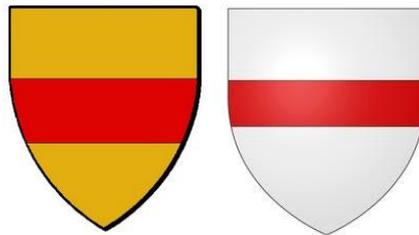


THIRTY FEUDAL GENERATIONS OF BETHUNE

Willy van Rycleghem

The name de Béthune is probably the most prestigious name in Flemish history, and several families have tried to appropriate it. However, the thirty generations which I will present here, are all authentic representatives of the original feudal dynasty. which shares its origin with that of nearby Haverskerque¹. The connection between both families is attested by the similar design of their coats of arms, which use the top colors of gold and silver from the heraldic hierarchy as background::



Haverskerke

Béthune

OR	ARGENT								
AZURE	GULES	PURPURE	SABLE	VERT					
MURREY	SANGUINE	TENNÉ							
CARNATION	BLEU CELESTE	RED OCHRE	BUFF	CENDRÉE / EISENFARBE	ORANGE	ROSE	COPPER		

¹ Cf. My earlier paper on *Thirty Feudal Generations of Haverskerke*

CHAPTER I FROM VIKINGS to CRUSADERS

The founder of the Haverskerke family had been a certain Rigaut, whose name was probably derived from Rik-gaut, i.e. the boss of the Gauts, a clan of Vikings which originated from the Geat region in Sweden. The founder of the Béthune dynasty came from the fourth generation of the Haverskerke family in order to become Béthune's first castellan. From then on, the family started a tradition of naming its scions after this founding father Robert :

G-IV	Robert	First Lord of Béthune
G-V	Robert I " <i>le Faiseux</i> "	2 nd Lord of Béthune
G-VI	Robert II " <i>le Faiseux</i> " & Berthilde d'Olhain	Third Lord of Béthune
G-VII	Robert III " <i>le Chauve</i> " & Giselberte d'Halluin	4th Lord of Béthune
G-VIII	Robert IV " <i>le Gros</i> " & Adèle of Péronne	Crusader
G-IX	Guillaume I & Clémence d'Oisy	First Lord of Richebourg
G-X	Robert V " <i>le Roux</i> " & Adelise de Saint-Pol ,	Crusader

The nickname "*le Faiseux*" referred to the nearby village of Faiseux taken over by the family. The other nicknames speak for themselves. Robert III, the Bald, is mentioned by E. Warlop as advocate of St Bertin with the additional titles of "baro", "princeps" and "procer"², in other words one of the top nobles at the time. Together with his brother Adam, Robert IV was a distinguished participant in the First Crusade of 1096 from which he would not return³.

In 1136 Robert IV's son Guillaume acquired the next-door property of Richebourg. This happened as follows. The lords of Béthune were hereditary advocates "*Avoués*" of the abbey of St Vaast, whose interests they were supposed to defend. Richebourg had been part of the abbey's properties from the beginning. In 1136, however, the advocate apparently forced the abbey to cede the southern part of the village to its advocate

² E. Warlop : *Flemish Nobility before 1300*, p. 658. Procer means mayor.

³ Cf. my earlier paper on *Flemish crusaders in 1096*.

Guillaume de Béthune. From then on it was named “Riquebourg-en-l’Avouerie”⁴.

In addition to taking over Richebourg, Guillaume also acquired neighboring Chocques by marrying Clémence d’Oisy, who had received this fief as dowry from her father Hugues II d’Oisy who had himself obtained it by marrying the widow of Arnoul of Chocques.

Guillaume’s son **Robert V** enters the scene at the age of 17 when he joins Thierry of Alsace and a large number of prominent Flemish nobles who all went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1147-49. Robert came back home with Thierry of Alsace but must have shown some independence afterwards since in 1158 Thierry’s son Philip ordered his incarceration in the castle of Douai for a couple of days. From then on, the more disciplined Robert began to play a distinct role in Anglo-Flemish diplomacy. In 1163, he witnessed the renewal of the Dover Treaty between Thierry of Alsace and King Henry II of England and became one of the twelve barons who guaranteed for the obligations of the Count of Flanders⁵. Each of the twelve barons received 100 marks as money fief in exchange for an annual service of ten of their knights to the king of England.

In 1177, Robert V would return to the Holy Land with his sons Robert VI and William II, this time accompanying Philip of Alsace and Henry II of England. Together, they won the Battle of Montgisard where the army of Saladin was decimated. Near the end of the decade, Robert became ambassador of the Count of Flanders to the English court and played an important role in several diplomatic missions.

⁴Riquebourg was probably founded by the Viking Rikiwulf in the ninth century. On the English side of the Channel, there is a place with a similar name Richborough, next to Sandwich. I suppose Rikiwulf left from there. See my book *The Ryckeghem Saga* (2021) for an explanation.

⁵ Eljas Oksanen : Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World 1066-1216, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 264-67..

Finally, in 1189, he embarked once more for the Third Crusade, this time accompanied by his sons Cono and Baldwin, following Philip of Alsace and the Richard Lionheart of England, to fight Saladin for the second time and besiege Acre. Sanitary conditions were awful and food ran out after the yearlong siege. Robert V of Béthune died on 10 January of 1191 probably from intestinal fever. Philip of Alsace later also succumbed to an epidemic at the end of the siege on 1 August 1191.

CHAPTER II THE SONS OF ROBERT V

The red-haired Robert V was not only an active crusader and diplomat, he was also a family man with seven children, five of whom were sons. Only the descendants of one of them would reach the thirtieth generation .

1. Cono of Béthune

Cono is mentioned by Wikipedia as the fifth son of Robert V, but this could be inconsistent with the dates of his career. He was educated by his cousin, the noted poet Hugues III d'Oisy and later became a troubadour who was lauded for his eloquence. He was knighted in 1170 and invited to join the court of Mathilde of Portugal. In 1180, he was sent by Mathilde's husband Philip of Alsace to sing at the marriage of the French king Philippe *Auguste* with Isabelle of Hainaut. It is reported that the Queen Mother, Mary of Champagne, mocked his Artesian accent.

In 1189, he accompanied his father Robert and Philip of Alsace on the Third Crusade, from which he returned safely. His major performance, however, took place during the Fourth Crusade, which ended in Constantinople. Baldwin IX of Flanders-Hainaut, the leader of the Crusade, mentioned him favorably in a letter to the Pope and in 1202 named him lord of Bergues near Dunkirk.



Map of the Near-East at the time of the third Crusade

After Count Baldwin IX disappeared during a fight against the Bulgarians in 1205, the barons elected Cono as regent. Nevertheless, after the arrival of Henry of Flanders-Hainaut who became the second Latin Emperor of Constantinople, Cono's role seems finished⁶. Cono died in Constantinople in 1219.

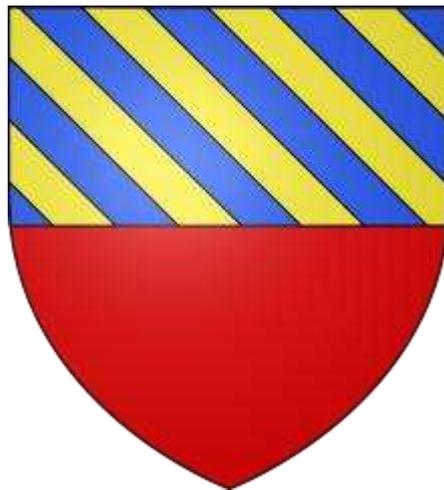


Image of Constantinople c. 1200

⁶ There is not a single reference to him in the extensive survey of the period by Filip van Tricht : La politique étrangère de l'empire de Constantinople, de 1210 à 1216, in : *Le Moyen Age*, Vol CVII (2001) pp. 409-38

2. Baldwin of Béthune

Cono's brother Baldwin became a prominent member of the inner circle of King Richard Lionheart, whom he accompanied on the Third Crusade. After the death of Lord William Mandeville in 1195, king Richard directed his widow Hawise of Aumale to remarry in with Baldwin of Béthune, the securing the latter's fortune. In 1197, Baldwin served as one of king Richard's emissaries to the German imperial election where he defended in vain the candidacy of Otto of Brunswick, count of Poitou. He died in 1212.



Coat of arms of Baldwin of Béthune

3. John of Béthune

John of Béthune was a cleric. He became first provost of Douai and Séclin and later bishop of Cambrai.

4. Robert VI

Robert VI and his brother William II accompanied their father Robert V in the armed escort of count Philip of Alsace when he made a “pilgrimage” to the Holy Land in 1177. When they arrived in Jerusalem Robert VI and William II wanted to marry the sisters of King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, Isabelle and Sibylle. They were turned down by the king⁷. Robert VI died childless in 1196.

5. William II “*the Red*” of Béthune

It would therefore befall to William II to become the ascendant of the remaining 20 generations of Béthune. He inherited not only his father’s red hair, but also the titles of lord of Richebourg, Chocques and Varneton. In the meantime, in 1191, he had married in 1191 Mathilde of Dendermonde, the heiress of Dendermonde, Lokeren and Meulebeke. From then on, his line was rebaptized “*de Béthune of Lokeren*”:

⁷ The ladies were much in demand among crusaders. Sybil married three times, Isabel four.

Line of William II of Béthune

- G-XI William II “the Red” & Mathilde of Dendermonde
- G-XII William III & Isabeau de Berghes
- G-XIII William IV & Beatrix de Hébuterne
- G-XIV William V & Jeanne de Nesle
- G-XV William VI & Marie de Roye
- G-XVI John I & Jeanne de Coucy
- G-XVII John II & Isabelle d’Estouteville
- G-XVIII Robert IX & Michelle d’Estouteville
- G-XIX John III & Jeanne d’Anglue
- G-XX Alpin & Jeanne Jouvenel des Ursins
- G-XXI François & Charlotte Dauvet
- G-XXII Maximilian I & Anne de Courtenay

We will devote the next chapter to Maximilian, Duke of Sully, and the final generations. It is amusing to note that the duke of Sully and marshal of France, apparently no longer knew that William II was his ascendant, but claimed to be Cono’s descendant, a historic celebrity.

CHAPTER III MAXIMILIAN of BETHUNE and his DESCENDANTS

Maximilian was born in 1559 at Rosny-sur-Seine and was raised a protestant by his parents. In 1572, he escaped the Massacre of St Barthélémy and joined the protestant king of Navarre, whom he followed everywhere. In 1576, he fought together with the protestant armies of Holland to recover Ghent. In 1583 he married the rich heiress Anne of Courtenay, and began building a huge fortune. In 1593, after the murder of the French king Henry III, he counseled Henry of Navarre to convert to Catholicism, so that he could become king of France (“Paris vaut bien une messe”). After he became king, Henry IV of France entrusted to Maximilian the management of France’s finances. He quickly put the accounts in order and made possible France’s recovery after thirty years of civil war. In 1606 he was rewarded with the Duchy of Sully, and became known simply as **Sully**. Unfortunately, after Henry IV was murdered in 1610, Maximilian did not get along with his widow Catherine de Medici, and resigned from his position in order to devote himself to further expanding his fortune and to the writing of his famous *Memoirs*. Later he became close again to Richelieu, who named him marshal of France in 1634. He died in 1641, leaving a huge fortune to his heirs⁸.

Maximilian married twice and his descendants are consequently divided in two separate lines, each with their respective fortunes...

⁸ Isabelle Aristide estimates his fortune at 5 million livres in : *La fortune de Sully*, Paris, 1990



Portrait of Maximilian of Béthune, duke of Sully

Both lines of descendants of Sully

G-XXIII	Maximilian I & Anne de Courtenay	Maximilian I & Rachel de Cochefilet
G-XXIV	Maximilian II & Françoise de Créquy	François & Anne d'Horville
G-XXV	Maximilian François & Charlotte Séquier	Armand & M. Jeanne de Vatan
G-XXVI	Maximilian Pierre & M. Ant. Servien	Maximilien & Gabrielle de Chatillon
G-XXVII	Maximilian Henri & M. J. de Guyon	Maximilien & Alexandrine d'Espinoy
G-XXVIII	(line extinct in 1729)	Maximilien Alexandre
	(line extinct in 1807)	(line extinct in 1807)

The lineage to the left inherited the title of Dukes of Sully, while the lineage to the right adopted the title of Dukes of Orval. However, neither lineage reached the 30th generation, but the descendants of Sully's brother Philippe would manage to do so.

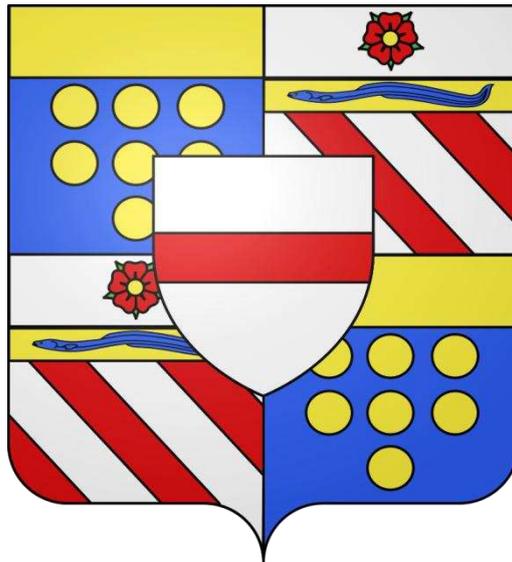


Portrait of Philippe de Béthune, French ambassador in Rome

Contrary to his brother Maximilian, Philippe remained a Catholic, and first served under King Henry III. Nevertheless he later also managed to enter into the graces of King Henry IV and became his ambassador to Rome where he befriended Pope Clément VIII and collected paintings by Caravaggio.

Lineage of Philippe de Béthune⁹

G-XXIII	Philippe & Catherine le Bouteiller de Senlis	Ambassador in Rome
G-XXIV	Hyppolite & Anne-Marie de Beauvilliers	Comte de Béthune et de Selles
G-XXV	Henri & Marie-Anne Dauvet	
G-XXVI	Louis & Marie-Thérèse Pellet de la Combe	
G-XXVII	Armand Louis & Marie-Thérèse de Creuzat	Marquis de Béthune
G-XXIX	Armand Louis Jean & Marie-Louise Scheir	
G-XXX	Anne Louis Maximilien Constant & Aline Daubrin de Comenil	
G-XXXI	Armand Maximilien de Béthune-Sully & Marie-Thérèse Allain de Cavant	



Coat of arms of Philippe de Béthune

THE END

⁹ Source: Jackie Philippe Manichon on Geneanet.org