

Around 1900, Cardinal Goossens, Archbishop of Mechelen, commissioned the clergy of his diocese **to write the history of their parish**. In the case of Hoegaarden, priest Egide Van Gucht (Merchtem 1848-Hoeg. 1922) took on the task, assisted by Frans Debroeck (Hoeg. 1878-Wavre-N-D 1922), who was Hoegaarden's parish priest as well as a teacher at 'Notre Dame de Tirlemont' College.

They described the Palm Sunday happening in Hoegaarden as follows:

***This festive day can be considered as the children's day.** Hundreds and hundreds of children, not only from Hougaerde but also from neighbouring villages, crowd around the donkey, carrying boxwood branches attached to long sticks. They wave the branches triumphantly in the air while singing, and accompany the donkey with the apostles to the church, where they find it hard to keep silent. **(But they are, after all, children).** After the blessing of the boxwood, everyone leaves the church: the children with the blessed branches. The donkey is carried by 4 disciples, followed by the 12 apostles, including their 'father' (the oldest apostle becomes the 'father'), and the clergy in church vestments.*

The procession follows the short processional route and, on approaching the church, the doors are closed; the ordinary ceremony then follows, as in other churches.

The regulation we received was nearly unchanged. Except as regards bare feet at mass. This is no longer considered acceptable. The midday meal on Palm Sunday is now served in the inn, at everyone's expense. Fish has also been eliminated; Palm Sunday used to be a day of abstinence. The lunch dedicated to sharing (= separation of the Apostles, 15 July) has been replaced by a supper.

In 1899, a new feature was added: from then on, a meeting was held on the 3rd Sunday of each month after worship to promote fellowship. Everyone contributed 25 centimes to cover the Society's expenses.

The Reverend Fathers of the Clergy are now part of the Society and must be present at all meetings'.

1931

That year, Palm Sunday on 29 March marked the 300th anniversary of the Statutes of the Society of Apostles. Mgr Van Cauwenbergh, who had just been consecrated bishop, celebrated the pontifical High Mass. In accordance with custom, the bishop attended the blessing of the boxwood and the customary procession before High Mass. **The streets were magnificently decorated.** (Tenenda 1922-1975).

1940

Addition to the Palm Sunday procession:

A small patron choir sings *Lauda Jerusalem Dominum*, waving branches of boxwood. The young singers line up in front of the statue of Christ.
(Tenenda 1922-1975)

From around 1970 onwards: parish choir - wind band - horse riders and the return of fringe events: silver rain - drawing competition - flea market - fairground activities - exhibition - guided walks around the village -

5. Book of the Brotherhood, the donkey's little ears, the boxwood known as 'pallemaai' and ... the '*mombaervader*' (godfather of the apostles): all are very much Hougaardian features!

This 'father' or 'godfather' (*mombaervader*) does not appear in the medieval Palm Sunday procession in Hoegaarden, nor in the best-known Palm Sunday processions in Germany, Austria or Switzerland. Its presence can perhaps be explained by the late reorganisation (1631) of the procession in Hoegaarden, as the statutes testify. In fact, there is no indication that the 'godfather' of the procession had ever existed before. Originally, Palm Sunday processions included a thirteenth apostle, Judas, who invariably caused a stir in medieval times. When the Hoegaarden tradition was being reorganised, the aim may well have been to avoid this turmoil and tension by introducing a more neutral figure, the '*mombaervader*' (literally 'guardian' and 'father'), **who also had a supervisory role**. This rearrangement probably helped ensure the survival of Hoegaarden's Palm Sunday procession; the ritual indeed remained very similar to that of 1631, with occasional interruptions during '*difficult times*' (e.g. from 1795 to 1805; see the writings of H.N. Nijs), but in any case the form was complete and almost unaltered.

1. Leo Kenjis (1637-1647)
2. Jan Vanden Puttke (1648-1667)
3. Peter Valentine (1667-1680)
4. Joachim Kenis (1680-1692)
5. Jan Leemans the Elder (1698-1712)
6. Henri Vanden Broeck (1712-1723)
7. Jan Leemans the Younger (1723-1729)
8. Peter Geerts/Geets (1729-1748)
9. William/Guilliam Van Simphoven (1748-1758)
10. Servaas Nijs (1758-1779)
11. Frans Henri Preuveneers (1779-1802)
12. Henri Norbert Nijs (1806-1814)
13. Peter Jan Medaerts (1814-1829)
14. Willem/Guilliam Goossens (1829-1873)
15. Jan Baptist Stockmans (1873-1886)
16. Henri Brams (1886-1901)
17. Frans Vanderwaeren (1901-1909/1910)
18. August Vanex (1909/1910-1916)
19. Petrus Kinaer (1916-1932)
20. Petrus Jozef Brams (1832-1943)
21. Constant Saelmaeckers (1944-1947)
22. Jan Baptist Bams (1947-1950)
23. Théophile Vandeplas (1950-1953)
24. Emile Koeckelkoren (1954-1967)
25. Victor Biscompte (1968-1986)
26. Victor Vandeplas (1986-1992)
27. August Van Nerum (1992-1999)
28. André Stockmans (1999-)

In the Middle Ages, almost every town organised a procession on Palm Sunday to mark the blessing of the green sprigs or palms. **The procession usually went beyond the town gates** and visited other churches.

In the **16th century**, the Palm Sunday ceremony had become an event in which all inhabitants took part. The task of pulling the Palm Sunday donkey (*fitted with wheels*) was often reserved for members of the Council or the nobility. Brotherhoods also shared this honour.

- **The custom was established of including 12 men dressed as apostles in the procession.**

Popular habits and customs

In many homes, boxwood sprigs were kept to bless the house in the event of violent storms or other natural disasters. At the time of an ordeal or death, boxwood was placed in a glass of holy water. Farmers used to plant a sprig of boxwood in the four corners of their fields in the afternoon to ensure an abundant harvest.

In **Outgaarden (Auchard)**, blessed boxwood was placed in the attic to ward off vermin.

In farming circles, boxwood was used to drive away moles: branches of blessed box were planted at three angles of a field. According to Belgian farmers, the moles then fled through the fourth angle. In southern Germany, boxwood is used as a remedy against negative earth rays.

It was then that things started going downhill!

In Tienen, the apostles would walk around with blackened faces and "*Judas*" (*the thirteenth apostle*), *the* traitor in the red wig, became the object of mockery and scorn.

Elsewhere, children would fight over the fruit, hosts and sweets attached to the box branches inserted into the hand of the statue representing Jesus.

In Leuven, there was a fight to get hold of the rope attached to the donkey on wheels.

All this led, here and there, to misunderstandings, mockery and even clashes, which eventually led to bans by the Church, despite numerous warnings.

From around 1580 onwards, the Palm Sunday procession with Christ on a donkey was abandoned, especially in Protestant areas.

6. The register of the *Society of Apostles*

Although our Hoegaarden "*donkey*" is unique, albeit not the most ancient, the Book of the Brotherhood of our Society of Apostles, begun in 1631, is perhaps the only one of the sort preserved to this day in Europe.



(The parchment cover is in very poor condition)

Callebaut, I. (1984), *L'ancien livre de la Société des Apôtres*. Edition with linguistic and sociolinguistic notes. Traité final. Brussels, 1984.

https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_ver016199001_01/_ver016199001_01_0012.php

(Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren (DBNL) (Digital Library of Dutch-language Literature).

This register started in 1631 is very valuable; it underwent some worrying treatment.

In 1948, Fons Homblé of Hoegaarden wrote about this in the magazine "*Eigen Schoon en de Brabander*":

"From 1931 until 1947, the old register was kept in the parish church. It used to be kept in the chronicler's abode. The book was often put away in the kitchen table drawer, and one may wonder how it was not even more damaged. It is remarkable that no house where the book was stored has ever been destroyed by fire".

In addition to the old book of the Society of the Apostles, there is a second register in which recent events since 1932 have been carefully recorded year after year. This book was given to the chronicler-secretary and treasurer, Hubert Lambrechts, after the 'ommegang' (circuit or route of the procession) in 1947. The chronicler is always a member of the Society of Apostles and is elected by secret ballot.



For the year 1947, it was Father Heuysdens who wrote the report; the previous scribe, Henri Debroek, a member and disciple of the Society since 1900, had passed away on 16 May 1947.

Hubert Lambrechts (Hoeg. 1902-1954) died on 16 November 1954.

Albert Lambrechts, a disciple since 1947, was Hubert's successor; Albert had already replaced Hubert during the latter's long illness.

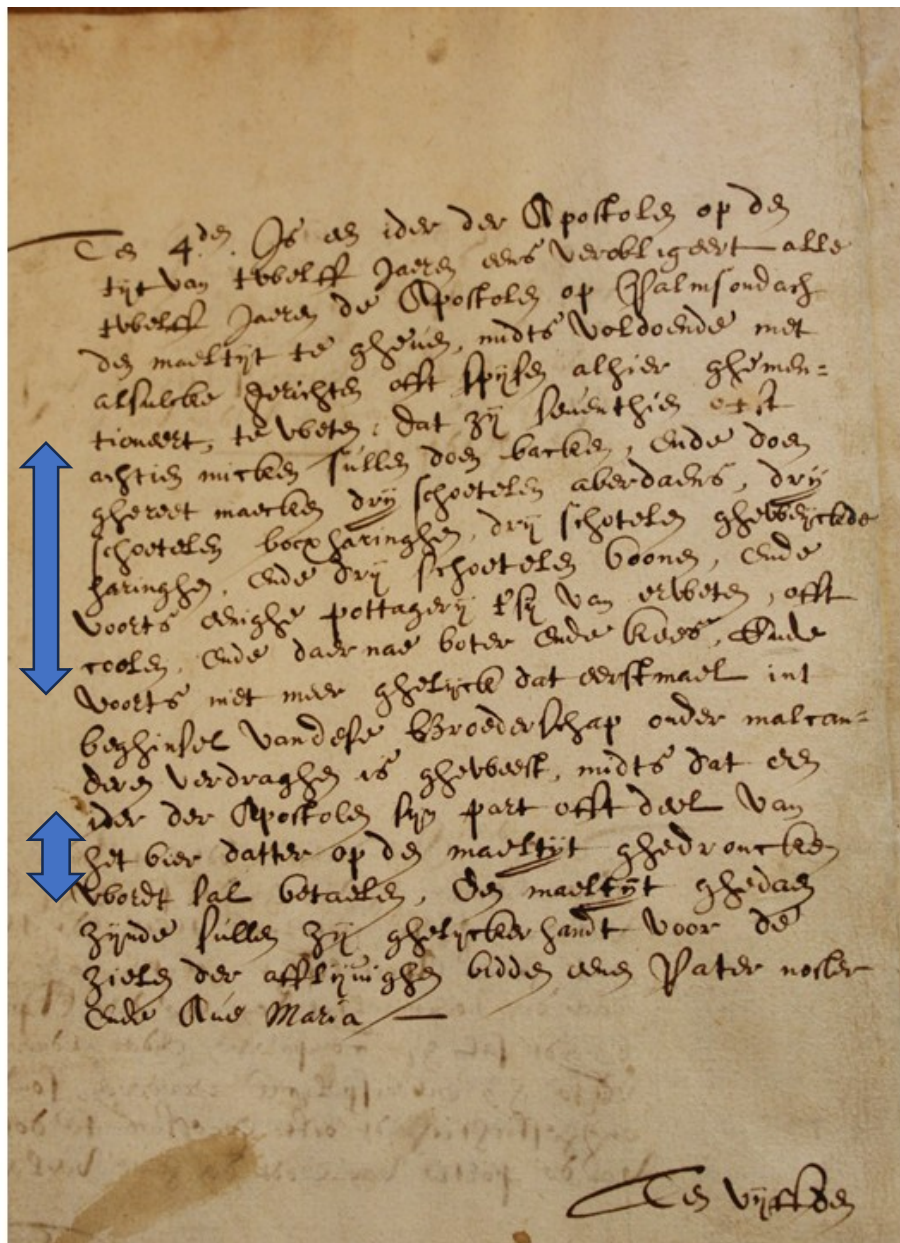
In the photo: disciples Louis Mertens (left) and Albert Lambrechts (right) in 1956.

The old book of the Society of Apostles can be consulted on our website <https://www.geslachten-lignages-hoegaarden.be> under: 'Bronnen < de 17^e en 18^e eeuw' (sources prior to the 17th and 18th centuries).

The oldest entry in the register dates from 1631

1. The Statutes, i.e. the procedures governing the celebration of Palm Sunday, as well as the obligations to which the members of the Society of the Apostles were subject on this occasion, and in their lives in general. These statutes were read out to the Society's members at least once a year until 1698, and again until 1706 to mark the arrival of a newly elected member.

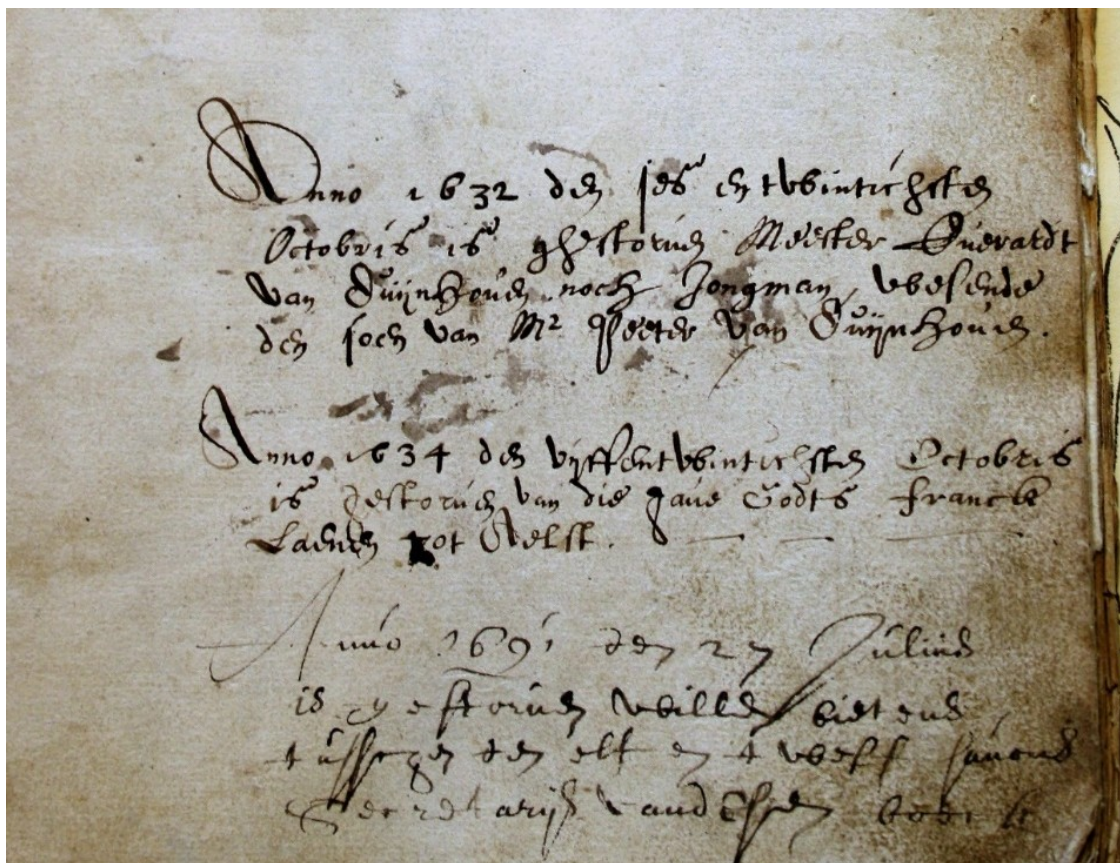
Article IV of the Articles of Association concerning the Palm Sunday meal



Each apostle undertakes to organise and finance the Palm Sunday meal every 12 years. To do this, he will provide 17 or 18 **'micken'** (loaves of coarse or fine bread), three dishes of **'aberdaens'** (salted fish), three dishes of **'boexharingen'** (fresh herring), three dishes of **'gepekelde haring'** (pickled herring), three dishes of **beans**, a sufficient quantity of vegetable purée (**peas or cabbage**), as well as **butter and cheese**.

Unlike in the past, today everyone pays for the beer they drink with their meal.

2. Personal data included in the membership inventory. The directory, which is rather disorganised, contains the dates of membership, resignation and death of members. It also contains information on members' compliance with their financial obligations and on the distribution of costs. In the 17th century, data had to be organised according to a given theme. Hence a first section entitled "*catalogus der Aflijuighen*", a second called "*hyer naer volghen die ingescreuen zijn die den maeltijt gegeven hebben*" and finally, towards the end of the collection, a third section entitled "*dach en datum vande ghene ingescreuen sijn ...*". However, this division by subject was clearly abandoned over time. Towards the middle of the 19th century, the arbitrariness became such that one author introduced the following phrase: "*ziet tweelf blaederen agterwaers om te beginnen de naemen*", not wishing to refer to the back of the repertoire, but rather to the front, where he had still found space to write the rest of his remarks. It should be noted that he was also mistaken about the number of pages to be leafed through towards the front. It is rare for the inventory to specify which apostle is embodied by a given member and what his attributes are (this information only appears later - cf. H.H. Nijs).



Anno 1632 den ses entwintichsten octobris is gestorven meester Euerardt Van Duijnhoven noch Jongman, wesende den soen van Mr. Peeter van Duijnhoven.

Anno 1634 den vijffentwintichsten octobris is gestorven van die gave Godts Francis Laenen tot Aelst.

Anno 1691 den 22 julius is gestorven Willem Bietens tusschen elf en twelf savons secretarijs vandesen boeck.

3. Scabinal deeds, including the agreement between Goort Finoels (Finoulst) and Marie Dauwen and the Finoels donation (a contract which is, moreover, debatable). There is no valid deed prior to 1745 that provides proof of any income. **It was not until 1745 that the Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages of Hoegaarden donated a meadow to the Society of Apostles.**

4. Circumstances: the conjunctions of the time, wars and revolutions, picturesque details, particularly meteorological, such as the unusual description of the winter of 1833-1834: *The swallows flew over the pond of the bogard fathers with stalactites on their tails'* and *'from 5 April it snowed incessantly for eight days and we didn't see a complete thaw until 15 May'.*

5. In addition to the codified part, there are scattered elements. They have been kept in the Society's book and are now enclosed in a special envelope. Handwritten by Nijs, we find two accounts relating to the Society's income; a third account relating to the 1811 meal and some "*vermaeningen*" (admonitions). In addition, two double sheets contain drafts of 17th century aldermen's letters (the latter have not been transcribed, as they show only insignificant deviations from the transcribed texts). What the inventory does not contain, and what might have been expected, especially given the details it contains, are aspects of the apostles' clothing or the route of the procession, for example. Or, more generally, about the customs of Palm Sunday in Hoegaarden or the habits of the Society (for example, during the Palm Sunday meal, a chalice of wine was traditionally passed from one apostle to another for a sip). There is no mention of where the Palm Sunday statue of Christ was stored, or of the restoration or painting of this "*colt*".

Dating and authenticity.

From the drafting of the statutes until 1931, the book of the Society of Apostles was added to fairly regularly. The earliest date (1631) is mentioned in the statutes: "*Int iaer ons heeren alsmen schreeff duijsent ses hondert een en dertich ...*". The date 1621, later in the book, refers to a document that was copied later: "*Copije*".

Authenticity is guaranteed both by the watermark on the paper and the specific features of the handwriting, as well as by the absence of any interest in falsification.

The Brotherhood book is written on old paper from the Epinal mill in the Vosges.
(With the exception of the latter part)

7. Fraternities/Brotherhoods/Societies in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of fraternities:

Spiritual or religious societies

to which the bishops paid a great deal of attention in the 17th century, given their instrumental role in encouraging the devotion or religious zeal of the population.

One example is

the **Brotherhood of the XII Apostles** or **Society of the Apostles** or **Fraternity in memory of the Twelve Apostles** of Hoegaarden, which adopted (revised) statutes in 1631 and had them ratified by the authorities.

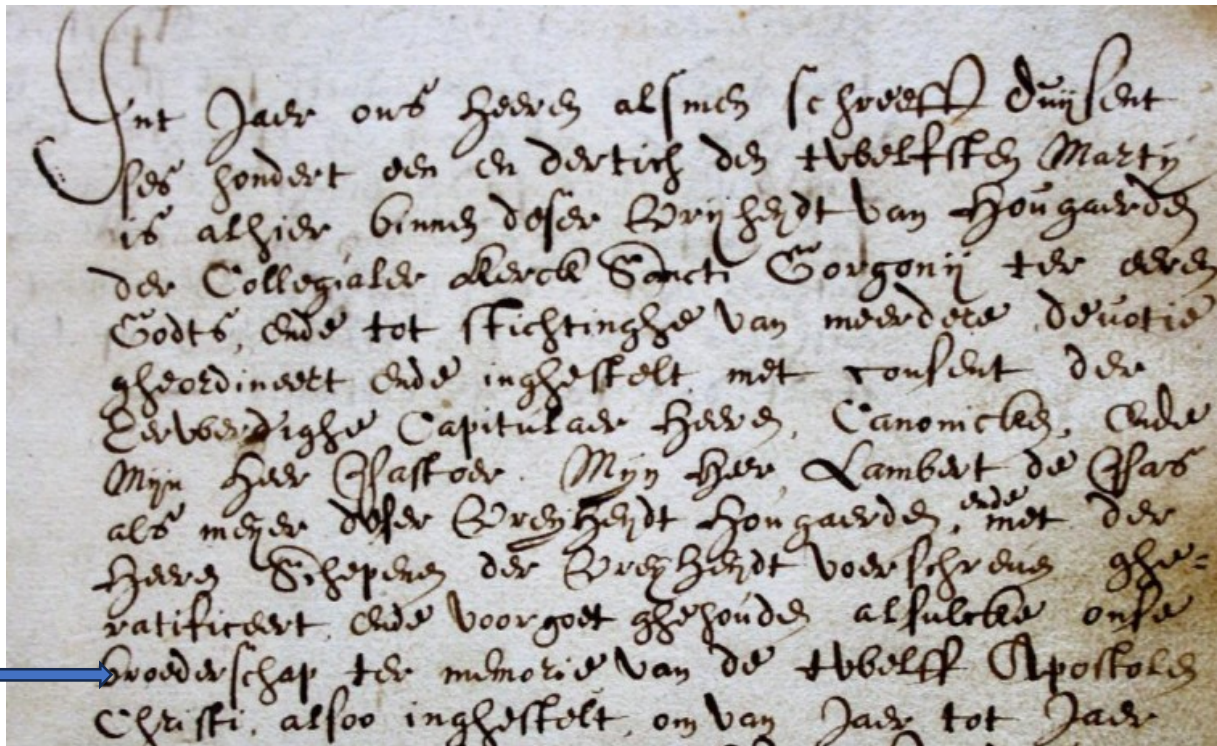
Secular societies

which are based on family ties or membership of societies, archers or even another society or guild. One example is

the **Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages** or **the Society of the V Noble Lineages** or **the Brotherhood of the Five Families**

of Hoegaarden, founded in 1741 by the five married children of the Sweerts-Peeters couple around the use of study grants created by the priest-dean Henricus Peeters.

The Brotherhood of the XII Apostles or the Society of the Apostles or
The Fraternity in memory of the Twelve Apostles (Statutes of 1631).



In the year 1631, on 12 March
at the "Vrijheid Hoegaarden" in the collegiate church of Saint-Gorgon
in honour of God = the brotherhood is spiritual or religious
to encourage devotion
and with the consent of the canons, the parish priest, mayor Lambert de Pas and the aldermen = the
ruling circles of the parish and the municipality (Vrijheid)
was established:



our fraternity in memory of the twelve Apostles of Christ

The main aim of the brotherhoods was not the veneration of some saint, but rather an in-depth experience of the faith, aimed at both individual salvation and the promotion of public worship. In the 17th century, the Church sought to **encourage religious life by generalising religious societies**. Members of the Society of the Apostles were also members of the Brotherhood of Notre-Dame. Parish.

Brotherhoods were not imposed by the bishop, but came into being at the request of the community. This 'community' initiative came from a few individuals belonging to the **leading circles of the parish**.

It is also possible that the foundation deed was drawn up in order to better control the peasants, probably at a time when the shift towards the lower strata of the population had already begun. The statutes bear witness to the desire to establish, in an institutional manner, a clergy support group which in itself was vested with a certain prestige. This is particularly evident in the fact that the brotherhood was given its own place in the choir on Palm Sunday.

[illegible]

Authentic extract from the Sweets book by notary Jean Sweets, Hoegaarden.

The Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages

founded on 9 December 1741 in Hoegaarden's former rectory

before notary Joannes Sweerts

in the presence of the parish priest-dean, Henricus Sweerts (brother of Servatius and Hubertus Sweerts) **in his capacity as witness,**

by

Carlo Van Nerim (sic) x Barbara Sweerts

Henricus Hoebancx x Marie Anne Sweerts

Henricus Struijs x Elisabeth Sweerts

Servatius Sweerts x Angelina Sweerts

Hubertus Sweerts x Barbara van Osmael

all of whom are aldermen and/or sworn members of the *Vrijheid Hoegaarden*.

They created three councils and designed the Brotherhood's coat of arms.

1. een bestierst ofte Hooftraede genaemt Sweerts-Raede (a main council named "Sweertsraad")

een bestierst ofte Hooftraede genaemt Sweerts-Raede".

2. Item te fundeeren de confrerie vande v familien (item on the creation of the "*Confrérie van de V Geslachten*" – Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages)

Item te fundeeren de confrerie vande v familien".

3. Item tot wettighe waepenen te voeren van confrérie (item relating to the description of the future coat of arms)

Item tot wettighe waepenen te voeren van confrerie voors(egd)

1 de gulden Lelie ofte van Nerim Carlosgelette in abime (schildhart)

2 tsilver sweert ofte Hoebancx Henricus gelette in senextrehooft

3 den silveren struysvoghel ofte Struys Henricus gelette in dextre

tip

4 den swarten merel ofte Sweerts Servatiusgelette

in dextrehooft

5 tgroene klaverblad ofte Sweerts Hubertus

gelette in senextrepointe

met upte voors(egde) blasoene een

wijndruyventak in respijt vande fundateur'

4. Item te nomineeren tot proviseur ende tuteur

Henricus Sweerts pastor ende te nemen tot collateurs die

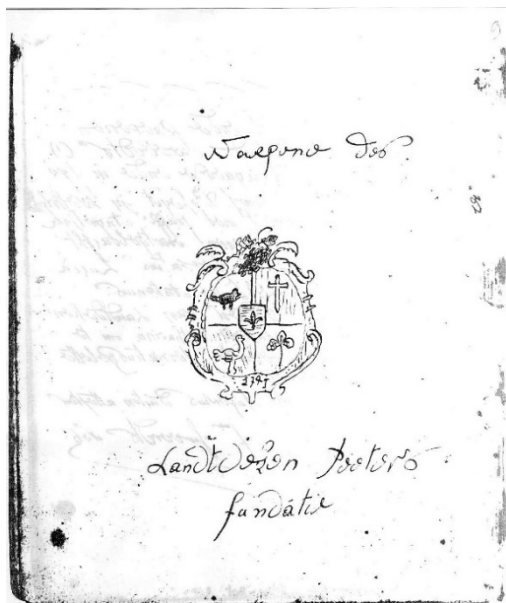
naergenoemden S. Sweerts ende H. Sweerts see you

denomineeren de (nomination of the headmaster and tutor and of the scholarship managers - S. Sweerts and H. Sweerts - responsible for selecting the scholarship holders)

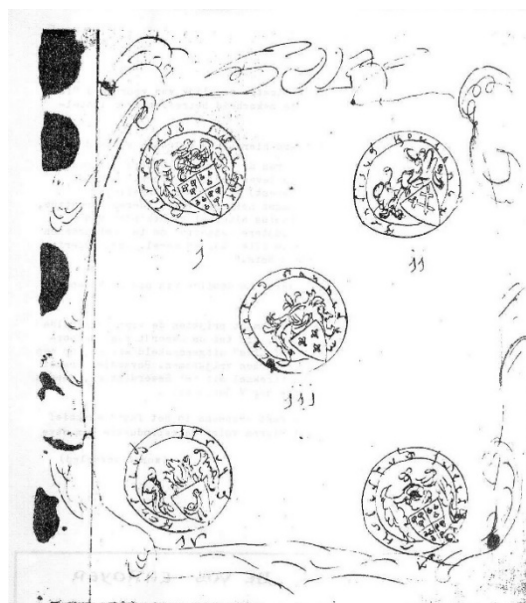
'item te nomineeren tot proviseur ende tuteur

Henricus Sweerts pastor ende te nemen tot collateurs die

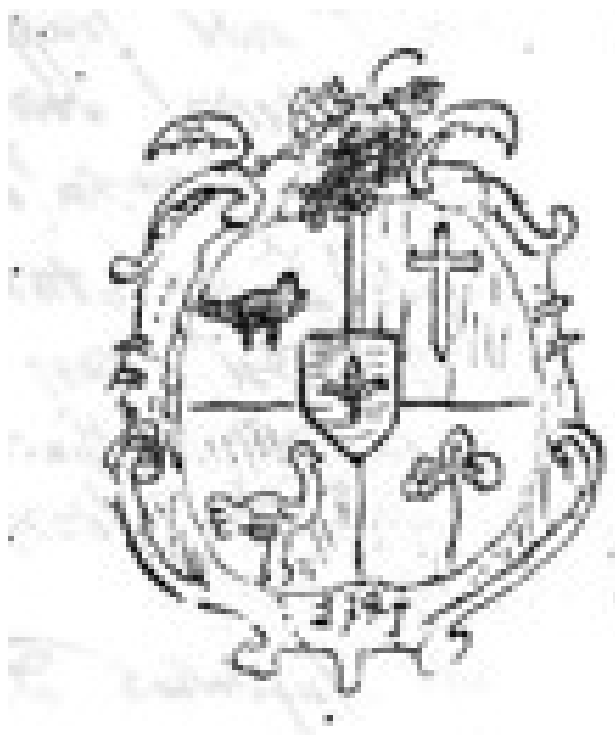
naergenoemden S. Sweerts ende H. Sweerts'



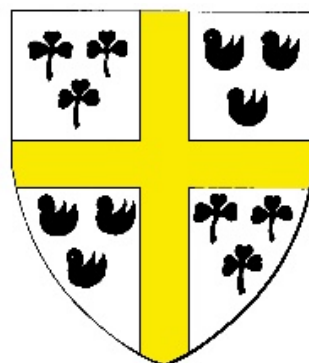
The Brotherhood's coat of arms



The coats of arms of the five founding members

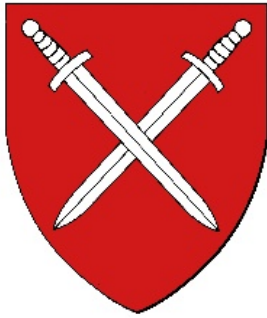


Coat of arms of the Brotherhood (the bunch of grapes = Peeters coat of arms (1741))

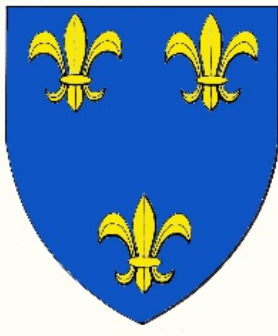




Servaes Sweerts = The Blackbird (1768)



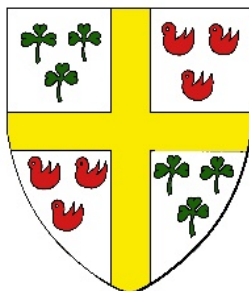
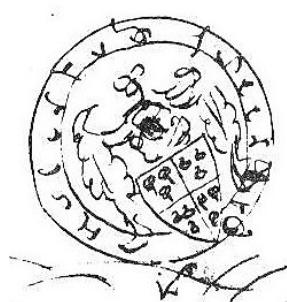
Henricus Hoebancx = The Silver Sword (1772)



Carolus Van Nerum = The Golden Lily (1778)

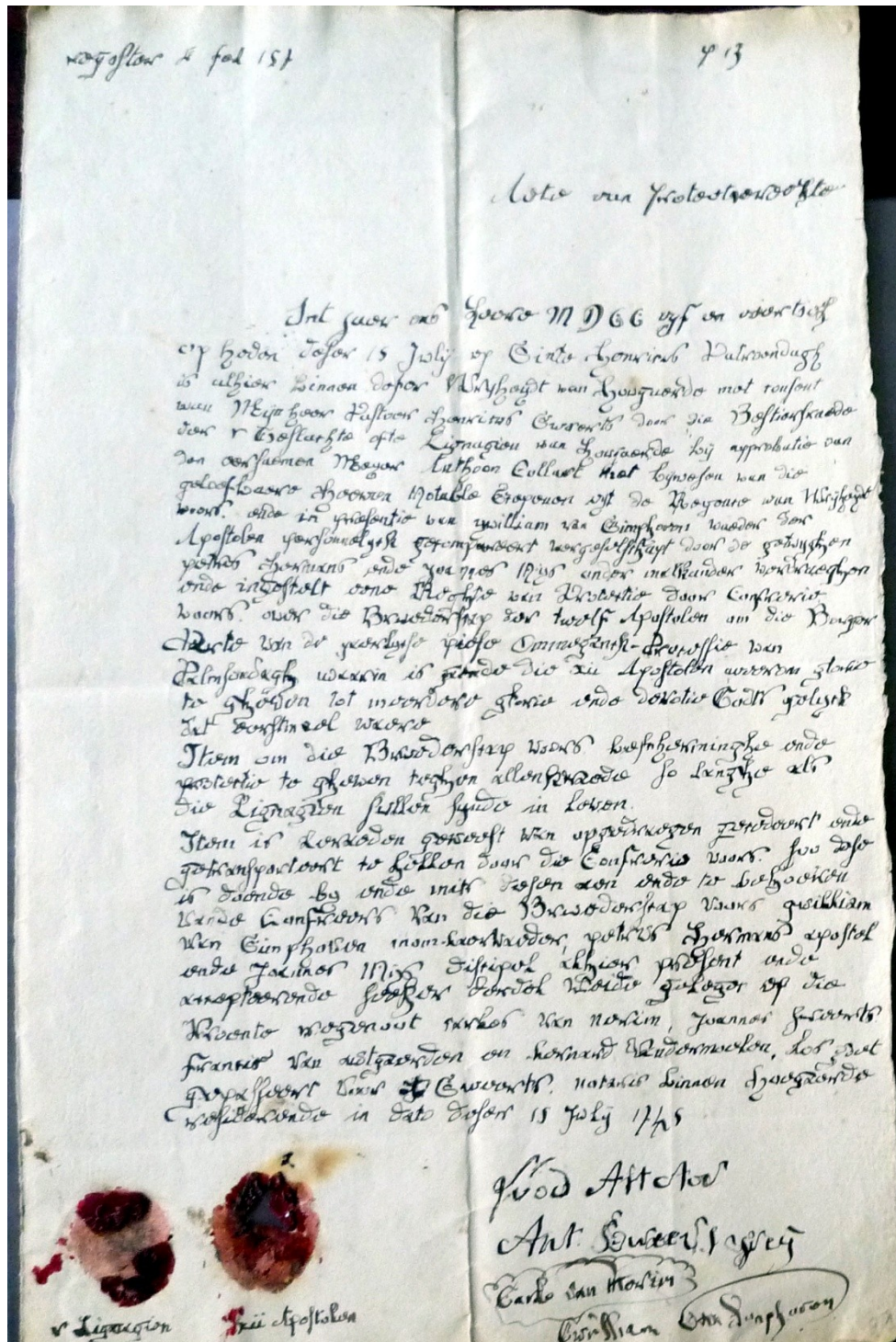


Henricus Struys = The Silver Ostrich (1780)



Hubert Sweerts = The Green Clover (1776)

Deed of protection concluded by the Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages in favour of the Society of Apostles on 15 July 1745, the day on which the Apostles celebrate the "Separation of the Apostles" each year.



Signed by Antoon Sweerts and Carlo van Nerim on behalf of the Brotherhood, and by Guiliam Van Simphoven, "godfather" (*Mombaarvader*) of the Society of the XII Apostles, and bearing the seal of the Brotherhood 'V Lignagiën' and of the 'XII Apostolen'.

The 1745 Act of Protection on the Palm Sunday procession was the concrete document used to reorganise *the 'ommegang'* into a flamboyant procession - an expression of the power and wealth of Hoegaarden's V Noble Lineages.

Transcription

Register E fol. 157

p. 13¹

Protection Rights Act

Int jaer ons Heere MDCC vijf en veertich

Op heden deser **15 julij op Sinte Henricus Patroondagh**

(= separation of the apostles)

is alhier binnen deser Vrijheydt van Hougaerde met consent

van Mijnheer **Pastoor** Henricus Sweerts door die **Bestiersraede**

(for the pastoor priest

der V Geslachte ofte Lignagien van Hougaerde bij approbatie van

council of the V Lin.

den eersaemen **Meyer Anthoon Collart** met bijwesen van die

mayor

geloofbaere Heeren Notable **Schepenen uijt de Regentie** van Vrijheydt

aldermen)

voors(egd) ende in presentie van **Guilliam Van Simphoven vaeder** der

(mombaervader)

Apostolen personelijck gecompereert vergeselschap door de getuijghen

Petrus Hermans ende Joannes Nijs onder malkander verdraeghen

(apostle Hermans/

ende ingestelt **eene Reghte van Protectie** door Confrerie

disciple Nijs)

voors(egd) over die Bruederschap der twelf **Apostolen om die Borger**

(the secular part)

Parte van de jaerlijcse paese Ommeganck-Processie van

Palmsondagh waarin is gaende die xii Apostolen **weerom glorie**

te gheven tot meerdere glorie ende devotie Godts gelijck

dat **eerstmael waere.**

(AS IN THE PAST!!!)

Item om die Bruederschap weers bescherminghe ende

protectie te gheven teghen allen kwaede so langhe als

die Lignagien sullen sijnde in leven.

Item is beraeden geweest van opgedraegen gecedeert ende

getransporteert te hebben door die Confrerie voors(egd) soo dese

is doende bij ende mits desen aen ende te behoeven

vande Confreers van die Bruederscap voors(egd) **Guilliam**

Van Simphoven mombaervader, **Petrus Hermans** apostel

ende **Joannes Nijs** discipel alhier present ende

accepteerende **seeker derdel weide gelegen op die** (the donation: 1/3° bunder = 40a.)

Vroente regenoot Carlos Van Nerim, Joannes Sweerts,

Francis Van Autgaerden en Bernard Vandermoelen, los goet

gepasseert voor J. Sweerts, notaris binnen Hoegaerde

residerende in dato deser 15 Julij 1745



V Lineages



xii Apostles

Quod Attestor

(signature) Ant. Sweerts secre(tar)is

(signature.) Carlo Van Nerim

(signature) Guilliam Van Simphoven

¹ Reg(ister) E fol(io) 157 p(agina) 13: reference to the E. Sweertsen/Confrérie register, where this deed of protection and donation is recorded; all these registers have been lost over time.

This document, bearing the wax seals of the V Lineages and that of the Society of Apostles, and the original signatures of Antoine Sweerts, Carolus Van Nerim and Guilliam Van Simphoven, forms part of our archives.

1745-1995 The Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages renews its act of protection dated 15 July 1745



The dean of the Brotherhood, Marcel Joseph (1991-1999) (left), presents the honorary insignia to honorary ambassador Georges Puttevils, auxiliary dean, to mark the Brotherhood's 250th anniversary (1741-1991).

Plechtige hernieuwing van de Acte van Protectiereghte van 15 juli 1745

Op heden, zaterdag 14 oktober 1995, ter gelegenheid van de jaarlijkse Regentiedag van de Confrerie der V Geslachten van Hoegaarden, in tegenwoordigheid van de bestuursraden der verschillende familie-gilden, in tegenwoordigheid van het Genootschap der XII Apostelen van Hoegaarden,

bevestigen wij, ondergetekenden:

*Marcel Joseph, Hoofddeken van de Confrerie der V Geslachten
August Van Nerum, Momboor-vader van het Apostelgenootschap*

de beschermingsakte van 15 juli 1745,

waarvoor wij, bovenvermelden, deze hernieuwing eigenhandig ondertekenen op heden 14 oktober 1995 in "t Nieuwhuys" te Hoegaarden in aanwezigheid van de vertegenwoordigers der V Geslachten.

Marcel Joseph

August Van Nerum

August Van Nerum (1922-1999), 'godfather' (Mombaar-vader) of the Society of Apostles from 1992 until his death in 1999).

Renewal of the deed of protection of 1745 by the Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages
During Regentiedag (Regency Day) on 14 October 1995

The importance of the 1745 '*protection act*' including the donation of land.

The Society of the Twelve Apostles has in a way been taken hostage by the Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages, which has turned it into a showcase for the power and glory of the '*Sweerts*' *Clan*. The Palm Sunday procession was intended to attract crowds to Hoegaarden and showcase the pomp and wealth of the Brotherhood.

As the deed clearly states:

The Sweerts Council (*bestiersraede*) - the Board of administration takes under its wings the Palm Sunday procession (*Reghte of Protection*) - the right to protect with the agreement of the parish priest Henricus Sweerts (*Sweerts*), Mayor Antoon Collart and aldermen of the Regency (*Sweerts and related family*)

to turn the secular part (*die Borger Parte*) of the Palm Sunday procession into a grand and glorious procession (*restore glory*).

On this occasion, the Brotherhood of the V Noble Lineages donated a third of a grazing plot - 40 ares - to the Society of Apostles in memory of this event, and to provide the Brotherhood of Apostles with an income that would give them financial independence and thus more resilience to malevolent external forces (*herininghe ende protectie te gheven teghen allen kwaede*).

It was also further added, without any clarification, that the aim was to **re-establish the former situation**. On this point, we have no data other than the fact that in 1631, when the statutes were revised, some apostles still belonged to the higher class.

We don't know when the magnificent procession first described in 1806 took place (certainly not before 1745), but the last one did take place in 1794.

The intention is all the clearer:

With the 'revived' Palm Sunday procession and the 'new' Church of Saint Gorgon,

the Sweerts family was able to display its power and wealth on a grand scale.

The Palm Sunday celebrations were henceforth to be aimed at pilgrims and day labourers:

- The splendour of our unique **rococo church (1754-1759, a flagship project of the Sweerts)**
- The modern cobbled streets along which the procession took place

Gasthuistraat to the corner with Putzeysstraat (1735)

Section next to the cemetery wall (1746)

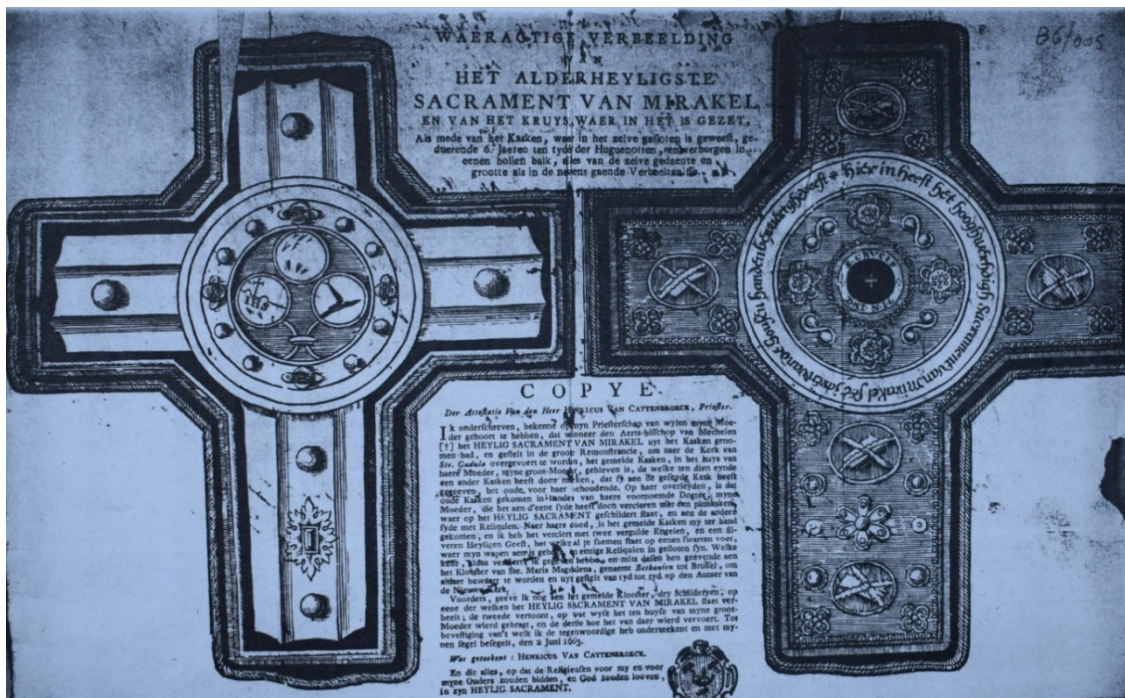
Doelstraat and Pastorijstraat (Molenweg) (1748-1750)

From the corner of the Putzeysstraat to the church (1749)

The road linking Hoegaarden to Tienen (1771-1772)

- The square-shaped farms: 'Cruysblock' (**17th-18th centuries**), 'de 11 000 Maagden' (**1748**), 'Arendnest' (**17th-18th centuries**), 'Paradijs' (**1727**), **birthplace of the five founding members.**
- Mansion houses such as that of Carolus van Nerum and Barbe Sweerts (1747) and the residence adjoining the 'Arendnest' (**18th century**).
- The Canons' Chapter and the '*Kapittelhuys*' or Chapter House (**18th century**)
- The centre of the deanery of Hoegaarden (**as of the end of the 17th century**)
- Its exceptional position as a "Liège enclave" within Brabant, whose mayor (burgomaster) was the highest representative of the Prince-Bishop (he resided in Hoegaarden and was also responsible for Tourinnes-Beauvechain).
- And above all, the source of all this wealth: 'Hoegaard', the famous white beer (**there were 39 breweries in Hoegaarden around 1740**).

All this is highlighted by the Palm Sunday procession, a parade through the village with flags, music, songs, militia, etc., which attracted rich and poor from all walks of life; of course, interest was also heightened by the fairground attractions that accompanied such an event.

[illegible]

Jan Baptist Collart, an apostle of the Society since 1784, noted on the back of a pious engraving from 1806 how the procession was organised during the last decades of the Ancien Régime. (*Paper, 21 x 29 cm, Archives of the V Noble Lineages, Hoegaarden*).

Transcription.

Ommeganck vanande Palmprocessie te Hugaerde, up Palmsondach by 't luyden vanande dicke Klocke ueter Collegialer Kercke, gaende in die Cuype rond die Paradisblock ende Cruysblock, naer maniere en forme voor memorie van die Bleyde Intrede Jezus tot Ieruzalem, gheleycke dat eerstmael uit 't beghinsel tot aen die Franschen Teyde in vueghe plaght syn.

Compose vande Borger Parte

To the 1st Ruythers te peert in Lambregyns with lignages Blasoene

Second Die Rotgesellen uyt die Edele Guld der Arquebusiers

3rd place The Hugaerde Playboys

Fourth Die Wethoudere Regenten ende Gesworenen met Myn Heere den Meyer up cop

the 5 Altegaer die Gulden met baniere vergheselschap wesende van hunne Confreers uyt die Raede.

Compose vande Religieuse-Parte

6th June Pilgrims with devotional display of the life and teaching of Christ at the so-called Kuysblock hoeve and church square.

At 7 years old Angels sangcoore

The 8th t Heyligh Cruys en Concilie van die Eerweerdighe Heere Canonicke, Plebaan, Landtdeken ende Pastoers in Priestcoore met hunne Cnaepe ende suite

The 9th The Brotherhood of the XII Apostles with their Mombaer-Father in Palmesel gedraeghen by these Disciples

The 10th Die Kinders ende ingesetenen 's dorp in juebelsange ende met palmgewuyf.

Institutie ter Ere Godts en tot meerdere devotie ingesteld en door die

Brotherhood of the Apostles Twalff Christe der Collegialen Kercke Sancti Gorgonii en onder die Bescherminghe van Mijn Heer den Meyer en Schepenen deser Vrijheydt Hugaerde

The confreres of the Eersaeme and the Notable Lineages

In den naem Ons Heeren Amen J. Bt. Collart Hugaerde 1806

Translation

Components of the secular part :

Riders bearing the banners of the V Noble Lineages and horses covered with tarpaulins;

The company of the 'St Martinus' **crossbow guild**;

Hoegaarden's musicians;

The village council, regents and sworn members, led by the mayor;

All the guilds with their advisors and banners.

Components of the religious part :

Scenes from the life and suffering of Christ portrayed by **pilgrims** at the *Cruysblock* Farm and on the church forecourt;

A choir of angelic singers ;

The processional cross followed by the **parish priest**, **canons** and **priests of the deanery** of

Hoegaarden, all dressed in their garments, with their retinue and servants;

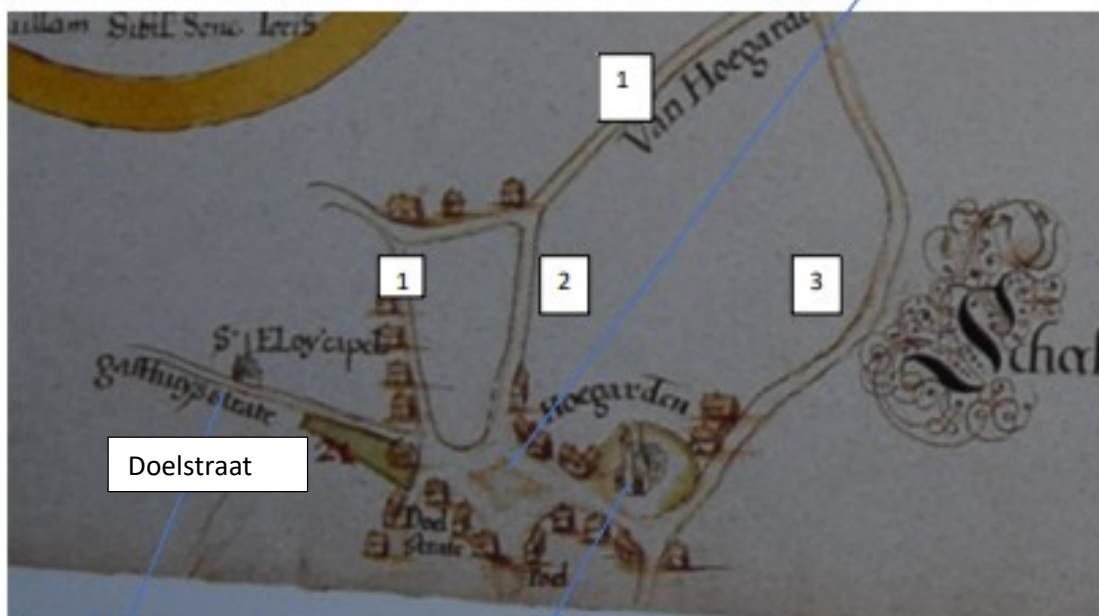
The Society of the XII Apostles accompanied by the 'mombaervader' (the Society's godfather) and the Palm Sunday donkey carried by 4 disciples;

The **children singing and waving their pallemalai sprigs**, and the village **inhabitants**.

Established in honour of God and to encourage piety by the Brotherhood/Society of the XII Apostles and under the patronage of the mayor and aldermen of the constituted bodies ('vrijheid' of Hoegaarden) and the "honourable brothers" of the noble lineages/families.

The short processional route: Churchyard-Doelstraat-Molenweg (Tommestraat-Pastorijstraat).

Centrum Hoegaarden in het 'Kaartboek van de Abdij van Park (1663), met de poel op het dorpsplein)

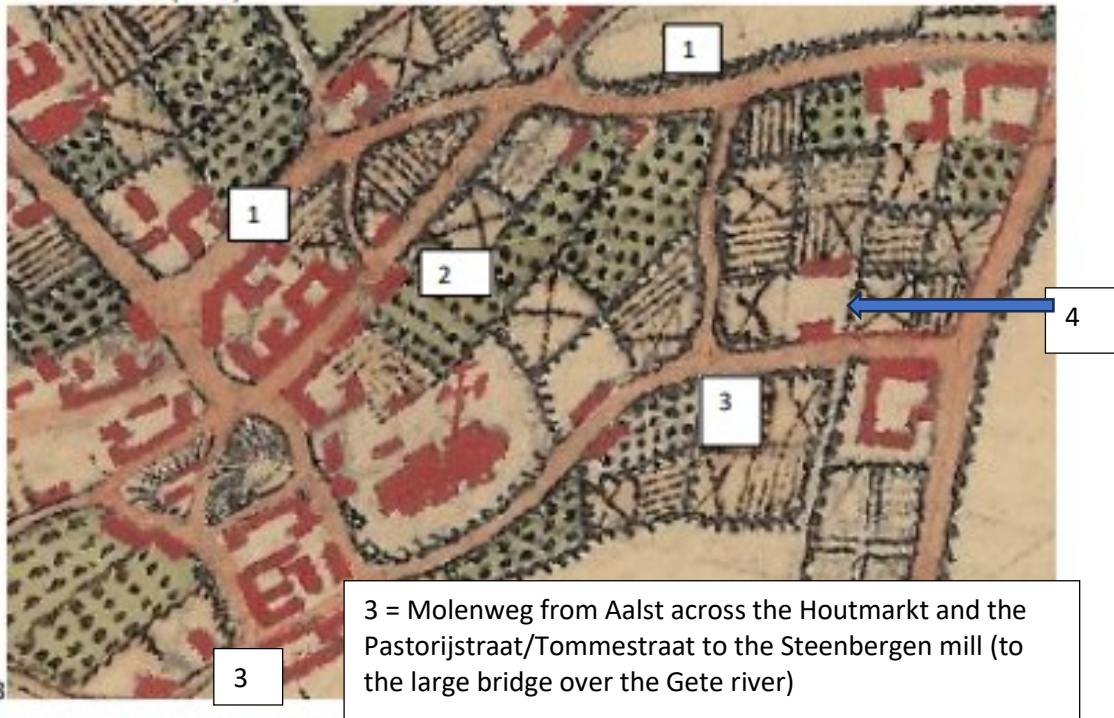


And on the Ferraris map (circa 1770-5)

The Doelstraat (1) continues towards Nerm (today: Dotremontstraat) and the Putzeysstraat (2), which had not yet been built.

In the 20th century, the Palm Sunday procession took the following route: Churchyard-Putzeysstraat-Doelstraat-Pastorijstraat.

De Villaretkaart (1745)



En de Ferrariskaart (ca. 1770)

4 On the Villaret map, the Van Nerum-Sweerts mansion is under construction; on the Ferraris map, the garden is laid out and surrounded by walls (the *gazebo is not yet visible*)".

Note the increase in construction between 1745 and 1770.

Pictures from the 1981 celebration

For the Society of the Apostles, the Hoegaarden Palm Sunday celebration starts in the early morning hours. Ahead of time, the members of the Society have taken up a collection in the parish to ease the financial burden of the event. Before the Saturday, they also take care to provide the boxwood needed to decorate the statue and to supply the children with '*pallemaai*'.



On the Saturday, the donkey is taken from it's Church storage place to the rectory; it is then decorated with boxwood by members of the Society.



On the Sunday morning, the apostles get ready in the rectory: garments and 'halo'.



The Palm Sunday Christ is brought into the church for the Palm Sunday blessing.



(from back to front) Mayor R. Kerryn and the aldermen members of the town council, Bishop P. Schoenmaeckers, the apostle Matthew and V. Biscompte, the '*mombaarvader*' or 'godfather' of the apostles.



It's as busy as it was in 1931 - but there are also related activities and a fair.



At the end of the Palm Sunday procession and the solemn High Mass with Easter Communion, the apostles and disciples, together with the '*mombaarvader*' or 'godfather', return to the rectory, where their garments and attributes will be stored until the following year.

The members then go to the banqueting hall to eat their meal together. They each take a sip from the chalice - the cup carried by the apostle John during the procession - which is emptied completely by a new member. On 15 July, the day apostle Henricus is celebrated, the Society remembers the "Apostles' separation".

The tradition is more or less preserved, even though the religious aspect has been reduced and/or adapted to modern times.

And finally :

Composition of the Society of the Apostles

The apostles are dressed in wide brown, dark green and dark blue robes that reach down to their feet and are held at the waist by a belt. A red sash is worn from shoulder to hip; it is decorated with gold fringes and their name is embroidered in yellow cross-stitch.

The apostles' vestments were renewed in 1899: *"They are now made of beautiful fabrics in different colours, whereas previously they were made of jute or cooper's cotton (sic), materials that were not worthy of public display..."*. (cf. the parish monograph). The current garments date from 1980.

The disciples and the '*mombaarvader*' or 'godfather' simply wear a sash from shoulder to hip over their civilian clothes; the four disciples are celibate and carry the Palm Sunday statue of Christ. The oldest apostle becomes the 'godfather' of the apostles or '*mombaarvader*'.

The apostles, bearing their symbols, walk alongside the Palm Sunday donkey in the following order:

to the left	to the right
John (chalice)	Peter (key)
Matthew (book)	Thaddaeus (square)
Philip (inverted cross)	Andrew (X-shaped cross)
James the Lesser (club)	Simon (saw)
Thomas (spear)	James the Greater (pilgrim's staff)
Bartholomew (cutlass)	Matthias (axe, halberd)

The apostles also wear a 'halo' known as an 'umbraculum' or 'ombrellino'.

This is a small halo-shaped artefact that they ingeniously attach to the back of their heads.