MAKING HISTORY

The destruction and (re)construction of old Belgian towns during and after the First World War

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Introduction

World War I was, without any doubt, one of the most traumatic episodes in the history of Belgium, one which left almost no town or village unaffected. The hundreds—if not thousands—of commemorative initiatives planned by the local, regional and national governments for the years leading up to the centenary of the war in 2014, testify to its lasting impression. It is a well-known fact that the worst cases of destruction in this war primarily occurred in small historical towns, rather than in the large cities or the countryside. The image comes to mind of Ieper with its medieval cloth hall, which was left completely razed to the ground after four years of trench warfare. However, it seems clear that this internationally-renowned case eclipses a much more diverse landscape of destruction. Examining four Belgian towns (Aalst, Dendermonde, Oudenaarde and Veurne), this chapter will give a glimpse of this complex reality, and address some key questions. What was the degree of destruction in these four towns, and what were the motives behind it? To what extent was the historical townscape targeted deliberately? How and why was this destruction of the historical townscape used in German and Allied propaganda, and was it also exploited for other reasons (such as tourism)? Finally, what role did these destructions play in the historical townscape after the war?

Degree of destruction and motives

At the time of the German invasion on 4 August 1914, Belgium was—thanks to an early and profound process of industrialization—the fifth-ranking economic power and the most densely populated country worldwide. A network of railroads resulted in a population that was scattered over many small towns. During the first two months after the invasion, the Germans were responsible for several cases of destruction in towns such as Aalst and Dendermonde. By October all resistance seemed broken and the Germans were able to advance quite easily, until they were halted at the river Yser, leaving only a small corner in the northwest of Belgium unoccupied with Veurne as the main town. Four years of trench
warfare followed until the Allies succeeded on 28 September 1918 in breaking through. By Armistice Day on 11 November, they had reached the town of Oudenaarde, which thus became one of the last battle grounds.\(^1\)

The estimates of the sustained war damage diverge, but it can be stated that the damage was quite uneven, as can be seen in the four towns discussed in this chapter. In Aalst only 6 per cent of the buildings were damaged or destroyed, in Oudenaarde approximately 25 per cent, in Veurne 66 per cent and in Dendermonde a staggering 96 per cent of the buildings were damaged—the 98 undamaged buildings consisting mainly of low-quality working class houses, which were demolished in any case in the years after the war.\(^2\) The motives for these varied cases of destruction were equally diverse. During the first months of the war they can be seen as part of a strategy of total war, which cast strikes against non-military targets as an appropriate way to demoralize civilian resistance and to incite civilians against their own government—a tactic which was practiced for the first time on such a large scale.\(^3\) Contemporaries clearly interpreted as intentional these kinds of attacks. According to the Swiss art historian Marius Vachon, the strategy of total war was typical of German warfare.\(^4\)
Others stated that the destruction of each town was a deliberate warning for the province concerned and for the neighboring city, with Dendermonde as a deterrent for East Flanders and its capital Ghent. Moreover, contemporaries understood this intimidation to function on an international level, as well. By destroying Belgium, other small countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark were pressured to stand aside.

In Dendermonde the destruction did, indeed, seem to be the result of a premeditated and methodical approach, which is exactly why it struck international observers as one of the most horrific cases. Although the town occupied a strategic location with a bridge across the river Scheldt, it had been deprived of its fortified status in the beginning of the twentieth century; its ramparts were listed as monuments. In August 1914 the town was quickly refortified but this was mainly for the sake of appearance, which explains the rapid seizure of the town on 4 September. However, most of the damage was inflicted in the days following the seizure, in a very systematic way and with specially devised instruments. First, fire accelerants were sprayed on the gables, and once the fire was lit by means of phosphorus, highly flammable discs were thrown into the buildings. That this was no uncontrolled eruption of soldier-initiated violence is also demonstrated by eyewitness reports. Several German soldiers apologized to the inhabitants and stated that the arson was by superior order (German general Von Böhn: ‘alles rasieren’); additionally, they helped to evacuate older people and even pets before setting fire to the houses. German postcards of the ruins with proudly posing soldiers further indicate that, after the commission of these acts of destruction the army was not ashamed, but saw such destruction as a legitimate military action. The fact that German officials offered two clearly false pretexts—the absence of the mayor and the presence of
armed civilians, the so-called francs-tireurs—as justifications given for the destruction, also shows that these acts of destruction were used to intimidate the local population and suppress civilian resistance. Nonetheless, just as the extent of damage varied from town to town, so, too did the processes by which that destruction took place. In Aalst, acts of destruction in these first weeks of the war may, in fact, be considered as instances of uncontrolled revenge by soldiers for such resistance, which the soldiers had not expected. Here, acts of destruction were largely restricted to a few streets where there had been more serious resistance than elsewhere. These uncontrolled actions resulted both in architectural destruction and in more cruelty towards civilians, with 60 deaths as opposed to only 9 in Dendermonde. However, in Veurne—the only unoccupied town in Belgium—the acts of destruction were the result of yet another cause, the ongoing bombardments that continued during the entire war, except during the period between July 1915, when Veurne was declared an open town and military activity in or around the town was forbidden by the Belgian general Michel, and the summer of 1917, when this statute of open town was no longer observed following the British takeover of military command from the French. Finally, in Oudenaarde the damage was inflicted in the last two weeks of the war, as the Germans bombarded the town in a final attempt to stop the Allied advance.

FIGURE 12.3 Railway bridge and Saint Walburge Church. From the photographic exhibition Bombarded Oudenaarde, 11/11/1918, nr. 266. Municipal Archives, Oudenaarde
The historical townscape targeted?

Whatever the precise method of destruction, the historical townscape was often heavily hit. In Aalst the béguinage (complex of buildings used by Catholic lay sisters), the Gothic parish church of St Martin, and the old hospital were damaged. In Oudenaarde the Gothic town hall received several hits and the tower of the Gothic St Walburge church took more than 500 shells. In Veurne, several municipal monuments such as the town hall were damaged and many historical houses were completely destroyed. In Dendermonde, the town hall and béguinage church were completely destroyed, and other large monuments such as the Church of Our Lady were heavily damaged. Almost all of the old characteristic houses were burnt down. Some contemporaries, such as Marius Vachon and the Belgian writer Emile Verhaeren, stated that the Germans had aimed specifically at historical towns and their monuments in a determined effort to destroy history, beauty and cultural identity.

Are there indications for this assertion in the four towns discussed here? Jozef Gesquiere, an inhabitant of Veurne who stayed in the town almost until the end of the war, was convinced at first that the German bombardments served a direct military goal and were aimed at transport infrastructure such as the railway station and bridges. However, as the war progressed, he increasingly questioned this. More and more, the town itself—and historical monuments in particular—seemed targeted. After a heavy bombardment of the central marketplace on 5 June 1917, Gesquiere wrote: ‘There is no doubt that the “barbarians”
envisage the total destruction of our wonderful monuments which are packed together so closely in the most beautiful corner of the town’. Similarly, In Oudenaarde the heavy damage in the vicinity of bridges and railways indicates that the German bombardments in November 1918 still had a direct military goal, whereas the simultaneous damage to the medieval St W alburge tower and town hall point to an act of sheer destruction. Of course, historical monuments such as the St W alburge church and the town hall in Oudenaarde were ideal targets for bombardment because of their height and central location. Beyond that, such monuments were, in fact, often used for military purposes such as gathering soldiers and military equipment, or observing the enemy. Jozef Gesquiere himself wrote in November 1914 that so many soldiers had left Veurne that the churches could be cleared and cleaned, indicating that these buildings were indeed used by the army. However, as will be discussed below, this interpretation is complicated by the fact that international Hague law distinguished between religious structures and other kinds of buildings, and prohibited both their targeting and occupation.

There are also several indications that the German army made efforts to preserve the historical townscape. During the German occupation of Oudenaarde, for example, a flag was attached to the tower of the medieval town hall, clearly indicating that this was an artistic building. And even during the systematic arson of Dendermonde the German Major von Sommerfeld complied with the request of an inhabitant to spare the medieval town and meat hall, and the Church of Our Lady was also left untouched. These three monuments were, however, damaged or destroyed in the following weeks during a subsequent battle.

**Destructions in propaganda**

Whatever the reasons and possible malice behind these acts of destruction in historical towns, both camps immediately understood their propaganda value. The Germans first of all tried to minimize the damage, stating that only 2 per cent of the buildings in Belgium were destroyed, whereas in reality it was close to 10 per cent. They alluded to the military necessity of the destruction, for example by circulating postcards of Dendermonde, showing the ramparts. Or they tried to shift the responsibility to others. German and Swiss architects and art historians played important roles in this process. The esteemed art history professor Paul Clemen for example, stated that the Belgians had protected their monuments in an unsatisfactory way, and that they had already mutilated their historical towns and monuments long before the war as a result of their *nouveau-riche* architecture and building speculation. Similarly, the Swiss architect Eugen Probst in 1916 published a report of a trip he made to Belgium in the fall of 1914 with the misleading title *Belgien. Eindrücke eines Neutralen* (*Belgium. Impressions of a Neutralist*). In this report he combined a very biased picture of the destruction with an almost absurd attention for the historical townscape. With respect to Dendermonde, for example, he described the explosion, caused by the Belgian army, of the Scheldt bridge, but failed to mention the systematic arson of the town by the Germans. In addition, he stated that the town hall could easily be restored, given that the damage had affected mainly the worthless nineteenth-century part. His biggest concern was that the municipality would spoil the historical townscape by straightening the picturesque river or allowing inappropriate architecture on the marketplace. The illustrations consisted of nineteenth-century lithographs showing historical townscapes unaffected by war and modernization. More implicit, but equally misleading, were the German art-historical
publications on Belgian architecture such as those by Clemen and Erdman Hartig (1916), which remained largely silent on the acts of destruction and focused on neglected aspects of this heritage such as historical houses.\textsuperscript{23}

Allied propaganda also trifled with the facts regarding architectural destruction. In Dendermonde, for example, several 'eyewitnesses' described the ruins of the Gothic parish church—according to a *Times* journalist, 'one of the most beautiful of Gothic churches'—whereas this church had only been slightly damaged.\textsuperscript{24} The ruins they described were probably those of the newly-built, neo-Gothic abbey church. Another flagrant example may be found in the writings of the American George Wharton Edwards, author of illustrated publications such as *Vanished Towers and Chimes of Flanders* (1916). Though Edwards knew Flanders well (he had partly been educated in Antwerp before the war), this publication contains many inaccuracies. Several buildings that were discussed had, in fact, far from vanished: such as the belfry in Aalst, the meat hall in Dendermonde and the town hall and St Walburge church in Oudenaarde. With respect to Aalst, Edwards wrote that the medieval parish church ‘was razed to the ground’ and that the town was no more than ‘a heap of blackened ruins’, a grave exaggeration given that only 6 per cent of the town was damaged.\textsuperscript{25} Nevertheless, Edwards’ work remained popular and in 1927 he was even knighted by the Belgian King for his artistic and historical merits.\textsuperscript{26}

This mix of exaggeration and ignorance is also present in several images such as a drawing on a Belgian postcard showing German soldiers spraying petrol on the burning town hall in Dendermonde (Figure 12.5). As already mentioned, this building was in fact spared during the systematic arson.\textsuperscript{27} Silk postcards of ‘martyr towns’ by the French firm Neyret Frères, which were sold in America to collect support for the war, showed the Gothic parish church of Dendermonde in flames. In a second version this was rectified and replaced by the towers of the neo-Gothic abbey church. The silk postcard of Veurne showed the belfry, the palace of justice, the Gothic parish church and the renaissance houses on the marketplace in flames, and combined this with the year 1914.\textsuperscript{28} In reality only the houses and the belfry were destroyed, and only towards the end of the war.

Even photographs were used erroneously. An image entitled ‘The famous old houses of Dendermonde’ distributed in France by the Rol-agency in 1914 showed picturesque half-timbered houses from another town.\textsuperscript{29} More subtle were the postcards of martyr towns such as Dendermonde, which gave no further information and seemed to imply that the destruction was inflicted by the Germans. One example is the photo of the destroyed Ghent gate in Dendermonde, a monument which was in fact demolished by the Belgian army before the German invasion, to have a clear line of fire for their artillery in the town.\textsuperscript{30}

**Use of the acts of destruction**

The acts of destruction in Belgium received so much attention in the first place because they were extensive (c. 100,000 buildings, approximately the same number as in France) whereas the death toll (c. 50,000) was quite low in comparison with other countries such as France, even relatively speaking.\textsuperscript{31} The focus on historical monuments can be explained first of all by the fact that, since the international conventions of The Hague (in 1899 and 1907), these acts of destruction were for the first time in history legally contestable. Specifically, the Hague conventions had stipulated that buildings which were used for religion, art, science and charity, as well as historical monuments, had to be spared on condition that they were not used
for military purposes and that the besieged took up the responsibility of informing the enemy of these buildings.

For this reason the Royal Commission of Monuments and Sites in September 1914 delivered an actualized list of classified monuments to the German and Belgian authorities. However, Germany and France had only signed the treaty of 1899 and not that of 1907, which also explicitly mentioned aerial bombing. Although this distinction may seem like an absurd juridical detail, it was taken into consideration by the German army, Veurne, for example, was bombed from the air much more than from the ground until the last months of the war, when the Germans no longer tried to adhere to any of the international treaties.

As evidence of damage to historical buildings could also be used to support claims for indemnities after the war, initiatives for documentation campaigns were taken on a national level. King Albert himself assigned Edmond Sacré to photograph Dendermonde in

FIGURE 12.5 Postcard showing German soldiers spraying petrol on the burning town hall of Dendermonde, 1914. Historical Documentation Centre, Dendermonde
September 1914, and his photos not only show the destruction but also the specially devised instruments of destruction and the rarely spared houses bearing chalk signatures of German army leaders and inscriptions such as ‘Good People. Do not burn’. According to contemporaries, the inhabitants of these houses were prostitutes, traitors or—most likely—old people who were unable or unwilling to leave their houses.64 Ironically, these exceptions of compassion were used after the war to legally prove the methodical and deliberate character of the acts of destruction and therefore the violation of the The Hague Treaty.65 In 1915 the architect Eugène Dhuicque was appointed by the Ministry of Science and Arts to list, photograph and draw valuable buildings and their war damage in Veurne and in the rest of the small territory of unoccupied Belgium.66 He too photographed the weapons of destructions (such as the empty bomb shell on the belfry) and he often revisited the same sights over time, thus showing the gradual degradation of the historical townscape.

Apart from the legal issue, images and descriptions of destroyed historical townscape and monuments were also used to gain international support for the Belgian cause, since they were considered more moving than the destruction of industry, infrastructure or the countryside.67 The idea that certain cultural monuments were to be considered part of world heritage (and therefore that their destruction should not merely affect the inhabitants of the nation in question, but all peoples), had already emerged before the war.68 In the first months of the war a lot of attention was directed to the martyr town of Dendermonde. The reason is clear. After the German raids on 4 and 5 September, Dendermonde was temporarily recaptured by the Belgian army, offering a unique opportunity to show the destruction inflicted by Germany to international journalists, photographers and even filmmakers.69 Once Belgium was occupied, Veurne took over this role. Dhuicques’ photos of Veurne were exhibited in Paris; and during the entire war, heads of state, politicians and delegations from all over the world were received and shown around by King Albert in this increasingly desolate and destroyed town.70 Abroad, lectures were held on Belgian towns, for example by the British Sam Ainsworth, who had made photographs of several Belgian towns such as Oudenaarde during a trip in 1887 and who reused these photos during the war in lectures to support the Belgian Refugee Relief committee in Manchester.71

Another way of gaining international support was by presenting the destruction as an attack of Germanic culture on Latin culture, as was done by the Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck.72 Emphasizing that most destroyed historical monuments were churches was also popular, because it implied that these acts of destruction were anti-Catholic and even antireligious. The politician Pierre Nothomb, for example, described the towns in the northwestern corner of Belgium (the stage of four years of trench warfare) as ‘Les villes saintes’ and Veurne in particular as ‘La ville de dieu, Furnes la Vierge, Furnes la Sainte, un sanctuaire, un autel, nouvelle Jérusalem’. Not surprisingly, his description of Veurne focused almost entirely on religious monuments.73 In Oudenaarde the local historian and priest Paul Vande Vyvere referred to the Germans as ‘protestant hordes’ in his description of the damaged St Walburge church.74 Unsurprisingly, German authors such as Joseph Sauer tried to deny these antireligious allegations and meticulously described the damage to Gothic parish churches such as those of Aalst and Dendermonde to prove that these destructions were in fact the result of lengthy military actions from both sides.75 Finally, some Allied publications tried to arouse international support by emphasizing the destruction of medieval town halls and guild houses, which were described as remnants of one of the oldest forms of democracy, thus portraying the acts of destruction as an attack on democracy.76
Apart from winning international support, the propaganda with respect to the destruction of these monuments was also successful in increasing feelings of nationalism within Belgium. According to some, Belgian nationalism even originated in this period. As elsewhere, there had been some attempts in Belgium before the war to create a national identity based on older regional identities. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century the two regions (Flanders and the Walloon provinces) became increasingly opposed to each other, animosity which posed a threat to the nation. Therefore national identity was more and more based on sub-regional and municipal identity. In addition, the historical towns—with their associations of medieval corporatism—offered the opportunity to conceal growing social and political differences.

FIGURE 12.6 Old picturesque arms of the river Scheldt. From the photographic exhibition Bombarded Oudenaarde, 11/11/1918, nr. 274. Municipal Archives, Oudenaarde
The destruction of these towns (in Flanders as well as in the Walloon provinces) only increased their importance for Belgian nationalism. According to contemporaries, soldiers clambered out of the trenches shouting slogans such as ‘Remember Termonde and Louvain!’ In their martyrdom and heroism, they proved a perfect *pars pro toto* for ‘Brave Little Belgium’, which is reflected by the use of images on powerful *lieux de mémoire* such as banknotes and postage stamps. These value bearers also show that the emphasis shifted after the war from martyrdom and acts of destruction (symbolized by, for example, the destroyed town hall of Dendermonde on a postage stamp), towards heroism and resilience (symbolized by, for example, the reconstructed town hall of Veurne, the headquarters of King-soldier Albert during the war, on a 1944 banknote).

The destruction of the historical townscape was also exploited for tourism, but to a different extent. Dendermonde quickly developed a thriving tourism business during the war, and postcards as well as guidebooks testify to the lasting tourist importance of this devastated town. In the French 1920 *Guide Bleue* on Belgium, for example, the description of the monuments of Dendermonde was sacrificed in favor of a map showing the destructions of the town, whereas in the case of the other three towns, the acts of destruction were largely omitted or even denied. With respect to Veurne for example it was stated that the gables on the north side of the great marketplace had been preserved in an almost intact state, whereas in reality these were completely destroyed. Veurne’s tourist image was clearly one of heroism and resilience, whereas that of Dendermonde was linked to martyrdom, the two faces of tourist wartime Belgium.

That such marketing of architectural destruction was a deliberate policy can clearly be seen in Oudenaarde. The damage in this town was heavy but relatively modest in comparison with other towns such as Ieper. Moreover, Oudenaarde was damaged at the end of the war and as such her acts of destruction had little ‘appeal’. Therefore, the municipality explicitly stated that Oudenaarde was one of the only restorable historical towns in the region, and as such should become the successor of former tourist towns such as Ieper. Hence the acts of destruction were not used to promote the town. A series of photographs entitled ‘Bombarded Oudenaarde’ which were exhibited by the municipality after the war, showed numerous historical buildings and picturesque townscapes which had barely been affected by the war.

**Reconstruction**

How did these views affect the reality of rebuilding the towns? During and immediately after the war, many pleaded for the preservation of the ruins as places to remember those who gave their lives. In addition, some people clearly appreciated the picturesque aesthetic value of the ruins, as can be seen from the many paintings that were made (especially in Dendermonde) or postcards such as the one showing the destroyed chimney of the Vertongen-Goens factory in Dendermonde, which was reminiscent of the broken columns and ruins of the classical world. Dendermonde was even described by a contemporary as a modern, Flemish Pompeii.

The possibility of preserving buildings with a national historical and/or artistic importance in their ruinous state, was provided for by the law on war damage of 10 May 1919. In the end, however, this option was never chosen. Even in Ieper, where there was international pressure for preservation (by Winston Churchill and others), the local population and
government were successful in their attempts to reconstruct the historical townscapes and their monuments. The same goes for the towns discussed in this article. In Dendermonde someone put forward a utopian (and of course never-realised) plan to build a new town on pillars and preserve the ruins beneath it as a place of remembrance. Writings on postcards show that there was indeed some fear amongst inhabitants immediately after the war that the reconstruction of Dendermonde and its medieval town hall in particular would remain unexecuted because of its symbolic value. On a postcard of the destroyed town hall (dated 8 January 1919), it read: ‘Here still no change, it is rather sad!! It’s like they want to keep everything as the barbarians made it’; in September of that same year, another inhabitant wrote: ‘In the ruins of Dendermonde … And the belfry decapitated, maybe for eternity’.

More modest proposals for the preservation of ruins also encountered significant local resistance. In Veurne and Oudenaarde for example, the Royal Commission of Monuments and Sites suggested replacing the ruined houses adjacent to the parish churches with a grass field containing debris of the war. However, this was not executed because inhabitants feared that this would turn their town centre into a grave-yard. Finally, the acts of destruction were remembered in the townscape only through a number of war memorials and date-stones on houses, referring to the destruction or reconstruction.
Local inhabitants and municipalities further used the destruction to enhance the historical townscape by effacing more recent alterations (especially classical and neoclassical ones from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), a process that had already started in most towns around the middle of the nineteenth century. In Dendermonde, for example, the medieval town hall was reconstructed in its late nineteenth-century historicized state, and its neoclassical rear part was replaced by a matching neo-Gothic one. In Oudenaarde the municipality seized the opportunity provided by the war damage to the St Walburge tower to propose the reconstruction of the original spire, which had been destroyed in the beginning of the nineteenth century; but these plans proved to be too ambitious. The neo-classicist court in this town—the destruction of which was described in a local publication on the reconstruction of the town as 'fortunate'—was replaced by a neo-Gothic one, which better fitted the neighboring church. In Veurne many neo-classicist plastered houses were replaced by brick houses in the typical regional renaissance style—with support of the local government, the Royal Commission of Monuments and Sites, and the national Service of Devastated Regions.

On the other hand, the acts of destruction did change and sharpen the awareness and appreciation of the historical townscape, focusing more on the value of small elements and landscapes. This is clear from photographic campaigns such as the one by Eugène Dhuicque in Veurne, which can be considered as the start of the scientific photographic inventory of the national building heritage in Belgium. Apart from the well-known monuments, much attention was paid to lesser-known monuments, residential architecture and townscales. In Oudenaarde, both the industrialist Albert Gevaert and the historian Paul Vande Vyver wrote in their respective works on the town’s reconstruction that the devastation had opened their eyes to the picturesque beauty of the historical town, referring to the historical dwellings and landscapes such as the winding arms of the old Scheldt. That this changed awareness was widespread is clear from the demolition of the small houses against the St Walburge choir and the filling-in of the ancient arms of the river Scheldt in Oudenaarde, two state-commissioned projects which were standard practice in the nineteenth century but which were fiercely protested by the local population and municipality after the war; in vain.

Conclusion

The four case studies discussed in this chapter clearly indicate that the degree of destruction of Belgian towns during World War I was as diverse as the motives behind the destruction; and that the German army took measures to avoid the destruction of historical townscape even while its actions heavily damaged them. However, this complex reality was (and still is) eclipsed by the enormous number of contemporary publications and images, which were published for a number of contrasting purposes and which often were misleading or biased. German publications tried to minimize or justify the acts of destruction in the historical townscape, or blatantly ignored them in an apparently neutral art-historical discourse. The Belgians used the destruction of historical monuments (or a more or less truthful account of these) to gather evidence for indemnities after the war, to gain support internationally, and to suppress any internal discord. In addition, the destruction of the historical townscape was also exploited for economic reasons (tourism) in certain towns such as Dendermonde, whereas in other towns (such as Oudenaarde) the devastation was downplayed for the same reason.
In the aftermath of the war, the destruction enabled the historicizing of the old town centre (a phenomenon which had already started in the middle of the nineteenth century) at the same time as the destruction altered the awareness of the picturesque beauty of the town, revealing the importance of small architectural elements such as houses, and landscape features such as rivers. As such, the influence of World War I on the historical townscape in Belgium seems double-edged. The destruction of the urban fabric during the war was without a doubt extremely serious in certain cases, yet at the same time the destruction opened the eyes of local politicians as well as the inhabitants to the value of their historical townscapes.

Notes
7 For example, Vachon, *Villes martyres*, 103 and Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Guerre*, 115.
8 Stroobants and Galland, 1914 *Dendermonde*, 53–7 and 153.
16 Gesquiere, *Veurne*, 87.
18 Stroobants and Galland, 1914 *Dendermonde*, 51.
20 Stroobants and Galland, 1914 *Dendermonde*, 95.


Stroobants and Galland, 1914 Dendermonde, 107.


Stroobants and Galland, 1914 Dendermonde, 79.

De Schaepdrijver, De Groote Oorlog, 295.


Stroobants and Galland, 1914 Dendermonde, 57 and Stroobants, 1914 Dendermonde, 76.


For example, George Wharton Edwards, Some Old Flemishtowns (s.l.: Moffat,Yard & Co., 1911), 37.

Stroobants and Galland, 1914 Dendermonde, 63.

Gesquiere, Verviers, 57; 73–4; 91–3; 157; 237; 293; 370 and 407–8.


De Schaepdrijver, De Groote Oorlog, 153.


Joseph Sauer, La destruction d’églises et de monuments d’art sur le front ouest (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1917), 8 and 24–6.

Frank Brangwyn and Hugh Stokes, Belgium (London: Kegan, 1916), 143.

De Schaepdrijver, De Groote Oorlog, 60.


Vachon, Villes martyres, 130.

Alexis Schwarzenbach, Portraits of the Nation. Stamps, Coins and Banknotes in Belgium and Switzerland 1880–1945 (Bern – Berlijn – Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 1999), 149–53.


H. Dirx, Jusqu’à la chute d’Anvers: Ce qu’il faut voir sur le champ de bataille et dans les villes détruites de Belgique (Bruxelles: Touring-Club de Belgique, 1920), v.


For example, Kervyn de Lettenhove, Guerre, 176.


Smets, Belgische wederopbouw, 91–6.

58 Postcard collection, Historical Documentation Centre Dendermonde.