

JOHN II OF GLYMES, LORD OF BERGEN OP ZOOM (1417–94) at the court of Richard III in May 1484: a puzzle solved

ZOË MAULA

'The next day the king sent a nobleman to me, that I would go to his church. There I heard the loveliest music I have ever heard in all my life; in the purity of the voices it was to be compared to the blessed angels. After mass the king sent to me John, Lord of Bergen op Zoom – which is a famous trade town in Brabant. He took me by the right hand into the church when the king was about to leave the church after mass, and next led me before the king into the building that had been erected near the church.'¹

'He wanted to show me his benevolence in everything. He gifted me with a golden necklace that he took off a free born lord and then gave it to me with his own hands. Three days earlier, and before I took leave from His Majesty, but before I blessed His Majesty, he sent to me Lord Hans of Bergen who told me that His Royal Majesty had procured fifty Nobles, which is a hundred and a half Rhenish Gulden, for me which His Majesty gifted me with.'²

Those who are acquainted with the reign of King Richard III will recognise these as passages from the travel journal of the Breslau knight Niclas von Popplau. Popplau stayed in York from the 1st until about 10 May in 1484, during which time he visited Richard III's court. It is a unique journal that offers a rare view of the court of Richard III, and as such it has been heavily relied upon to provide insight into Richard's character and the people he kept close. A figure that stands out from Richard's company was John, Lord of Bergen op Zoom. As Popplau writes, during the fifteenth century the city of Bergen op Zoom was known as one of the leading trade cities of the Low Countries, rivalled only by Antwerp, Bruges and Middelburg. It stood under the authority of the Van Glymes family, an illegitimate branch of the ducal house of Brabant through Duke John II of Brabant (1275–1312). On 27 August 1344 this line was legitimised by Emperor Louis the Bavarian (1282–1347), upon which Duke John II bestowed on this line the lands of Glymes in Brabant.³ Through marriage arrangements, the Van Glymes line gradually extended their lands and wealth. It was through these marriages, when John I married Johanna of Boutershem, a daughter of Henry III of Bergen op Zoom, that the Glymes line acquired the city of Bergen op Zoom.⁴

Discerning the two Johns of Bergen op Zoom

Until now, there has been some debate about who this John/Hans of Bergen was that Popplau spoke of, due to the fact that there were two candidates: John II (1417–94), Lord of Bergen op Zoom, and his son John III (1452–1531), Lord of Walhain and Melun, Knight of the Golden Fleece since 9 May 1481 and in 1500 one of the godparents to the then Emperor Charles V. The few secondary sources that speak on this subject tend to give this role cautiously to the son, John III of Walhain, because of his active political career as a diplomat and him being a known Anglophile. Indeed, John III and his brother Henri of Bergen, Bishop of Cambrai, can be viewed as the leaders of the pro-

English faction at the Burgundian court in the late fifteenth century. Yet their political affiliation was not as striking for this period as one might believe. The majority of the Dutch people at this time were very anti-French, slightly German-minded and strongly pro-English.⁵ And for the Van Glymes family in particular, their political affiliation was fundamentally more economically orientated. That is, the status the Van Glymes family acquired at the Burgundian court in the late fifteenth century can be seen as a result of the wealth they accumulated, through the trade from the free annual markets of Bergen op Zoom, the Easter and Cold Markets.⁶ With this privilege, visitors could enjoy peaceful markets and guidance, i.e. they were not to be harassed on the inward and outward journeys for any reason and during their stay at the market itself could only be prosecuted for having committed murder or for debts incurred during the market.⁷ As such, ensuring the prosperity of Bergen op Zoom as a trade city by acquiring privileges and fostering good relations with foreign countries and merchants stood at the core of their political agenda. At the Cold Market of 1459, for example, when Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy seized wool and other merchandise from the merchants of Newcastle, it

An important part of The Missing Princes Project investigation is taking place in the Burgundian Low Countries where a number of key figures, including the two pretenders to Henry VII's throne, spent some considerable time. In July 2019, Zoë Maula from the Netherlands joined the project, quickly becoming a key member of the Dutch Research Group. Zoë's original research work into the Glymes family of the period is offering many potential new leads and become a significant line of investigation. The following paper is an example of this exciting research work. Our thanks also to Wim Wiss of the Dutch Research Group, and Oliver Brettschneider.

Philippa Langley



Above: Jan II van Glymes, heer van Bergen op Zoom. Bartram Foucher based on an older example, 1659, oil paint on panel. Below: Jan III van Glymes. Saskia Barkema, 2007, oil paint on panel. based on a lost painting from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Both images courtesy of Collectie Museum het Markiezenhof, Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands.



was John II Van Glymes, Lord of Bergen op Zoom, who interceded by emphasising that the duke's actions would detract greatly from trade on the free markets of his city, as the merchants of Newcastle would likely avoid these from then on. This motive clearly made an impression, because on 14 February 1460 Philip retracted his decision and declared, furthermore, that it was not his intent to curtail the freedom of the Bergse markets nor hinder the Newcastle merchants in their trade there.⁸ This event not only illustrates the importance of the English to Bergen op Zoom and the Van Glymes, but also indicates the extent of influence on and importance of the Van Glymes to their sovereign. The importance of Bergen op Zoom as a trade city lies in the provision of foreign goods and as a result a source of wealth to help finance the wars of their sovereign. This gave the Van Glymes family both economic and political status at the Burgundian court. Maintaining good relations with the English was therefore an indispensable part in securing their status and influence.

In this context, the Anglophile stance that is often attributed to John III of Walhain in actuality began with his father John II, under whose reign Bergen op Zoom entered its golden age. Yet the notion of John III being at Richard III's court in May 1484 is mostly considered more probable than that of John II. In *The Book of Privileges of the Merchant Adventurers of England: 1296–1483*, for example, Livia Visser-Fuchs and Anne Sutton mention that John III, then called John of Walhain, is known to have been a tireless worker for the merchant community of his home town and for the creation of favourable conditions of its trade, particularly that with England.⁹ Here, Visser-Fuchs and Sutton cite the transcriptions of a city account and a Schepen register of Bergen op Zoom by city archivist Korneel Sloomans. That is, the city account of 7 November 1480 states that the town presented John III, for his 'services and labour', with six silver dishes engraved with his arms. Though it doesn't specify which services and labour, the timeframe does make one speculate that this must have been related to dealings with the English. In April 1480, the governor of the Merchant Adventurers, John Pickering, justified to Edward IV a restraint of trade against Bergen op Zoom, although this would diminish the King's income from customs. By 18 October, the same John Pickering was able to bring about an agreement that granted further privileges to the English merchants and a house and a street for their use.¹⁰ However, to assume that this agreement came about through the actions of John III of Walhain alone would be a mistake. Soon after the order of this restraint, on 5 May 1480, a messenger from Bergen op Zoom was sent to Bruges and Ghent with a copy of the business dealings between the king of England and John II, Lord of Bergen op Zoom.¹¹ At the time, the English ambassadors were residing in Bruges, so it is likely that the messenger was instructed to give them this copy with the results of the talks between their King and John II,¹² in

order for talks between the town and English merchants to proceed. Indeed, Bergen op Zoom's Mayor Willem Coelgheeness and an unnamed bailiff were sent to the English ambassadors in Bruges with the same copy on 10 May, and later, on 4 June, a messenger was sent to John III of Walhain in Brussels, the political centre of Burgundy.¹³ What is important to emphasise here is, rather than the agreement being thanks to the sole efforts of John III of Walhain, it was a team effort between father and son. That is, John II's network, experience and position as Lord of Bergen op Zoom made him the perfect candidate to be sent to England and the king to negotiate on behalf of his city, while his son and heir would represent him and the city in the negotiations with the English merchants and ambassadors. The same pattern can also be seen only a few months later in January 1481, when letters from 19 and 29 January 1481 were sent by the town council to John III of Walhain. The first to ask for his intervention in an effort to move the staple for the Newcastle wool to Bergen op Zoom, the second to advise him to end any negotiations as it was clear by then that the Newcastle merchants had no interest in having a staple¹⁴ in Bergen op Zoom.¹⁵ In *Jan Metten Lippen: zijn familie en stad*, Korneel Sloomans indeed states that the city accounts of that year record John III of Walhain being in Bruges at the time to meet with the English ambassadors Thomas Cook and Thomas Montgomery.¹⁶ Sloomans elaborates more on this subject in his other book *Paas – en Koudemarkten te Bergen op Zoom 1365–1565*, stating that earlier negotiations with Mayor Coelgheenes and the unnamed bailiff were not concluded, and the city council therefore asked John III of Walhain to intervene on their behalf, while his father John II was still in England to strengthen the bonds with the English court and merchants.¹⁷ Once again, we see both father and son working together to promote the city's economic interests. Still, it is easy to confuse the two Johns, which is why the main narrative gives the epithet 'anglophile' to the promising young John III of Walhain. However, when reviewing the city accounts of various years, a distinction between the two Johns can clearly be made. Reading through the city accounts of 1479–95, it has come to my attention that John II is almost exclusively addressed as '*Onsen lieve here van Bergen*' or '*Mijne genadige her*', i.e. 'Our dear lord of Bergen' and 'My gracious lord' respectively. On the other hand, his son, John III, is always addressed as '*here van Walhain*' i.e. 'Lord of Walhain' up to the point his father John II died on 17 September 1494, when he took over his position and from thence was addressed as Lord of Bergen op Zoom. This is clearly noticeable when looking at the way the Lord of Bergen op Zoom is being addressed before and after 17 September 1494 in ordinances. In the *Book of Privileges of Bergen op Zoom 1365–1597*, ordinances often begin by addressing the lord with his titles. From 1449 until September 1494, ordinances began '*Wij, Jan heere van Bergen opten Zoom tot Glymes*' i.e. 'We, John lord of Bergen

op Zoom to Glymes' when addressing John II.¹⁸ In contrast, after September 1494, when John III became Lord of Bergen op Zoom, addressing the Lord of Bergen became longer, since John III had acquired other titles during his youth. Therefore, with the death of John II, the addressing in ordinances changed to '*Jan, Heere van Bergen opten zoom, van Walhain, van Glymes, van Grimbergen, ridder vander Gulden Vlies, Raide en eerste Camerheer van den Keyser*', i.e. 'John, Lord of Bergen op Zoom, of Walhain, of Glymes, of Grimbergen, Knight of the Golden Fleece, Councillor and first Chamberlain of the Emperor'. Because of the continuity of the use of the title 'Lord of Walhain' throughout John III's life we can more easily discern John II, the father, and John III, the son.

Identifying Popplau's Lord John of Bergen

While the above-mentioned arguments question the tendency to favour John III of Walhain as the 'John of Bergen' that Popplau spoke of, many would understandably remain unconvinced. The difference in age between the two Johns has led many to believe that the most likely candidate is John III of Walhain. At the time, John II was 67 years of age, while his son John III of Walhain was 32. Generally, one would be sceptical about the idea of an elderly John II making the journey to England, instead of his son, who was then becoming a prominent figure in Burgundian politics.

However, it appears Popplau has been quite clear on the matter. In his journal he wrote: 'After Mass the King sent to me the Lord of Bergen, John of Zoom' and later '... he sent to me Lord Hans of Bergen...' ('Hans' being a German diminutive of 'Johannes', i.e. John). Nowhere in the original German text is it implied Popplau was dealing with the heir of the Lord of Bergen op Zoom, but instead he is quite clear that it is the Lord of Bergen op Zoom himself²⁰ who was sent to him.²¹ It is important to emphasise here once more that official documents and city accounts always denote John III by his title, Lord of Walhain. More importantly, however, is the fact that in 1484 there was but one Lord of Bergen op Zoom, John II. Still, without substantial evidence that clearly indicates that John II was with Richard III, it remains possible this could be a mistake on Popplau's part for having insufficient knowledge of the nobility of the Low Countries. Therefore, the only way to be certain was to review the city accounts of Bergen op Zoom from 1484–85 and retrace the movements of both John II and John III.

What immediately caught my attention was an account from the chapter 'Travels and Voyages' of 2 May 1484 (Fig. 1). According to this account, on the 2nd day of May 1484, Janne de Potter, a messenger of the Van Glymes family and the city of Bergen op Zoom, was sent to Brussels to 'my Lord of Walhain', i.e. John III, with certain letters.²² This clearly states that on the day Popplau was led by the Lord of Bergen op Zoom in the presence of Richard III, John III of Walhain was residing

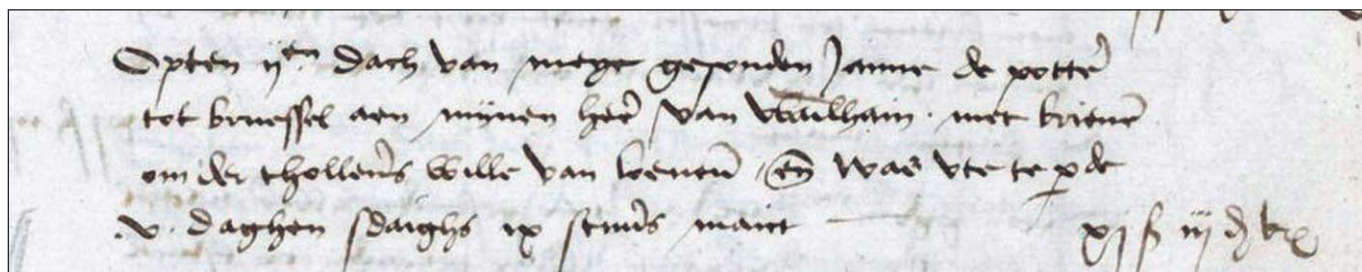


Fig. 1 City accounts of Bergen op Zoom 1484–1485. In Archive of West-Brabant, Bergen op Zoom.

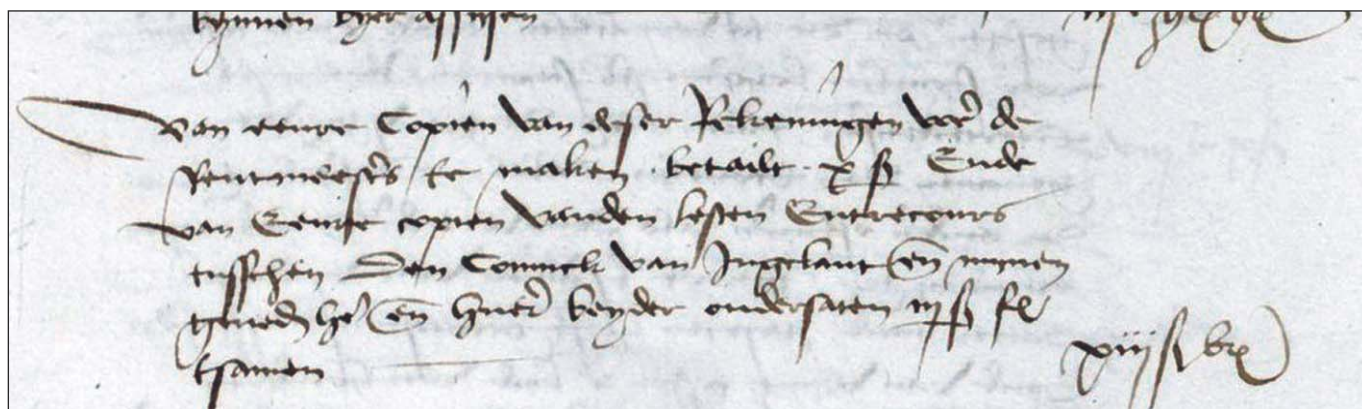


Fig. 2 City accounts of Bergen op Zoom 1484–1485. In Archive of West-Brabant, Bergen op Zoom.

in Brussels. In the context of the major events that were happening in that year, such as the war with Liège, Flemish uprisings and the military preparations leading up to the battle of Dendermonde (26 November 1484), John III of Walhain does indeed appear to be far too preoccupied to allow for any travels to England. Moreover, the city accounts attest to this by stating that John III of Walhain travelled frequently between Brussels, Bergen op Zoom and Antwerp in 1484.²³

On the other hand, the earliest account from 1484 on the whereabouts of John II dates from the Tuesday in the week of Easter Day, which in 1484 fell on 19 April. On that day, the city of Bergen op Zoom sent one of its secretaries Zweer Naghel to Malines with letters to their gracious Lord, John II.²⁴ After that, however, John II only shows up again in an account of October 1484, just before the battle of Dendermonde, and then again in December 1484 in Brussels for the celebrations of the victory.²⁵ Though the amount of time between these dates leaves enough room for John II to make the trip to England, the chapter on ‘Travels and Voyages’ reveals nothing that could indicate such an important journey. Instead John II disappears altogether from the pages until October, leaving a huge void to be filled with only speculations. Or so it seemed, for on the very last pages of the city accounts, an entry, similar to the one of 5 May 1480, reveals undoubted evidence of who accompanied Popplau during his visit at Richard III’s court (Fig. 2).

Under the chapter ‘Various Matters’, this account states that the Steward of Bergen op Zoom paid someone to make copies of the last intercourse (business dealings) between ‘the king of England and my gracious Lord and both their subjects’.²⁶ Remembering that only John II is being consistently referred to as ‘my gracious Lord’

throughout these accounts, this account provides clear evidence that it was John II Van Glymes, Lord of Bergen op Zoom, that is mentioned in Popplau’s travel journal. John III of Walhain could never have been in two places at once.

Conclusion

Looking back on John II’s long history of dealings with the English, we can now safely conclude that he was already a well-known and respected figure in England. Moreover, the implications of having established it was John II Van Glymes, Lord of Bergen op Zoom, who was at Richard III’s court in what we believe to be one of the key years, and perhaps key months, for The Missing Princes Project will now be subject to further investigation.

Dutch national, Zoë Maula, is a graduate of Leiden University where she received a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Japanese studies with a specialisation in Japanese premodern history. Whilst Zoë’s specialisation might differ from the focus of The Missing Princes Project, British history of the fifteenth and sixteenth century has ignited her interest due to its parallels with this key Japanese period of political conflict and war. The fact that the project could provide an answer to solve a centuries-old historical mystery and may well lead to answers about many others is an exciting prospect for Zoë to assist in any way she can. Zoë is now currently working for a Japanese medical company in their logistics department, and remains an active researcher.

Notes and references

1. Radzikowski, *Reisebeschreibung Niclas von Popplau, Ritters, bürger von Breslau (nach der kopie vom jahre 1712)*, p. 55;

- revised translation by William Wiss and Oliver Brettschneider, 2020. See also note 20.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 57. See also note 20.
 3. Slootmans, *Jan Metten Lippen: zijn familie en stad*, 1943, p. 12.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
 5. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
 6. The Easter Market and the Cold Market are two annual fairs of two weeks each that were held in Bergen op Zoom. One after Easter, the other – called Cold Market – after All Saints' Day in mid-November.
 7. Slootmans, p. 38.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 58–59.
 9. Livia Visser-Fuchs and Anne Sutton, *The Book of Privileges of the Merchant Adventurers of England 1296–1483* (2011) p. 8.
 10. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
 11. *Stadsrekeningen Bergen op Zoom* [City Accounts Bergen op Zoom (S.R.)] 1480–1481, 1480, p. 26: '*Opten Vth dach van Meye gesonden Janne de Potter tot Brugge en tot Ghent om de copie vande intercourse tusschen den coninck van Ingelant ende onsen genadige here ende was ute vj dagen.*' Translated into English this text reads: 'On the 5th day of May, Janne de Potter was sent to Bruges and Ghent for a copy of the intercourse between the king of England and our gracious Lord and was out in 6 days.'
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 14. The term 'staple' refers to the medieval system of trade and its taxation. Under this system, the government or the ruler required that all overseas trade in certain goods be transacted at specific designated market towns or ports, referred to as the 'staple ports'. The system made it easy for local and regional governments to monitor the overseas trade and to levy taxes and derive income and revenue from it.
 15. Visser-Fuchs and Sutton, p. 8.
 16. Slootmans, p. 85.
 17. *Archief schepensbank, Register van procuratiën en certificatiën 1479–1493 t.a.p.*, fol. 35; Smit, a.w., 1, 2e stuk nr. 1896; Slootmans, *Paas- en Koudemarkten te Bergen op Zoom 1365–1565*, p. 777.
 18. '*Privilegieboek*', *cartularium, 1365–1597, aangelegd begin 16e eeuw*, p. 73. Transcription.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 62. Transcription.
 20. Radzikowski, pp 55–7. The original German text reads: p.55 '*Nach der Meß schicket der König zu mir, den Herrn von Bergin Johannem von Zaume*'; p. 57 '*... schickte er zu mir Herr Hanßen von Bergin...*'.
 21. *Ibid.*, 2020.
 22. S.R. 1484–1485, p. 29: '*Opten II en dach van Meye gesonden Janne de Potter tot Brussel aens mijnen Herr van Walhain mit brieven*'. Translated into English this text reads: 'on the 2nd day of May, Janne de Potter was sent to Brussels to my lord of Walhain with letters'. See Fig.1.
 23. S.R. 1484–1485, pp 29–33.
 24. *Ibid.*, pp 29.
 25. Slootmans, p. 89.
 26. S.R. 1484–1485, p 69: '*Van eener copien van deser rekeningen vor de rentmeester te maken, betaillt 10 St. Ende van dese copien vanden lesten entrecourse tussgen den Coninck van Ingelant ende mijnen genedige herr ende hunner beyder ondersaten*'. Translation: 'From making copies of these accounts for the steward, paid 10 St. And from these copies of the last intercourse between the king of England and my gracious lord and both their subjects.' See Fig. 2.