

Notes

- 1) Sp 29 (December, 1986) marks a point at which the sources suddenly branch out from Flanders into Dutch and central European lands. Renaat acknowledges this and then stops. It was nearly a decade until the *Speurtocht* resumed, with Sp 30 in March, 1995. Remember that 't *Zweertdanserke*, in which the series appeared, was primarily the monthly newsletter for the folk dance group Lange Wapper, and by 1995 the group had nearly a decade of recruitment behind it since the last *Speurtocht*, so Renaat began by summarising his earlier findings for the benefit of the newer members. There is little here for the reader who has gone through 1-29.
- 2) 12-month gap between 't Zw 99, October 1996, and 't Zw 100, October 1997. There is another long gap between October, 1997 and January, 2000.
- 3) New material finally appears in Sp 40, October 2000, after a gap of nearly 14 years, dealing with the first non-Flemish record, in Brunswick. There's good stuff here.

Speurtocht 1 't Zweertdanserke 5 October 1979	Sword dancing is a theme which regularly, albeit not all that frequently, turns up in our folklore publications. Again and again, a researcher discovers some texts in which there is a payment for a performance by a sword-dance guild in one or other municipality, which in turn is the reason for considering such texts more closely. Even though this is interesting with regard to the new dates, it remains unfortunate that the significance of the event, as well as the way in which it has developed, is left virtually untouched. The best attempt at summary is in the work of Dr. Eugene Verstraete, which appeared in the magazine <i>De Speelman</i> (a publication of VIVO) between 1940 and 1943. Despite the difficult times, the foundation was laid for a better understanding of the phenomenon of sword dancing by bringing together a large quantity of data which had previously been published in a wide range of publications. Our intention now is to set up a series of articles in which we will chronologically check all of our well-known texts with entries of sword dancers, analyse and discuss them in order to better describe sword dancing as historical events in our regions. In the investigation we have quite quickly come across wrong dates and inaccuracies, so that the necessity of such a check seems inevitable to us. We would like to appeal to you for all help in this area. Let us clearly set out the following points in advance: First of all, we only deal here with those indications that are related to
---	--

	linked-sword dances; dancing or performing so that after a certain point the dancers will no longer break the linked line or circle. Solo dancers with swords or dancers over swords (e.g. laid on the ground in a cross) fall outside this scope. Furthermore, we impose a geographical limitation in that we limit ourselves to the texts that relate to the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. We fully agree that this is short-sighted: in fact at least Dutch Flanders (Zeeland) and French Flanders should be involved in the research. However, in connection with the planned archive investigation, we did not want to add to the difficulties by including too many foreign archives in the research. It soon became clear to us that these concerns were fully justified.
Speurtocht 2 't Zwaarddanserke 6 November, 1979 Bruges <i>By order of the mayor, payment to the boatmen four shillings and threepence for dancing with swords at the back end of the city on vastenavond = Shrove Tuesday</i>	This is the frequently-quoted text from the Bruges city accounts of 1388/89. Let us read it in sync for a moment: Item ghegheven bi bevelne van borchmeesters den sciplieden spelende vastenavond achter de stede met zwerden iiij. s. iij. d groot. Somme .li. s. City of Bruges Accounts 1388/89 - folio 107 verso - nr 7 In whole or in part, this text has been quoted a hundred times in the most diverse range of publications. Although it has been considered the oldest record of a linked sword-dance in Western Europe since about 1875, and may therefore be considered important, few have bothered to consider the original text. Usually they refer to the man who first extracted the text from oblivion: Gilliodts-Van Severen (1871-85, III:119) reproduces the text incompletely: it does not mention amounts paid. However, this information provides us with additional information, as we will explain further! Apparently, however, Gilliodts did not understand the text as relating to sword dancing. He puts the text in a story about the visit of the "Vrauwe van Vlaenderen" [<i>Duchess of Flanders</i>], brought to the city on July 20, 1389 and points out:

<i>The old-style tournaments had been transformed; the boatmen carried out the same types of fencing displays with swords and oars</i> <i>Shrove Tuesday was the 3rd March, 1389</i>	"Les anciens behourdis (= tornooien) se sont transformés. Les navieurs livrent des assauts d'armes (= schermoeeningen), maniant avec la même adresse le glaive (= zwaard) et l'aviron (= roeiriem)" From his possible unfamiliarity with the sword dance it is understandable that he initially thinks of fencing practice. In his <i>Glossaire Flamande</i> (p. 600) he translates '[Speilen metten Zweerden' (<i>playing/performing with swords</i>) as 'fencing', a translation that we might apply to sword defence exercises. However, it only becomes strange when he continues and writes: "We say in France Dancing with Naked Blades." So here clearly is the word dancing! It is strange that he puts the emphasis of the text on the visit of the duchess. Not only does the text itself clearly refer to an event related to Shrove Tuesday, but also when we look at the Bruges city account, we see that the event to which the text refers (the posts are chronologically inscribed) must have taken place at the end of February /early March. The visit took place in July. By the way, the other texts cited by Gilliodts-Van Severen (remember the chronology) that come from the same section are at least three folios away in the archive! As far as we know, his position was never accepted later and the text has always been interpreted as referring to Shrove Tuesday. As soon as it was published the text was noticed by Koppmann (1875: 105) associated the text with the linked-sword dance and at the same time referred to it as the oldest known reference near such dance in Western Europe. The question has to be asked is how near to the truth this comes, but we want to talk about it next time. Along with Koppmann, the Bruges text appears in German professional literature and from there all over the world.
Speurtocht 3 't Zweekdansenke 7 December 1979 <i>See Cumbrian 'Fassens Eve', Scots 'Fasterns E'en'</i>	<u>Is the Bruges text really the oldest reference?</u> The Bruges city accounts, from which we took the text we reproduced last time, start on 2 September 1388 and end on 2 September of the following year. It is therefore clear that the text refers to an event in the year 1389, given the time reference "vastenavonde" (Shrove Tuesday). Three older dates are known in the relevant literature: 1350, 1351 and 1386. This concerns all three records of linked-sword dances in the German city of Nuremberg. The German researchers, however,

We're getting into the realm of speculation here	wholeheartedly agree to attach little value to these dates. The years 1350 and 1351 can be found in chronicles from the 16th century, so some 200 years after the events. The same goes for 1386. Kurt Meschke (1931:20) says the following about this: "In a picture attached to a Schönbart book of the 16th century in the Nuremberg City Library, there is a note that claims the swordsmith's sword dance for the year 1386. However, this report has no historical validity (just a possibility)." We find a similar rejection in the standard work of Richard Wolfram, <i>Schwerttanz und Männerbund</i> (1936, I:18). We have not (yet) had the opportunity to check these texts, but we believe that we will be in good company should we join the decisions of the two eminent German researchers and put aside the three aforementioned dates. A question that immediately arises is whether there are no older texts in Bruges. It is true that Gilliodts-Van Severen does not write anywhere that the text quoted by him is the oldest or first mention in the city accounts. However, we see that Gilliodts-Van Severen has done a very good job and that he never misses the opportunity to present new elements with the necessary quotes. We may therefore readily assume that no older texts were known to him. Samples taken by us have also not produced any results. A systematic (and time-consuming) investigation would be desirable here. In anticipation, we can state that the text of Bruges is indeed currently the oldest known mention of a sword dance performance in Western Europe. Now let us check the text to see what it can teach us. The opening <i>ghegheven bi beveilne van borghmeesters</i> is not uncommon in city accounts. Apparently this description was used when there was a favour, a gratuity. Why is it that suddenly in 1389 the boatmen are allowed such a gift? And still only to the ships' masters, because the surrounding account items have no items outstanding at all with the Shrove Tuesday celebration. We can imagine some possibilities. The boatmen may have asked for an allowance from the city council to cover their expenses, for example. This might indicate that it was a traditional practice, the maintenance of which was occasionally difficult. Another possibility is that the city council itself took the initiative to allow them something, for example because they took a collection with their sword dance. That is a strong possibility. Later the sword dancers
---	---

<i>These tournaments continue in the squares, on the bridges, on the ramparts, by the companions.</i>	would often be rewarded with wine or beer. And such custom fits in perfectly with the customs of the men's unions, such as the Epiphany singing, the fool's dance from Mater, the p��lerins in Walloon Brabant, etc. Because the following is clear in the text: the sword dancers roamed around the city. <i>Achter de stede</i> does not mean "on the city walls", as was made clear by Wauters (1939/40, p12). Verwijs (1885-1929, 1:18) indeed states as one of the meanings of the word <i>achter</i> in Middle Dutch texts: <i>achter</i> with dative was used as a preposition of place to indicate that something or itself is within a certain space moves without qualifying direction, or is scattered anywhere within that space. Gilliodts-Van Severen is of the same opinion. In the article cited above by Koppmann we find an explanation, which is said to come from the Addenda of the <i>Inventaire</i> and which says: Ces behourdis se continuent sur les places, sur les ponts, sur les remparts, par des compagnons. A possible explanation for the sudden payment could therefore be that the skippers, when they travelled around in the city with their sword dance to collect gifts, accidentally danced for the mayor or magistrate and were therefore also rewarded for this.
Speurtocht 4 't Zweertdanserke 8 January 1980 <i>There are no indications of sword dancing in England before the 16th century.</i>	Who danced in Bruges in 1389? That seems to be ready enough to be said in the text: <i>den sciplieden</i>, which is generally regarded as referring to the skippers or members of the boatmen's guild. However, there have sometimes been objections that foreigners may have danced here. After all, wasn't Bruges an international port? It was thought that it might have been Englishmen who introduced the sword dance in our regions in this way (this in connection with the continuing tradition of sword dancers in Northern England). However, we believe that we can assume with great certainty that these are indeed members of the Bruges boatmen's guild: the use of the definite article <i>de</i> points to us in this sense. If we had dealt with foreigners here, we would rather think of the term <i>sciplieden</i> [without the direct article] here as simply assuming the nationality of the performers. Farwerck (1978: 317) says the following about the 'skippers': "However, the conclusion that people were dealing with skippers here

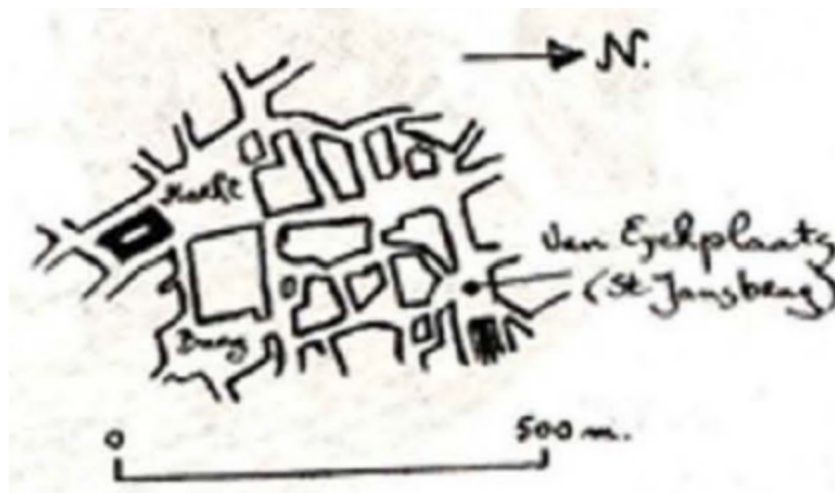
	may be a bit too superficial. It is quite possible that the communication concerned the crew of the carnival ship." Farwerck is referring to the "blue barge" or the fool's ship, which was one of the popular entertainments in the carnival period. Note that in part 3 we pointed out that the surrounding account items have absolutely no support for Shrove Tuesday celebrations, so that Farwerck's (very cautious) assumption finds no support anywhere. We can determine the number of participants based on the sums paid. Although this is not clearly indicated, it is likely that each participant was paid 4 shillings and 3 pence or, converted into pence, 51 per man (there are 12 denarii or pence in 1 shilling). The total sum paid is now 51 shillings or 612 pence. A simple division (612/51) teaches us that there were probably twelve paid participants. We say participants and not dancers, because we do not know whether they performed with music accompaniment and we do not know whether there was a fool (or possibly even other characters). Speaking of dancers, as Verstraete (1941: 12) does, is premature and therefore out of the question! It may have been twelve dancers whose only rhythm came from their bells and the sound of their steps. But equally well it is possible that there were only 11 or 10 or 9 or 8.
Speurtocht 5 't Zweertdanserke 10 March 1980 <i>Cornelis Kiliaan, 17th-century Flemish lexicographer</i>	Let's take a look back at the text that we reproduced in <i>Speurtocht 2</i>. We have now examined all the elements in the previous contributions, with the exception of what is in fact the most important thing, namely <i>vastenavond ... met zwerden</i>. We have already pointed out that Gilliodts-Van Severen did not initially use the text as relating to the linked-sword dance. He thought of fencing exercises (see Sp. 2). Let's turn to the Middle Dutch Dictionary. There we will find the same interpretation: playing with swords = dealing with weapons; this can include wielding in a serious fight. This interpretation is supported by a lot of text examples, including our Bruges text. This opinion goes back to Kiliaan, which gives it a solid foundation. We believe - and with us many other researchers - that this is indeed a reference to a linked-sword dance. A number of elements point more or less clearly in this sense: • the event takes place on Shrove Tuesday • the event takes place in various places in the city (successively) (see <i>Speurtocht 3</i>) • the number of participants (dancers?) Was twelve (see <i>Speurtocht 4</i>) • a collection may have been made (see <i>Speurtocht 3</i>)

	All these elements, plus the fact that everything happened within the framework of a particular community, take us to the Men's Association. If you want to learn more about this read Wolfram (1936). Even though it is not explicitly stated in the text, it appears from the further known material and from surviving tradition in other countries that an interpretation in the direction of the linked-sword dance can be accepted with great certainty. Why not use the word "dance" then? We believe we can assume that there was a good reason for this, a well-founded reason in that it was not presented to the spectator as a dance. How might this be? Well, we have already pointed out that there were twelve participants, and these could have been described as dancers. We have indicated that there might be no musician. Twelve is nevertheless an attractive number: we know of many medieval German sword dances that were performed with twelve. And so the question arises: if there were no musician(s) present at the performance is this not strange? Not quite: on the Breugel print <i>Sint-Joriskermis</i> there is also no musician. It was always thought that Breugel had forgotten the musician. It seems strange to us that Breugel, who pays so much attention to detail, would forget a musician. So no musician after all. What about the dance? Well, we can assume that the dancers were wearing bells. They may have followed the rhythm of the figures of a linked-sword dance. Or did they do it with stamping of feet? It seems to us that we should see the performance in that sense and then the text becomes clear and correct: the dancers wielded the swords in the figures of the linked-sword dance.
Speurtocht 6 't Zweertdanserke 11 April, 1980 <i>Renaat breaks this down as follows: by order of the mayor, 36/- was paid at a rate of 3/- per man to the skippers for dancing at Shrovetide - see below for explanation of grote vastavond.</i>	If we now want to continue in our research, the following known text (which is considered the second oldest) brings us to the early fifteenth century, still in Bruges, but now to the year 1404. So there would be a gap of fifteen years, in which the Bruges magistrate did not give a penny to the sword dancers. This is quite possible in the context of our assumptions: we would like to point out once again that the sword dancers may have happened by chance before the magistracy in 1389 (possibly re-read the contribution in <i>Speurtocht 3</i>). However, we have always found it a bit strange, especially because after 1404, entries for the years 1406 and 1407 are also known. That is why we have checked the years in between in the archives. And imagine our happiness when we read the following text in the Bruges city account of 1390/91:

However, he glosses over the expression in hovescheden te verdrinken but definitely implies that they were to use the money to buy a large quantity of drink - verdrinken = to drown (drench?). Hovescheden is more difficult, but in a near-contemporary poem (Der Leken Spieghel, 1330) it appears to refer to conducting oneself in a respectful or well-mannered fashion. So maybe money for ample drink provided things remain well-conducted. Maybe. Renaat uses both forms 'trawetel' and 'trawantel' to refer to the Westerlo dance	Item ghegheven bi beveilne van borghmeest(er)s den sciplieden in hovescheden te verdrinckene grote vaste avonde die up den reep speilden iij. s grote. Sum: 36 shillings. City of Bruges Account 1390/91 - fol. 108 verso - nr 3 Even though there is no mention of swords here at all, it seems obvious to me that here too there is the linked sword dance. We still know today of sword dances in which a hoop is used (first think of our trawetel from Westerlo; but there is also a version from Sweden known from the seventeenth century; and also an Italian sword dance with hoop). And we also know that in some linked sword dances the word sword must actually be placed in quotation marks: no swords were used at all, but flexible branches covered with foliage (the Austrian Bogentanz) or even handkerchiefs. For example, don't the English dance with short flexible swords? Gilliodts-Van Severen also quoted the text (1871-5, IV:480) and he placed it just above the quotation of the texts concerning 1406 and 1407. These two were mentioned repeatedly by researchers, but no one noticed the text that was three lines higher! We believe that all elements of the text support an interpretation in the direction of the linked sword dance: the text is almost identical to that of 1389. However, some important additional elements, which support previous assumptions, such as the text "verdrinckene". But more about that next time.
Speurtocht 7 't Zweertdanserke 12 May, 1980 <i>This is difficult; Renaat translates</i>	In the final edition of last year [<i>referring to 't Zweertdanserke</i>] we published a text from the Bruges city account of 1390/91, which spoke of the skippers "who were playing/performing up the bar" (<i>up den reep speilden</i>). We interpreted this text as dealing with a sword dance, where the swords would have been replaced by bars or hoops, or as a sword dance, using a bar like in Westerlo's trawantel. A nice

reep as 'bar', although it is cognate with German 'Reife', tyre, and he indeed asserts that it could refer to some kind of hoop. Using the Bank of England's inflation calculator, 3 shillings and 4 pence suggests a value of around £177 per person, which places a higher value on sword dancing than is commonly found today. This measure is based on purchasing power, and could reflect disparities in income and expectations between social classes (imagine if all sword dancers were City bankers...). However, you'll see that at the end of Speurtocht 9 Renaat raises a question	illustration of the first possibility can be found in Louis (1963, plate XXXVII). The accompanying text says: <i>Les danseurs de cerceaux. D'après un manuscrit de Nuremberg 1539-1586</i> (A la Bibliothèque Municipale de Hambourg) and shows a group of dancers connected by hoops. Unfortunately, the quality of the image is not sufficient to display them here. We hope to get a better reproduction from Hamburg. But how does Gilliodts-Van Severen interpret the text? Well, he does not give an explanation for the text itself, so we have to look further at the Glossaire Flamand and there we find as an explanation: <i>danser sur la corde</i>, And some account statements are quoted, which indeed say "up the bar", referring to a tightrope walker. Incidentally, the interpretation is based on Kiliaan, so Verwijs mentions six meanings for the word <i>reep</i> in his <i>Middle Dutch Dictionary</i>. He also brings to bear our Bruges text in the sense of tightrope dancing. However, he also gives <i>reep</i> in the meaning: hoop. So are we wrong? Perhaps, but the texts quoted in support of the <i>Glossary Flamand</i> clearly speak of a tightrope walker. Let's take a look at the Bruges text: looking at the payment - 36 shillings in total divided by 3 shillings per participant - our skippers again number twelve. Now we do not immediately see twelve tightrope walkers at work, so that, in our opinion, an interpretation in the direction of the linked sword dance is required. But even if one does not agree with this position, then still, the text teaches us something about our research. After all, it has now been established that the boatmen had a custom (tradition?) of crossing the city in a group of twelve on Shrove Tuesday. In addition to a mention of 1389, we now also have one from 1391 (the said account indeed starts again on September 2, 1390, and ends on September 2, 1391). And it is also certain that they performed "something" (in our opinion a linked sword dance), for which they qualified for a gift or gratuity. This is made very clear in the text of 1391: politely drowning (themselves). In other words, 36 shillings were kindly given to "go and get one". As we already noted in <i>Speurtocht 3</i> this fits perfectly with the customs of the men's unions. A new element in the text is also a great fixed evening event. This indicates multi-day events (including multiple performances. According to the <i>Middle Dutch Dictionary</i>, <i>grote vastavond</i> [<i>translated above as 'Shrovetide'</i>] should be understood to mean: Monday and the Tuesday after Esto Mihi (the seventh Sunday before Easter, also called Quinquagesima); in other words: Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. Let us also notice that the "bar" dancers of 1391 received only 36 shillings as compensation, whereas the sword dancers of 1389 gained
--	--

about his interpretation.	as much as 51 shillings! Was the sword dance valued more highly?
Speurtocht 8 't Zweertdanserke 13 June 1980 <i>Paid then by order of the mayor to the company that performed with swords at St. John's Bridge on Shrove Tuesday - 3 shillings and 4 pence, total sum 40 shillings.</i> <i>See discussion of 'ghesellen' in Introduction</i>	A further search for new texts has yielded nothing. For example, we arrive for the next snapshot - chronologically - in the Bruges city account of 1403/04, which states: Item doe ghegheven bi heveilne van borchmeesters den ghesellen die met zwerden speilden tsinte jansbrughe up den vestenavond-. iij. s .iiij. d grote Som(m)e xl s City of Bruges Accounts 1403/04 - folio 117 recto - nr 1 In our contribution last month, we were just able to print the text from the Bruges city account of 1403/04. Today we would like to take a closer look. <i>Doe</i> means "then". But in our opinion to be understood as referring to the timing of "Shrove Tuesday". If we look at the date of the previous post (to which <i>doe</i> may also refer), we see that this is "20th day in <i>laumaend</i> (20th January) and that is a bit too early in the year for Shrove Tuesday. Now the date of the next entry in the city account is "20th day in <i>sporkele</i>" (20th February), so that we can situate the event between these two dates. Where the account starts again on 2nd September, 1403, to end on 2nd September, 1404, the entry refers to the year 1404. We have already discussed that <i>ghegheven beveilne van borchmeesters</i> indicates a gratuity (<i>Speurtocht</i> 3 and 7). No more talks about <i>sciplieden</i>, but <i>ghesellen</i>. In our opinion, the word should not have any specific meaning. <i>Gheselle</i> here probably means just an individual, being part of a company. "Those who played/performed with swords": there remains the reservation that could be applied to the text of 1389 to explain it in terms of fencing exercises.

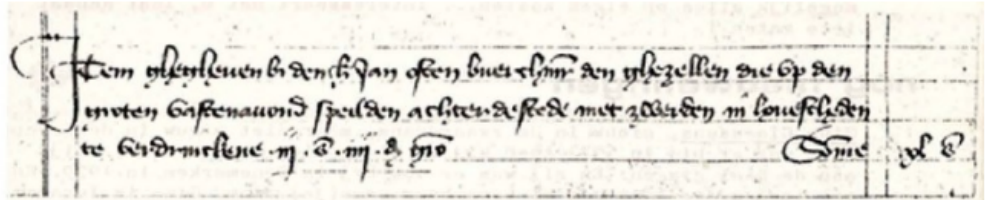


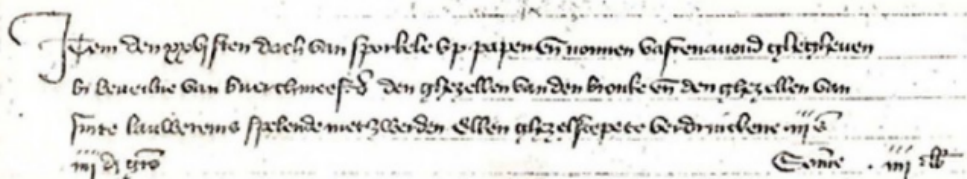
Our new text has a very precise location: *tsinte Jansbrughe*. Die Sint Jansbrug is the current Van Eyckplaats (Duclos, 1913: 398), not five hundred meters from the Belfry. That place is in fact a very wide bridge over the Rei waterway, which used to run further in the direction of the Markt. It would be interesting to know what that bridge looked like in the early fifteenth century. Was there enough room to dance? Was it a hump-backed bridge? And why that exact positioning? Probably because just there they could dance for the mayor or for the magistrate. But we have not been able to find out whether there was perhaps some important building here, which can be associated with this location. Did the mayor live here?

Whatever the case, it is clear that the performance was happening in the city, "on Shrove Tuesday". This timing and also the location give the impression that the dance was performed in only one place and at a single time. This is in contrast to the two previous texts, which clearly evoked the suspicion of several performances in various places. This may be explained by the fact that, as already suggested, only the time is indicated on which they danced for the mayor. The text does not exclude the possibility of multiple performances, possibly even in other places.

One last element: the sum paid, 3 shillings and 4 pence, means 40 pence per participant. The total sum is 40 shillings or 480 pence, which again gives us twelve participants. Let us also mention that the text was first quoted in the work of Gilliodts-Van Severen, which is already well known to us. Here we also find the text, which we already quoted in part in *Speurtocht 3*: "Ces behourdis (tournaments) se continuent sur les places, sur les ponts, sur les remparts, par des compagnons (ghesellen) qui s'organizer ensuite and guild des coulevriners." The latter is interesting! It means that Gilliodts has the tradition being continued by the culverin gunners' guild. That is a new element.

Dancing by the bridge might also be a good busking/collecting spot, with plenty of passing traffic

	No-one has ever put forward a text stating that this guild performed sword dances. We do know such texts from other municipalities, as we will discuss later, so someone needs to look into the gunners' archive!
Speurtocht 9 't Zweertdanserke 14 July/August, 1980 <i>See discussion of Verstraete's sudden interest in sword dancing in Flanders after the German occupation of Belgium in 1940</i> <i>Given by order of the mayor, Mr. Jan Osten, the sum of 3/4 [by implication per person] to the companions who danced at Great Shrovetide around the town, money for the purposes of a civilised but substantial drink. Total 40/-</i>	So that takes us to 1404. The next mention should date from 1405. At least this date was mentioned by Verstraete (1942:23/24). He lists the oldest entries known to him at that time and notes that they all refer to the months of February and March. He mentions 1389 and 1404-5-6-7 for Bruges. We have checked the account of 1404/05 for the months mentioned, but found no trace of any mention. This is probably a wrong date. In the city account of 1405/06 we will indeed again find a mention, but where this city account also starts on the 2nd September, 1405, it concerns a sword dance performance in the year 1406. When we asked Dr. Verstraete about this a decade ago he could not give us a conclusive answer.  item ghegheven bi den h(ere) jan osten buerchm(eeste)r den ghezellen die up den groten vastenavond speilden achter de stede met zwerden in hovescheden te verdrinckene .iij. s .iiij. d gro(ot) City of Bruges accounts 1405-6 - folio 114 verso, no. 5 We have already alluded in our previous contribution to the mentioning of a performance in the year 1406 and we also gave the justification. It is strange that the text is between a text that describes an entry on March 24 and a text regarding an entry on March 30. Since this is impossibly late for Shrove Tuesday, the payment is apparently included in the account retrospectively. The text does not teach us much that is new. Let's take a closer look at it: - ghegheven bi den here jan osten buerchmeester. So this time the text is not "by order of the mayor". It is clear this time that the mayor himself, Jan Osten, has donated a certain sum to the sword dancers. This reinforces the idea we had developed of a gratuity. The sword dancers apparently visited the mayor to dance for him and

Again, Renaat somewhat skates over these difficult elements In fact Renaat went off in another direction entirely, so we'll leave it here for now.	expected a reward for that. That the mayor himself paid here is perhaps the reason why the entry was first included in the city accounts. - den ghezellen: as we said in <i>Speurtocht 8</i>, in our opinion no specific meaning should be given to this. - up den groten vastenavond: this again points to several performances. Great Shrovetide indeed includes the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday (see <i>Speurtocht 7</i>) - achter de stede: we recall the meaning: in different places in the city; so clearly again a reference to several performances (see <i>Speurtocht 3</i>) - in hovesheden and te verdrinckene: these elements do not, in our view, rule out any doubts as to the gratification nature of the payment Finally; a correction. When we searched for the number of participants in this text, we kept concluding that it was 12. But we have concluded that we had apparently walked into a trap. All other items also yield 12 with this calculation method. Apparently it is a conversion into another currency here ... We look further and promise you the correct explanation in the next issue.
Speurtocht 10 't Zweertdanserke 17 November, 1980 On the 26th day of February, on 'Papen en Nonnen Vastenavond', the following sum was given by order of the Mayor to the companions from den Brouke and the companions from St. Lauwereins who performed with swords, to buy a drink for each of the group; 3s 4d, totalling 4 pounds.	In <i>Speurtocht 9</i> we looked at a Bruges text from 1406. The accounts of 1406-1407 for the city of Bruges do not contain any mention. But, rejoice, in accounts 1407-08 we find a more comprehensive and curious entry:  City of Bruges accounts 1407-08 - folio 99 verso - no. 5 Let's read it together: Item den xxvjsten dach van sporkele up papen en nonnen vastenavond ghegheven bi beveilne van buerchmeest(er)s den ghezellen van den broucke en den ghezellen van sinte lauwereins spelende met zwerden elken ghezelscepe ty verdrinckene iij s iiij d gro(ot) Som(m)e .iiij lb

This was fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Flemish dialect for Quinquagesima (the Sunday before Shrove Tuesday), as opposed to <i>grotten</i> (great) vastenavond, which was Quadragesima (the first Sunday of Lent) ...lying at St. Lauwereins, in the parish of Dudzele.	The text is so interesting, because we get here for the first time an indication of the place of origin of the sword dancers. The previous texts give the impression that these are burghers of their own city (see, for example, the text of 1389, which speaks of the "boatmen"). Suddenly there are two groups, who still come from outside the city walls. But don't let us get ahead, and parse the text as usual: - xxvjsten dach van sporkele: <i>sporkele</i> refers to February (think of the old Flemish name: <i>sprokkelmaand</i>) - up papen en nonnen vastenavond: according to the <i>Glossary</i> of Gilliodts-Van Severen, means: the Sunday of quinquagesima [the seventh Sunday before Easter]. Reference to his <i>Middle Dutch Dictionary</i> gives the same interpretation and states at quinquagesima: "this Sunday is also called <i>papenvastelavont</i>" (p.1298) - bi beveilne van buerchmeest(er)s: we refer to our text interpretation as referring to a gratuity (see <i>Speurtocht</i> 3). An opinion which is supported in the above text by the statement "<i>verdrinckene</i>" - den ghezellen: in our view this has no specific significance in this context. - van den brouke: Verstraete (1942:21) identified this place name with the hamlet het Broek, located in Sinte-Kruis near Bruges. And indeed, if we go by de Flou (1914, II:799) then we can see: "den Broek: low ponds and meadows, south of the Damsche Vaart, in Sint-Kruis (Bruges)". We would like to draw your attention to the fact that this can and should only be an assumption. Broek is a very common place name, also in the Bruges area. With a relatively great certainty, however, we can be sure that the sword dancers have not come very far, although there is still some room for error here. - sinte lauwereins: in the article mentioned above, Verstraete identified this with Sint-Laureins in East Flanders. The relatively large distance (approx. 19 km as the crow flies) between Bruges and that village has always surprised us, so we looked for a more acceptable identification. We found this too in de Flou (1914, XIV:737). Within Dudzele [<i>part of Bruges</i>], the Sinte-Lauwereins chapel existed in the fifteenth century. For example, a text from 1435 speaks of merchandise "... <i>liggende bi Sinte Lauwereins, in de prochie van Dudzele</i>". So there is no reason to go looking for our sword dancers in East Flanders. It looks like they came from the immediate vicinity of Bruges. Based on the map of Vander Maelen (1846-1854), we have drawn both places on the map on the next page on a map of the area north of
---	---

Bruges.



Both places are less than four kilometers from the city centre, which we believe gives a great certainty regarding the correctness of the situation. Sint-Laureins chapel no longer exists. The site is now located within Bruges, at the end of an industrial estate. The name no longer appears on current street maps. This is also the case for Broek, a little-inhabited area south of Damme.

- **spelende met zwerden**: in *Speurtocht 5* we extensively discussed the reservation that must be made in connection with an interpretation in favour of assuming that this refers to the sword dance.

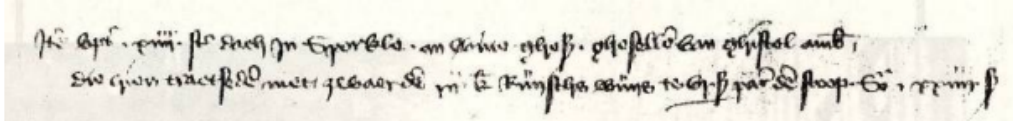
We conclude this text review by pointing out that the event took place in 1408. The city accounts run from the 2nd September, 1407 to the 2nd September, 1408.

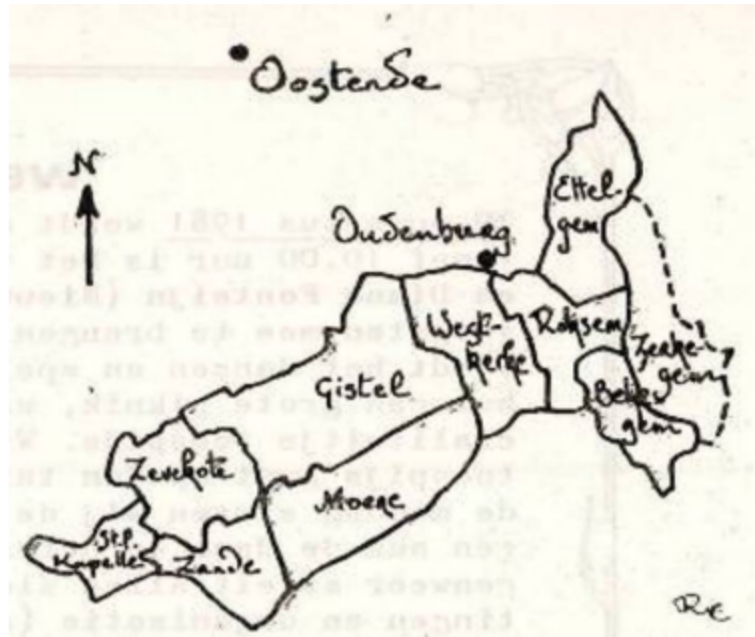
Speurtocht 11
't Zweertdanserke 24
June, 1981

Speurtocht 10 appeared in issue 17 (November 1980). That such a long time has passed before we got any further is mainly due to the difficulties of research in the State Archives in Brussels and especially to the long waiting time (about three months) to obtain the necessary copies.

Indeed, we had to go to the State Archives in Brussels because the next entry does not come from Bruges (where searches in the City Archives are relatively easy) but from Oudenburg, now a quiet village, but in the 12th-13th century a town with an important cloth industry

Oudenburg

Gistel-Ambacht	and horse market. Here is the text as it appears in RAD Rekenkamer 37 605 folio 18 - recto.  It(em) upt(en) .xiiij.st(en) dach in Sporkle an wine ghes(cenct) gheselle(n) van ghistel amb(acht), die hier traetsede(n) met zwaerde(n) ij. k(annen) riinschs wiins te vj. s(chellingen) par(isis) de(n) stoop. So(mme) .xxiiij s(chellingen). A good and complete reading of the text was given by Feys and Van de Castele (1873-87: 258). Vander Straeten (1874, II: 98) also mentions the Oudenbourg performance, but has the dancers come from Gistel instead of Gistel-Ambacht. This error is then taken over later Verstraete (1940, 15/16:11). The text is especially important because of the verb used: <i>traetsen</i>. If we look up Verwijs' <i>Middle Dutch Dictionary</i> (p. 630), we see that <i>traetsen</i> means to dance, and, more specifically, circle dance. The word is said to be a derivation of the French <i>tracer</i>. <i>Traetsen</i> with swords thus very clearly refers to the well known linked-sword dance! And so we have the first text that unambiguously proves the presence of the sword dance in our regions. In the light of this text the older texts, where we pointed out the possibility of a different interpretation (see <i>Speurtocht</i> 5), can be interpreted with more certainty in the direction of the sword dance. The early date again points in the direction of Lent, although this day is not explicitly mentioned here. Another new element is that the dancers are paid in kind. They are offered 2 jugs = 4 stoops of wine. In Bruges, a sum of money was always offered, usually with the explicit mention of <i>te verdrinckene</i>. In our opinion, no special meaning should be attached to the word <i>ghesellen</i>. If we look at De Flou (1914, IV:688) we see that this naming indicates an area which included the parishes of Gistel, Moere, Zande, Zevekote (partly), Westkerke, Sint-Pieters-Kapelle, Roksem, Dekegem and Ettelgem, as well as a corner of Zerkegem. For your convenience we have drawn it on the map.
------------------------------	--



We have also indicated Oudenburg and Ostend to make it easier for you.

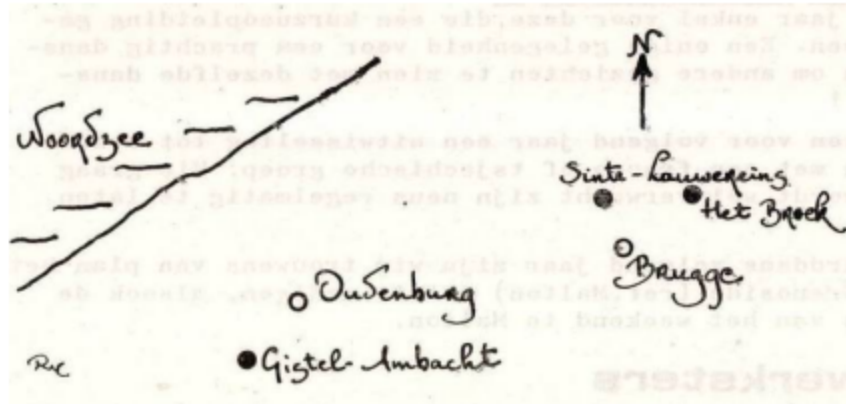
The use of the term *Gistel-Ambacht* instead of a well-defined place of origin, makes sense to us. It reminds us of the Bruges text of 1408. Wasn't the name *Gistel-Ambacht* used here to indicate that the sword dancers came from one or more small hamlets in the Gistel area? The Bruges text clearly stated that dancers came from two small rural hamlets, Sinte Lauwereins and Het Broek, to dance in Bruges. Could there have been groups of sword dancers from small rural communities in Bruges at the beginning of the fifteenth century, who travelled the surrounding area around Lent? In the 19th century, this was still the practice of several English sword-dancing teams from the Yorkshire region.

For the sake of overview, we would like to put the data we have retrieved from the archive texts up to now into a map:

- the black circles indicate locations from which sword dancers came
- the white circles are the locations where they performed. So far everything is situated in the north of West Flanders.

It will stay that way. For the next entry we will discuss another contribution, and that comes from the municipal accounts of Gistel.

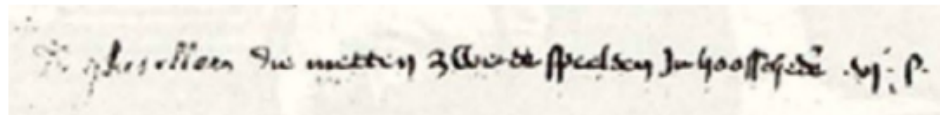
For example, local teams from villages such as Goathland, Loftus, Sleights, and others converging on Whitby in mid-winter; see, for example, Corrsin, Davenport, and Sharp.



Should we attach any significance to this? For the time being, we do not think so. The fact is that this area was organised very early on due to the international trade role of Bruges and the Zwin. The town accounts are usually much older than in Brabant, for example.

Speurtocht 12
't Zweertdanserke 25
July/August 1881

The following text is usually dated 1409, as far as we can tell. It appears in the accounts of Gistel. The specimen preserved at Brussels in the State Archives is badly damaged by damp. The text itself is not particularly interesting either: it brings no new elements to the fore. Let us print it first:



RAB Rekenkamer 35213 - folio 9 - verso - no. 4

(De ghesellen) **die metten zwerde speelden in hoosschede .vj. p.**

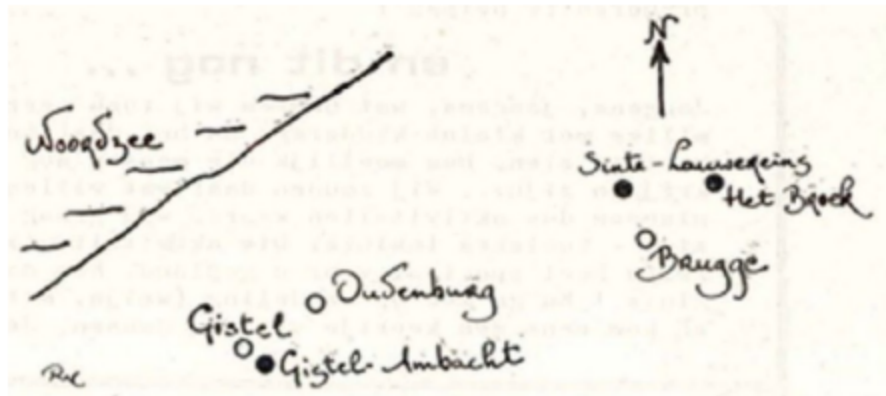
The first two words were added in pencil: the original text has disappeared. First (?) cited by Vander Straeten (1881 vII: 98).

Correct dating is difficult. The first leaf of the account is so water-damaged that start and end dates are illegible. In pencil, the starting date was later noted as 05.03.1409 (new style) and given by Vander Straeten as 15.03.1409. The placement of the text as third last of a section, suggests that the event mentioned took place in the spring of 1410. However, there is no evidence for this. Indeed, the surrounding texts contain no date indication either.

Consequently, when Verstraete writes (1942, **23-24**:13) "of the entries for which we know exactly what time they refer to, all the oldest refer to the Sprokkel- and Lentemaand [*February and March*]: Gistel (1409)..." then we cannot agree with him. Apparently, he considered the starting date of the account given by Vander Straeten to be the

Shrove Tuesday in 1409 was the 23rd February, which would make this remarkable as a rare performance during Lent. However, if the 5th March interpretation is correct, this is probably accounted for by differences between the Julian (Old Style) calendar in use at the time and the Gregorian (New Style) which is

<i>referred to here</i> <i>But see the note above about changes in the calendar; on the other hand, Verstraete had shown no interest in Flemish sword dancing until he suddenly started writing about it in 1940, and there are places where his mastery of his material can be questioned.</i> <i>in hoosschede</i> <i>means in a house enclosure, i.e. courtyard - in other words, they performed with swords in a courtyard.</i>	date of the event itself. We would also like to point out here that the text reproduced by Vander Straeten is not correct, or at least does not correspond to the text in the account at the State Archives. For instance, Vander Straeten reads <i>zweirde</i> instead of <i>zwerde</i>, which is not important in itself, but further, he mentions as payment XI shillings, where the text clearly reads <i>vj</i>, i.e. six. This wrong reading led Verstraete (1941, 17:12) to raise the possibility, that 11 dancers (or 10 + 1) participated, which he then relates to the number of participants on the famous Breugel illustration, which is also 11 (and from which the number of dancers in the Antwerp sword dance of Lange Wapper is derived). As the correct reading shows, this assumption makes no sense. The text analysis was quickly completed. We leave out the beginning, as we do not know the original text. die metten zwerde speelden: we refer again to the reservation we expressed earlier in connection with the interpretation of this expression in the direction of the linked-sword dance. We discussed this problem at length in 't Zw 10. We would just like to draw attention to the use of the singular: <i>zwerd(e)</i>, where all previous texts speak of <i>met zwerden</i> [<i>i.e. plural</i>]. However, we do not believe that much importance should be attached to this. in hoosschede: as a favour; again, the idea of enclosure As mentioned earlier, a bizarrely poor text. No word on the origin of the dancers (often authors who cite the text say that the dancers are from the city itself, but that is not clear from the text), nor about the date. Apparently they were paid in money here, unlike in Bruges. Let's add to the map from last time. We will stay in the area around Bruges and Ostend. A white bullet (places of performance) will be added: Gistel. Let me remind you that the black dots indicate the places of origin.
--	--



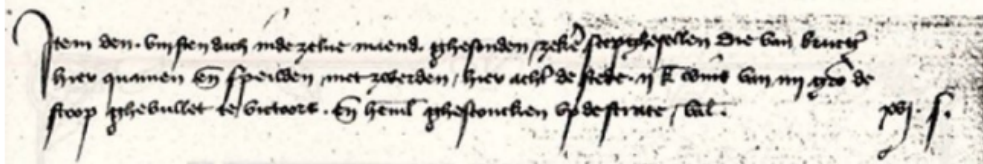
Speurtocht - 13

't Zweertdanserke 30
January 1982

Damme

Damme is in West
Flanders, 6 km NE of
Bruges.

We skip forward about ten years. In *Speurtocht* 12 we talked about the Gistel text, which probably referred to the year 1410. With the new text to be discussed, originating from the Damme city accounts, we are in the year 1419. Let us take a closer look at the text:



**Item den vijftien dach inde zelve maend. ghesonden zeke(re)
scepghesellen die van brugge(he)**

**hier quamen en(de) speilden met zwerden hier acht(er) de stede
.ij k(annen) wine van iij gro(ot) de**

**stoop ghevullet te victoors .en(de) heml(ieden) ghesconcken up
de strate val(uta)
xvj s(hellingen)**

RAB Rekenkamer 33 564 - folio 34 - recto - no. 8

A curious text for two reasons: the dating and the identity of the dancers. We explain this in more detail in our text analysis.

Let us first point out that the text was apparently quoted for the first time by Vander Straeten (1881). We must, however, find the text in the first part (par. 29). There is a reason why we initially overlooked him: the text citation in the footnote contains a number of gross inaccuracies, including an omission of an element that we believe is

*One might question
Renaat's
interpretation here.*

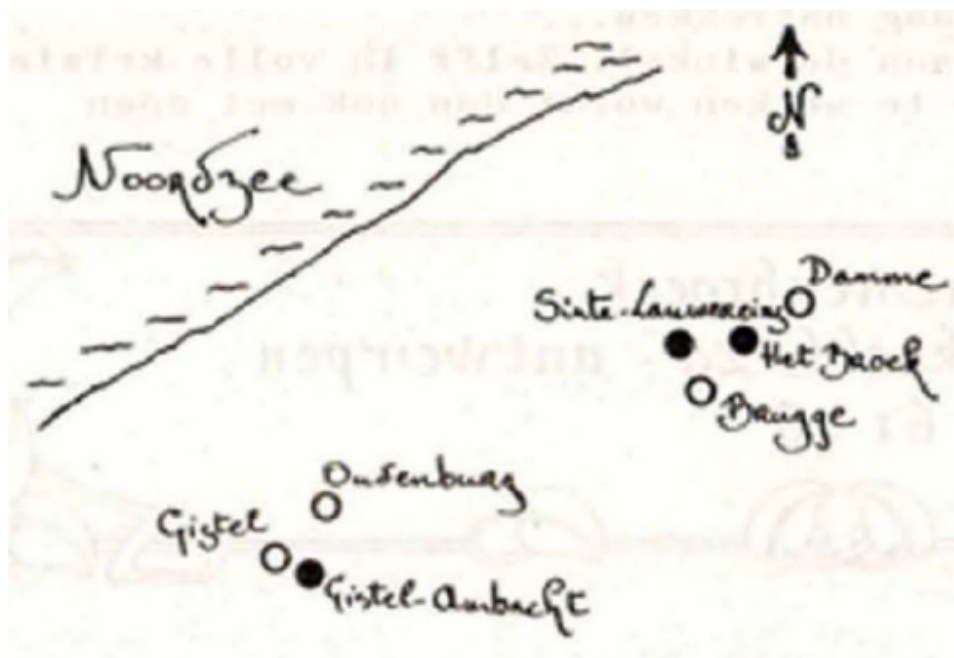
The distinction Renaat is making is that they were specifically boatmen, whereas Vander Straeten's meaning is taken as journeymen from an unspecified guild.

First of all, there is the correct date. Vander Straeten speaks of the year 1418. The Damme account, however, runs from midwinter 1418, to St John's Day [24th June] 1419. The text part **inde zelve maend** [in the same month] refers very clearly to August, as explicitly indicated in the titles of the series of posts, to which our excerpt belongs: **Betaelt ... in ougstmaend** [paid in the month of August]. The account published by Vander Straeten now speaks of: *den vjsten dach* [the sixth day]. Apparently this is a printing error, because Vander Straeten himself mentions August 8 in his running text, which we also read! The definitive date for us is therefore August 8, 1419.

Zeke(re) scepghesellen die van brucg(he) hier quamen [certain boatmen who came here from Bruges]: yes, we read very clearly *SCEPghesellen*, where van der Straeten only speaks about *ghesellen*.

21

<i>Two jugs of wine at 4 shillings per stoop - the measure varied from place to place, but in the region of 2.5 litres per stoop.</i>	speilden met zwerden [<i>performed with swords</i>]: again we remind you of the possible caveat that this is a fencing exercise rather than a linked sword dance. Given the rather unusual dating this reservation becomes stronger.. hier achter de stede: we previously explained the word <i>achter</i> as an indication of the occurrence of the event in various places within a certain space (in this case: "here" Damme). So obviously multiple performances around the city. 2 kannen wine van 4 groot de stoop: two stoops to one jug, so that the final sum is indeed correct: 2 jugs = 4 stoops @ 4 shillings per stoop = 16 shillings. Just as in Oudenburg in 1409, the dancers (?) did not receive money, but wine directly, in contrast to Bruges, where money was always given. ghevullet te victoors [<i>filled by Victor</i>]: this refers to Victor (his family name is Bertolfs, as we learn from the surrounding texts) who was the innkeeper, who might fill the jugs. ende hemlieden ghesconcken up de strate: the drink was thus consumed in the open air. It was probably back to the dancing after that! Let us summarise: August 8, 1419 in Damme, from Bruges, perhaps strange seafarers, with swords, dance (?) at various places within the city. The city magistrate gives them two jugs of wine for this. Victor Bertolfs is commissioned to fill these and deliver them to the dancers (?), which they have drunk in the street. The whole treat cost the city of Damme sixteen shillings.
--	---



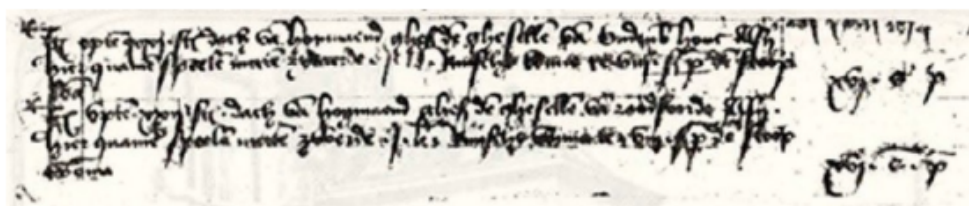
Our map thus gains another point, staying in the area around Bruges. We shall also stay in that area for our next text [*Speurtocht* 14]. That text dates from a while later, 1431, and comes from Oudenburg. As a special feature we shall find the statement of two place names where the dancers came from.

In *Speurtocht* 9 we pointed out that our calculations to determine the number of dancers were based on a wrong idea. We did not yet know exactly why, but we had established that each sum mentioned in the various items of the Bruges city accounts was then quoted again, but then multiplied by twelve. That's how we thought of twelve dancers! It was too good to be true: it only concerns a conversion from shillings to pence, in other words a conversion into another denomination. Regrettably...

Speurtocht 14
't Zwerdtdanserke 38
October 1982

Oudenburg

Our wanderings in the old archives take us this time - chronology always observed! - once again to the (then) busy town of Oudenburg. Once again, we make a leap forward in time: the last post discussed dated from 1419. We end up with this new entry in 1432. But we get value for money and effort: 2 entries in the same account! Let us take a look at them first:



**It(em) upte(n) xxj.ste dach va(n) hoymaend ghes(ent) de(n)
gheselle(n) va(n) Oudenb(urg)houc
Alsij hier quame(n) speele(n) mette(n) zwaerde . j. k. riinschs
wiins te . viij. s(chellingen) p(arisis) de(n) stoop
so(mm)a xvj. s. P.**

RAB Rekenkamer 31 621 - folio 9 - recto - nos. 6 & 7

As far as we know, these data were first published by Feys and Van de Casteele (1873-87, ii: 361), where they give an almost complete and accurate reading of the texts. We were therefore able to find the text almost without difficulty at the National Archives in Brussels.

In terms of dating, however, there were again snags. Didn't we read in the heading of the account that it began on 3 February 1431 to end on 27 February 1432? So, according to our simple reasoning, the quoted event had to have taken place in 1431 in the month of July or the hay month (*hooimaand*). Now, in the early fifteenth century, however, there was quite a bit of wrangling with timekeeping, in the sense that sometimes a year would start at Easter and simply continue until the next Easter! One then speaks of old style and new style, the latter when January 1 is taken as the beginning of the year. In this case, Feys and Van de Casteele read 1431 as 1432 and 1432 as 1433!

And they are right!

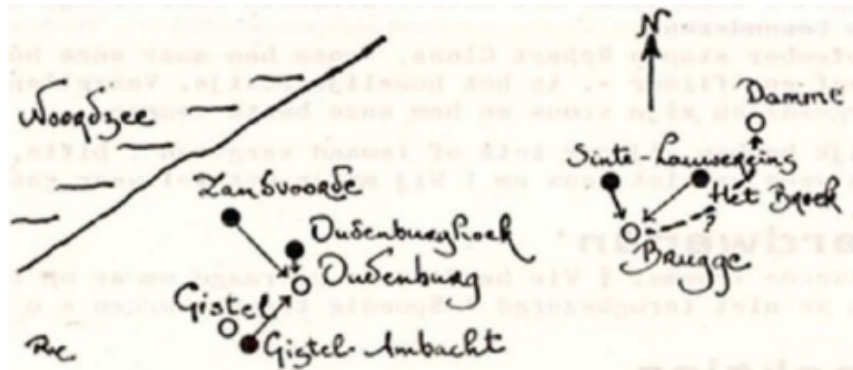
So we find two performances in the year 1432 in the month of July on two different but consecutive days (22 and 23 July). Curious actually to find performances on those dates in the full summer period . . . Especially then because other known data from Oudenburg (1409, 1438, 1443) are situated in the period of Lent (12 February to 3 March).

Much later (1609) there would again be talk of sword dancing at a later period in the year, namely the Monday after Sinksen at the annual shooting festival of the St Sebastian guild. It is possible, however, that in the latter case there was confusion with fencing, because for the year 1612 Feys and Van de Casteele (I:325) speak of fencing at the annual shooting festival... This needs to be investigated later!

Renaat is assuming that the accounts use Old Style dating, where the calendar year began on the 25th March. Thus, February 1431 OS would be 1432 New Style (dating the year from the 1st January).

Sinksen is a festival, still celebrated in Kortrijk, occupying the long weekend before Pentecost/Whitsun.

<i>Renaat discusses two texts but only reproduces one as an illustration.</i>	What these July dates represent is not clear to us for now. Is it the local fair? We should find an enthusiast who would like to read through Feys and Van de Castele to perhaps find the answer. We tried to find an answer using the data concerning the Church festivals (processions, etc.), but we did not come up with a satisfactory solution. Yet such dates do not stand alone. Consider Damme: 6 August (<i>Sp.</i> 13). In any case, it does detract from the assertion of some authors that the oldest mentions of sword dances refer exclusively to celebrations in the Lent period. Barely forty years after the oldest text, we already find clear exceptions. Pleasing again is that the place of origin of the dancers is specified. In the second case, the locality poses no problem at all. Zandvoorde is a (former) municipality located 3 kilometres from Oudenburg. Less clear is the location of the first text. In de Flou (1914), under <i>Oudenburg-Hoek</i>, we find an area including the municipalities Oudenburg (in part), Oudenburg Hoek and Ettelghem, now also a district of Roxem, Westkerke, and Jabbeke. The toponym Hoek is very common in the area, as evidenced by current staff maps. However, we could not find Oudenburg-Hoek on any map. Perhaps this was a district of Oudenburg, located on the border with Ettelgem. In the examples, Oudenburg-Hoek is mostly situated north of Oudenburg church. As far as we can tell, a stoop would have represented something like two and a half litres. Gilliods-Van Severen (1871-5) states that in 1875, the stoop still represented two litres. So the sword dancers received about five litres of wine per group. This allows us to make some guesses about the number of dancers. Their number probably did not exceed twelve, otherwise the reward given seems too small per head. On the other hand, it seems unlikely to us that there were fewer than six of them. Not just dancing technically, but also relative to the amount of wine. Six and twelve are not random numbers, but are numbers that occur elsewhere for participants in the sword dance. Whether or not musicians, jester(s) and other participants should be added to the dancers is and remains an open question, which we have discussed before (<i>Speurtocht</i> 5).
--	---



Take a look at our completed map. An open circle still represents a place where we know with certainty that sword dancers were at work; a black dot indicates a place, where we can say with certainty that a sword dancers' association existed. We have drawn arrows to indicate where the groups went, and we have indicated the dubious case of the dancers from Bruges performing in Damme (*Speurtocht* 13) with a dotted line.

We clearly remain in the north of the province of West Flanders and the journeys are rather small - five kilometres at most. However, this is about to change. Around 1440, we find the first traces of the linked-sword dance in East Flanders.

Speurtocht 15
't Zweertdanserke 39
November 1982

We return once more to the Damme town account of 1418/19 which mentions an allowance of two jugs of wine, which was given to shipmates from Bruges who came to 'play with the swords'. We already talked about this text at length in *Speurtocht* 13.

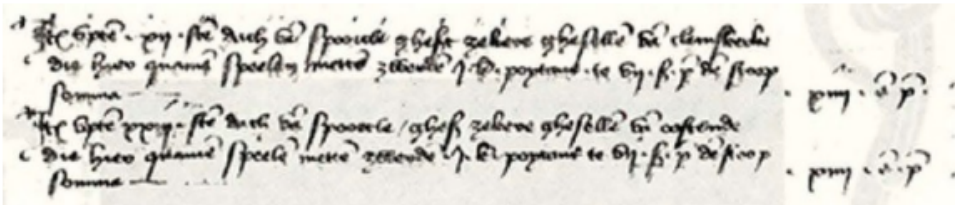
Damme

In connection with this text, we must correct something which was published by Verstraete in his series of articles on the Flemish linked-sword dance (1941: **17**:12). Verstraete writes the following there:

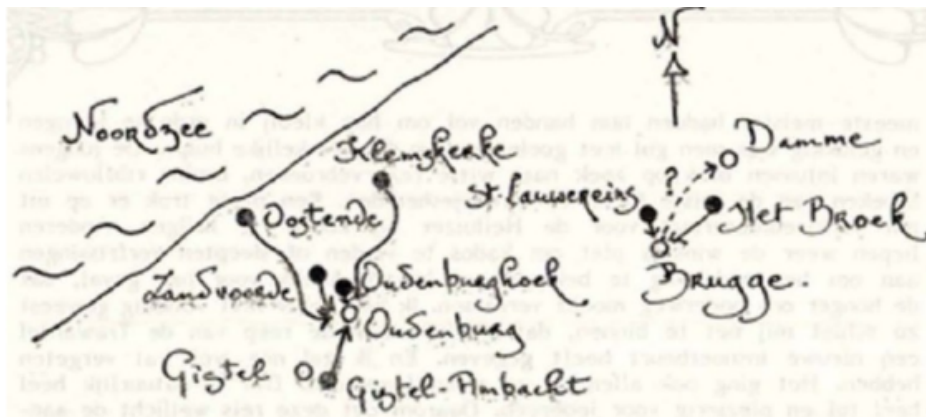
"One may ask how many participants our sword dances were performed with. We have tried to ascertain this from the sums paid. Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes not, e.g. the accounts of Damme (1418) say that given were *ij kannen wins van iij gr., val. xvj st.* 16 stuivers = 192 pennies, paid for 48 cans of wine which cost 4 denarii (or pennies) each: since now each received 2 cups of wine there were thus 24 dancers."

On the face of it, a reasoning that fits like a glove. But if you take a look at our previous contribution (*Speurtocht* 14), you will read that a 1/2 jug held something like two and a half litres! So almost 10 litres of

	wine per man! And at that price! It must have been a drunken procession if this were true. The calculation of the number of dancers is, of course, incorrect. Verstraete based his interpretation on the incomplete reading, as it appears in Vander Straeten (1874: 29 in footnote). We had already pointed out that Vander Straeten only spoke of <i>gesellen</i>, where the text very clearly states <i>scepghesellen</i>. Similarly, the original text reads <i>ij k. wine' van iij groot de stoop</i>. That <i>de stoop</i> is omitted in Vander Straeten's text rendering. And so Verstraete fell into the trap.... A <i>stoop</i> is half of a <i>kanne</i>, so $2 \times 2 \text{ kanne} \times 4 \text{ groot} = 16$ shillings. This in turn shows that looking up the original texts is absolutely essential. Misrepresentation can easily lead to erroneous decisions. So how many dancers were there in Damme? We cannot determine it precisely, but 2 jugs is 9 to 10 litres. Wouldn't a number of 12 dancers, plus perhaps a few musicians and/or extras be rather acceptable then? If we compare the amount of wine poured here with that poured at Oudenburg in 1432, i.e. a single jug per group, we may wonder whether the Bruges group was perhaps more numerous. The question remains open: there is no answer (yet). Perhaps the comparison with the following texts will yield something!
Speurtocht 16 (numbered 15 in paper edition) 't Zweertdanserke 42 February 1983 Tielt <i>Renaat mistakenly gives this reference as issue 17, 1941.</i>	Now, upon checking at the State Archives in Brussels, we drew a blank. The file <i>Rekenkamer</i> 38 334, which runs from 30 June 1431 to 4 August 1432, contains no mention of a sword dance (or else we must have overlooked it). Verstraete unfortunately does not mention his source. Indeed, it could still be that he meant that sword dancers from Tielt performed elsewhere. But on top of that, we are fairly well informed about Tielt. De Vroede published an article '<i>Zwaarddansen te Tielt</i>' (1942, 23/24:8-11). On the basis of the accounts available in Brussels, he gives a lot of data on sword-dancing societies performing in Tielt. But the first entry dates from 1464. Now Verstraete's enumeration includes the erroneous statement of a performance at Bruges in 1405; a probable error, which we already pointed out in <i>Speurtocht</i> 8. Verstraete himself, when we questioned him about the 1432 entry,

	believed it to be a mistake, though without being able to explicitly confirm it. Consequently, we provisionally consider the 1432 text non-existent. Possibly, it may yet emerge from other sources. In our next contribution, we linger for a while in the province of West Flanders. Oudenburg demands our attention for a while.
Speurtocht 17 't Zweertdanserke 44 April 1983	Don't look for <i>Speurtocht</i> 16, because in our scientific folly, we have used the number 15 twice! Thus, we have given this meaningless interlude the number 17, so that next time we can continue with 18, in which you will be presented with some archive texts from the coastal region again and a few municipalities will join our list.
Speurtocht 18 't Zweertdanserke 47 July/August 1983 Oudenburg	It has been a while since we have bothered you with old archival texts, but we really don't want to overfeed you. On our wander through the past, we have ended up in the year 1438. And we will stay a while longer in that small, busy town of Oudenburg. Once again it was Feys and Van de Casteele (1873-87 ii:382) who were the first to publish the text . In the National Archives in Brussels, we found the following texts without much difficulty:  RAB Rekenkamer 37624 - folio 11 - verso 3 & 4 Regarding the dating, we join Feys and Van de Casteele (1873-1887 ii:382), who were very meticulous in this. The account indeed runs from May 12, 1436 to March 31, 1438 (new style). The placement of the items at the back of the accounts section clearly shows that we are in 1438. Again we find in one locality (Oudenburg in this case) in the same year two sword-dancing groups and what makes it pleasant for us: they come from two locales which we had not previously associated with the sword dance. The first text mentions the ghesellen van clemskerke, which clearly refers to today's Klemskerke. The second text mentions ghesellen van Oostende. So again, we remain in the immediate vicinity of the place of performance: Ostend is 8 km from Oudenburg, Klemskerke just under 7.
Klemskerke Ostend	

<i>Date here is the 12th February</i> <i>...on the 25th February, that was the Sunday before Shrovetide</i> <i>This places it at the end of 1438 Old Style (where 1439 started on the 25th March)</i>	But first, let us try to read the texts: It(em) upte(n) .xij.ste(n) dach va(n) spoorcle ghes(cenc)t zekere gheselle(n) va(n) clemskerke die hier quame(n) speelen mette(n) zwerde(n) .j. k(anne) :poytaus te vij. s(chellingen) p(arisis) de stoop somma .xiij. s(chellingen) p(arisis) So, that was it. It strikes us, with these texts, that we are back in the period around Lent. Indeed, on the same page in the next post we read: "...upte(n) xxv.ste(n) dach va(n) spoorcle, dat was te vastenavonde lest leden...". Ostend came on the Sunday before Lent and Klemskerke came no less than two weeks before Ash Wednesday ... Does this perhaps refer to groups traveling around for several weeks, such as we can still find in 19th century England? This long period before Lent seems to correspond to that in the text of 1409 from the same church (see <i>Speurtocht</i> 11). And at the same time, it contradicts the texts from Oudenburg, which we discussed in <i>Speurtocht</i> 14, when there was action in the month of July! Somewhat unclear, then! For the time being, these data do not allow us to draw a clear conclusion. The dating is thus as stated Feb. 12, 1438 (Klemskerke) and Feb. 23 of the same year (Ostend). ghescent 1 kanne poytaus: the sword dancers were rewarded for their performance with 1 jug (about five litres of French wine from the region of Poitiers. If the town was less well-off or the groups were smaller in number the sword dancers were less highly paid, but in 1409 they still received 2 jugs, and this was also the case in Damme in 1419. In 1432, also at Oudenburg, however, the dancers from Oudenburghoek and Zandvoorde had received only a single jug. speelen metten zwerden: here we must again make the reservation, which we have discussed at length in <i>Speurtocht</i> 5 and where we pointed out that this may not be linked-sword dancers, but jugglers or fencers. In light of the texts already published, however, this is unlikely.
--	--

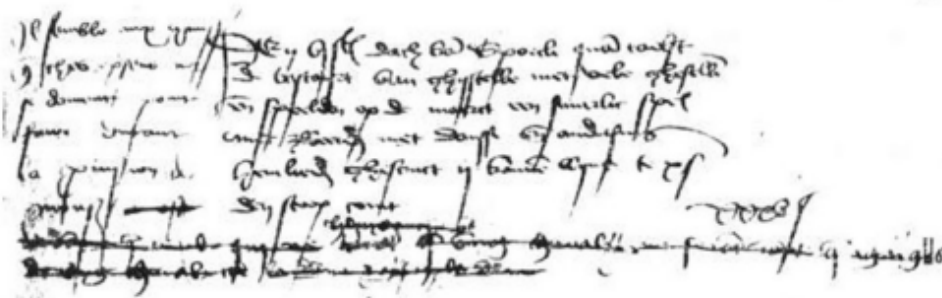


Our map is beginning to take on more and more allure: let us remind you that the black dots indicate the places of origin; the white ones the places where performances were given. With the following texts, we leave the coastal region and shift our attention to East Flanders. But more about that next time.

Speurtocht 19

't Zweertdanserke 49
October 1983

Next time, we will look at the text in more detail. We dive back into history, after all that chatter. We have arrived in the year 1439 and for the first time we are leaving the coastal region for Aalst. In the town account of that year we find no fewer than two entries that mention swords and dancing. We mention the terms separately because the texts also refer to them as such. Important: the word dancing is suddenly there! No more playing with swords, but clearly dancing, although it does not say that swords were used in this dancing. But we'll talk about that next time. Let us first take a closer look at the texts. And we will begin with the text that comes after the others in the account for the simple reason that it is the oldest. Both texts are indeed found in two different sections. This is the illustration of the oldest text:

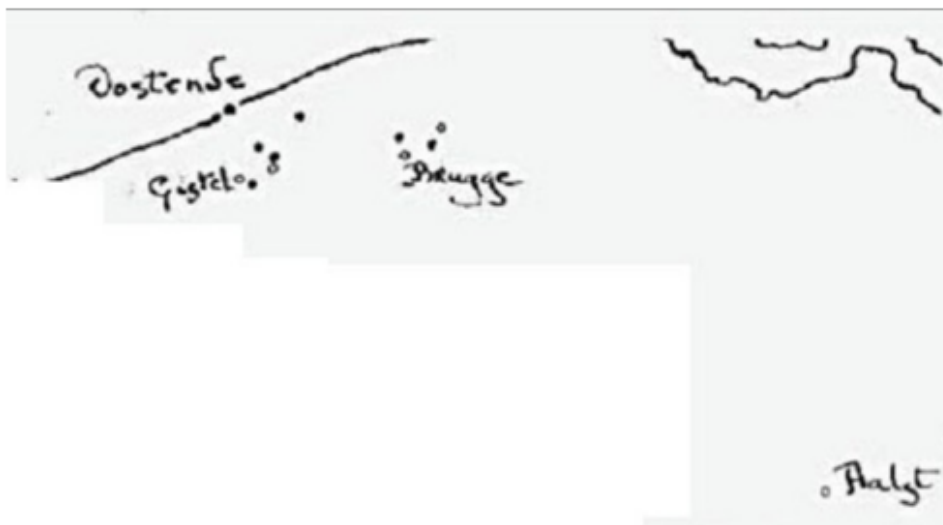


Rijksarchief Brussel - Rekenkamer 31 437 - folio 81 - recto - nr 5.

This text is harder to make out than some. It reads:

Den vi ste dach van sporcle qua(m) taelst de bastaert van

<i>'Andersins' literally means 'otherwise', so the text is referring to 'dancing and other things'</i>	many more. We will find out later in other texts. Didn't we learn from <i>Rattle up, my boys</i>, that the groups there sometimes grew to around a hundred people? speelden ... een suverlick spel:e: <i>suverlic</i>, according to Verwijs and Verdam (1885-1929) means clean, beautiful, neat, pretty; neat when referring to objects and things relating to appearance. So apparently the performance must have been appreciated, which incidentally also explains the compensation obtained! met zweerden met dansse ende andersins: it is actually crazy that dancing is mentioned separately. And what is meant by <i>andersins</i>? Can we go so far as to assume that a descendant of the Lords of Gistel saw something in the sword dance and created a sword dance based on it? And that he travelled around in the Carnival with it? A Karnaval company avant la lettre? Or are we going too far with that? Who will tell us? Soberly speaking, there is only talk of a performance in which swords were used and dancing and other things were involved. ghescinct ij kannen wyns: if the bastard of Gistel did it to earn a penny from it, he was already deceived: wine was served but there is no question of a cash payment. Two jugs meant some ten litres. But where normally two stoops go into one jug, the bill here is not correct! After all, two jugs will hold four stoops. And if each stoop costs ten shillings, the total sum should be forty shillings, and not thirty-five shillings as stated in the account. Was it miscalculation or wrongly recorded? In the end this doesn't greatly matter. In summary, we can only conclude that in 1439, shortly before Lent, a sword dance performance may have taken place on the Aalsterse large market by a relatively large group of companions under the leadership of a captain. But wait! There was another comment - written in French in the margin. We will examine that one next time. All in all, our map underwent a profound change: we left the coastal region and our view suddenly became much wider.
---	---



Speurtocht 22
 't Zweertdanserke 56
 May 1984

Aalst

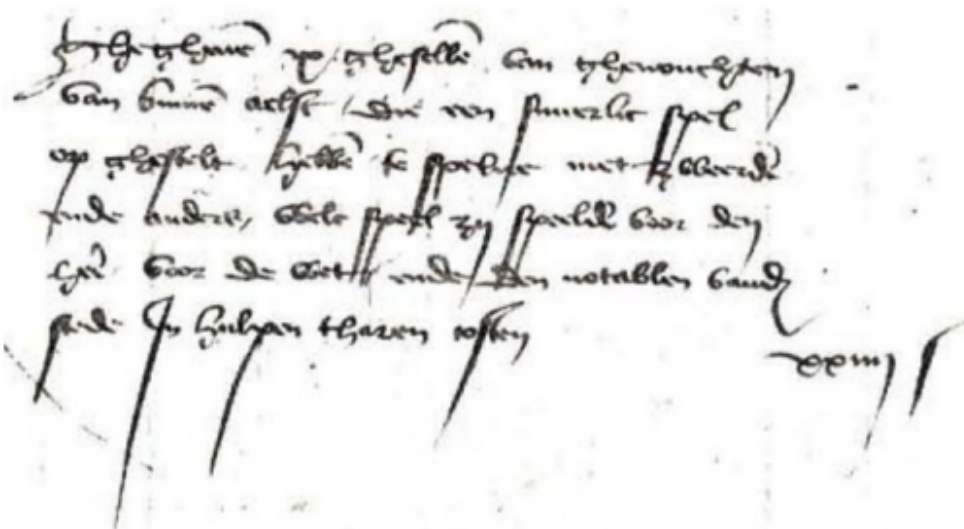
The text from Aalst can be spread over quite a few chapters! We published it in *Speurtocht* 19 and devoted two reviews to it, one in *Sp.* 20 (very short) and a more extensive one in *Sp.* 21. Anyone who returns to the text reproduction will notice that there was also a French text, noted in the margin. This is a remark by the auditor of the account and contains a disapproval of the use of the funds. We would like to repeat the text (it has been so long).

Il semble aux commissaires que ches presens ne se doivent point faire durant la provision de Monseigneur.

(It seems to the commissioners that these presentations should not be made during the provision of Monseigneur.)???

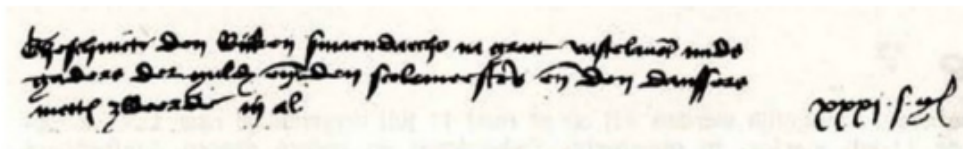
We give the reading as we found it in Van Nuffel (1914-15) because we can read the text with the exception of two words (*commissaires* and *provision*). The first word appears in abbreviated form and we are not sufficiently familiar with the usual abbreviations and terminology of medieval French. The second word is difficult for us to read back.

Whatever the case, the tenor of the text is clear: the town clerks are advised against making such expenditures. It is not very clear, because the marginal remark refers to the first item of a classification of expenditures, whether it refers to this one item or to the total of the mentioned expenditures. Is this disapproval perhaps the reason why we find no trace of Aalstrian sword dancers in the rest of the town accounts? Yet they did exist. For, based on a mention of Jan Broeckkaert, we find them in 1452 in Dendermonde, and later according to another source in Liedekerke (texts to be examined later). But in

	Aalst apparently nothing more. At least, nothing more according to de Potter and Broeckaert (1875). Perhaps texts will emerge from church archives or mural drawings. For now, we can do little else but move on to the second text from the same year, 1439, which also mentions sword dancers and which we will reproduce next time.
Speurtocht 23 't Zweertdanserke 57 June 1984 Aalst	So, we are still in 1439. and still well within the city of Aalst because, as already mentioned, in the same account of the said year we find a second entry, which mentions a performance of swords and dancing. This account entry is found in the register before the text already discussed, but chronologically it falls later: this is the reason why we discuss it after the previous one. Let's take a closer look and read it first:  (RAB - Rekenkamer 31 437 folio 56 recto nr 4) Ghegheve(n) ix gheselle(n) van ghenouchten van binne(n) aelst, die een suverlic spel op ghestelt hebbe(n) te spelne met zwerd(en) ende anders, welc speel zy speeld(en) voor den her(e), voor de wet, ende den notablen vand(en) stede in hulpen tharen kosten xxiiij s(chellingen) As already mentioned in <i>Speurtocht</i> 20, this text was apparently not known to de Potter and Broeckaert, who do not mention it in their history. We believe the oldest citation of the text can be found in the already cited work by Van Nuffel. It contains an article 'Een zwaardendans in 1439' (p.196), in which both texts are quoted without any further comment.

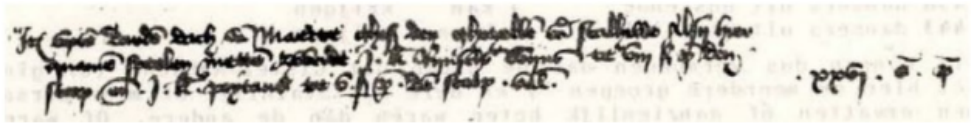
	As for the dating, as far as the year 1439 is concerned, we refer to <i>Speurtocht</i> 21. No precise statement can be found in the text itself regarding the exact day of the month. However, the first post on folio 56 speaks of 14 September. The performance therefore more than likely took place in the autumn (after 14 September). Let us now analyse the text: ix ghesellen: the number 9 has fascinated many researchers and led them to conclude that there were nine sword dancers at work. But we would like to point out that this can by no means be gathered from the text without question. Nine can mean eight sword dancers + 1 musician (or 1 jester, if we assume no musical accompaniment to our oldest sword dances), or also six sword dancers + 2 musicians + 1 jester, etc ... It is indeed plausible that not only the dancers, but the whole company was rewarded. On the other hand, nine is among the possibilities: After all, Bruegel also draws an uneven number of dancers: eleven. So the indication of the number does not take us very far. We would also like to point out that the performers apparently did not belong to a guild or form an independent guild. There is only talk of <i>ghesellen</i>, a term that has little substance. van ghenouchten: they were companions who came to entertain the others (in this case the Lord, the Law and the Notables). van binnen aelst: at least that is clear: they were Aalst people, this perhaps in contrast to the companions, who were led by the bastard. een suverlic spel up ghestelt hebben: for the word <i>suverlic</i> we refer to <i>Speurtocht</i> 22. More important is the fact that the people of Aalst apparently created this performance or at least gave it their own interpretation. te spelne met zweerden ende anders: that swords were used in it is clear. But what is otherwise? A sabre?? Other connections between the dancers: bows, cloths or sticks? Does it indicate a sword dance? Who will say? However, please note that there is no mention of dancing, as in the other text. Perhaps no music was used in the performance of the Aalst people and was used in that of the other group? Is this the reason for not using the word dancing?
Ghesellen van ghenouchten - entertainers	
Anders = other things	

<i>They played this game</i>	welc speel zy speelden: no word on dancing! voor den here, voor de wet, ende den notablen vanden stede: there is an implication that the performers were perhaps not the first or the best when allowed to perform their play before this important company. On what occasion did this happen? This text too, despite its cumbersome wording, is in fact very obscure and uninformative. Let us also mention that the disapproval of the issue (see <i>Speurtocht 22</i>) does not occur with this text. Why then no later payments to Aalstrian sword dancers, who, as we have already shown, certainly existed? Were those (later) Aalstrian sword dancers perhaps of a less wealthy class? ***** From all the data which we have looked at so far, a very nice story can be distilled. Listen: just before 1400 the sword dance was introduced to Bruges by sailors. In a short time, the custom becomes very popular in the northern coastal region, so popular, in fact, that a bastard of the Lords of Gistel makes an elaborate show of it and tours with it. At a performance in Aalst, the success was so great that the people of Aalst imitated them that same year. Within a short space of time, the sword dance societies in East Flanders emerge. Pretty clever, isn't it? However, anyone who takes the trouble to read up on it in our text analyses will soon be convinced to consign this interpretation to the realm of fiction. And probably with good reason!
Speurtocht 24 't Zweertdanserke 65 December 1985 <i>It might be that it had been seen done by others but that this was the first time the locals had made up a dance.</i>	How long has it been since we have been on a scavenger hunt! We found the last notes in June 1984! We were then in Aalst and were talking about the two texts which were in the town account in the year 1439 and which mentioned a sword dance. With that second text, which spoke of <i>ghesellen van ghenouchten van binnen Aelst</i>, we must make a note. In the text there is talk of an activity that they have <i>up ghestelt</i>. In other words they have created a game to play with swords and others. But does this suggest that such an activity was previously unknown? Did the sword dance in Aalst then not predate 1439? A conclusive answer cannot be given here either. But the text does give food for thought.
Speurtocht 25	Last time we were in 1439 in Aalst, where we found no fewer than two

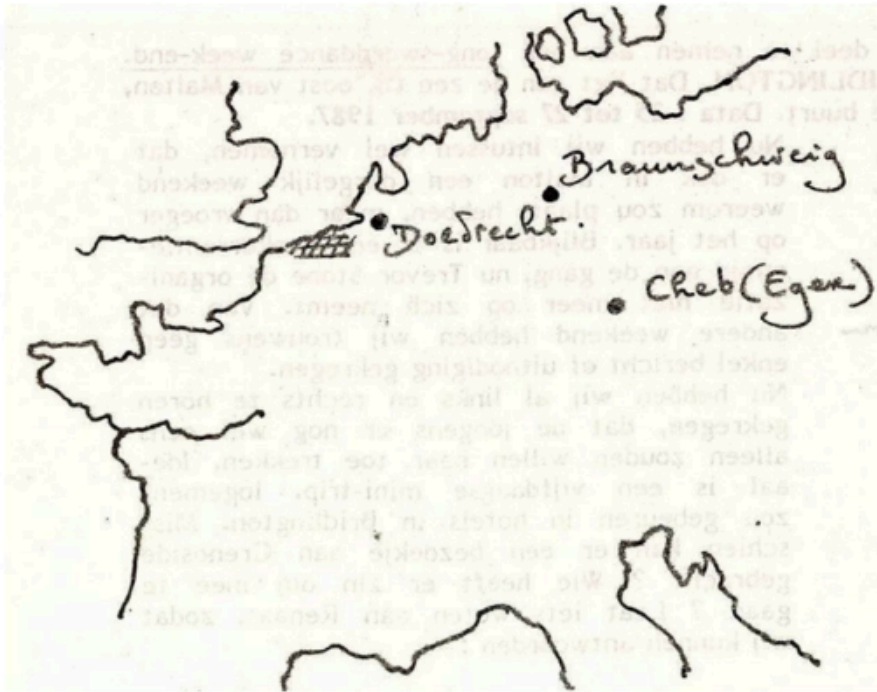
't Zweertdanserke 66 January 1986 Dendermonde <i>This assumes that sword dancers would</i>	comprehensive texts. The next text still keeps us in East Flanders, but now we are in Dendermonde. In the city account for the year 1440 - 41 we find the following text there:  RAB - Rekenkamer 38 009 - folio 28 (not numbered!) recto - post 6 We read: Gheschinct den Wiiken smaendachs na groot vastelavont mids gaders der guld en(de) den scolemeesters en(de) den danssers mette zweerde(n) in al xxxi s(chelling) g(roo)t As far as we know, the existence of this text is first mentioned by Alfons L. De Vlaminck in 1900. In the same article, De Vlaminck gives a lot of data on the performance of sword dances in Dendermonde. We will therefore encounter him regularly in our further quest. Before taking a closer look at the text, let us look at the correct dating. The account begins on 1 July 1440 to end on 30 June 1441. Clearly, then, that the aforementioned sword-dancing performance, in Lent, took place in 1441. To our regret, bitterly little can be deduced from the text. The city donates a sum of 31 shillings to the districts (who brought forward games at carnival in Dendermonde) and the guild and schoolmasters and to the sword dancers. The only connection we can establish between all those listed is that they all did something on the Monday of Carnival. In what connection? In the same place? We are left to guess. Interesting for our research is the time: <i>smaendachs na groot vastelavont</i>, i.e. the Monday before Lent. Here is another entry which puts the dance event in its probable original context. Also interesting is the designation of the sword dancers: the <i>danssers mette zweerde(n)</i>. Not only is the word dance clearly used this time, but also the swords are mentioned as the only attribute (i.e. not as in the texts from Aalst). The sword dancers apparently did not belong to the district organisations or the guild: they are indeed mentioned separately. Presumably they did come from the city itself.
--	--

necessarily be guild members.	In Dendermonde we will find a lot of mentions of sword dancers, a city (and its surroundings) which we will regularly come across in our Quest. We would like to remind you that in the accounts of Aalst, there is only one year with mentions, although we know for sure that there were sword dancers: we now find them in Dendermonde and Ninove. Anyway, that's for later. Our map has become another dot richer. Just a quick note: all these entries are older than any entry from any other European country! We will have to wait another five years or so for the oldest (accepted) entries from Germany to arrive. And suddenly we are far from home: in Braunschweig (Brunswick) and in Eger (now Cheb in Czechia!). Claiming that our little country is the cradle of the linked-sword dance is therefore a dangerous thing! But also more on this later.
Speurtocht 26 't Zweertdanserke 69 September 1986	We are progressing laboriously in time. The next date we meet in our collection of data is Shrove Tuesday 1442. It was reported to us by De Potter and Broeckaert (1875). In the section dealing with the municipalities of Kaprijke (Arrondissement Eekloo - Kaprijke - Ghent 1870/72 - p.158) we read the following: "The first time we find mention of a sword play in Kaprijk is on Shrove Tuesday 1442: the aldermen gave the dancers as a reward, 4 pounds parisis. Then the sword-performers from Ertvelde and Aardenburg also came here." That looks promising! Three new municipalities in one fell swoop and that too in a region which we have not encountered until now. For those who don't know where these municipalities are located: Ertvelde and Kaprijke can be found on the map north of Ghent. Aardenburg is slightly to the west of the previous two and is a

	(former) town, currently in the Netherlands. Unfortunately . . we cannot find the original archival text(s). In the Brussels State Archives (where such old texts should normally be found), there is a gap in the accounts for Kaprijke from 1437 to 1445. The archive concerning Kaprijke in the Ghent State Archives is much later so the account for 1442 cannot be found there either. Annoyingly, De Potter and Broeckaert mention the year 1494 in their further account, referring in footnote to the municipal accounts. But no footnote for the data concerning 1442! Apparently Achiël De Vos, who published a fantastically documented History of Ertvelde in 1971, also encountered the same difficulty. He mentions the Year 1442 and refers to De Potter and Broeckaert, where for other data he usually refers to the original archive texts. Is this the wrong year? Has the account disappeared in the meantime? Open questions at the moment... True to our position of only including data insofar as we can check them against the archival texts, we have to put these data aside. Does it hurt us at the moment, it's not that bad, because we're going to come across each of these three municipalities repeatedly at the end of the fifteenth century and in the sixteenth century. Postponed, then, but not written off. Before we completely disregard the text, we have to say that the £4 parisis reward seems very high to us compared to what we have been able to find so far. But once again, without seeing the original archive text, we do not want to venture into interpretations!
Speurtocht 27 't Zweertdanserke 70 October 1986 Brunswick	We have landed in the year 1443. In our database (ahem!) we find two records for that year. For the very first time, we hear something from abroad, particularly from Germany. Karl Müllenhoff, who represents just about the starting point of collecting data on German sword dances, published an article 'Über den Schwerttanz' in 1871 in the <i>Festgaben für Gustav Homeyer</i>. In it, he mentions as the oldest German mention of the performance of a sword dance, in Braunschweig (in English: Brunswick) in 1443. However, that date is wrong according to later authors and among others Meschke and Wolfram have pointed out that the correct date should be 1446. We have not yet managed to find copies of Müllenhoff's article, or of the original texts.

Oudenburg Eger/Cheb	We therefore leave this fact aside for the moment, not only because of the above, but also because our own accounts have something in store for us in the same year. We need to visit Oudenburg again for that. But we will do that at length next time. After Oudenburg we have to wait until around 1450 for further data, but in that time span foreign data turn up in two different places: in Braunschweig, as already touched upon and also in 1448 in the then Eger (now Cheb in Czechoslovak territory). We will return to these two interesting facts in a separate article.
Speurtocht 28 't Zweertdanserke 71 November 1986 Oudenburg <i>The first text Renaat cites says 3rd March, but the line he gives here says 5th March. According to the Julian calendar, the 3rd March, 1443 was</i>	We are still in the year 1443. As already mentioned in our previous contribution, we find another fact from our Flemish country before we hear the first news from abroad. From the East Flanders area (in which we found ourselves when we last discussed texts) we again head for the coastal region. And there, in the Oudenburg town account of 1442, we find the following text:  (RAB Rekenkamer 37630 - folio 7 - recto - post 4) Text, which we might do better to go through together: It(em) upte(n) darde(n) dach va(n) Maerte ghes(endt) den ghezelle(n) Va(n) stalhille alsij hier quame(n) speelen mette(n) zwerde .j. k(anne) Rijnschs wijns teviiij s p den stoop en(de) .1. k(anne) poytaus te v. s p de(n) stoop. val(uta) xxvj s p The text we are talking about was brought to the eyes of the wider public for the first time by Feys and Van De Casteele (1873-77: 626). As for the correct dating, Feys and Van de Casteele use the year 1443 and we have already found that they are generally very accurate. And indeed the account runs from 24.02.1442 to 10.03.1443. Since the entry is now at the front of the account, one would expect the event to take place in 1442. But . . . this is an old-style account, where the year runs from Easter to Easter, so that in this case (two dates before Easter), we have to add a year. That may seem Chinese [<i>the modern reader might prefer to say 'convoluted'</i>], but if you want to know the details, just ask Renaat or Piet De Gryse!

<i>a Friday, the 5th a Sunday.</i>	Furthermore, we know the exact day: 3 March, and that was the Sunday before Lent, as in the next post we read: it(em) upte(n) v.ste(n) dach va(n) maerte dat was te vastenavonde So at least a report from the Lenten season. Who was at work? Companions from Stalhille, a village about six kilometres as the crow flies from Oudenburg. Given that Oudenburg was a fairly important town, this totally fits the picture we have already formed for the performances in the coastal strip: groups from the immediate area, going dancing in town for a reward. Otherwise, the text teaches us little or nothing. Companions [<i>ghezellen</i>], as we discussed earlier, is a rather general term, which cannot teach us anything. The description "playing with swords" deserves the caveat which we have already made several times in previous contributions. What we do learn is that the Rhine wine was about 60% more expensive than the French wine (<i>poytaus</i> - from the region of Poitiers) and that the group consumed about 10 litres of wine. We can therefore assume that the group must have consisted of at least a dozen people. Perhaps there were even more. Comparing with other data from Oudenburg, we see that in the year: <table><tr><td>1409</td><td>dancers from Gistel-Ambacht received</td><td>2 'cans'</td></tr><tr><td>1437</td><td>dancers from Oudenburghoek received</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>1437</td><td>dancers from Zandvoorde received</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>1438</td><td>dancers from Kemskerke received</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>1438</td><td>dancers from Ostend received</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>1443</td><td>dancers from Stalhille received</td><td>2</td></tr></table> We can therefore suspect that the group from Gistel-Ambacht (or were there several groups here?) and this one from Stalhille were either more numerous or considerably better performers than the others. Or perhaps the lords of the magistracy in 1409 and 1442 were bizarrely generous? Who will tell us?	1409	dancers from Gistel-Ambacht received	2 'cans'	1437	dancers from Oudenburghoek received	1	1437	dancers from Zandvoorde received	1	1438	dancers from Kemskerke received	1	1438	dancers from Ostend received	1	1443	dancers from Stalhille received	2
1409	dancers from Gistel-Ambacht received	2 'cans'																	
1437	dancers from Oudenburghoek received	1																	
1437	dancers from Zandvoorde received	1																	
1438	dancers from Kemskerke received	1																	
1438	dancers from Ostend received	1																	
1443	dancers from Stalhille received	2																	
Speurtocht 29 't Zweertdanserke 72 December 1986	So far, we have always stuck to Flemish territory. There have been no traces elsewhere. And suddenly, testimonies are																		

Bruges, Brunswick, and Dordrecht were all trading cities involved, in various ways, with the Hanseatic League. There would have been constant traffic to and fro and it is possible to imagine a process of cultural diffusion carrying the sword dance with it. Eger was in central Europe and under a completely separate jurisdiction. It is possible that the dance was carried there, but we must also consider the possibility that it arose there quite spontaneously.	now turning up in three different and far(ther) away places: 1446: Brunswick 1448: Eger (now Cheb in Czech Republic) 1450: Dordrecht  The wide dispersion of these data over a time period of barely four years makes it clear, in our opinion, that there can be no question of the linked sword dance having its origins in our regions. A closer examination of these testimonies should make this even clearer, but for now our data is too fragmentary to communicate.
Speurtocht 31 't Zweertdanserke 87 May 1995	Having discussed the 1389 text in detail at the time, we looked forward to the next text. Although it also comes from Bruges, we have to wait until 1404 before it is mentioned again <i>met zwerden speilen</i>. And after 1404, we know of performances in Bruges in 1406 and 1407. So we wondered whether nothing could be found on sword dance between 1389 and 1404 and went to the accounts for those years. And to our delight, we found the following text in 1391: item ghegheven bi beveilne van borghmeest(er)s den sciplieden in hovescheden te verdrinckene grote vaste(n) avonde die up den reep speilden iij. s grote.

Som(m)e .xxxvi. s

Even if there is no mention of swords, there is still the possibility that the text could be related to the sword dance. In some sword dances, a stick is used. Just think of Bagnasco or our own Trawantel. But also hoops or bows or other more flexible objects were used as binding between the dancers instead of the sword. Now this text is practically like two drops of water on this one from 1389.

It is somewhat premature to conclude that a hoop was used in the Bruges sword dance or that in 1391 the swords were replaced by hoops, but these are all-possible suppositions. To date, the text has always been interpreted as saying that the boatmen danced on the tightrope. However, tightrope dancing seems to us something for a single individual and not for a bunch of boatmen....

Looking more closely at the text, we note the clear statement that they received 36 shillings *te verdrinckene*, in other words to take a drink. So clearly a gratuity.

Had the time of occurrence been accurately determined in 1389? Not *vastenavond* [Shrove Tuesday], but *Grote vaste(n)avond*, meaning the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, according to the Middle Dutch Dictionary. So the boatmen would have performed either on several days or the account holder did not remember the correct day and simply referred to the period of carnival.

In any case, the text teaches us, that the *sciplieden* regularly performed something on Shrove Tuesday, which clearly reduces the chance that in 1389 it was foreigners (sailors) who *met zwerden speilden*.

In 1404 we find the following text, again in Bruges:

Item doe ghegheven bi beveilne van borchm(eeste)rs den
ghesellen
die met zwerden speilden tsinte jansbrueghe up den
vastenavond
.iiij. s .iiij. d grote Som(m)e xl s

(Stadsrekening Brugge 1403/04 - folio 117 recto - nr 1)

We then went looking for that St John's Bridge and found it a few hundred metres from the Bruges belfry: it is the current Van Eyckplaats. We published a map with location in *'t Zweertdanserke* number 13.

	This text clearly establishes the time: Lent. Our conclusion from last time still stands: in Bruges around 1400, a group of people trooped around just before Lent with a performance, using swords (perhaps with a hoop). They tried to perform for the mayor to be rewarded for it.
Speurtocht 32 't Zweertdanserke 90 August 1995	We remain in Bruges for a while. Indeed, the oldest known texts all come from this city. After 1389, 1391 and 1404, we know of texts concerning 1406 and 1408. We leave them below: Item ghegheven bi den h(ere) jan osten buerchm(eeste)r den ghezellen die up den groten vastenavond speilden achter de stede met zwerden in hovescheden te verdrinckene .iiij.s.iiij.d gro(ot) Som xl s (Stadsrekening Brugge 1405/06 - folio 114 verso - nr 5) Item den xxvjsten dach van sporkele up papen en(de) nonnen vastenavond ghegheven bi beveilne van buerchmeest(er)s den ghezellen van den brouke en den ghezellen van sinte lauwereins spelende met zwerden elken ghezelscepe te verdrinckene iij s iiij d gro(ot) Som(m)e .iiij lb (Stadsrekening Brugge 1407/08 - folio 99 verso - nr 5) What do these texts teach us when we take a closer look at them? In the first text, we do not find the mention <i>bi beveilne</i> (by order) this time, so we can surmise that it was the mayor himself who granted the sword dancers the permission to go and have a drink on him (<i>in hovescheden te verdrinckene</i>). The fact that the text talking about an act on <i>papen ende nonnen vastenavond</i> (this is the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday) can be found between a post dated 24 March and one dated 30 March reinforces that suspicion. The mayor apparently retrospectively requested the refund [of costs to the dancers]. <i>Achter de stede</i> (meaning: at different places in the city) and the timestamp <i>groot vastenavond</i> let us assume that the dance was performed several times.

	The second text is a lot more interesting because here the origin of the dancers is indicated for the first time. <i>Den Brouke</i> may refer with fairly high certainty to the hamlet of Het Broek, located at Sinte-Kruis/Bruges. <i>Sinte Lauwereins</i> was identified by Verstraete as the municipality Sint Lauwereins [or Laureins] in East Flanders, some 20 kilometres as the crow flies from Bruges. Although we will later find sword dancers in this region, this identification seemed rather daring to us. We rather suspect that this is the hamlet of Sint Lauwereins onder Dudzele, in the immediate vicinity of Bruges. The hamlet no longer exists; it has disappeared into an industrial estate. Both places [Sint Lauwereins and Den Broucke] are then a good four kilometres from Bruges' city centre. The second text gives an explicit time reference: 26 "sporkele" is equivalent to 26 February (old Dutch name: sprockelmaand) and it is additionally stipulated that it was "papen ende nonnen vastenavond", which refers to the Sunday of quinquagesima (the Sunday before Ash Wednesday). Looking at the texts from Bruges discussed so far, we can conclude that at the end of the 14th, beginning of the 15th century, small groups of boatmen or farmers from the immediate Bruges area descended to the city during Carnival to perform with swords in various places. Apparently they thereby tried to appear before the magistrate in the hope of obtaining a reward, which was then used to purchase strong drink.
Speurtocht 33 't Zweertdanserke 91 September 1995	We leave Bruges in our quest for the sword dance. The harvest there was not bad: appearances in 1389, 1391(?), 1404, 1406, and 1408. For the next mention, though, we stay nearby, but we make our way to Oudenburg. In the town account for the period from 27 March 1407 to 18 June 1409, we find the following text: It(em) upt(en) .xiiij.st(en) doch in Sporkle an wine ghes(cenct) gheselle(n) van ghistel amb(acht), die hier traetsede(n) met zwaerde(n) ij.k(annen) riinschs wiins te vj. s(chellingen) par(isis) d(en) stoop. So(mme) xxiiij s(chellingen) (RAS Rekenkamer 37605 - folio 18 - recto) According to its place in the account, we can surmise that the date setting is 14 February 1409. In fact, this is a very important text and that because it does not use the usual entry "spelen met zwaarden" here, but the word "traetsen".

The Middle Dutch dictionary gives the meaning as dancing, more specifically in a circle dance! It refers to the French "tracer". This would thus give us the first explicit mention of a linked sword dance.... We recall that the expression "spelen met zwaarden" in the previous texts could also have other meanings, such as juggling or fencing. Our Oudenburg text gives us arguments in our hand to consider the connection of the Bruges texts and the circle sword dance as likely.

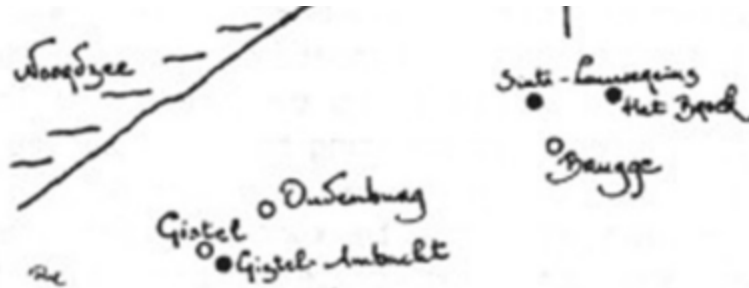
What is also new is that the dancers were apparently paid in kind: they were offered Rhine wine and even more so some ten litres! A kanne contains two stoops and a stoop is about two and a half litres. At the time, Rhine wine was the better and more expensive type of wine. Gistel-ambacht denotes an area comprising the parishes of Gistel, Moere, Zande, Zevekote (in part), Westkerke, Sint-Pieters-Kapelle, Roksem, Bekegem and Ettelgem, as well as a corner of Zerkegem. The imprecise indication of the dancers' origins leads us to suspect that they too came from a hamlet in the area, just as was the case with the dancers from Sinte-Lauwereins and Het Broek, when the latter danced in Bruges in 1408.

We quickly discuss the following text, found in the city account of Gistel. It does not teach us much, except that it is indeed necessary to go back to the source in order to avoid wrong conclusions. But first the text:

(De ghesellen) die metten zwerde speelden in hoosschede .vj.p.

(RAS Rekenkamer 35213 - folio 9 - verso - nummer 4)

The page has suffered greatly from dampness: *de ghesellen* is captioned in pencil and start and end dates on the flyleaf are illegible. In pencil, 05.03.1409 is given as the start date. Van der Straeten incorrectly copied this as 15.03.1409, which apparently prompted Verstraete to conclude in *De Speelman* that the dance was performed on that date, while there is no date entry at all in the text! Similarly, Van der Straeten incorrectly mentions the sum paid: according to him, XI shillings were paid, instead of VI. This led Verstraete to raise the possibility that 11 dancers were at work, referring to the appearance of 11 dancers on the Breugel print. As is clear from the original text, this assumption has no basis whatsoever. Which just goes to show how dangerous it is to go on quoting texts...



I have summarised the provenance data in a map: the white dots indicate the places where was danced, the black ones the origin of the dancers.

Speurtocht 34

't Zweertdanserke 92
October 1995

In our search for traces of the sword dance, we came across a very interesting text from 1419, originating from Damme. Text, which we discussed at length in 't Zweertdanserke 30 and 39. We herewith summarise the contents, but first reproduce the text once more:

Item den viijsten doch inde zelve maand, ghesonden zeke(re)
scepghesellen die van brucg(he) hier quamen en(de) speilden
met zwerden hier acht(er) de stede
.ij k(annen) wine van iij gro(ot) de stoop ghevullet te victoors.
en(de) heml(ieden) ghesconcken up de strate val(uta) xvj
s(chellingen)

(RAB Rekenkamer 33564 folio 34 recto nr 8)

Two things are interesting about this text; the date of performance and the origin of the dancers. We were able to determine the date as being 8 August 1419, a date that falls outside the so far generally mentioned period of Lent (only the text from Gistel does not give a date). It must have been good weather that day, because the dancers got their wine *ghesconcken up de strata* [given to them in the street]. And either there were many of them or they were very thirsty because according to the record they received some ten litres of wine.... (a stoop is about two and a half litres and two stoops go into a jug). But perhaps there is an explanation for that considerable amount of wine in the mention that

the dancers were *zekere scepghesellen die van brucghe hier quamen* [certain seamen/boatmen (who) came here from Bruges].

Scepghesellen are almost certainly seamen, and not members of a boatmen's guild, as presumably in the Bruges text of 1389. That suspicion that they are sailors is reinforced by the wording *die van brucghe hier quamen*. This wording suggests that they were not Bruges people, because otherwise they would have simply said

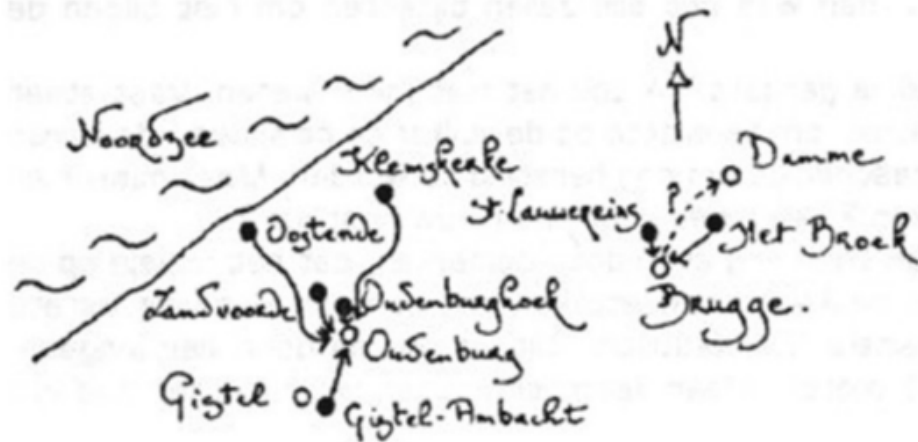
<i>It's not clear where this reference to flowers comes from</i>	"scepghesellen van Brucghe", but sailors anchored at Bruges who had come down to Damme (on the occasion of the fair?) to put the flowers outside. They performed their sword dance in various places in town (<i>achter de stede</i>) in the hope of being rewarded for it, which apparently succeeded nicely. More than five hundred years ago, it couldn't have been a waste of time! Tracing the original text allowed us to correct an error made by Eugene Verstraete regarding the number of dancers at Damme, an error first made in <i>De Speelman</i>, but also repeated in <i>Zwaarddansen in Vlaanderen</i> (p.34). Based on the incomplete text, as reproduced by Vander Straeten in <i>Le theatre villageois en Flandre</i>, he arrived at 24 participants, who would have received 2 jugs (five litres) each! There would be a lot of hangovers involved in this case! The number of dancers or participants cannot be deduced from the text. Too bad...
Speurtocht 35 't Zweertdanserke 95 March 1996	Looking further back in time, the following mentions of sword dancers come from Oudenburg. Now a fairly important village, then a fairly important town. We find mentions in 1432 as well as in 1438. And still two account entries each time. Here they go: It(em) upfe(n) xxj.ste dach va(n) hoymaend ghes(cenct) de(n) gheselle(n) va(n) Oudenb(urg)houc Alsij hier quame(n) speele(n) mette(n) zwaerde .j. k. riinschs wiins te .viij. s(chellingen) p(arisis) de(n) stoop so(m)ma xvj, s. P. It(em) upte(n) .xxij.ste. dach va(n) hoymaend ghes(cenct) de(n) gheselle(n) van zandfoorde Alsij hier quame(n) speele(n) mette(n) zwerde .j. k. riinschs wiins te .vlij. s(chellingen) p(arisis) de(n) stoop So(m)ma xvj. s. p. (RAB Rekenkamer 31621 - folio 9 - recto - nummers 6 en 7) It(em) upte(n) .xij.ste(n) dach va(n) spoorcle ghes(cenct) zekere gheselle(n) va(n) clemskerke die hier quame(n) speelen mette(n) zwerde(n) .j. k(anne) poytaus te vij. S(chellingen) p(arisis) de(n) stoop somma .xiiij. s(chellingen) p(arisis) it(em) upte(n) xxij.ste(n) dach va(n) spoorcle ghes(cenct) zekere gheselle(n) va(n) Oostende

die hier quame(n) speele(n) mette(n) zwerde(n) .j. k(anne)
poytaus te vij. s(chellingen) p(arisis) de(n) stoop
somma .xiiij, s(chellingen) p(arisis)

(RAS Rekenkamer 37624 - folio 11 - verso - nummers 3 en 4)

Pleasant texts because they let us know the origins of the sword dancers: these came to Oudenburg from Klemskerke, Ostend, Zandvoorde and the not so clear-cut Oudenburghoek. The latter would have been an area covering part of the former municipalities of Oudenburg, Ettelgem, Roxem, Westkerke, and Jabbeke. In any case, these are all places at a distance of less than ten kilometres from Oudenburg.

This is entirely consistent with our earlier findings that sword dancers from surrounding villages would descend to the town to perform and, if possible, win rewards.



We have once again put the provenance data collected so far into a map, which we hereby print. The black dots indicate places where sword dancers came from; the white dots indicate places where dancing took place. The dotted line between Bruges and Damme reminds us that the dancers at Damme were probably sailors who were ashore at Bruges.

A peculiarity occurs with the first two texts. The groups perform on 21 and 22 July (hay month). The older mentions of Oudenburg can be situated in the Lenten eve period, as can the texts from 1438 (12 and 23 February = spoorcle). From other texts, we know that in 1438, Lent fell on 25 February. So those from Ostend came to dance on the Sunday before Shrove Tuesday, while those from Klemskerke would have danced

	on a Wednesday, some two weeks before Lent. Could they perhaps have been like some English groups in the nineteenth century, travelling around the area for several weeks? We have no immediate explanation for the performances in July 1432. The sword dancers received about 5 litres of rhenish wine in 1432, the same number of litres in 1438, but then it was French wine (poytaus = wine from the Poitiers region). Now wine from the Rhine was the better quality wine for the time being. In 1432, the sword dancers were apparently more valued than other groups, who received only French wine. But in 1438, they themselves were no longer given wine of the Rhine either! Was their performance perhaps considered less good? Or were the city coffers less well off? Otherwise, we cannot glean anything from the entries. We merely point out that the term "playing with swords" does not refer with a hundred per cent certainty to a sword dance.
Speurtocht 36 't Zweertdanserke 99 October 1996 <i>See Sp. 23 for discussion of this phrase</i>	Steve Corrsin, our American friend, in his lecture on the history of sword dancing at the sword dance meeting in Scarborough, opined that there was no evidence anywhere of the creation of such a dance at any particular time. And he may have been right. Yet in our search for the history of the sword dance in our regions, we have found texts that warrant a (relatively heavy) suspicion of the creation of <i>een suverlic spel ... te spelne met zwerden ende anders</i>. We have to go back to 1439 and make our way to the town of Aalst. This is the first time we have left the coastal region and have to look for our texts inland. We find in one and the same account no less than two entries about the occurrence of a sword dance. Although we have to question the form of the latter. But before continuing, let us take a closer look at the first text: Den vi ste dach van sporcle qua(m) taelst de bastaert van ghystelle met vele gheselle(n) en(de) speelden op de marct een suverlic spel met zweerd(en) met dansse en(de) andersins hemlied(en) ghescinct ij kanne(n) wyns te x s(chellingen) den stoop comt xxxv s(chellingen) with the following note in the margin: Il semble aux commiss(aires) q(ue) ches presens ne se doivent point faire durant la provision de mons(eigneur) This is followed by a long section of deleted text, which we have tried
<i>Discussed in Sp 22</i>	

	unsuccessfully to decipher. (RAB -Rekenkamer 31347 - folio 81 - recto - nr 5) A rather long text that ultimately teaches us very little! We learn that on February 6 (Sporcle) 1439, a fairly large group (with many companions) led by the "bastard of Ghystelle" performed a "play" on the Great Market Square in Aalst (surely the most important place in the city!), which featured swords and dancing. What "and otherwise" might mean remains an open question... Apparently, they did not receive any money for their performance, but they did receive a dozen litres of wine (2 jugs of wine). t expenditure apparently did not find favour in the eyes of the auditor, who wrote a disapproval in the margin! And indeed, if we are to give credit to the Aalst historians, there are no traces of gratuities to sword dancers in the other city accounts of Aalst. Unless, that is, in the same account from 1439, which contains a second text that deserves our attention. Nevertheless, there were sword dancers in Aalst: we find them in Liedekerke in 1450, in Dendermonde in 1452 and in Zottegem in 1486. It is almost certain that they also danced in Aalst. However, we cannot find any traces of them because they were not allowed to be awarded gratuities. Before concluding this text, we would like to point out that the sword dancers mentioned were apparently not from Aalst, but from elsewhere (quam taelst). Please also note that this is the first time the word "danske" appears, although it does not necessarily have a direct connection with "zweerden". If you would like to know more, please reread our articles in 't <i>Zweertdanserke</i> 49, 53 and 56.
Speurtocht 37 't Zweertdanserke 100, October 1997	We had ended up in Aalst, back in the year 1439. In the same city accounts that we drew from last time, we also find the following text: Ghegheve(n) ix ghesell(n) van ghenouchten van binne(n) aelst, die een suverlic spel op ghestelt hebbe(n) te spelne met zwerd(en) ende anders, welc speel zy speeld(en) voor den her(e), voor de wet, ende den notablen vand(er) stede in hulpen tharen costen xxiiij s(chellingen) (RAB - Rekenkamer 31437 - folio 56 - recto nr 4)

	No specific date is mentioned, but since the post appears after a payment dated 14 September, the event probably took place in the autumn. Let us take a closer look at the text. It mentions a game that nine residents of Aalst “set up”! The latter could well refer to a creation. This would give us a text that refers to the creation or first performance of a sword dance. But is this really a sword dance? It only says that they performed a <i>suverlic spel</i>; te spelne met zweerden ende anders (a splendid game to be played with swords and other things). So apparently other props were involved. And was it a dance or a fencing exercise? Questions that we cannot possibly answer with certainty. It appears that in the autumn of 1439, nine theatre performers (ghesellen van ghenouchten) from Aalst put together a sword dance with swordplay after they were fascinated by a similar performance shown to them on 6 February by ghesellen from outside Aalst. It is a possibility, and there is currently nothing to substantiate this possibility. The number nine has fascinated various authors. There is talk of nine sword dancers and reference is made to the eleven who appear in Breughel's paintings. However, there is nothing in the text to suggest that all nine were dancers. Perhaps there were eight dancers and a musician, or a jester. Or perhaps there were only six of them, and the rest were two musicians and a jester... You see, we can go in many directions with such a statement of numbers! What is clear from the text is that the performers must have enjoyed a certain prestige in the city of Aalst. They were allowed to perform their play “before the lord, before the law, and before the notables of the city”. They will not have become rich from it. The group from outside the city received drinks worth 35 shillings; the people of Aalst received only 24 shillings to cover the costs they incurred.
Speurtocht 38 't Zweertdanserke 107, January 2000	Dear God, it has been quite some time since we last delved into the past! Our last contribution appeared in issue 100, which dates back to October 1997! For those unfamiliar with Speurtocht: in October 1979 (1) we decided to subject the old texts relating to sword dancing, which can be found in city and church accounts and which have been and continue to be quoted in various publications, to a thorough examination. First and foremost, we wanted to check them for correct reading, but also to place them in their proper context. From the

outset, we encountered misinterpretations of texts and/or words and questioned empty assertions. This went smoothly until 1986. 't *Zweertdanserke* then took a long break. In March 1995, in 't *Zweertdanserke* 85, we continued the series. 'Continued' is not the right word; because a new generation had emerged in the meantime, we summarised the previous contributions and briefly discussed the texts that had already been discussed. This enabled us to locate a number of places where sword dancing took place or where sword dancers performed between 1389, the oldest known mention, and 1439. We list them below:



And just add the years. The years marked with an asterisk (*) are those in which the event took place during Shrovetide.

Brugge: 1389*, 1391*(?), 1404*, 1406*, 1408*, 1419
 Den Broek (Brugge): 1408*
 Sint-Lauwereins (Brugge): 1408*
 Oudenburg: 1409*, 1432*, 1438
 Gistel-ambacht: 1409*
 Gistel: 1410 (?)
 Damme: 1419
 Oudenburghoek: 1432*
 Zandvoorde: 1432*
 Klemskerke: 1438
 Oostende: 1438
 Aalst: 1439* (2x)

This time we are talking about an additional location: Dendermonde. In the city accounts for the year 1440-41, we find the following text:

Gheschinct den Wijken smaendachs na groot vastelavont mids
 gaders der guld en(de) den scolemeesters en(de) den danssers
 mette zweerde(n) in al xxxi s(chellingen) g(roo)t

(RAB - Rekenkamer 38 009 - folio 28 (niet-genummerd) recto - post 6)

<i>A slightly odd sentence to finish on; presumably 'precarious' because we cannot be certain that these early references describe linked sword dancing at all.</i>	This text does not make us much wiser. If we check the date, we see that the event took place in 1441. Once again during the Shrove Tuesday period. On Shrove Tuesday, various associations put on performances: the guild, the schoolmasters, the neighbourhood organisations and also dancers with swords. It is interesting to note that this is the first time that dancers are clearly mentioned (the term had been used before) with swords as their only attribute. Apparently, they were not from the neighbourhood. Did they come from elsewhere? Or were they residents of Dendermonde? We can only speculate. In our further search, we will encounter Dendermonde frequently. Allow me to remind you that all of the above information is older than any mention from any other European country. We will have to wait another five years before references from other countries become known. But these do come from very different areas: Brunswick (Braunschweig) is in Germany, Cheb (Eger) in the Czech Republic, Ourense in Galicia (Spain) and Dordrecht in the Netherlands! The claim that Flanders is the birthplace of the linked sword dance is therefore a precarious one.
Speurtocht 39 't Zweertdanserke 111, May 2000	Before delving further into the distant history of sword dancing in our region, we would first like to express our gratitude to Frank Claes, who has kindly assisted Renaat in locating relevant material. It is not always easy to find the material one is looking for, and nowadays there is so much being published. Thank you, Frank! We received a response from an unexpected source: Andrew Kennedy from East Grinstead (West Sussex) wrote us the following (in Dutch!): I must thank you for the two editions of 't Zweertdanserke (editor's note: which we sent him). I particularly enjoyed the 'Speurtocht'. I am interested in the relations between Flanders and the east coast of Scotland. Scottish sword dancing reached its peak between 1580 and 1633, and until 1570-80 most of the Scottish trade took place with Veere and Antwerp. Four of the five Elgin dancers (1623) (editor's note: Andrew published an article in <i>Rattle Up, My Boys</i> about references to sword dancers in Elgin, Scotland, in the seventeenth century) were merchants. The Perth (editor's note: a city in Scotland, near where our friend and musician Jan Van Outrive resides) dance (1617, 1633) was a guild dance, and the guilds had representatives who travelled to Flanders to buy and sell. Edinburgh

(mentioned in 1588 and 1590) was the most important Scottish city for trade across the North Sea. It is quite possible that the dances in Flanders or Zeeland were seen by Scottish visitors. I would like to know more about Scottish-Flemish trade and also about the dancers. I have read Corrsin, but do you have more information about Flanders and Zeeland at the end of the 16th century?

Andrew Kennedy is part of Thrale Rapper and he is coming to Whitby. Hopefully we will find the time there to have a chat about this topic.

Meanwhile, we ourselves are still in the fifteenth century. In 't *Zweertdanserke* 69, we discussed an event from 1442. According to De Potter and Broeckaert, sword dancers from Kaprijke (?), Ertvelde and Aardenburg performed in Kaprijke. The first two municipalities are located north of Ghent; the third is also north of Ghent, but is now in the Netherlands. Despite all our research, we have not yet been able to find the original text. We will therefore leave it out of our investigation.

So far, we have only looked at Flemish sources. Around this time, however, the first reports from abroad also began to appear. German sources sometimes mention 1443 as the oldest German reference. The place of the event is Brunswick (Braunschweig). However, this date is incorrect and is in fact 1446. We will come back to this later.

In our own country, we did find a text relating to 1443. It can be found in the city accounts of Oudenburg (a city that we have encountered several times in our research) and reads as follows:

It(em) upte(n) darde(n) dach va(n) Maerte ghes(endt) den
ghezelle(n) va(n) stalhille alsij hier quame(n) speelen mette(n)
zwerde .j. k(anne) Rijnschs wijns te viij s p den stoop en(de)
.j. k(anne) poytaus te v. s p de(n) stoop. val(uta) xxvj s p

(RAB Rekenkamer 37360 - folio 7 -recto - post 4)

At first glance, this text teaches us little. However, with some research, we can learn something from it. The precise date: 3 March is the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. We learn this from another text dated 5 March, which stipulates: that was Shrove Tuesday. So this is an item that we can add to the list of performances during the carnival season. We published that list in 't *Zweertdanserke* 107.

Furthermore, there is a new municipality that we can add to the same list:

Stalhille: probably completely unknown to most of us. Stalhille is now

	part of the municipality of Jabbeke and is located about six kilometres from Oudenburg as the crow flies. All in all, this confirms our idea that in the early fifteenth century, groups of farmers(?) from the immediate vicinity of urban centres would travel to the city around the beginning of Lent (Carnival) to perform a sword dance in exchange for money or drink. Although Oudenburg is no longer an important city, in the fifteenth century it was, thanks to its weaving industry. The dancers were once again rewarded with wine. And not just one type, but two: Rhine wine and wine from the Poitiers region. The price difference between the two is remarkable: the Rhine wine costs about 60% more than the French wine! Perhaps because of the high price, the dancers were only offered one can (about 5 litres) of Rhine wine and had to make do with <i>poytaus</i> for the rest! The amount of wine they had to consume (a total of about ten litres!) leads us to assume that the group must not have been very small. If we compare this with other data from Oudenburg, we see that in other years the dancers did not get as much to drink: 1409: dancers from Gistel-Ambacht, 2 jugs Rijns, 24/- 1432: dancers from Oudenburghoek, 1 jug Rijns, 16/- 1432: dancers from Zandvoorde, 1 jug Rijns, 16/- 1438: dancers from Klemskerke, 1 jug Poytaus, 14/- 1438: dancers from Ostend, 1 jug Poytaus, 14/- 1443: dancers from Stalhille, 1 jug Rijns, 1 jug Poytaus, 25/- Twice (in 1409 and 1443), significantly more was spent. Was it because people appreciated the performance more? Or was it because only one group came to dance that year? Or was it because the groups were larger? Who can say? 
Speurtocht 40	Starting in 1389 in Bruges, where the oldest reference to a sword dancer (?) was found, we have now researched a period of about 54 years, during which we were able to locate 14 places where sword

't Zweertdanserke 114, October 2000 So, despite Renaat's protestations about the lack of significance of the term 'ghezellen', evidence here of the sword dance being practised by journeymen (German 'Gesellen').	dancers performed or came from. Apart from the cities of Aalst and Dendermonde, all these locations were in the current province of West Flanders. We selected 16 texts from the city accounts for this purpose. If we delve further into the data available to us, we now find ourselves abroad for the first time. Specifically, in present-day Germany. Here we find the first reliable mention of the occurrence of the linked sword dance outside our regions. The year is 1446. In the <i>Shigt-Bôk der Stad Brunswyk</i> (Chronicle of the City of Brunswick), there is a long text from which we believe we can understand that in the aforementioned year, there was quite a bit of discontent in the city. Discontent because of the mayors (who were all from the same family, which was not normally permitted); dissatisfaction with the high price of beer, etc... On Shrove Tuesday, journeymen from several guilds came forward with a game (laughter) and dance in the city. They wore slogans on their heads, which apparently did not appeal to the journeymen of the blacksmiths' guild or those of the shoemakers' guild. They went to wait for the dancers and intended to give them a good thrashing. However, the guild masters of both guilds were able to prevent this and calmed their journeymen. However, not everyone was happy with this, and it took quite a bit of discussion to calm everyone down. But in the end, the blacksmiths' and shoemakers' apprentices decided to <i>den swertreygen treden tosarnede</i> [probably a misreading of <i>tosamede</i>] (perform the linked sword dance together)... 
--	---

	However, the Council feared that this would lead to a <i>blotstorting</i> [bloodshed] and asked the blacksmiths' and shoemakers' apprentices to refrain from performing the sword dance this time. The apprentices listened and did not perform their dance that year... The story is not always clear, but it is certain that it concerns the omission of a <i>swertreygen</i>, which apparently was carried out in previous years by the journeymen of the blacksmiths' and shoemakers' guild (separately). So the linked sword dance already existed in Brunswick before 1446. The use of the word <i>reygen</i> is interesting. This brings us closer to the assumption that these are indeed references to what are referred to in Flemish sources as <i>reiswaard</i> dances. For the first time, we also note that the dance is performed by journeymen of a guild. In Bruges, we heard several times that it was the <i>sciplieden</i> who played/performed with swords, but without any specific reference to journeymen or a guild. One question that remains unanswered is whether the other guild members, who chased the blacksmiths and shoemakers into the centre and danced in the town, also performed a sword dance. The text does not provide a definitive answer. We obtained the information from <i>Die Chroniken der niedersächsischen Städte: Braunschweig</i> (v2, Leipzig, 1880). Copies were provided to us by Steve Corrsin, for which we are very grateful. In his <i>Sword Dancing in Europe : A History</i> (1997), Corrsin makes a mistake when he states: "But in the end, the smiths' boys and the shoemakers' boys...danced the sword dance together." (p.38). Apparently he did not read far enough, because as mentioned above, it was decided afterwards not to perform the dance that year.
Speurtocht 41 't Zweertdanserke 116, December 2000 Eger/Cheb	Continuing along the timeline, after 1446 in Brunswick we remain abroad for a while before returning to our own regions. The next mention dates from 1448 and takes us to Cheb. Cheb is currently located in the far west of the Czech Republic. The city used to bear the German name of Eger and the surrounding area was known as Egerland. The brass bands from Egerland were well known at the time. Many German speakers lived in the region It was a certain Heinrich Gradl who, in 1895, published a whole series of excerpts about sword dance performances from the city accounts in the journal <i>Mittheilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der deutschen in Böhmen</i> (33:3).

The first of these dates from 1448 and reads:

Item Geben den Spelleuten xx gr., die an der vasnacht den Swertt tancz heften

The most interesting thing about this text is that it refers to Shrove Tuesday, just like most texts from Flanders and the one from Brunswick. In our opinion, these numerous early references to Shrove Tuesday suggest that the meaning of the dance should be sought in that direction. Not only the strong geographical spread, but also the fact that in places far apart the dance is linked to the same time of year also gives us reason to believe that the sword dance, although the texts only go back to 1389, is actually much older.

In Cheb, it was the "players" who performed the dance in 1448. In our region, they were often referred to as "journeymen who played with/on swords". In Brunswick, they were the young journeymen of the guilds.

The term *Swertt tancz* is also interesting. In our region, the name dance can first be found in 1439. Let us note that this text does not allow us to conclude that this is a linked sword dance...



We cannot determine what 20 gr. meant in relation to other achievements due to a lack of context. But our friend Joeri De Jong told us that he regularly visits the archive in Cheb (he is researching accordions and an important Czech manufacturer is located nearby). Perhaps he could provide us with a copy of the entire page?

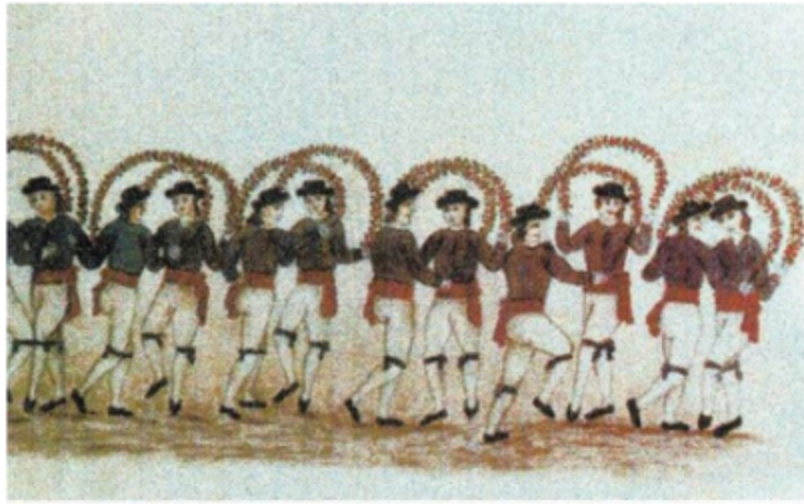
Given that this is a financial record, 20 gr. could mean 20 groschen (groschen being a coin - grote in Dutch, groat in English)

<i>Not clear when this conversation with Laudová took place</i>	Richard Wolfram also mentions the year 1447 for Cheb in his <i>Schwerttanz und Männerbund</i>. However, this is probably a mistake. The account from which Gradl derives the text covers 1447 and 1448. Accounts did not usually begin not on New Year's Day, but at Easter, for example. 1448 would indeed be the correct year. At the time, Hannah Laudová expressed her doubts about the date in an informal conversation. She suspected that it was more likely to be 1548. Given the many references we find in Gradl for 1548, this doubt seems to us to be unfounded. That's it for Cheb. Meanwhile, a few pirates have appeared on the horizon with older foreign references (Galicia and Croatia). We are still checking a few things and will probably discuss this next time. (RVC)
Speurtocht 42 't Zweertdanserke 118, February 2001 Dubrovnik <i>Renaat says</i> <i>'bogendans; this can sometimes refer to something much like an English garland dance</i>	In 't Zweertdanserke 114, we discussed the text from 1446 in the <i>Brunswick Shigt-Bôk</i>, which is not only considered the oldest German mention of a linked sword dance, but is also regarded as the first mention outside Flanders. We were therefore very interested when, during the 2000 Symposium of the Ethnochoreology study group of the International Council for Traditional Music, we heard about prints of a bow dance in Dubrovnik (Croatia) from 1432. A reference that is more than 14 years older than the Brunswick one. Ivancan says the following about this (1996: 336): In the first half of the 15th century, we find the bow dance of the shoemakers in Dubrovnik, a type of dance derived from the linked sword dances. Both types (bow dance and sword dance) appeared simultaneously in Europe, often even in the same city; the representatives of some guilds danced with swords or sabres (or other instruments such as sticks or handkerchiefs) while other guilds danced with bows. Archival documents tell us that such bow dancing was performed in 1432 on the feast day of St. Philip and St. James. All shoemakers under the age of 45 had to take part in the dance. Two dance figures are depicted in watercolours, which are kept in the archives of the Marteochni family. See below, a watercolour (this one with the formation of a dome).



Afbeelding van een figuur van de bogendans der schoenmakers, uitgevoerd in Dubrovnik op de feestdag van de heiligen Philippus en Jacobus 1432.
(Stadsarchief Dubrovnik—Martecchini Archief—Album di Ragusa 1892)

Gruppo del ballo dei Caglari (Group of the Shoemakers' Dance) is mentioned. However, the mention under the other print is more interesting (we printed this print on the front page of *'t Zweertdanserke* 117): "the dance of the noblemen and their wives on May Day, which the shoemakers continued to perform on the 'day of Philip and Jacob 1432'. Apparently, this dance was formerly danced by noblemen to celebrate May. A second interesting aspect of these prints is that Cupid is depicted standing on the dome formed by the arches. In similar medieval dances, one often finds a figure in which one person is lifted up.



Afbeelding van een bogendans die in 1432 door de schoenmakers op de feestdag van de heiligen Philippus en Jacobus in Dubrovnik uitgevoerd werd
(Stadsarchief Dubrovnik - Martecchini Archief - Album di Ragusa 1892)

Korčula

Writing about the Kumpanija on Korčula, Ivan Ivančan also links these prints to the linked sword dance (1967: 194).

For the time being, we know little about the authenticity of these prints. Do they really date from the 15th century? But even if this were the case, we would not immediately associate these prints with the sword dances. A close observer will quickly notice that in the print with the two rows, the twelve dancers are holding their own bows with both hands, while in the other print, contrary to expectations, the dancers are holding the bows with only one hand. The other arm is clearly depicted next to the body and there is nothing in the hand of that arm. In neither print are the dancers connected to each other in a line or circle by the bows. In my opinion, therefore, this is not a line or chain dance at all, related to the linked sword dance...

And for me, Brunswick emerges victorious from the battlefield.

Of course, it is interesting to note that the text mentions that the shoemakers adopted the dance from the nobility. This is a famous argument for those who want to see all (or at least many) folk dances as *gesunkenes Kulturgut* (lost cultural heritage/submerged cultural assets), namely the imitation by the people of the customs (in this case: dances) of the nobility.

However, the fact that the dancers are not connected to a line or circle makes our contrarian minds wonder. Could it be that a dance such as the bow dance was performed by the nobles, but without linked formation; a dance which later, after being adopted by the people, under the influence of the linked sword dance performed by the people,

	became the characteristic element of connection in this adoption? There is an even older reference to a sword dance in Croatia. It dates from 1273, more than a hundred years before our Bruges reference (1389)! The <i>Liber questionum</i> mentions the handling of the complaint lodged by Bastianus Luca against Boghidan. The latter is said to have wounded Marinicije, the son of Denaksa, with his sword, causing blood to flow. This happened in Trogir during a dance with weapons. From the wording of the defendant's defence, it can be inferred that it was a collective dance. It is believed that this is the (first) mention of the Moreška, the sword dance of the "Moors against Christians" type, as still danced today in the town of Korčula. This dance is indeed documented in Trogir in later times. (rvc)
Speurtocht 43 't Zweertdanserke 120, April 2001 Dendermonde	Continuing our journey along the timeline, after visiting Braunschweig and Cheb, we return to our own country. The city accounts of Dendermonde provide us with the following discovery for the year 1449: Quite a mouthful, indeed, but unfortunately there is not much in it about sword dancers... Let us begin by reading the text: ij i(n) m(aer)te te g(r)o(o)t vastelavonde gheschinct de(n) wyke(n) van d(enre)m(onde) die up de vastelavond ghespeelt hadden elk(een) ij. ka(n)nen Riinsche wiins, den wijke vande keyser vande dicpoorte vande veste va(n)d(e) ver(e) va(n)d(e) steenpoort(e), vanden couwenb(er)ghe v(an) greffeninghe(n) vande nuw(en)borch, de g(r)o(o)t(e) ghulde de hantboghe gulde de(n) rector vande scole, de gheselle(n) die de wildema(n) jaeghde(n) elk(een) ij ka(n)nen die de(n) bart sloughe(n) j kan(n)e, mette(n) zw(eer)de speelde(n) dese Ryse j. ka(n)ne al R(ynsch) wyn te vij st de stoop heft i(n) al (RAB-Rekenkamer 38 016-pag 58 recto-post 4) (With thanks to Dr Eugene Van Autenboer and curator Aimé Stroobants for their assistance in reading the text.) This is the second mention of sword dancers in Dendermonde that we have encountered in our journey through time. In 't <i>Zweertdanserke</i> 107, we already discussed the mention of sword dancers performing in 1441, also during Shrovetide.

The fact that this concerns a performance around Shrove Tuesday 1449 is clear from the date of the account, which runs from the first day of *hooimaand* [July] of 1448 to the first day of the same month in 1449. The exact date cannot be determined from the text, but it certainly concerns the Shrove Tuesday period.

De Vlaeminck (1900:93) first discussed the performances of sword dancers in Dendermonde. In the article, he lists a large number of performances between 1440 and 1568. Some texts mention that the sword dancers came from elsewhere. We will encounter those texts later.

It must have been a busy time in Dendermonde in the days leading up to Ash Wednesday in the year 1449. Not only the districts of the city itself, but also a large number of others put on performances (*ghespeelt had*), and in addition, the rector of the school, the great guild and the archery guild were active, a play was performed about the wild man and another, perhaps about a bear (?), and the sword dancers performed. If the term dancers was used in the accounts of 1440/41, then we must make do here with *ghesellen die... metten zweerden speelden*, terms that do not make us much wiser. We have already pointed out in previous Searches that *ghesellen* has no specific meaning and that *metten zweerden speelden* does not necessarily refer to linked sword dancing.

Aimé Stroobants, curator of the Dendermonde City Archives, was kind enough to send us some photocopies from his publication *Carnaval in het Dendermondse - Een springlevende traditie* (Carnival in Dendermonde - A living tradition). In it, he writes that Shrove Tuesday performances can be traced through the neighbourhoods from the beginning of the fifteenth century. The texts refer to 'the young people... who play good, entertaining poems to delight the good people...'. (City accounts 1407)

Hunting the wild man (a person dressed in animal skins, moss, leaves or straw) was apparently a privilege accorded to the guild of painters. It was finally abolished in 1775.

We are not sure what *den bart sloughen* means. Perhaps it has something to do with walking around with a bear, as was customary in Dendermonde until the beginning of the last century.

The sword dancers are also referred to as *dese Ryse*. This probably does not mean that they came from elsewhere, but can be interpreted as "this time, on this occasion". Apparently, they were also present in other years. However, we are not aware of any accounts that mention a financial reward. Perhaps their performance was not

	appreciated to such an extent? According to our current text, they only received one jug (about 5 litres) of Rhine wine, while all the other groups, with the exception of those who <i>den bart sloughen</i>, received two jugs... Or did the number of participants play a role in this? (rvc)
Speurtocht 44 't Zweertdanserke 121, May 2001 Dordrecht (Liedekerke, Damme)	When we look in our database, we find no fewer than three references to sword dance performances for the following year [i.e. 1450]: in Damme, in Dordrecht and in Liedekerke. However, further investigation reveals that two of these entries do not belong in that year. Damme danced in 1451 and in Liedekerke, where people from Aalst were working, the correct date is 1452. This leaves only the entry for Dordrecht (the Netherlands) for 1450. And even then... The text that tells us about this event can be found in the <i>Beschryvinge der Stad Dordrecht</i> (Description of the City of Dordrecht), a work by Matthys Balen, published in 1677 in Dordrecht. On page 79, he reproduces the following text, which he clarifies as follows: Found in the Mayor's Accounts, 1450. Gegeven den gesellen vanden drie Scipluden Gilde, die metten Zwaerde dansten te Vastelavond, t'samen geschenct, drie postulaets gulden ars gelde, en x. stoep wijns, den stoep ij. stuyv. en een half, xiiij. pond viij. schell. This is indeed an interesting text. First and foremost, it is the third oldest reference outside Flanders (we have previously encountered Brunswick in Germany and Cheb/Eger in the Czech Republic), and furthermore, it is only the second time that guilds are explicitly mentioned. The other text that refers to guilds is that of Brunswick from 1446. The reference to boatmen's guilds is also interesting, since our oldest text (Bruges 1389) also mentions <i>sciplieden</i>, as does the one from Damme 1419, which refers to <i>scepghesellen</i>. However, these texts do not specify whether or not the journeymen were members of a boatmen's guild. However, there are still quite a few snags. When Dr. Elise Van der Ven-Ten Bensel contacted the Dordrecht city

archivist for her standard work *De Volksdans in Nederland*, "he wrote to me, however, that he had been unable to verify the entry from the ... mentioned mayor's account of 1450, as this account has apparently not been preserved and there is no mention of it in the treasurer's account of 1450" (1942:149).

We therefore have no certainty regarding the year specified... However, we can assume that sword dancing was performed in Dordrecht around 1450. After all, we will also encounter prohibitions from the following years (1451, 1452). We will return to this later.

However, the text accompanying the entry in Matthys Balen's book also raises questions about the form of dance. Was it indeed a linked sword dance?

Mr Jakob vander Eyk brought to light the old battle-cry of this city, of *Thurt en Thurdrecht*, corrupted to *Thure-Thurette*, from which, (perhaps borrowed from the pagans) over fifty or sixty years ago, as a remnant (the memory was no longer preserved) in the Shrovetide dance, which the young people used to perform at the same time, in which the Leyds-man [?] carried a white sword, he in front and the rest behind, singing and repeatedly reciting the aforementioned battle-cry, &c.

This text suggests that in the early seventeenth century, it was still customary in Dordrecht for young people to perform a circle dance on Shrove Tuesday, with only the leader carrying a sword. This reminds us in particular of Moravian *ommegangen*, in which only the leader carries a sword. Gifts from the houses visited are either skewered on the sword (bacon, sausages, etc.) or hung on it (pastries, slivovitz, etc.). (see the photo of the *gajda* in Stráni below). Was the custom in Dordrecht a watered-down version of the linked sword dance? Or was this how people danced as early as 1450? The text as reproduced by Matthys Balen does not allow us to say anything meaningful about this...

The engraving comes from the National Museum in Dublin and shows dancers linked by flexible swords (or similar). The caption gives no date, but it's apparently 16th century, on whalebone.



Dr. Elise Van de Ven-Ten Bensel refers to an image on a bone plate depicting a single dancer with a sword and three dancers connected by a flexible object (see image on previous page). She sees this image as an indication that the sword dance evolved from the circle.

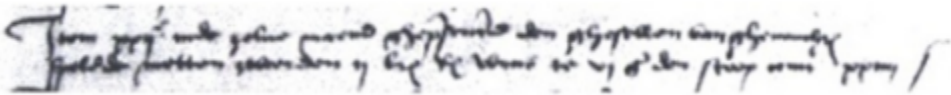


She also links the dance to a Shrove Tuesday play with the peculiar name *Vrouwtje komt ten Hof* (Lady Comes to Court), which is said to have been depicted in a painting by a certain Gottfried Schalken. This painting is said to show a representation of 'young people on a raft, led by a young man with a white sword in his hand'. The painting is (as yet) unknown to us.

Whatever the case may be, we can reasonably assume that in the early fifteenth century, a sword dance was performed in Dordrecht by the boatmen's guilds. The fact that there were three such guilds should come as no surprise. At the time, Dordrecht was one of the largest cities in Western Europe and there were indeed a large number of these guilds. (rvc)

Speurtocht 45

Our database contains two entries for the following year in our journey through time (1451): one concerning Damme and one concerning

't Zweertdanserke 122, June 2001 Damme	Dordrecht. However, more recent researchers place the Dordrecht text in 1452... Only Damme remains. It was once again the Bruges archivist Gilliodts - Van Severen who published part of the text (1875: 519). He published the same section in the same year in his <i>Glossaire Flamand</i> (p.600) without citing the source, but with a reference to his <i>Inventaire</i>. Gilliodts - Van Severen only refers to the text in the account of 1450 and does not mention an exact date. He places the sword dancers among the members of the local Chamber of Rhetoric, and calls them <i>des acrobates, escrimeurs</i> [fencers], etc. Van der Straeten correctly situates the text (1881, 1:32) as dating from the 22nd February, 1451 and reproduces it more completely. Here is the original text:  Item xxijen inde zelve maend ghep(re)sen(teer)d den ghesellen van ghenouchten spele(n)de metten zweerden ij k(annen) R(ynsch) wyys te vj g(root) den stoop comt xxiiij s(tuivers) (RAB - Rekenkamer 33590-folio 26-recto-post 14) The most interesting thing about this text is its date. It again concerns a performance in the Shrovetide atmosphere. The heading of the chapter mentions the month: <i>sporcle</i>, which is February. The Damse accounts run from midwinter to midwinter. The account begins in 1450. The event therefore took place on 22 February 1451. Can we learn anything else from this text? Not much. <i>Ghesellen van ghenouchten</i> does not tell us anything specific about the dancers, and we first encountered the term in Aalst in 1439. Playing with swords: here we must again make our usual reservation: is it really a linked sword dance? Or is it fencing? Or juggling? The fact that they received about 10 litres of Rhine wine as a reward allows us to assume that the group consisted of ten to twelve people. The fact that they received the better quality wine (Rhine wine instead of Poitiers wine) suggests that their performance was appreciated. But that is all. The accompanying texts do not make us any wiser either: they only refer to expenditure on wine as a gift on various occasions. This is the second time that sword dancers are mentioned in Damme. As early as 1418, there was mention of certain <i>scepghesellen</i> who came from Bruges and performed with swords in Damme (see 't <i>Zweertdanserke</i> 30 and 39).
---	--

	Let us also mention that Verstraete (1985:34), concludes that, according to this text, there were 24 sword dancers at work. However, the calculations made are incorrect. There are two measures in a jug; one measure costs six pennies; two jugs make twenty-four pennies (6 x 4). (rvc)
--	--

The *Speurtocht* stops here. After a long fallow period, from December, 1986 to October, 2000, Renaat's researches had taken off again and produced valuable material. His final articles speak of matters to which he intended to return at a later stage.

Renaat van Craenenbroeck died on the 6th July, 2001, at the age of 64, while performing with Lange Wapper at a festival in Croatia. Not only did he help found the Lange Wapper dance group in the early 1960s and create the Lange Wapper sword dance in 1970, he also assisted with the establishment of In de Kring (Dunkirk), who are still performing regularly.

Bibliography

- Balen, M. *Beschryvinge der Stad Dordrecht*. (Dordrecht, 1677).
- Beseler, G. *Festgaben für Gustav Homeyer*. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1871, reprinted by Forgotten Books, 2019).
- Corrsin, S. *Sword Dancing in Europe: A History*. (London: Hisarlik Press, 1997).
- Davenport, P.D. *Under the Rose*. (Maltby: Hallamshire Traditions, 2015).
- Duclos, A. *Histoire et Souvenirs*. (Bruges. 1913).
- Farwerck, F.E. *Noordeuropese mysteriën en hun sporen tot heden*. (Deventer, 1978). = Northern European mysteries and their traces to date.
- Feys, E. and Van de Castele, D. *Histoire d'Oudenbourg*. (Bruges 1873-87).
- Flou, K. de. *Woordenboek van Toponymie*. (Gent, 1914).
- Gilliodts-Van Severen, L. *Inventaire des Archives de la Ville de Bruges*. (Brugge, 1871-5).
- Hegel, L. *Die Chroniken der niedersächsischen Städte: Braunschweig*, v2. (Leipzig, Hirzel Verlag, 1880).
- Ivančan, I. *Narodni običaji Korčulanskih Kumpanija*. (Zagreb, 1967).
- Ivancan, I. *Narodni Plesni Običaji u Hrvata*. (Zagreb, 1996).
- Koppmann, K. 'Schwerttanz', in *Jahrbuch des Vereins für niederdeutsche Sprachforschung*, Jahrgang 1875. (Bremen, 1876, pp 105-7). Available at <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb11334705?page=111> accessed 11.2.2025
- Louis, M. *Le Folklore et la Danse*. (Paris 1963).
- Meschke, K. *Schwerttanz und Schwerttanzspiel im Germanischen Kulturkreis*. (Leipzig / Berlin, 1931).
- Sharp, C.J. *The Sword Dances of Northern England*. (Wakefield: EP Publishing, new ed. 1977).
- Stroobants, A. *Carnaval in het Dendermondse - Een springlevende traditie*. (Dendermonde, 2000).
- Van Nuffel, P. *Historiek der oude Streten, Markten, Pleinen en Gebouwen der Stad Aalst*. (Aalst, 1914-15)
- De Potter, F. & Broekaert, J. *Geschiedenis der Stad Aalst*. (Ghent 1875).
- Vander Straeten, E. *Le Théâtre villageois en Flandre*, v1. (Bruxelles, 1874).
- Vander Straeten, E. *Le Théâtre villageois en Flandre*, v2. (Bruxelles, 1881).
- Van der Ven-Ten Bonsel, E. *De Volksdans in Nederland*. (Naarden, 1942).

- Verstraete, E. 'Gegevens over Zwaardddansen in Vlaanderen', in *De Speelman*. (VIVO: Brussels, 1940, **15/16**:9-12).
- Verstraete, E. 'Gegevens over Zwaardddansen in Vlaanderen II' in *De Speelman*. (VIVO: Brussels, 1941, **17**:9-12).
- Verstraete, E. 'Gegevens over Zwaardddansen in Vlaanderen IV' in *De Speelman*, (VIVO: Brussels, 1942, **21**:10-14).
- Verstraete, E. 'Gegevens over Zwaardddansen in Vlaanderen V' in *De Speelman*. (VIVO: Brussels, 1942, **23/24**:13-17).
- Verstraete, E. *Zwaardddansen in Vlaanderen*. (Stadsbestuur Sint Niklaas, 1985).
- Verwijs, E. & Verdam, J. *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek/Middle Dutch Dictionary*. (Nijhoff, 1885-1929).
- De Vlaminck, A. 'Les anciennes Chambres de Rhétorique de Termonde', in *Gedenkschriften van de Oudheidkundige Kring van Dendermonde*. (1900: 2nd series - part VIII).
- De Vos, A. *Geschiedenis van Ertvelde*. (Gemeentebestuur: Ertvelde, 1971).
- De Vroede, P. 'Zwaardddansen te Tielt' in *De Speelman*. (VIVO: Brussels, 1942, **23/24**:8-11).
- Wauters, E. 'Enkele Nota's over een Vlaamsche Mannendans met Stokken en Hoepel', in *De Speelman*. (VIVO: Brussels, 1939/40, **13/14**: 12-14).
- Wolfram, R. *Schwerttanz und Männerbund*. (Kassel, 3vv, 1936-8).