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Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris. Promised prayers for an anniversary of death.

The case of Elisabeth ‘sConincs’ mortuary roll (1458-1459)

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Preface

The first few months I spent working on this thesis, I knew the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs only by photographs. In November of 2015, I had the opportunity to visit the John Ryland’s Library in Manchester. I was given the rare chance to actually see and touch this well-kept mortuary roll, known there as Latin MS 114. It was a very special moment to be so close to a manuscript that passed through the hands of so many people over 500 years ago. The manuscript is fragile, of course, but the gold used in the illuminations is still shining, and the inscriptions bear the traces of their makers, with ink in different colours, additional lines, corrections and spots. So many handwritings, hundreds of entries, vellum after vellum stitched together, too many to unveil the entire roll that afternoon. But my brief physical encounter gave me a strong and lasting impression of a unique document that holds so much in it: an archaeological object, a work of medieval illustrational art, a collection of Latin handwritings, a devotional object meant to keep the memory of a deceased person alive and to pray for salvation of all souls, an agreement between parties to strengthen mutual bonds.

This thesis will only begin to explore the richness of Elisabeth ‘sConincs mortuary roll as an example of the importance of *Memoria* in the later Middle Ages. I will look at both the material and the functional side of the document. Undoubtedly, there is much more to be studied. I hope to bring this beautiful manuscript to the attention of people in Belgium, as it originated there, in the abbey of Forest in Brussels, before travelling through the medieval Low Countries and part of what is now Germany. It is fortunate that this piece of heritage survived and has now found a home in a specialised environment.

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This thesis would not have been as it is now without the help and guidance of the following people. First, I would like to thank my promotor, Professor Dr. Paul Trio, for his availability, his remarks and his feedback. Next, I would like to thank Mr. John Hodgson, Manuscript and Archives Manager at the John Rylands Library in Manchester, for providing me with information concerning the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs and for allowing me to see the roll for myself. A thank you is also due to Corinne van Dijk, of Medieval Memoria Online, for answering my question regarding mortuary rolls in the Northern Low Countries. I would also like to thank Aiko Uytterhaegen for her support and friendship, my sister Rigoberta and my mother, who have been with me to offer support and help every step of the way.

Abstract

Mortuary rolls are medieval manuscripts that announce the death of a member of a monastic community to other religious houses. Furthermore, a request for prayer was made with the promise that these prayers would be returned. The roll was given to a messenger who carried sheets of parchment with him on which the recipients of the message would confirm his visit and state their prayers. After having completed the journey, the roll was brought back to the monastery that sent it to become a symbol of the memory of the deceased person. The prayers to be said on the anniversary of death would ease the transition of the soul of the deceased through the afterlife. Mortuary rolls are rare; in the Low Countries, few examples have survived. In the Special Collection of the John Rylands Library in Manchester, however, a complete and well-preserved mortuary roll is kept that originated in the 15th-century Brussels region. This mortuary roll, identified as Latin MS 114, is dedicated to abbess Elisabeth ‘sConincs of the Benedictine abbey of Forest. She died on the 19th of July, 1458. Soon after that, messenger Johannis Leonis was ordered to visit at least the ten religious houses that belonged to the Benedictine spiritual community with whom the Forest abbey had fraternal relationships. During four consecutive trips, he travelled as far as Utrecht, Cologne and Mons. On his way, he visited hundreds of other religious houses: monasteries, abbeys, chapters and churches, of all orders, male and female communities, regular and secular clergy. He walked long distances, was received well and offered hospitality. The houses all wrote a so-called *titulus* or entry: a confirmation of the visit and a promise to pray for the deceased in the expectation of reciprocity. The entries were written in Latin and most of them contained the sentence: *Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris* (Pray for our deceased and we will pray for yours). Nearly a year later, Johannis Leonis came back to Forest with 393 entries, just in time for the anniversary of death of Elisabeth. Two illuminations were attached to the roll: one grouping of saints with the Virgin Mary and Child, St Benedict and St Elisabeth; the other the deathbed of the abbess, surrounded by members of her community. The mortuary roll was displayed on the altar to remind the community of their beloved Elisabeth and of the prayers that were said for her soul in many houses on this day and for years to come. In this thesis, a general overview of the scholarly understanding of medieval mortuary rolls is presented and the particular example of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs is explored, both in its physical appearance and in its function as carrier of *Memoria*: the remembering of the dead by the living. A data-set of 54 entries in the Old County of Flanders was selected for further study. A large variety of religious houses was visited in the medieval cities and surrounding regions of Ghent, Bruges and Ypres. There is of course much more research to be done on the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs. It would be

worthwhile to transcribe all entries. The mortuary roll can provide indications of formal and spiritual networks between medieval religious houses. Mortuary rolls, fragments, and mortuary briefs that the messenger left behind as proof of his visit, merit the attention of historians, archivists and librarians so that we may broaden our understanding of this medieval practice and its meaning.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem statement

A mortuary roll is a handwritten document used to announce the death of a specific person to other religious communities. Such a document was rolled up on an cylindrical carrier to make travelling easier. A mortuary roll was presented to religious houses that had a relationship with the institution that sent it to keep the receiving institutions informed and to enable them to express their grief over the death and to promise to pray for the soul of the deceased. These promises were written down by the writers of religious houses on loose sheets of parchment, which were then stitched or glued together, often in chronological order, and attached to a wooden carrier (DELISLE, 1866; LAUWERS, 1997, p. 135; PETRUCCI, 1998, p. 49-50; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59; DUFOUR, 2009). Because praying for the dead and mentioning their names facilitates their remembrance and enhances their chances of salvation and their passage into the afterlife, this exchange of prayers was a means to contribute to *Memoria*. Christians believed that there is a world after earthly life. The afterlife was considered to be a place where the faithful will go to until judgement day (TELLENBACH, 1984, p. 211). The practice of sending and receiving mortuary rolls and the exchange of prayers also played a role in strengthening the ties between religious communities and houses. Latin MS 114, the fifteenth-century mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs abbess of Forest, well-preserved and well-kept but not yet extensively studied, is an example of this practice. This particular mortuary roll will serve as a case-study to try to understand what such carriers may have meant in their time, for the deceased, for the people involved in the prayer-exchange, and for the religious houses that were connected through the journey of the roll.

1.2. Research questions

This thesis will attempt to answer two main research questions about the physical appearance and the functions of the mortuary roll. The first question is descriptive in character and is based on a selection from the data of the case-study. Amongst the elements to be studied are entries or, in Latin, *tituli*; these are the responsive words written down by the visited religious houses. The second question is interpretive in character and considers the functions of the mortuary roll.

The first research question is this: *Within a specified data-set, how many and what kind of religious houses were visited in what span of time and what does a global exploration of the entries reveal?*

The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs counts 393 entries; due to the limited time and scope of this thesis, I will not be able to look into all of them. I selected a data-set of 54 entries in a geographical area with three regions: the cities of Ghent, Bruges and Ypres, and their surroundings. In this way, I expect to come across all or most of the religious orders that were present in the studied period and regions. I will take a closer look at the journey the messenger undertook and the entries he collected.

The second research question is this: *What was the commemorative purpose of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs, how did it enhance salvation through prayer, and what does the specified data-set indicate about the relationships between these religious houses and the abbey of Forest?*

The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs († 19 July 1458) was brought back to the abbey just in time for the first anniversary of her death one year later. The mortuary roll would probably have been displayed on the main altar in the abbey church that day, with the image of the abbess visible for all members of the monastic community. The nuns of the order would see the roll and commemorate the abbess by praying for her. The roll thus served a mnemonic purpose. Knowing that the entries on the roll held the promise of many other religious houses also praying for the salvation of her soul, the community would feel strengthened.

The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs counts 393 entries, as every *titulus* represents a different religious house. This means that at least 393 religious houses would pray for the abbess and for the other deceased members of her community that were mentioned in the announcement. But as these religious houses expected that prayers with the same intention and fervour would be returned for their own deceased, all members of the communities benefitted from the prayer-exchange. Even without mentioning the names of each individual, praying for the deceased members of an associated or visited religious house would mean that these people were accompanied by prayers on their journey to the afterlife and that their souls would be saved.

The practice of announcing the death of an abbess or another important member of a monastic community, and requesting prayers by sending out a messenger with a mortuary roll meant that many religious houses were visited and ties were strengthened, not only between communities of

the same order or in the same region, but also over great physical distance and across different spiritual backgrounds.

1.3. Goal

The final goal of this thesis is to contribute to our understanding of *Memoria* in the Late Middle Ages and especially of prayer-exchange and of the mortuary roll as a carrier of mutually promised prayers. *Memoria*, a Latin word, refers to the medieval practice of commemoration and remembrance. It is concerned with keeping the memory of a deceased person alive. It is usually attained through masses, prayers, the naming of the deceased, and art—such as images and funerary monuments (OEXLE, 1984, p. 385; VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 12; CARRUTHERS, 2008, p. 23; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 3). The Forest mortuary roll is studied not as an isolated historical or literary object but as an agent that has meaning for its users. The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs should be researched via an interdisciplinary approach. It is my conviction that several disciplines need to work together to contribute to our understanding of this mortuary roll.

Because Latin MS 114 is no longer in nowadays Brussels, where it originated, but is kept in the John Rylands Library in Manchester (United Kingdom) and it is rather unknown in the Low Countries, I hope to bring it to the attention of current and future scholars of *Memoria* in the Low Countries.

1.4. Thesis outline

Chapter 1 introduces the subject of this thesis, the problem statement, the research questions and the goal of this research.
Chapter 2 deals with the methodology and the theoretical framework. The scope of the thesis is outlined, and the research problems are addressed.
Chapter 3 presents an overview of the *status questionis* on medieval mortuary rolls in Western Europe.
Chapter 4 introduces the case-study of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs. Some background information on this abbess and on the abbey of Forest is given. The material appearance of the content of the mortuary roll is described. Finally, its journey is discussed.
Chapter 5 deals with research question I. A data-set is composed that is focused on the Old County of Flanders. The visits to the religious houses in three cities are summed up and presented in a table so that the itinerary can be reconstructed. Finally, a closer look is given to the entries and some characteristics are identified.
Chapter 6 deals with research question II. This chapter explains the practice of the celebration of the anniversary of death in light of *Memoria*. The various elements of the mortuary roll and their contribution to the commemoration of the abbess are examined carefully, as are the significance of prayer-exchange and of mutually promised prayers. The benefit of praying, especially in monastic communities, is described in terms of the salvation of the soul. Finally, this chapter considers the number and nature of the different religious houses in a selected region amidst the entries on the mortuary roll and their possible relationships with the Benedictine abbey of Forest.
Chapter 7 sums up the conclusion and discussion. Suggestions for further research are mentioned.

2. Methodology

2.1. Scope of the thesis

Abbess Elisabeth ‘sConincs died in 1458, and the entries on the mortuary roll date between 1458 and 1459. This thesis is therefore focused on the Late medieval period. Because the abbey of Forest is situated in what is now called Brussels, the geographical area is the Southern Low Countries. The subject of this thesis fits into the theme of the Advanced Master of Medieval and Renaissance Studies: i.e., it involves translation and interpretation, not in a literal sense, but in reference to the world of meaning behind the formulaic promised prayers of mortuary rolls.

2.2. Research problems

There are some limitations that need to be taken into account. I completed a bachelor and master’s degree in Art Sciences and Archaeology. I do not have a background as a historian. Furthermore, I have limited knowledge of literature, Latin language and writing techniques. The transcription of the Latin *tituli* was conducted mainly from photographs and with the aid of my promotor.

This research can by no means be exhaustive. The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs contains almost 400 *tituli*, so I had to make a selection of the entries to explore in this initial phase. I opted for *tituli* from three regions, situated in the Old County of Flanders: the cities of Bruges, Ghent and Ypres and their surroundings. This resulted in a data-set containing 54 entries. I strongly recommend further research of the roll by other scholars, as it is a fascinating object that merits more attention and may contribute to our understanding of medieval monastic history.

The mortuary roll is kept in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, in the Special Collection. Therefore, I was not able to consult the roll at all times as I conducted my research. I was not allowed to take any photographs of my own during my only visit. The photographs taken by the library and published on their website have nevertheless proven very useful. Fortunately, they are provided with a zoom-in function, which allows the viewer to see all details.

There is a practical problem concerning the counting of entries in the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs. There are two leading articles written on this mortuary roll: one by art-historian Stacy Boldrick (2000) and one by Taylor (1980), who composed a catalogue on all objects in the John

Rylands Library Collections that is based on James' earlier work of 1921. Boldrick counted 390, but James counted 383. Counting and numbering the entries for research purposes, I found a total of 393. I have carefully observed, distinguished and numbered all entries to ensure that I did not make any mistakes. For now, I will assume that the mortuary roll has 393 entries. I will contact the library once my thesis is complete to mention the inconsistency.

2.3. Methodology and framework

As the Advanced Master of Medieval and Renaissance Studies is an interdisciplinary study, it is my aim to look at the mortuary roll with the aid of several disciplines, including history, art science and archaeology. Archaeologists strive to see objects as imbued with agency. Objects have a story to tell, but this story cannot be read merely by looking at an object. Interpretation is necessary. The life course perspective, developed by archaeologist Roberta Gilchrist (2012), argues that the medieval life course stretched out to human existence after death. It tries to understand the experience of living in the Middle Ages by taking into account the significance of objects as social agents. Objects belong to the material world but have to be understood in the context of their making and use. To gain insight into the functions of the mortuary roll, I will use the theoretical framework of *Memoria* elaborated by German scholar Oexle (1984).

My approach to the subject of this thesis is to start out with an overview of the literature on mortuary rolls in general. I next introduce the mortuary roll of Elisabeth 'sConincs by summarizing what has already been written about it. In order to answer my research questions, I adopt my own point of view by looking at the material characteristics of a selected data-set from the case-study. I then try to interpret the data-set and the roll in general in light of the chosen framework.

3. Status questionis on mortuary rolls

3.1. Study of mortuary rolls: challenges and possibilities

There is limited expertise on the subject of mortuary rolls. I am aware of two overview studies specifically on mortuary rolls; both are written in French. The study by Dufour is the most recent (DUFOUR, 2009), while the study by Delisle dates from the second half of the nineteenth century (DELISLE, 1866). Delisle was the first to treat mortuary rolls as a genre on their own (DELISLE, 1847). He listed mainly French mortuary rolls from the ninth to fifteenth centuries (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 10). Dufour made an inventory of all known mortuary rolls. Other scholars mention mortuary rolls as part of literary mortuary practices besides necrologies, obituaries, *libri vitae*, etc. (DELISLE, 1847; HUYGHEBAERT, 1972; LEMAÎTRE, 1985). There is also a considerable amount of literature dedicated to one mortuary roll or group of mortuary rolls, or to a particular region (GOUCH NICHOLS, 1851; HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 10-11; LESLIE, 1993; SIGNORI, 2004; ROLLASON, 2011; BEYER, 2014). Most often, mortuary rolls were written for high-placed religious figures, such as abbots and bishops, but monks could also merit a mortuary roll, as could lay people. Royalty virtually never had a mortuary roll (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 7).

Mortuary rolls have received limited attention from scholars who study the High and Late Middle Ages. Their focus is instead on other mortuary documents, such as necrologies, and on fraternities from that time (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 521). Whether or not a medieval document is preserved over the course of time depends on whether it is still of interest to modern scholars (MILIS, 1992, p. 3). Some of the documents produced by members of monastic communities were only used within these groups and were not of any significance for the secular world outside (MILIS, 1992, p. 4-5).

According to Milis:
"Things which are to be written down, need to meet one basic condition: they must be considered worthy of being recorded" (MILIS, 1992, p. 1).

Mortuary rolls and fragments are often considered as isolated archival objects and are therefore not studied in a broader context (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 20). German scholars warn that the distinctive periods of the High and Late Middle Ages can result in neglecting long-term developments and traditions, such as the mortuary roll (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 521). Due to the fragmentary state of some of the mortuary rolls that have survived, scholars have had difficulty recognizing the significance

of the content of the rolls, of their promised prayers, and of the existence of spiritual networks (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 20). Spiritual networks refer to the relationships that medieval religious houses established with each other. These relationships were not necessarily based on the same rules of living. Spiritual networks transcended geographical borders. The members of such a spiritual network promised to pray for the souls of the deceased of the associated houses (DELISLE, 1866, p. I; BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327).

There are several problems that can occur in the study of mortuary rolls. They have to do with the state of the texts themselves and with their interpretation (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 27-28). The fragmentary nature of most mortuary rolls means a loss of information (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 20). Some of the elements of mortuary rolls are known to us only through copies or have become separated over time (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 27-28). Sometimes, mortuary rolls were no longer considered valuable after their return to the sending house and the sheets were cut up to serve other purposes. Also, sheets could become detached or joined together in an erroneous manner by later archivists (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 7; BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 20). Some fragments of mortuary rolls were re-used when binding books. By the same token, it is clear that archives and librarians did not always recognize mortuary rolls as such (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 317; BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 20). Finally, fragments of *tituli* can be wrongfully attached to another announcement of death (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 27-28). In some instances, it is clear that the different elements of a mortuary roll have been re-used for subsequent rolls. Especially, the *tituli* were removed to make room for new promised prayers (ROLLASON, 2011, p. 193 and 194). An entry is a short piece of text that is written by a receiving religious house. It contained a formulaic prayer for the soul of the deceased on the anniversary of his or her death (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 525; BEYER, 2014, p. 28). In this thesis, I use the word 'formula' to indicate this formulaic promise of prayer. Most often, the entry confirms the arrival of the messenger by writing down the year, day and even the hour the messenger came to the religious house. It also gives the name of the house (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327). In other cases, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when an entry was written, where and by whom (LESLIE, 1993, p. 118).

The fact that certain religious houses were invited to write an entry can give some indication of the spiritual network in which religious houses were linked to each other (LESLIE, 1993, p. 119). When studying networks between different religious houses, however, scholars may come across some problems. When looking at narrative sources, one must always question the objectivity of the sources. Furthermore, it is not always clear whether the networks are as intense as they appear to be (SNIJDERS, 2009, p. 270-271). When studying mortuary rolls and especially the networks that

were fostered through them, it is important not to take these relationships at face-value. The messenger did not always visit all of the monasteries with which the sending monastery had a relationship. Circumstances on the road and the weather also played an important role. The messenger might miss an allied monastery due to these obstacles. Therefore, Snijders warns us, networks should not be studied solely based on information retracted from mortuary rolls (SNIJDERS, 2009, p. 271).

Mortuary rolls are of broad importance and merit intensive study. The *tituli* of a mortuary roll can give us insight into both the history of literature and the ecclesiastical history (DELISLE, 1847, p. 384).The *tituli* that were composed in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries are imbued with a combination of prose and poetry. This is one of the reasons that the entries on mortuary rolls are of interest to philologists (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 525). Mortuary rolls can give insight into how well the Latin language was understood by members of monastic communities (SOUTHERN, 1967, p. 24). These objects can also tell us something about the monastic communities present in medieval times; they have historical value (GOUCH NICHOLS, 1851, p. 110-111). Sometimes we can learn details that we do not know from other sources, such as details concerning exact dates, names of abbots, the existence of smaller communities, historical errors, geographical insights and the level of intellectual and spiritual development of the different houses (GOUCH NICHOLS, 1851, p. 111; HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 30-32; LESLIE, 1993, p. 117-118). The study of mortuary rolls can benefit the general study of medieval Church and society as well as the general study of monastic history in Western Europe (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 317; SOUTHERN, 1967, p. 24).

Mortuary rolls differ from other medieval documents in the sense that they were composed by multiple scribes. Each religious house that was visited added a *titulus* to the document (GOUCH NICHOLS, 1851, p. 99). After all entries were collected, and the sheets of parchment were attached to the wooden carrier, the mortuary roll served as a reminder of the death of a specific person. It was a tangible object that reminded the sending institution and its members of the prayers promised by the visited monastic communities (GOUCH NICHOLS, 1851, p. 99). Late medieval mortuary rolls are a perfect example of the thriving culture of *Memoria*. This widespread practice of remembrance cannot be compared to that of any other period. When studying mortuary rolls, it is evident what the significance was of praying for the dead and how that could foster relationships between monastic communities. Mortuary rolls can be studied from different perspectives. They were a means of preserving information and a means of expressing the identity of a religious house. They

served to strengthen bonds between religious houses and communities. Moreover, they were a means by which the dead could remain connected with the living (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 544).

3.2. Overview

Mortuary rolls occur over a period of several centuries and in different Western European countries. Although they were a widespread phenomenon, relatively few examples have survived. Scientific interest in the collection and study of mortuary rolls sparked from the nineteenth century onwards (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59-60). Scholars began to distinguish different types of mortuary rolls. Two nineteenth-century historians, Delisle and Wybrands, felt the need to order the material and present a typology of mortuary rolls (DELISLE, 1847; WYBRANDS, 1880). We know that Wybrands was familiar with some of the work of Delisle, but it is not clear whether he copied his typology. Delisle identifies three types of mortuary rolls (DELISLE, 1847, p. 369-372; SIGNORI, 2004, p. 522).

The first type is the perpetual roll, which was destined to contain the names of members or benefactors of a religious community. It consists of parchment sheets stitched together that were used for a longer period of time as names were added on to it. This roll was meant to stay within the religious house (DELISLE, 1847, p. 372). Wybrands calls the first type *necrologia*, which are lists of deceased members and benefactors. These lists were kept near the altar and were unrolled each year to commemorate the dead (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 311-312). The second type, the annual mortuary roll or *rotuli annui*, was sent between associated religious houses and contained the names of all the deceased in the past year; this roll was meant to travel and served as a newsletter (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 311-312; ZOEPFL, 1936, p. 1022). This type of announcement of names of deceased members is occasionally called an encyclical. After the reception of such a roll, prayers were conducted for the salvation of the souls of the deceased (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 311-312). Sometimes the practice of sending an annual mortuary roll was limited to religious houses that were so far apart that notice of individual death was not possible; in other cases, the association between certain religious houses explicitly demanded an annual mortuary roll and even specified the day it was to be sent (DELISLE, 1847, p. 369-372; WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 311-312; SNELL, 2006, s.n.). The third type, the individual mortuary roll, announced the death of a specified member of the religious community and requested prayers of the (associated) house to save the soul of the deceased. The encyclical brief was either copied for each house, or the same brief would go on a journey and visit the (associated) houses (DELISLE, 1847, p. 372). This type was deemed the most important for its content (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 311-312). Mortuary rolls are also known under other names: *obituary*

roll, *bede roll* or *precatory* (LESLIE, 1993, p. 116; BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417).

Scholars differ in establishing the beginning of this practice. According to Huyghebaert, the first to use the mortuary roll were seventh-century Irish monks (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 27). Anglo-Saxon missionaries brought the practice to continental Europe in the eighth century (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204). Other scholars also place the origins of the mortuary rolls in the eighth century (OEXLE, 1983, p. 37-38; LESLIE, 1993, p. 117). Wybrands, on the other hand, states that the use of mortuary rolls started in the ninth century and was common until at least the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 310). There seems to be general agreement that the practice dates back to at least the eighth century on the Western European Continent. Wybrands may have been unaware of all the extant evidence. Most of the known mortuary rolls date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (LESLIE, 1993, p. 117; PETRUCCI, 1998, p. 50). Throughout the thirteenth century, their use is still frequent; from the fourteenth century onwards, they become rarer (DELISLE, 1847, p. 377-378). Authors offer various reasons for the diminishing use of mortuary rolls. Some think that the use of mortuary rolls decreased partly due to the destructive force of the Black Death. There are, however, rolls from the fifteenth and even the sixteenth centuries (BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 418). The most recent known rolls stem from the middle of the sixteenth century (LESLIE, 1993, p. 117). According to Paquay, the practice of mortuary rolls in the Low Countries ended with the Council of Trent (1545-1563) (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59). In contemporary England, on the other hand, the use of mortuary rolls came to an abrupt end in 1536, when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 27; BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 418). In contemporary Germany and Austria, the practice of sending mortuary rolls, including an encyclical brief, continued in a slightly different form, sometimes even in print, until at least the eighteenth century (ZOEPFL, 1936, p. 1022; HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 27; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 6).

Rotulus is the Latin word for roll. It is derived from the round shape of the carrier (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 520; SCHMIDT, 2011; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 4). It is important to pay attention to the choice of rolls rather than sheets of parchment. When mortuary rolls were first attested in the eighth century, the *codex* was a popular means of carrying information (LESLIE, 1993, p. 118). *Rotuli* have been used throughout history. There is a difference, however, in the way the rolls are read. Medieval rolls are read vertically, and are unrolled accordingly. Ancient rolls, on the other hand, are to be opened like a book and read horizontally. Even though *rotuli* are present in both periods, this does not mean

that the ancient scrolls are the direct predecessors of the medieval objects (SCHMIDT, 2011, p. 377). Rolls were used because it was easier to add sheets to them. They were also convenient for travelling, as the rolls were carried by messengers in their bags or on a strap around the neck (WYBRANDS, 1880, 310; p. LESLIE, 1993, p. 118). Rolled-up documents were often used in medieval times; they served specific purposes (SCHMIDT, 2011, p. 374). It is possible that medieval rolls were far more common than they are thought to be today. Preservation issues and lack of interest could be reasons for a distorted picture (SCHMIDT, 2011, p. 383).

Scholars do not agree about where mortuary rolls originated. Huyghebaert and Diemel believe that the practice came from the Anglo-Saxon region and was brought to the Continent (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 27; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204). Other scholars think the first mortuary rolls were produced in contemporary France and Spain. Later, the regions now called Belgium, Germany, England and Austria also issued these objects (BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417). Mortuary rolls, however, are rare in contemporary Southern European countries: Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Most of the rolls can be found in what is now known as England, France, Germany and Austria (LESLIE, 1993, p. 117; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 6). It is known that mortuary rolls produced in medieval English houses from the twelfth century onwards paid occasional visits to religious houses on the Continent. In later medieval times, the journeys had a smaller scope (ROLLASON, 2011, p. 208). The practice of mortuary rolls has a longer tradition in contemporary Germany and was a widespread phenomenon (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 317; HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 27).

Mortuary rolls were usually dedicated to male figures, but some rolls were used to commemorate abbesses. The mortuary roll of Mathilda of Caen is a high-quality example that travelled over large distances (DELISLE, 1866, p. 279; LESLIE, 1993, p. 117; BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417). Mathilda of Caen was a twelfth-century abbess and her mortuary roll contains 253 *tituli* and a very elaborate encyclical brief. The messenger also travelled to the medieval British Isles (DELISLE, 1847, p. 378; BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417). The *tituli* contain short standardized formulas and rich examples of prose and verse in which the name of Mathilda and her virtues are often mentioned. Some *tituli* reflect on the inevitability of death. The writers of the *tituli* seem to have mastered the Latin language very well and were capable of expressing their grief in an authentic and eloquent way (DELISLE, 1866, p. 279).

Most of the mortuary rolls of the Low Countries can be found in the Southern part, although rolls from this geographical area are rare (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204). The mortuary

roll of the St. Baafs abbey in Ghent, for instance, is dedicated to abbot Joris van der Zichelen and dates from 1406 (DUVERGER, 1974, p. 11). It is composed of 51 sheets of parchment, which were stitched together, and one glued part which was decorated with a miniature. The sheets of parchment are attached to a wooden round carrier, which is provided with a leather cover with stamped decorations. The roll dedicated to abbot Joris van der Zichelen also requested prayers for the souls of his two predecessors, Jan and Wouter, as well as for several other members of the monastic community (DUVERGER, 1974, p. 12). Another example of a mortuary roll from the Southern Low Countries is that of the Saint-Trond abbey. This roll was produced in 1450 (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327). The roll is not entirely preserved; the encyclical brief with the name(s) of the deceased of this abbey is missing. It is believed that the number of *tituli* is not complete (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 328). Berlière states that he believes the roll originally would have counted over 300 entries; only 261 entries are preserved (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 331). Wybrands mentions the lack of evidence of existence of mortuary rolls from the Northern part of the Low Countries, even though he is convinced the practice was present here as well (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 316). Though the online database Medieval Memoria Online (MeMo) includes the term *mortuary roll* in its glossary, it does not seem to include any mortuary rolls produced in the Northern Low Countries (MEMO ONLINE, GLOSSARY, p. 4). This is confirmed by Truus van Bueren, who is not aware of any mortuary rolls from the Northern Netherlands (personal communication, 26-7-2016).

It is rare to find complete mortuary rolls in the archives and libraries in Western Europe, as most rolls have a fragmentary nature (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 32; ROLLASON, 2011, p. 193). Delisle, a nineteenth-century scholar, was aware of about 100 mortuary rolls, mainly in French-speaking countries (DELISLE, 1866, p. II). Leslie, more than a century later, reports some 160 mortuary rolls, and over 320 fragments from such rolls have been recorded. Both rolls and fragments are kept in libraries, archives and private collections (LESLIE, 1993, p. 117). According to several scholars, 320 fragments and complete rolls have been preserved (PETRUCCI, 1998, p. 50; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59; DUFOUR, 2009). The number of 160 mortuary rolls is confirmed by other scholars. They, however, mention fewer fragments that belonged to mortuary rolls: 160 instead of 320 texts (BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417). There seems to be some confusion about what to call fragments or texts, as scholars come to different numbers.

Most mortuary rolls were issued by Benedictine orders (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204). The so-called structured orders, like the Cistercians, rarely made use of this practice. There are no known rolls from mendicant orders (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9). Medieval monastic society was

concerned with preserving the past and its values. Therefore, it was considered very important to write things down (MILIS, 1992, p. 100). Especially in Benedictine orders, writing was a major part of daily life (MILIS, 1992, p. 102). The Latin language was deemed the most important in monastic environments. Latin, however, was not spoken on a daily basis by most of the members, so it was taught in monasteries. The clergy were those who studied the language and could speak and write it fluently (MILIS, 1992, p. 103).

3.3. Material characteristics

In the Middle Ages, religious houses were allied in relationships with other monasteries. When a death occurred in one of the houses, the other houses were notified of this event. The religious houses promised to pray for the souls of the deceased. In return, these houses requested that others pray for their deceased as well. This exchange of promised prayers was to be conducted in perpetuity (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 30; BEYER, 2014, p. 32). The mortuary roll is one of several mortuary objects used in medieval times, and in large parts of Western Europe, to convey a specific message: the announcement of death of a member of the religious community. It was deemed one of the most efficient ways to get that message across. The mortuary roll stresses the significance of prayers for the salvation of souls (ROLLASON, 2011, p. 187).
Mortuary rolls are usually composed of two main elements: the encyclical brief and the *tituli* added by other religious houses (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 32). Some encyclical briefs are preceded by an illumination of a deathbed scene (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204). The images and the encyclical brief that precede the vast number of *tituli* meant an investment on the part of the issuing religious house; these elements were sometimes preserved for re-use (ROLLASON, 2011, p. 193).

3.3.1. Encyclical brief

An encyclical brief is a short text that announces someone's death and precedes the *tituli* on a mortuary roll. The encyclical brief contains information about the deceased to which the roll was dedicated and a demand for prayer (DELISLE, 1866, p. II; PETRUCCI, 1998, p. 50; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8). Not only the associated or the neighbouring houses were addressed in the encyclical brief; the community of loyal believers was addressed as a whole (DELISLE, 1847, p. 372). It was a means of letting other religious houses know that someone had passed away (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 134-135). The word *encyclical* refers to the fact that the announcement was meant to be spread by sending it around. The word was sometimes used for the annual announcement of the deceased. The personal

mortuary roll sometimes preserved the element of mentioning the recent deaths in a community in addition to that of the person to whom it was dedicated (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 311-312). Encyclical briefs mention the passing away of the person to whom a mortuary roll was dedicated and offer some specific characteristics of this person. For ordinary members of the community, the announcement of death and the request for prayers were often simple and followed a set order, mentioning the name, the date and the place and soliciting prayer. If the deceased was an important person, his qualities and acts would be described as well (DELISLE, 1847, p. 372). In order to interpret the last part, it is useful to consider the fact that the mortuary eulogy is a particular genre, in which the virtues of the deceased are emphasized; one does not speak ill of the dead (*de mortuis nisi bene*) (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8). The brief does not necessary inform us about the historical person; it is a product of its time and context (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 28). The encyclical brief serves as a means to portray the deceased; it did not matter whether this portrait was actually correct (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 7). Often, the traits and values of a person were exaggerated for the purpose of creating a good memory.

The religious house that sent out the mortuary roll was mentioned in the encyclical brief, and, in some cases, the relationship with other religious houses to be visited was indicated. It was in the encyclical brief that the mutually promised prayers were stipulated. Sometimes, the name of the messenger was given with a request to treat him with hospitality (DELISLE, 1847, p. 371; DELISLE, 1866, p. I-II; ZOEPFL, 1936, p. 1022; HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 28; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8-9).

The manufacturing of the encyclical brief was treated with great care, such as was common for manuscripts (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 6). Composition of the encyclical brief was undertaken by the most studied monk, called a *cantor*, who would employ all his knowledge and craftsmanship to paint a favourable picture and to praise the virtues of the deceased (DELISLE, 1847, p. 372-373; ROLLASON, 2011, p. 195). The *cantor* trained young members of the community, and he was responsible for the conduct of the daily liturgy. He was also responsible for the *scriptorium* (LAWRENCE, 1989, p. 122). The writer of the encyclical brief may ensure the recipient that his community will return the prayers if necessary (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8). The writing of the encyclical brief, with the name of the deceased to which the roll was dedicated and other deceased members of the community, required some effort, as the text was often elaborate (ROLLASON, 2011, p. 195). The writer, after praising the deceased, would conclude that this fine person was human after all and thus in need of prayer. And so each brief would end with a request for prayer (DELISLE, 1847, p. 372-373). Sometimes Scriptural verses are cited to underline the necessity of prayer for the dead and for the community as a whole (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8). The initial, the first letter of the brief, was often decorated

(DUFOUR, 2009, p. 7). The encyclical brief usually measured between 15 and 20 cm, and could sometimes measure up to 6 meters in length (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327). Usually, black inks were used to write both the encyclical brief and the entries, but due to the different recipes and qualities, the writing is preserved in different states over the course of time. Sometimes red ink was used by the sending institution, usually to rubricate the initial (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 7).

From the thirteenth century onwards, the encyclical brief was sometimes preceded by one or more painted images. These can be deathbed scenes or general Biblical iconographies (LESLIE, 1993, p. 116; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9). A deathbed scene is a common theme in Late Medieval art. The scene usually takes place in one's bedroom, with a sick and dying person lying in bed, family and friends surrounding the bed. To ease the death of the person in bed, the visitors conduct prayers for the soul of the soon to be deceased. It was essential that a priest was present to conduct the last rites and to say prayers for the soul of the deceased (KASTENBAUM & KASTENBAUM, 1989, p. 97-101; HOWARTH & LEAMAN, 2003, p. 144-147; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 196-197). Equally, from the thirteenth century onwards, the encyclical brief is sometimes followed by a list of religious houses that belonged to the same spiritual association and that were to be visited by the messenger. This provided some sort of an itinerary; it refers to the journey a messenger conducted to collect as many entries as possible (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9). It is obvious that the encyclical brief had to be carried to other religious houses as soon as possible after the death of a member of the community by a messenger (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327; ROLLASON, 2011, p. 206). The encyclical brief was written on a large piece of parchment that was rolled on a portable cylinder (DELISLE, 1847, p. 374-375; BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327).

3.3.2. *Tituli*: form and formula

The term *titulus* refers to the entry written on a mortuary roll. *Titulus* also refers to the close analogy with an epitaph. Furthermore, it refers to an inscription on any funerary monument or object (BEYER, 2014, p. 28).

According to Beyer:

"The designation 'tituli' for mortuary roll entries consequently marks them, not simply as sections of a piece of writing, but rather as monument-like fixings of an act of commemoration" (BEYER, 2014, p. 29).

Commemoration refers to keeping alive the memory of a certain person or of a group of people. Commemoration can be attained in multiple ways: through masses and prayers, and through art (OEXLE, 1984, p. 215; WOLLASCH, 1984, p. 215; APPLEBY, 2002, p. 101; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 194). A *titulus* is usually composed of a confirmation of arrival of the messenger with the encyclical brief, followed by the promise of prayer for the deceased to which the roll was dedicated and for the other members of the sending institution (DELISLE, 1866, p. I; ZOEPFL, 1936, p. 1022; LAUWERS, 1997, p. 135; SIGNORI, 2004, p. 524; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59). Usually, after the receiving religious houses wrote their entry on the mortuary roll, they added the name of the deceased to their necrology. In this way, the deceased was included in the citing of names whilst prayers were conducted (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 135).

The content of a *titulus* could differ: some writers opted to include the bare necessities, while others gave their entry a more personal character through the use of decorative elements and personal texts (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 312; BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 33; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 5). Paquay states that an entry included the signature of the writer (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59). Monasteries often took the opportunity to mention their own deceased in the *tituli*. This way, the receiving religious house would not have to wait for the annual roll to be distributed (SNELL, 2006, s.n.; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9, 125). The fact that religious houses added their *tituli* to a mortuary roll meant that they wanted to foster bonds between the sending and receiving religious houses (PETRUCCI, 1998, p. 50). The entries of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries are considered personal and private pieces of prose and poetry. According to Delisle, poetry was cultivated as an art in twelfth century French monasteries. Those who were not poets tried to show their general education by writing elaborate Latin entries (DELISLE, 1847, p. 385-386). Often, the writer elaborated on the inevitability of death or on the lives of the deceased (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 313; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 5). From the thirteenth century onwards, with a highpoint in the fifteenth century, some scribes add human or animal heads to their entries (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8).

Usually, the entry on the mortuary roll consisted of several set phrases. The name of the receiving religious house was mentioned. Next, the writer acknowledged the announced death and promised to pray for the soul of the deceased. The receiving institution would also request prayers for its own members, both dead and alive (DUVERGER, 1974, p. 12; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 5). Reciprocity refers to the expectation that a favour is returned with an act that has the same valour. Initially, the persons who wrote the entries remained anonymous; but from the fourteenth century onwards, we see their names mentioned. Sometimes the writer even asks for prayers for himself (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8).

The most common formula in the entries is *Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris* (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204). Some other formulas are often used, such as *Anime corum et omnium fidelium defunctorum, per misericordiam Dei, requiescant in pace, Amen*, which is mainly used in mortuary rolls produced in Western Europe. Another known formula is *Vestris nostra damus, pro nostris vestra rogamus*, which was usually present in medieval English entries (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9).

The formula *Orate pro nostris, oravimus pro vestris*, can be translated as "Pray for those belonging to us; we have prayed for those belonging to you" (BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 5). The formula *Anime eius et anime omnium fidelium defunctorum requeiscant in pace, Amen* can be translated as, "May his soul and the souls of all departed believers rest in peace, Amen" (LESLIE, 1993, p. 116-117; BEYER, 2014, p. 29).

The use of the formula *requiescant in pace* in the entries can be perceived as a commemorative element in the entry. While it states that the writer wants the deceased to find peace, it also serves as a means of commemoration in itself. The adoption of this formula from monastic prayer into the mortuary rolls indicates that the *tituli* here serve less to record the fact of remembrance than to function in themselves as a means of commemorating the dead (BEYER, 2014, p. 30).
Scholars note an evolution in the type and number of elements a *titulus* contains. While the earliest examples of entries on mortuary rolls contained only the name of the recipient, the promised prayer and the request for prayer, later entries included the order, the diocese in which the religious house was situated and the date and year of the visit of the messenger (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 525; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 5). Some writers used the entries to engage in verses; others simply wrote that they hoped the souls would find peace. Sometimes, entries were written by multiple persons (LESLIE, 1993, p. 117). From the thirteenth century onwards, the exact hour of arrival of the messenger is mentioned in the *tituli*, often linked to the liturgical time of the day (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9; SIGNORI, 2004, p. 525; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 5). This possibly had to do with the initiative of the female Benedictine abbey of Paraclet to standardize the formula of the *tituli*. They proposed to include the date and hour of the visit and a fixed formula for prayer-exchange (DELISLE, 1866, p. 426; SIGNORI, 2014, p. 6).

Mortuary rolls did not have a set length. The length was decided by the number of entries that were collected. The entries were written on loose sheets of parchment, so the more entries, the more sheets were added to the roll (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59; SCHMIDT, 2011, p. 374). The parchment sheets were usually of the same size, colour and quality and were left blank so that the receivers could

write their *titulus*. The average length of a sheet was 25 cm; the sheets used in current England were longer and, on the other hand, the sheets from current Germany and Austria were usually shorter (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 6). From the tenth century onwards, sheets were used on both sides (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 7).

All parts of the mortuary roll were written in Latin: that is, the encyclical brief and the entries (BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417). Some of the entries contain spelling mistakes (LESLIE, 1993, p. 116; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9). Encyclical briefs and *tituli* can give insight into the level of Latin education in monasteries during the Middle Ages (DELISLE, 1866, p. II). Scholars see a decline in the grasp of the Latin language in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries after a period of prosperity in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries (DELISLE, 1866, p. II). Southern also notes a regional distinction in the comprehension of Latin between the Mediterranean area and the North-western area of medieval Europe. He states that scribes from the South were subject to a stricter use of Latin prose. This dichotomy between the Southern strictness and Northern freedom has to do with the inheritance of classical culture by the Mediterranean areas and therefore with the solemnity of Latin language. The Northern area, on the other hand, shows developments in eleventh century civilization and cultural ideas of freedom in writing (SOUTHERN, 1967, p. 25). Mostly, it was the *cantor*, also responsible for the prayers for the deceased, who wrote the *titulus*. He sometimes expressed his compassion in prose, later also in verse (GOUCH NICHOLS, 1851, p. 100; HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 29-30). He would mention the deaths within his own community and request prayers. Sometimes it was not the *cantor* himself, but a young student of his within the community who was asked to write the *titulus* as a means of practicing his writing skills (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 29-30). These entries are called *versis puerilis* (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8).

3.4. Messenger and journey

Medieval monasteries were kept informed through the use of messengers. These people travelled to other regions, religious orders and monasteries as fast as they could to convey a certain message (OHLER, 1989, p. 64). The messengers were male, as traveling was deemed dangerous and hard (OHLER, 1989, p. 67). The messenger also served as a link with the outside world: the members of monastic communities were able to hear the latest news through him (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 310). Little is known about the messengers who travelled with mortuary rolls. Sometimes their names are known, but we do not know much about their function. According to Dufour, messengers were initially recruited amongst the clergy, later also amongst laymen (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 11). Some

scholars specify the provenance of the messenger or roll bearer. Boldrick thinks he was often a layman (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 33). Gouch Nichols states that, in the case of the Dereham mortuary roll, the messenger was a monk (GOUCH NICHOLS, 1851, p. 110). A messenger may have had knowledge of the Latin language, given that all the *tituli* and the encyclical brief were written in Latin and the fact that messengers were supposed to write mortuary briefs for the receiving religious houses (OHLER, 1989, p. 67; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 11). Thanks to Latin, language borders did not matter (OHLER, 1989, p. 74). As many members of monastic communities were prohibited to speak during the day, the members communicated through a kind of sign language (LAWRENCE, 1989, p. 118-119). It may have been the case that the messenger learned this sign language to engage with members of the silent monasteries to explain his consignment (OHLER, 1989, p. 75).

Messengers were also known as *rolliger*, which is derived from the round wooden carrier they travelled with (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 311). There were many other Latin denominations for the messenger: *rotliger*, *rotularius, cursor, gerulus, breviger* and *brevigulus* (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 26; BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 73; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204).
Breviators, as messengers were also known, sometimes had to show that they were entitled to travel to religious institutions (OHLER, 1989, p. 81; BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417). According to Rollason, messengers had a licence through which they could identify themselves (ROLLASON, 2011, p. 196). They were issued a credential note (OHLER, 1989, p. 81; BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 72). Some messengers had to take an oath before they could commence their journey, especially in the case of messages with a private character (OHLER, 1989, p. 67). Apparently, carrying an object such as a mortuary roll was not evidence enough of the messenger's duty and aim of the journey.

The messenger was meant to leave with the mortuary roll as soon as possible after the death that was announced in the encyclical brief, but a longer or shorter delay could occur if no messenger was available or if the messenger had to prepare for the journey. This delay did not interfere with the intention of the mortuary roll, which was to ask for prayers (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 7).
Mortuary rolls were transported through the use of a wooden cylinder, which was sometimes reinforced at the ends by means of copper plates (SNELL, 2006, s.n.; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 6; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204). Some scholars assume that the messenger travelled with two rolls: one so-called small roll, which contained the encyclical brief and some entries, and one large roll, which contained empty parchment sheets (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9). Mortuary rolls may have been rolled up for practical reasons. The roll could be extended by adding loose sheets. Thus, the messenger did

not need to carry all sheets with him on his journeys. A wooden carrier with a small number of sheets was easier to transport; it could, for instance, be kept in a small bag (SCHMIDT, 2011, p. 375).

The messenger would go on his way, from one religious house to the other, and would receive a proper welcome where he went. The encyclical brief ends with a request to receive the messenger well and with hospitality (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 8). A messenger was provided with some money or food for the road by the sending house (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 11). According to the practices of the community or the deliberate request in the brief, the messenger was offered food and drink, a rest, and sometimes even a little money by the receiving religious houses (DELISLE, 1847, p. 374; BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327). He would be received with great curiosity about the reason for his visit and the news he brought with him (DELISLE, 1847, p. 374-375). Some *tituli* express gratitude towards the messenger, as he travelled far distances. Often the visitor was welcomed by the abbot of the order and other members (OHLER, 1989, p. 82). This task of welcoming visitors meant an additional strain on the daily tasks of the monks or nuns (OHLER, 1989, p. 85). If he could not continue his journey on the same day of his visit, a bed was offered to the messenger to rest (OHLER, 1989, p. 82 and 83). On arrival, the messenger brought the mortuary roll to the responsible person, who read it and wrote the confirmation of reception (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 311; SNELL, 2006, s.n.). This *titulus* was written by the representative of each religious house the messenger visited (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 32-33). It was the duty of the messenger to ensure that this confirmation was conducted (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 524). After a messenger visited a religious house and the responsible writer wrote the entry, the religious house received a mortuary brief as a sort of receipt. On this brief, the date of the visit was specified with the name of the person to which the mortuary roll was dedicated and for whom prayers were collected. On this bookmark, the promised prayers were confirmed (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 19). Once informed about the death, the members of the community would gather in the church and pray for the deceased (DELISLE, 1847, p. 374; SNELL, 2006, s.n.). It was the responsibility of the messenger to take the sheets of parchment back to the sending institution in time for the anniversary of death. An anniversary of death is a perpetually annual event—marked each year after the date of death—during which the death of a specific person is commemorated though a ceremony. Members of a monastic community and their spiritual networks pray for the salvation of the soul of the deceased (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 19).

Most of travellers in the Middle Ages travelled on foot and could cover up to 25 miles a day (c. 40 km) (OHLER, 1989, p. 97 and 101; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 11, see also Figure 1). The average distance covered, however, was 19 miles a day (OHLER, 1989, p. 98). During the Middle Ages, the

circumstances for travelling were more favourable than they were in earlier times, thanks to better and more accessible roads (OHLER, 1989, p. 99). The messenger, who was responsible for collecting as many intercessory prayers as possible, travelled far and wide, both in his own country and abroad (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 520). Some scholars believe that the routes taken by the messenger were worked out prior to the start of the journey (OHLER, 1989, p. 98). It was common for the messenger to carry with him a list of the houses he was to visit, also called an itinerary (OHLER, 1989, p. 98; BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 72). Others think that the messenger could compose his own itinerary (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 206). Aspects to bear in mind would have been the landscape, season, and location of religious orders (OHLER, 1989, p. 98). A *breviator* did not necessarily have to pay a visit to all religious houses within a religious network. Sometimes, he was assigned to travel within a certain geographical area or had to return to the monastery on a certain date (BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 73). *Tituli* are in fact receipts of reception of the announcement of death (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 29-30). If the *tituli* are dated, it is possible to reconstruct the travelling route of the messenger. This can be difficult, as cantors sometimes wrote their *tituli* on the first blank space they encountered instead of unrolling the parchment (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 29-30; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 6).

Figure 1. A miniature of a Cistercian monk carrying a roll (Paquay, 2007, p. 61)

4. Case-study: the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs

Having discussed the *status questionis* on mortuary rolls in Medieval Western Europe in general, the scope of this thesis is now limited to one specific mortuary roll: that of Elisabeth ‘sConincs. This mortuary roll was produced in the Southern Low Countries and is now kept in the John Rylands Library in Manchester. It is one of the most complete and best preserved mortuary rolls known and it contains all elements: a sheet with two illuminations, an elaborate encyclical brief with a decorated initial and nearly 400 entries.

First, the person of Elisabeth ‘sConincs as abbess is outlined, and a brief overview of the relevant history of the abbey of Forest is given. The name Forest will be used throughout the thesis to refer to the abbey in contemporary Brussels of which Elisabeth was abbess. It is also known as *Vorst* by Dutch-speaking scholars and *Forêt* by French-speaking scholars (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 23; DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 189).

Next, the material characteristics of the mortuary roll, and its content, are stated. The last part of this chapter deals with the journey of the mortuary roll.

To date, the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs has been most widely discussed by art-historian Stacy Boldrick, although she leaves different areas of study to be conducted (BOLDRICK, 2000). Mortuary roll Latin MS 114, as it is known in the library where it is kept, is mentioned by other scholars as well, mostly as an example of a roll that travelled over considerable distances and visited a vast number of religious houses (WYBRANDS, 1880; DIEMEL, 2011).

4.1. Elisabeth ‘sConincs

Elisabeth ‘sConincs was the seventeenth abbess of the Benedictine abbey of Forest. She served for a total of 27 years, from 9 February of 1431 until her death on 19 July of 1458 (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 203; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034; TAYLOR, 1980, p. 201; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60). We do not know her date of birth. The spelling of the surname of the abbess differs slightly. While I prefer to use *‘sConincs,* other scholars, like James, use *Sconincx*, or *‘sConincks*, while Verniers uses *De Coninc* (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 57; TAYLOR, 1980, p. 201). The online tool of the University of Manchester prefers the term *‘sConincx* (THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER LIBRARY IMAGE COLLECTIONS, online).

As an abbess, Elisabeth was particularly talented on the administrative level and responsible for issuing a manual. It was also Elisabeth who finished the construction of the gothic abbey church in

1435 (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 205; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125). In 1440, the bishop of Cambrai confirmed the longstanding custom that the recruitment of the abbey of Forest was to be limited to daughters of noble families to acquire important dowries from wealthy families; Elisabeth herself also was of noble origin (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 205). A certain Marie ‘sConincs was the fifteenth abbess of Forest; she died in 1418 (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 203; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034). Whether Elisabeth was related to her is not clear. According to Verniers, her last name was *T’Sconincx*. He spells Elisabeth’s last name as *De Coninc* (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 57). It is most probable that the mortuary roll for Elisabeth ‘sConincs was commissioned by her successor, Margaret de Schorisse, who started as an abbess on the day after Elisabeth’s death, 20 July of 1458, and died on 31 March of 1495 (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 205; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125). In general, abbeys and monasteries kept obituaries in their archives to record all commemoration of their members (TRIO, 2011, p. 182). *Monasticon Belge* mentions mainly administrative documents for Forest. Only one sixteenth-century obituary is mentioned (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 189). It is noteworthy that, to our knowledge, Elisabeth was the only abbess of this abbey to receive a mortuary roll. It is uncertain whether Elisabeth specifically requested this object or her successor Margaret judged her worthy of it, or if other mortuary rolls simply did not survive the hand of time. We do know that other mortuary rolls were presented to the abbey of Forest. In July of 1450, a messenger from the abbey of Saint-Trond came to the abbey of Forest to announce a death within this Benedictine community (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 238-331).

4.2. Abbey of Forest, Brussels

The abbey of Forest was a daughter abbey of Affligem. The abbey of Affligem originated from an eremitic community and started to follow the Benedictine Rule in 1086 (DE GRIECK, 2010, p. 66). The Benedictine Rule promoted living faithfully and conducting prayers (DE GRIECK, 2010, p. 3). The abbey of Affligem had several daughter establishments (DE GRIECK, 2010, p. 67). In 1096, the knight Gislebert of Aalst granted some lands to the abbey of Affligem, in the province of Flemish-Brabant, to establish a new religious house in which female members of the community would follow the rule of Saint Benedict (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 56; DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 191; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034). This house was started on one of the lands of the Affligem abbey, but the abbot chose to move it elsewhere. From 1105 onwards, the female house was established in the parish church of Forest in the medieval Brussels region; the first attestation occurred in a charter of 1110 (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 56; DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 189, 192; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60). Initially, Forest was a priory, dependent on the abbey of Affligem. The

inhabitants followed the rule of Marcigny: a religious house for women in France, dependent on the male Benedict community of Cluny (BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034; MCNAMARA, 2005, p. 15-16). The first confirmed mention of a superior in the Forest priory is in 1163 (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 193). In 1238, it was decided that the priory was to be an independent abbey, under the direction of a female abbess (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 56; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60). The priory had become wealthy enough and had sufficient members to become an independent abbey (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 196-197). A year later, in 1239, during the reign of Petronille, the priory of Forest officially became independent of the abbey of Affligem (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 56; DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 193; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034). The fact that the Forest abbey originated from the Affligem abbey meant that they had to adopt the Benedictine Rule (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 56). From the beginning, the successive abbesses of Forest acquired lands and secured an income for the monastic community (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 193). The abbeys under Benedictine Rule had accumulated large amounts of property in the Late Middle Ages, which granted these monasteries prestige and wealth (DE GRIECK, 2010, p. 486).

From an archaeological perspective, there are very few material remains of the abbey of Forest. The first site, dating from the twelfth century, was situated in the local parish church. During the middle of the thirteenth century, monastic buildings were established at the same site. These were to last until 1582, when they were destroyed by a fire (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 191; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034). The abbey of Forest had a sanctuary, where the abbesses and the nuns could seek refuge in times of trouble. This place was also occasionally used in case a messenger came to visit the abbey (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 72).

There are several seals known from the abbey, some of which date from 1437, 1439 and 1453, the period Elisabeth ‘sConincs was the abbess of Forest (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 191, 205). The seal of 1437 was kept within the abbey (see Figure 2). The place where it was kept was sealed and could only be opened using three special keys (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 57).

From the seventeenth century onwards, the history of the abbey of Forest was written down. Initially, the abbesses were listed; from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the general history was taken into account (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 190). The history of the abbey of Forest is well-documented. The nature of the documents is mainly administrative (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 189). The mortuary roll is not mentioned as a source here (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 189-190). Besides such documents, there is also a hagiography dedicated to Alenae: a Merovingian saint who was adored in the priory of Forest from the late twelfth century onwards (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 190 and 193; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034). The monastic buildings were destroyed by fire or

abandoned several times during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. In 1794, under the siege of French troops, the sisters fled to the abbey of St. Cécile in Cologne and the old abbey was pillaged by the villagers of Forest (Despy-Meyer, 1964, p. 217; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034). The nuns returned in 1795, without their abbess. In the course of 1796, the decision was made by the commissioners of the Republic to cease the activities of the abbey of Forest. The 19 remaining female inhabitants of the abbey tried to resist this decision by claiming that they fulfilled a task in the public education of the community. Their protest was in vain; the abbey ceased to exist on the 26th of October, 1796 (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 217; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60).

Figure 2. Seal of Elisabeth 'sConincs, 1437 (VERNIERS, 1949, p. 57).

4.3. Description of the mortuary roll: pedigree and material characteristics

The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs will now be discussed. First, the pedigree and material characteristics will be looked at, after which the encyclical brief and the *tituli* will be outlined. The images on the roll will be discussed as well. Finally, the journey of the mortuary roll will be considered.

Scholars acknowledge that the mortuary roll as an object was favoured by nineteenth-century collectors due to its completeness and scientific significance. The location of the mortuary roll between the eighteenth century and its appearance overseas is unknown (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 35). Given that the roll stayed within the Forest community until the moment the abbey ceased to exist in 1796, it disappears for more than 50 years. Paquay suggests that the roll was confiscated by national authorities and sold to an antiquarian; possibly a British collector came across it (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59-60). The first attestation of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs in a semi-public collection is in 1853, when the roll was part of the Ashburnham collection in the British Isles (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 35). Henry Yates Thompson bought the roll in May of 1897 (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). The John Rylands Library in Manchester became owner of the roll after Lord Crawford bought it for a mere 2 pounds at the Ashburnham sale on May 1st of 1899 (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 39; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). The mortuary roll became part of the Crawford Collection of the John Rylands Library in Manchester in 1901 (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 36). The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs is now known as Latin MS 114 in the John Rylands Library of Manchester and is kept in the Special Collection (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 39). The Library in Manchester has digitalized the mortuary roll, which makes it accessible for intensive studying. There are a total of 34 photographs, which have a zoom-in option that makes it possible to see every detail (THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER LIBRARY IMAGE COLLECTIONS, online). The University of Manchester follows the research conducted by James (1921) and updated by Taylor (1980).

Several scholars have described the material characteristics of the mortuary roll. There are, however, some inconsistencies regarding the dimensions of the object. James has intensively studied the objects in the Collections of the John Rylands Library (TAYLOR, 1980). According to James, the mortuary roll has a width of 18.3 cm and is composed of a total of 18 sheets (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 201). Dufour contradicts this and states that the mortuary roll contains a total number of 19 sheets. Most of the sheets are glued together (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). Some sheets are stitched (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 37; see Figure 3). According to Dufour, the length of the roll is 13.30 meters, while the width per sheet differs between 18 and 19.5 cm (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). According to Boldrick, the length of the sheets varies between 60 and 83 cm. Boldrick and Paquay agree with

Dufour that the width of the sheets is around 19 cm (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 37; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60). Boldrick also counts 19 sheets. She specifies that these 19 sheets are composed of a sheet with two illuminations, the encyclical brief, and a total of 17 sheets with entries. She states that the roll measures a total of 12.95 meters (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 19). The encyclical brief measures 84.5 cm in length. The sheet with the two illuminations is deemed 49 cm long (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 37).

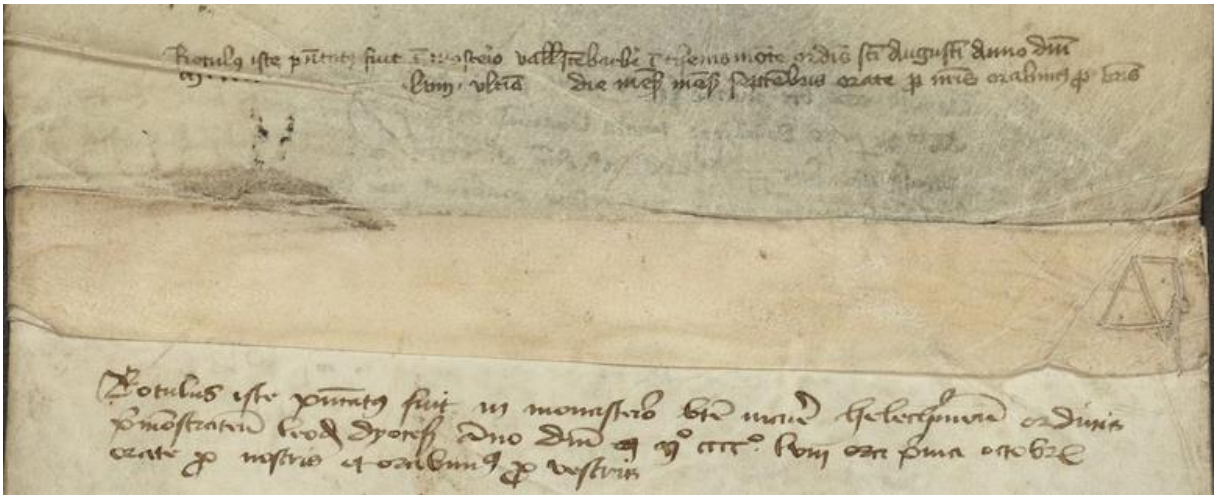


Figure 3. Detail of glued and stitched sheets. Note that there is significant space between the entry on the previous sheet and the first entry on the second sheet (University of Manchester Library Image collections, 006r)

The mortuary roll closes with a leather strap, attached to the first sheet of the roll (see Figure 4). The last sheet of parchment is attached to a carrier with the aid of three clout-nails (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). The carrier of the mortuary roll is a wooden cylinder with two metal bosses. Boldrick states that the bosses have a 3.8 cm diameter (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 37). On either end of the cylinder, a metal ring is attached with a circumference of 2.5 cm (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 37; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). According to Wybrands, these rings were attached to a strap the messenger wore around his neck (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 310). Scholars differ in the measurement of the wooden carrier, dependent on whether the bosses and rings are included. Dufour believes that it is 26 cm wide (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). According to James, the carrier measures 24.5 cm and contains a metal boss on each side, to which a ring is attached (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 201). Boldrick, on the other hand, states that the carrier measures 29.2 cm. She puts the diameter of the carrier at 7.1 cm (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 37). The wooden carrier seems to have been produced around the same time as the sheets of the mortuary roll (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 19). Stains, cracks and tears are evidence of the use of the mortuary roll, which went through many hands in just under one year (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 38).

Figure 4. Leather end of the mortuary roll. The end is stitched to the last sheet of parchment. Note the impression of the lower scene of the first sheet (The University of Manchester Library Image collections, 008v)

4.4. Content of the mortuary roll

4.4.1. Encyclical brief

The encyclical brief was the medieval term for a short text that preceded the entries on a mortuary roll and that stipulated the function of the roll: announcement of death and requested prayers for the soul of the deceased (DELISLE, 1847, p. 371; BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 14). The encyclical brief was often decorated with illuminations (BLOCK FRIEDMAN & MOSSLER FIGG, 2000, p. 417).
This part of the mortuary roll expressed the grief of the monastic community about the loss they experienced. The brief also served as an eulogy of the deceased (GOUCH NICHOLS, 1851, p. 99).

The encyclical brief refers to the merits of Elisabeth ‘sConincs (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60). The encyclical brief concerning the abbess, which was written in a book-hand, advocates purity in life and in death. The brief talks about the liminal place of purgatory, and states that “After life, something always remains to be cleaned” (see Appendix B, line 12-13). This refers to the function of the encyclical brief, that is, to ask for prayers for the souls of the Forest abbey. The brief also introduces Johannes Leonis as the messenger responsible for carrying the mortuary roll (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60). The members of the abbey of Forest stipulated that the messenger should be taken care of by the receiving religious houses (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 38-39; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125). This is especially clear in the following passage, in which the name of the messenger is mentioned:

> *Roligerulum exhibitorem presencium fauorabiliter scilicet* ***Iohannem leonis*** *cum uenerit recipere uelitis nos deposcimus et benigne. Ut uobis et uestris in casu simili gratam uicissitudinem rependamus. Datum anno domini .M. CCCC. LVIII die XVI. mensis augusti* (THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER LIBRARY IMAGE COLLECTIONS, 003r; my emphasis).

In this passage, the receiving houses are asked to be kind to Johannes Leonis when he comes to visit. Furthermore, it is stated that, in return for their kindness, the abbey of Forest will in similar circumstances express its gratitude by showing the same hospitality (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 39).
At the end of the encyclical brief, the houses belonging to the fraternity are listed (see Appendix B). The churches of Saint Mary in Groot-Bijgaarden and Saint Laurence in Liège were bound to the Forest abbey through the promise of three psalters. Next, a list of eight churches is given, all of which include the Forest abbey in three masses in return for one psalter (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 202):

Ecclesia S. petri in Affligemo.
Eccl. S. Saluatoris in Heenam.
Eccl. S. petri Gandensis.
Eccl. S. Marie in Laken iuxta renam.
Eccl. S. Bertini in S. Odomaro
Eccl. S. Michaelis in Zibbert.
Eccl. S. Pantalionis in Colonia.
Eccl. S. Winnochi Bergensis.

The religious houses were mentioned in affirmation of their relationship with the abbey of Forest. The houses were listed in an order aimed to show their significance to the abbey of Forest (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 40).

The encyclical brief is not only dedicated to Elisabeth ‘sConincs; it also mentions the death of seven other nuns of Forest. Prayers for their souls are also requested (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125). They may have been included because they passed away in the same period as Elisabeth. Thus, they were included in the encyclical brief so that they could also be commemorated through prayers by the religious houses in the *tituli*.

Figure 5. Detail of mortuary brief; the initial is decorated with Mary and Child (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 003r)

The encyclical brief starts with a large initial of the letter “U” (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 201; see Figure 5). In this initial, a miniature is painted from the Virgin Mary and Child. The two figures have golden nimbuses, and are seated on a wooden throne. The background within the initial is divided in a green and maroon planes. The margins of the encyclical brief are decorated with gold foil leaves and blue flowers (see Figure 5).

4.4.2. *Tituli* and images on the mortuary roll

Stacy Boldrick, a scholar from the University of Leeds, has written an article concerning the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs (BOLDRICK, 2000). In the article, she acknowledges the lack of study of this specific commemorative object and gives some avenues of research that are still to be conducted (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 37).

The sheets of parchment of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs are of a different colour and shade: some sheets are yellowish; others are white (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). From my own observation, it seems clear that the 393 entries on both sides of the mortuary roll are written by different writers. Even though the entries were collected in a period of less than a year, there seem to be strong differences in the quality of the entries. Some writers used a black ink that has faded over time. The style of writing seems to differ as well. The *tituli* are almost all composed of abbreviated words. It is clear, however, that not all writers used the same abbreviations (See Figure 7). In appendix A, all the entries in the data-set are transcribed. In appendix C, some original *tituli* can be viewed.

In general, *tituli* are 3-4 lines long. Usually, they contain a confirmation and the date of the visit of the messenger; the name, order and location of the house that is responding; and a formula to indicate the promised prayers. The formula expresses reciprocity. Sometimes the writer puts his signature at the end of the *titulus* (see Figure 6).

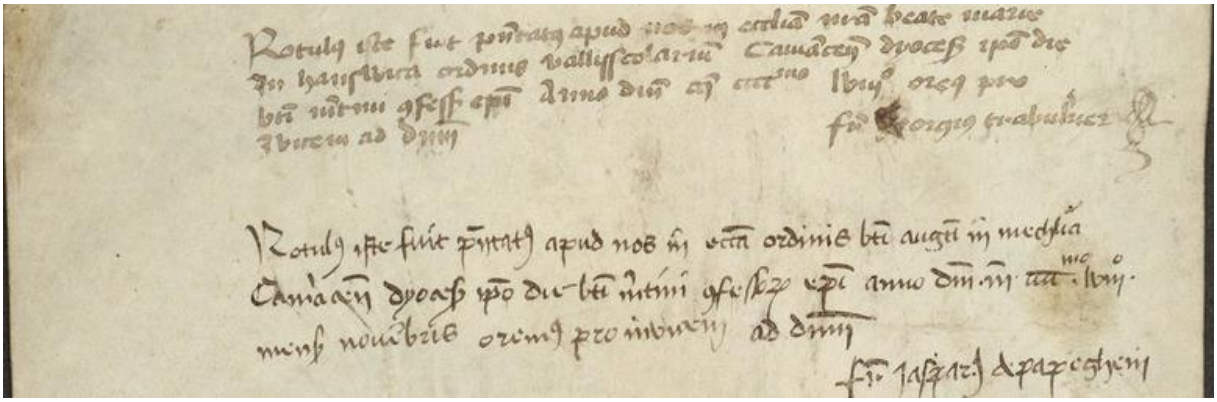


Figure 6. Examples of two entries with signatures (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 009r)

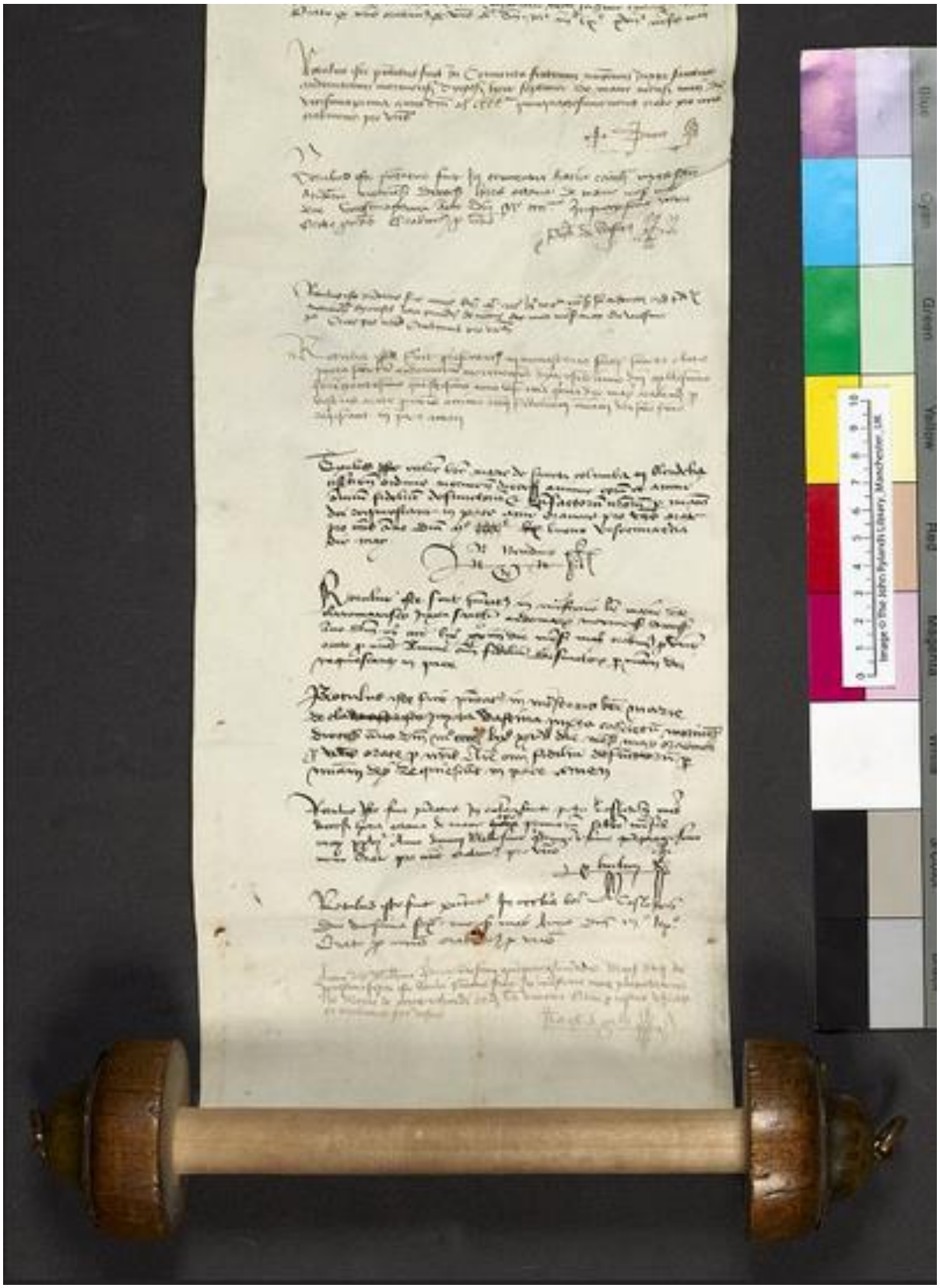


Figure 7. End of the front side of the mortuary roll. Note the differences in colour of ink and style of writing in the entries (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 026r)

There are no visible lines to help the writers position their entries; nor is there a designated space for a *titulus*. As a result, some entries are rather out of alignment or very close to another (see Figure 8).

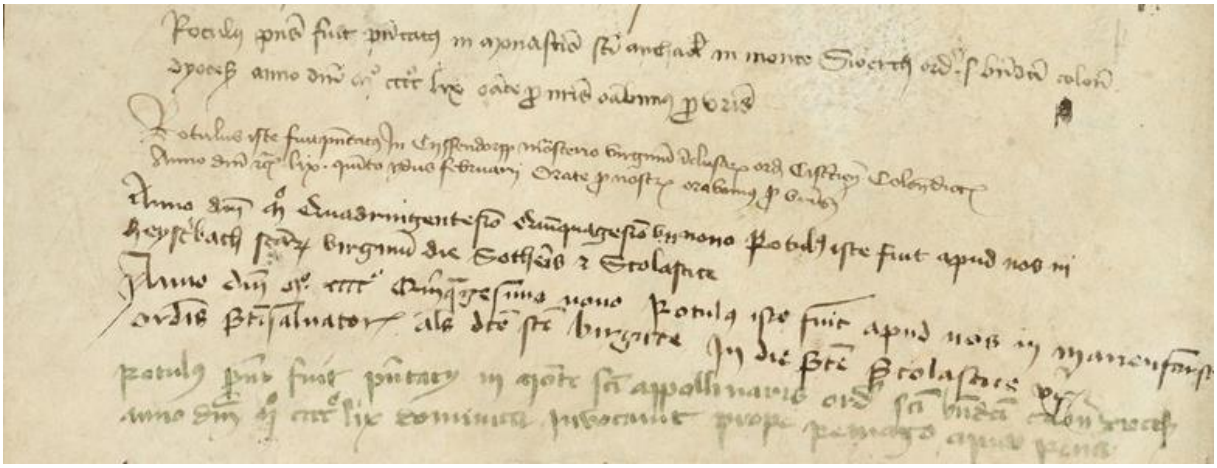


Figure 8. Examples of tituli close to another or out of alignment (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 016r)

Entry 144 is remarkable for its length and for mentioning the names of the deceased of the own community. The name of the messenger is also included in prayer (see Figure 9).

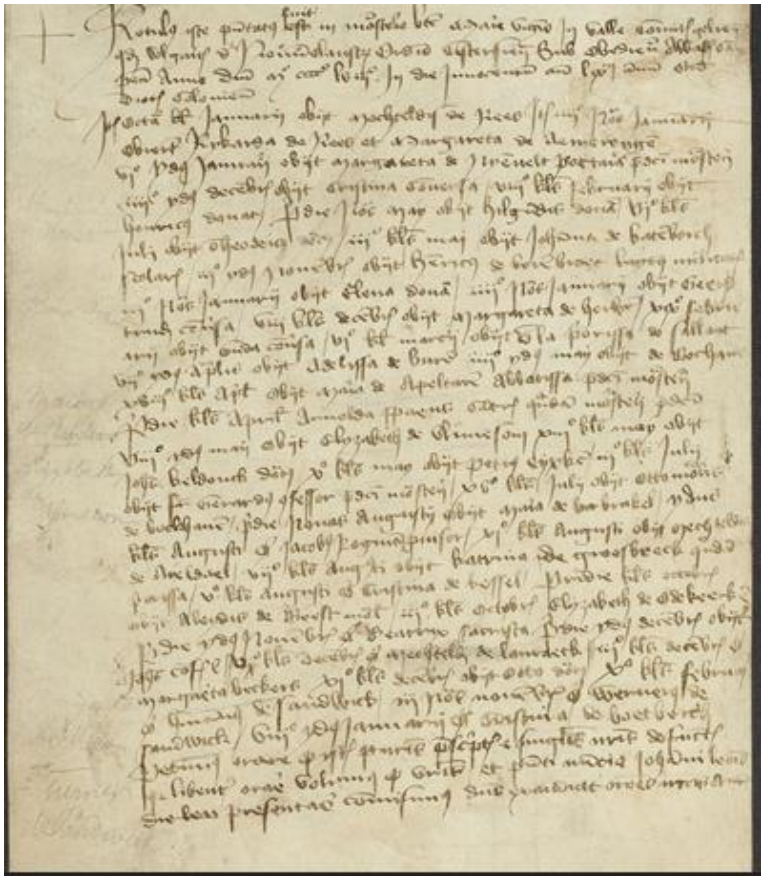


Figure 9. Example of elaborate entry: entry 144 (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 013r)

The roll contains two illuminations rimmed by a thick red frame, which ends in a circular shape on both ends (see Figure 10). According to Dufour, the quality of the two scenes is poor (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125). The upper illumination contains the four Evangelistic emblems (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 201; BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 38). Also, an interior is displayed in which the Virgin and Child, Saint Benedict and Saint Elisabeth are shown (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 201; BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 38). The lower scene shows Elisabeth in her deathbed. She is surrounded by several clerics and nuns. The two illuminations are linked to each other. The lower scene depicts the community of the Forest abbey, praying for the soul of Elisabeth, while the upper scene shows the saintly intercessors and the ultimate final place for the soul: in heaven with the saints (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 38).

Figure 10. First sheet of mortuary roll with two scenes (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 002r)

The frontispiece refers to the anniversary mass, the mass in which the abbess was commemorated and prayers were granted to the other orders (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 38). A frontispiece is the first illumination in a manuscript or book. The frontispiece did not travel with the messenger, but was produced after the initiation of the journey. It was attached to the encyclical brief and *tituli* once all religious houses were visited and just in time for the first anniversary of the death of the abbess (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 41 and 42). The mortuary roll of Elisabeth 'sConincs does not provide exact information about its purpose after all prayers have been collected. It is not clear whether the roll would be displayed in the abbey in perpetuity or whether it was kept in the abbey archives (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 20).

As Boldrick concludes:

"…the production of the roll was defined and determined by ritual" (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 42).

4.5. Journey of the mortuary roll

4.5.1. Messenger

The entries on the mortuary roll of Elisabeth 'sConincs were collected by a messenger known as Johannes Leonis (Latin: *Iohannes leonis*)**.** We know that Johannes Leonis was a layman (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 33).

Members of the Christian faith were welcomed with hospitality by the religious orders they visited (OHLER, 1989, p. 82 and 83). According to Boldrick, Johannes Leonis was a professional roll bearer and was therefore accustomed to being always on the go and dependent on the hospitality of others (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 39). He most probably did not carry all sheets of vellum during his journeys. Rather, he collected a set of *tituli* and, later, probably in the Forest abbey, the *tituli* were assembled in chronological order (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 41).

According to Boldrick, each religious house that the messenger visited was presented with an announcement of death that included a seal and the entries that were written down to that point (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 42). While it is likely that Johannes Leonis left a so-called mortuary brief after every visit as a kind of receipt, these objects do not seem to have survived (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 39; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60).

Johannes Leonis travelled quickly: he could visit up to six religious houses a day. This may imply that Leonis was treated well at the receiving institutions and that they supported him to continue

his journey (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 39). Boldrick believes that he undertook his journeys on horseback (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 19). Paquay disagrees and states that Leonis travelled on foot (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60).

4.5.2. Itinerary

The mortuary roll of abbess Elisabeth ‘sConincs travelled between September of 1458 and July of 1459 (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). Most of the entries are collected in the current provinces of Brabant, Flanders and Hainaut (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125).

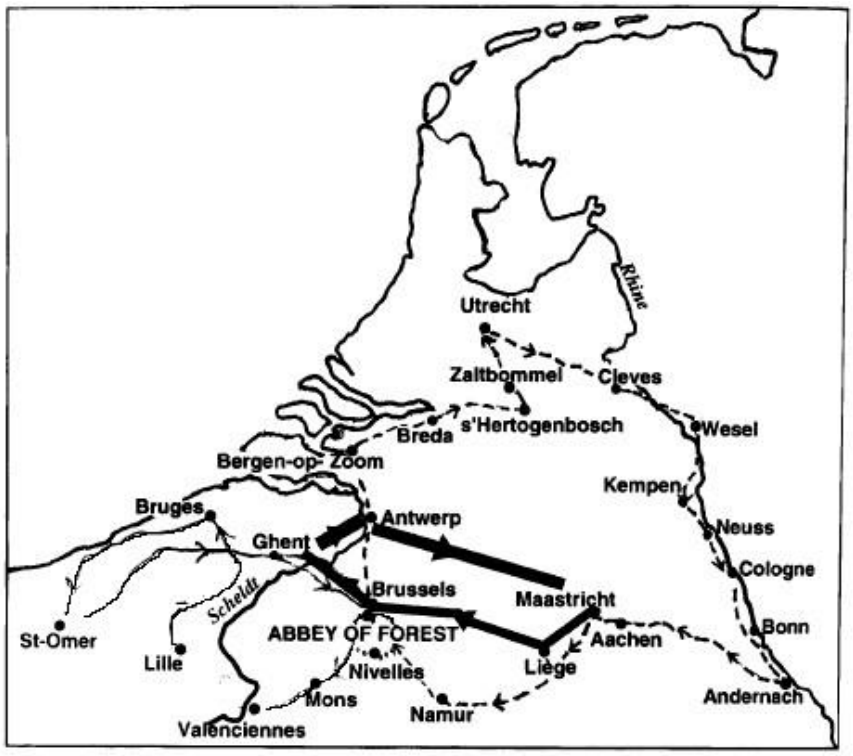
Johannes Leonis conducted four major journeys (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 210; BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 39). James, a scholar who composed a catalogue on the objects in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, has in a more elaborate way described the four journeys of Johannes Leonis (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 210). During these journeys, he visited several cities and collected nearly 400 entries (see Figure 11). His first journey led him from Brussels to Ghent, via Antwerp and Hasselt to Maastricht and Liège and back to Brussels. His second journey was the longest. On this trip, he visited religious houses in Mechelen and Bergen op Zoom, and went as far up north as ‘s-Hertogenbosch and Utrecht, after which he went to current Germany to visit Cologne, Bonn, and Aachen (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 210; BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 19). During this trip, he paid a second visit to Maastricht (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 210). Before returning to Brussels, he visited the town of Namur as well. His third trip led him to Lille, Bruges, St-Omer and Ypres, before he travelled back to Brussels; Leonis visited one religious house in Ghent during this trip. His final route took him to Nivelles, Braine and Brussels again (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 210; BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 19). On the map, it is clear that every trip started and ended in the abbey of Forest (see Figure 11).

When we look at the religious houses mentioned in the encyclical brief, it is clear that Leonis visited far more houses than the abbey had a formal relationship with (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60). Whether he composed his own itinerary or was instructed accordingly by the abbey is unclear. Most of the religious communities he visited, both male and female communities, were Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 205).

In the Low Countries, there were two main economic trading routes. The first route followed the course of the rivers Scheldt and Meuse and went from a south-to-north direction. The other route, which went from a west-to-east direction, was situated between Bruges and Cologne (SIMONS, 2001, p. 3). Most mortuary rolls of the Low Countries were transported in the area south of the rivers Meuse and Rhine (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 206).

It is clear from the chronological order of the entries that the messenger must have had a map of some kind to know which religious houses were situated in a particular town or region (BOLDRICK, 2000).

Johannes Leonis took just under a year to travel to announce the death of the abbess and to collect promised prayers. It is clear from his journey that he was not held down by any geographical borders, as he travelled as far as the Holy Roman Empire and the medieval Northern Low Countries (BOLDRICK, 2000; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 60; see also Figure 11).



1) ━━ : Brussels–Ghent–Antwerp–Maastricht–Liege–Brussels

2) ---- : Brussels–Utrecht–Cologne–Bonn–Aachen–Namur–Brussels

3) — : Brussels–Lille–Bruges–St-Omer–Ghent–Brussels

4) ····· : Brussels–Nivelles–Braine–Brussels

Figure 11. Map of the journeys conducted by messenger Johannes Leonis (BOLDRICK, 2012, Figure 2)

5. The mortuary roll's journey in the Old County of Flanders

This chapter attempts to answer the following question: *Within a specified data-set, how many and what kind of religious houses were visited in what span of time, and what does a global exploration of the entries reveal?* First, attention is given to the composed data-set. Next, a closer look is given to the entries from the cities of Ghent, Bruges and Ypres and their surroundings. This part is concerned with different religious houses and orders that the messenger visited. Finally, some examples of *tituli* in the data-set are highlighted.

5.1. Data-set

In October of 2015, I e-mailed John Hodgson, the Manuscript and Archives Manager at the John Rylands Library in Manchester, to obtain information on the work conducted on the mortuary roll, especially regarding the transcription of the entries. He replied that the library has, *"… no plans to produce transcripts or translations of all our manuscripts. This would be an absolutely* ***colossal undertaking****, given the extent of our collections*" (personal communication, 26 October 2015; my emphasis).

It is thus impossible within the scope of this thesis to study all entries. There is an inconsistency in the number of entries as counted by Boldrick and James. The latter scholar composed a catalogue of objects within the John Rylands Library. James counted a total of 383 entries, while Boldrick came to 390 (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 36). James has numbered each entry and provides some information per entry (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 202-210). To be sure about the exact number of entries and to be able to make a selection based on location, I counted and numbered the entries once again. My total count is 393 entries. To understand the practice and the impact of the use of the mortuary roll related to this particular example, I chose to make a geographical selection. To make the work feasible, a data-set of 54 entries was composed. This is 13.7 % of the total. The selection is based on the importance of the cities of Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres, and on their surroundings as negotiated with my promotor, all in the Late medieval Old County of Flanders. The data-set comprises a total of 22 entries of Ghent and its surroundings, 17 entries from Bruges and its surroundings, and of 15 entries from Ypres and its surroundings. I transcribed the 54 entries based on the photographs on the website of the library in Manchester (See Table 1 and Appendix A).

5.2. Ghent, Bruges and Ypres and their surroundings: a closer look

From the journeys described by James and Boldrick, it is clear that Johannes Leonis visited Ghent during his first and third trip, and Bruges and Ypres on his third trip.
The messenger visited most of the religious houses in Ghent in September of 1458. One religious house in Ghent, however, was visited in June of 1459. Johannes Leonis may have missed this religious house on his first trip, and decided to visit it after all. Both Bruges and Ypres and their surroundings were visited in May of 1459. Johannes Leonis was a fast traveller. He visited 5 religious houses in Ghent and its surroundings in one day (11 September of 1458). He also visited 5 religious houses in Bruges in one day (6 May of 1459). In the surroundings of Ghent, he visited 4 religious houses in one day as well (21 May of 1459). Finally, on 29 May of 1459, he visited 5 religious houses in Ypres. It is clear from the other entries, that Leonis never stayed longer than a day in each religious house (see Table 1). On days that he did not visit a religious house, he may have stayed in a tavern or inn while travelling to the next destination. Most of the religious houses in Ghent were visited during the first trip.

The itinerary creates the impression that Johannes Leonis did not always take the shortest road; presumably the messenger had to take into account the challenges of the route or the possibilities of transport: for instance crossing a river, weather conditions, the time of day or night, etc. On the other hand, he sometimes managed to visit up to four or five houses in one day, once he was within the city limits. It is noteworthy to mention that one religious house in Ghent was visited much later than the others in this region. We do not know why, but apparently it was worthwhile to make a detour to allow this visit.

The first religious house Johannes Leonis visited in Ghent was Saint Peter's abbey. This abbey is mentioned in the encyclical brief as one of the religious houses that had a relationship with the abbey of Forest. We may assume that Johannes Leonis was instructed to visit at least these religious houses mentioned in the encyclical brief. Likewise, Johannes Leonis visited the Benedictine abbey of Saint Salvator in Ename, which was also mentioned in the encyclical brief and can be seen in entry 296 (see Table 1). In Chapter 6, a closer look will be given to the relationships between different religious houses in the data-set and the abbey of Forest.

The abbey of Forest lived under the Benedictine Rule. The religious houses in the data-set were from different religious orders (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 61). Not only Benedictine orders appeared in the

entries on the mortuary roll. Other orders were visited as well, such as the Cistercian order, the Dominican order, the Augustinian order, the Franciscan order, and the order of St. Clare. Besides these orders, several chapters and churches were visited as well (see Table 1).
Most of the religious houses belongs to the Cistercian order; 8 houses were visited. Other religious orders that are frequently visited, are the Augustinian order with 6 religious houses, the Benedictine order with 5 houses, and the Dominican order with 5 houses. Only one religious house lived under the Premonstratensian Rule. This is consistent with the finding of Diemel that Benedictine and Cistercian orders were visited the most (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 205). On the other hand, the data-set shows great variety in the religious houses that were visited.

An overview of the visited religious houses, their characteristics and the dates of visit, is represented in Table 1. The table is composed using the Latin texts of the entries and additional information found in the *Monasticon Belge* (BERLIÈRE, 1960, p. 9-10; BERLIÈRE, 1988, p. 9-10). In some cases, the information is unclear; I indicate this with a question mark. All entries in the data-set were situated in the dioceses of Tournai and Thérouanne. The abbey of Forest is situated in the diocese of Cambrai (see Appendix A and Figure 12). From the 54 religious houses, 28 male communities were visited, while the messenger visited 15 female communities. For a total of 11 entries, it is either not specified what kind of community it is, or the entry is from a church or chapter.
The table makes a distinction between an abbey and a monastery. 23 abbeys, 20 monasteries, and 1 deanery were visited. The remaining religious houses are composed of 8 chapters and 2 churches. In the city of Ghent, one chapter was visited; and in the city of Bruges, two. Two churches were visited in the surroundings of Bruges, along with one chapter. Four chapters were visited in the surroundings of Ypres.

Figure 12. Map of Late medieval dioceses. Note the location of Brussels, Ghent, Ypres, and Bruges (DECAVELE, 1971, col. 1005-1085)

Entries 306-311 originally contained the term, *Johannis ante portam Latinam*. The date *Johannis ante portam Latinam* is the 6th of May. In the diocese of Tournai, this day was an official feast day (STRUBBE & VOET, 1960, p. 170).

Three of the entries in the data-set are composed using the term *ides*. This term refers to a specific day in specific months. Two entries in September contain the term *ides*: *5 ides September* and *4 ides September*. The 15th day of March, May, July, and October is the ides of these months, while the ides of the other months are on the 13th day. The number written before *ides* is to be subtracted from the date: in this case, the 13th, starting to count including the 13th. We can thus assume that *5 ides September* refers to the 9th of September, and likewise that *4 ides September* refers to the 10th of September. The last entry, number 357, contains the date, *4 ides June*, which thus refers to the 10th of June (STRUBBE & VOET, 1960, p. 27, 30).

Entry number 318 contains the date *octavo Ascensiom*, which means the eighth day after Ascension. According to Strubbe and Voet, Easter Sunday 1459 was on 25th of March. Knowing that Ascension Day is 40 days after Easter Sunday, we can assume that Ascension was celebrated on 4th of May. Eight days later, it would be the 12th of May (STRUBBE & VOET, 1960, p. 126).

Entry 314 is noteworthy. The writer of this Cistercian abbey dated the entry 17 September of 1459 (see Table 1). This is odd, given the fact that the entries before and after this visit are dated 7 and 8 May of 1459, respectively. Whether the writer was mistaken, or whether the entry was written on a blank space on the sheet in unclear. This entry is not near the end of a sheet.

Table 1 shows the entries in the data-set and gives additional information regarding the city and diocese, the name of the religious house, the type of house, the order and whether it was a male or female community. Finally, the date of the visit is specified using Roman numerals for the months. For instance, *12 IX* refers to 12 September. From entry number 18 onwards, all entries concern the year 1459. For the convenience of the reader, letter codes and symbols are used. The first two columns refer to the numbering made by James in 1921 when he composed a catalogue of the objects in the Manchester Library; the second column refers to my own numbering. It is clear that these two numberings are not similar. Appendix C contains screenshots of the entries with my numbering.

Letter Code/ Symbol	**Meaning**
*****	Surroundings
A	Abbey
AE	Augustinian Eremitics
AU	Augustinian order
B	Benedictine order
C	Chapter
CA	Order of Carmelites
CH	Church
CI	Cistercian order
CL	Order of St. Clare
CT	Carthusian order
D	Dominican order
F	Franciscan order
M	Monastery
n.a.	Not applicable
n.s.	Not specified
P	Premonstratensian order
T	Tournai (diocese)
TH	Thérouanne (diocese)
V	Order of St. Victor

James' numbering	My numbering	City	Diocese	Name of religious house	Type	Order	Male (m)/ Female (f)	Date 1458
7	**7**	Ghent	T	Saint Peter's abbey	A	B	m	9 IX
8	**8**	Ghent	T	Saint Pharaiildis or Saint Veerle Chapter	C	n.a.	n.a.	10 IX
9	**9**	Ghent	T	Saint Baafs Abbey	A	B	m	10 IX
10	**10**	Ghent*	T	Bijloke Abbey	A	CI	f	11 IX
11	**11**	Ghent	T	n.s.	M	F	m	11 IX
12	**12**	Ghent	T	n.s.	M	AE	m	11 IX
13	**13**	Ghent	T	Saint Margareta Abbey?	A	V	n.a.	11 IX
14	**14**	Ghent	T	Saint Mary Abbey	A	CA	m	11 IX
15	**15**	Ghent	T	n.s.	M	D	m	12 IX
16	**16**	Ghent*	T	Drongen abbey	A	P	m	12 IX
17	**17**	Ghent*	T	n.s.	A	CT	m	13 IX
18	**18**	Ghent*	T	n.s.	M	CL	f	13 IX

								1459
286	**295**	Ghent*	T	Maagdendale abbey	A	CI	f	22 IV
287	**296**	Ghent*	T	Saint Salvator abbey	A	B	m	22 IV
288	**297**	Ghent*	T	Doornzele abbey	A	CI	f	24 IV
289	**298**	Ghent*	T	Boudelo abbey	A	CI	m	25 IV
290	**299**	Ghent*	T	Ter Haghen abbey	A	CI	f	26 IV
291	**300**	Bruges*	T	Our Lady Chapter Church	C	n.a.	n.a.	28 IV
292	**301**	Bruges*	T	Our Lady Church	CH	n.a.	n.a.	29 IV
293	**302**	Bruges*	T	Saint Jan Church	CH	n.a.	n.a.	29 IV
294	**303**	Bruges*	T	Soetendael abbey	A	AU	m	30 IV
295	**304**	Bruges	T	Saint Donaas Chapter	C	n.a.	n.a.	2 V
296	**305**	Bruges	T	Our Lady Of Bruges Chapter	C	n.a.	n.a.	2 V
297	**306**	Bruges	T	Saint Bartholomy Eekhout abbey	A	AU	m	6 V
298	**307**	Bruges	T	n.s.	M	D	m	6 V

299	**308**	Bruges	T	n.s.	M	F	m	6 V
300	**310**	Bruges	T	n.s.	M	AE	m	6 V
301	**311**	Bruges	T	n.s.	M	CL	f	6 V
302	**312**	Bruges*	T	Genadedal abbey	A	CT	m	7 V
303	**313**	Bruges	T	Saint Trudo abbey	A	AU	f	7 V
304	**314**	Bruges	T	Our Lady Of New Jerusalem abbey	A	CI	f	17 IX
305	**315**	Bruges	T	Engelendale monastery	M	D	f	8 V
307	**317**	Bruges	T	Saint Andries abbey	A	B	m	10 V
308	**318**	Bruges*	T	Saint Anna monastery	M	CT	f	12 V
323	**334**	Ghent*	T	n.s.	M	F	m	21 V
324	**335**	Ghent*	T	n.s.	M	CT	m	21 V
325	**336**	Ghent*	T	n.s.	M	D	m	21 V
326	**337**	Ghent*	T	n.s.	M	CL	f	21 V
328	**339**	Ypres*	Th	Clairmarais monastery	M	CI	m	24 V
329	**340**	Ypres*	Th	Our Lady of Waaster Chapter?	C	n.a.	n.a.	25 V

330	**341**	Ypres*	Th	Saint Peter's chapter	C	n.a.	n.a.	26 V
331	**342**	Ypres*	Th	Our Lady chapter	C	n.a.	n.a.	26 V
332	**343**	Ypres*	Th	Our Lady Ter Nieuwe Plant abbey	A	V	f	26 V
333	**344**	Ypres*	Th	Saint Peter and Saint Vaas abbey	A	AU	m	27 V
334	**345**	Ypres*	Th	Saint Peter's chapter	C	n.a.	n.a.	27 V
335	**346**	Ypres	Th	Saint Martin's deanery	DE	AU	m	28 V
336	**347**	Ypres	Th	n.s.	M	D	m	29 V
337	**348**	Ypres	Th	n.s.	M	F	m	29 V
338	**349**	Ypres	Th	n.s.	M	CA	m	29 V
339	**350**	Ypres	Th	n.s.	M	AE	m	29 V
340	**351**	Ypres	Th	n.s.	M	CL	f	29 V
342	**353**	Ypres*	Th	Nonnebossen abbey	A	B	f	30 V
343	**354**	Ypres*	Th	Zonnebeke abbey	A	AU	m	31 V
346	**357**	Ghent*	T	Nieuwenbos abbey	A	CI	f	10 VI

Table 1. Overview of the visited religious houses within the data-set, their characteristics, and dates of visit

Almost all of the entries in the data-set are composed of the same elements: a confirmation of the arrival of the messenger, the mention of the name, the location of the visited religious house and a promised prayer. A total of 30 entries mention the exact time of arrival of the messenger by adding the liturgical hour in the *titulus* (see Appendix A and C). Entry 341 even mentions the weekday of the visit; Leonis came to this religious house on a Saturday.

The entries in the data-set show some characteristics that we have already seen in the literature on Western European mortuary rolls. While all the entries in the data-set seem to be composed of information regarding the religious house and a formula of prayer, these components can differ. For instance, only entries 314, 315 and 317 used the word *titulus* in the entry (see Figure 13). It is noteworthy that entry 295 does not include a formula for prayer. It is not clear whether the writer forgot to include this phrase, or whether the writing down of the information of the religious house was sufficient for the writer. While most of the entries in the data-set are written in Latin, entry 315 is noteworthy. This *titulus* ends with some Dutch words: *gescreven den VIIIsten dach in meye*. The rest of the *titulus* is written in Latin—even the exact arrival date of the messenger (see Figure 13).

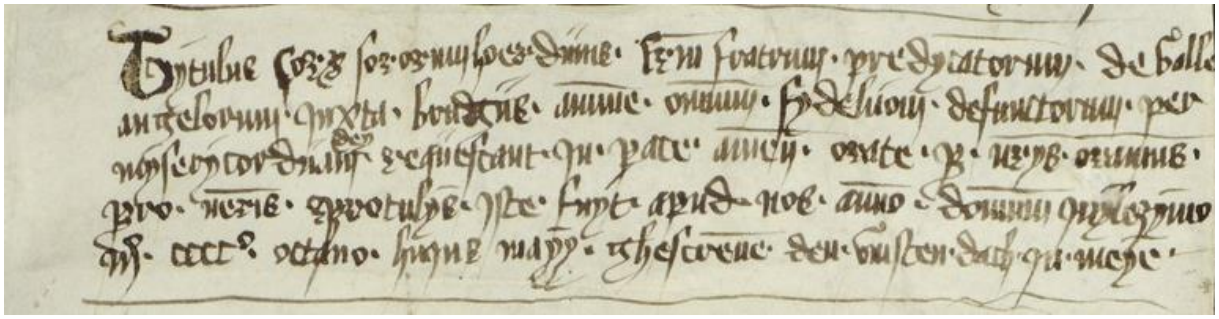


Figure 13. Example of entry which starts with the term titulus: entry 315. Note the line above and under the entry to delineate the titulus (University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 0024r)

Usually, the formula *Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris* is used (see Figure 15); variations on this theme are possible as well. Other phrases used include *Vestris nostra damus pro nostris vestra rogamus* and *Anime eorum et anime omnium fidelium et defunctorum per misericordiam dei requiescant in pace amen* (see Figures 16 and 17). While the literature on mortuary rolls states that the first phrase can be particularly found in *tituli* from medieval England, the data-set for this thesis contains several entries with this particular formula (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 9).

Whether these religious houses had relationships with English houses is unclear. It seems, however, that some religious houses copied the entries written before on the sheet, as some of the same formulas come one after the other.

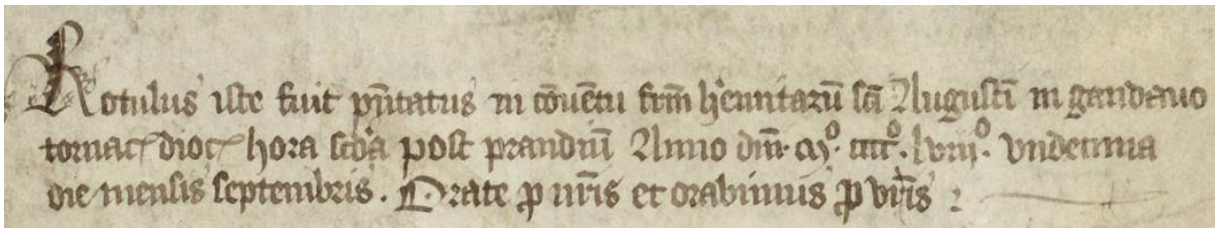


Figure 14. Example of an entry: entry number 12 (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 004r)

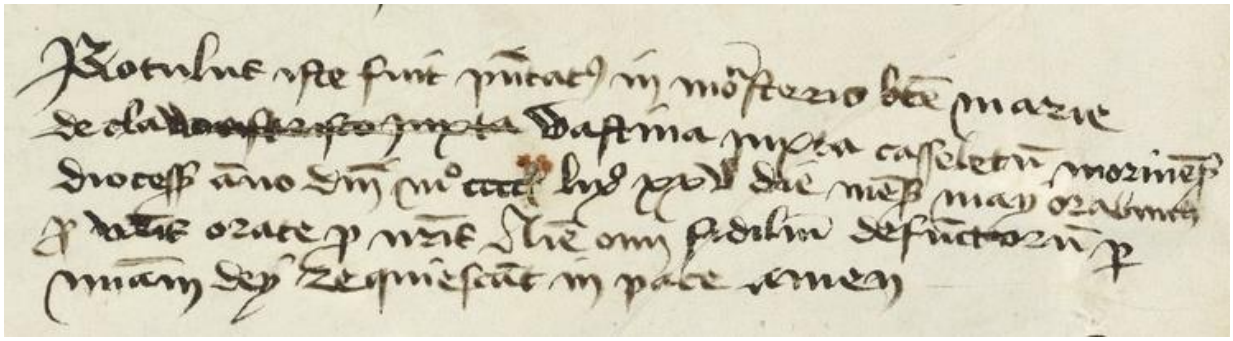


Figure 15. Example of an entry: entry number 340 (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 026r)

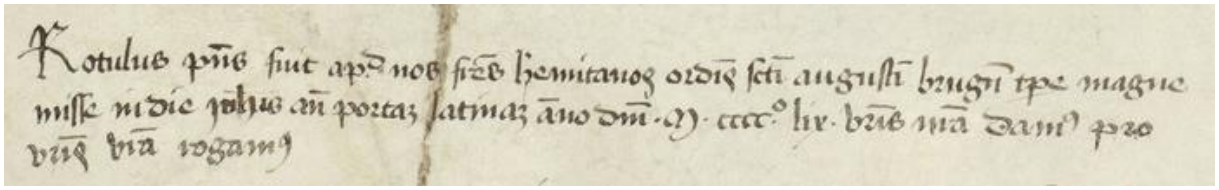


Figure 16. Example of an entry: entry number 311 (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 023r)

As we have seen in the overview of mortuary rolls, some entries seem to have been decorated by the writer with heads or other decorative elements (see Figure 14).

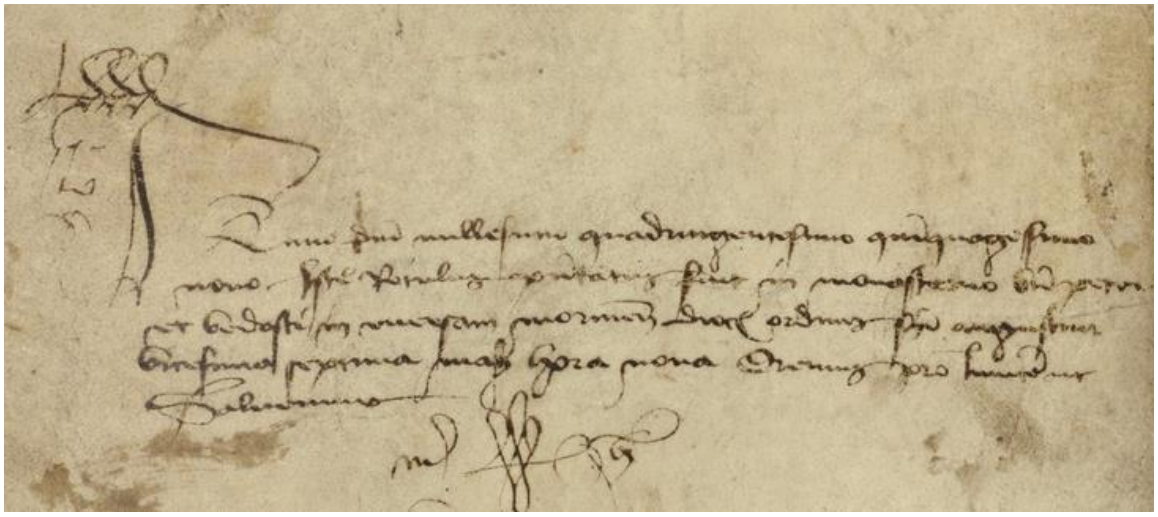


Figure 17. Detail of entry number 344. Note the human head (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 004v).

The literature on mortuary rolls states that some writers included the dead of their religious house when composing the *titulus*. The entries in the data-set do not mention any dead members. Some of the entries on the roll, however, do mention their dead (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125; see also Figure 9).

6. Functions of the mortuary roll

This chapter looks at the different functions of a mortuary roll in general and wherever possible, of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs in particular, and attempts to answer the following question: *What was the commemorative purpose of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs, how did it enhance salvation through prayer, and what does the specified data-set indicate about the relationships between the included religious houses and the abbey of Forest?*
First, celebration of the anniversary of death is placed in the context of remembrance; the significance of the images that are used is highlighted. Next, the practice of praying for salvation and especially the significance of prayer-exchange is elaborated upon. Finally, spiritual networks and relationships between different religious houses are considered, with the specified data-set as an example.

A note on the historical value of manuscripts and the critical view we must adopt towards them: mortuary rolls are products of deliberate action, aimed at interaction but are not meant to be accurate accounts. The information we can extract from documents like these is not to be taken at face-value; texts may have been written out of self-interest or with a certain idea or aim in mind (MILIS, 1992, p. 5). Commemorative documents are not necessarily evidence of the practices of the religious communities; thus, scholars need to be cautious when interpreting them (DEPLOIGE & NIP, 2015, p. 12).
Historians and other scholars are aware of the multiple functions medieval documents could have. These objects can be seen as texts, but they should also be understood in their contextual sense (DEPLOIGE & NIP, 2015, p. 8). Mortuary rolls are often considered as belonging to the category of mortuary documents, but this implies the pitfall of seeing them as merely administrative documents. They also contain narrative elements, however. Furthermore, having served as formal documents, mortuary rolls become symbolic objects in the sense that they come to represent the ideal of exchanging prayers (DEPLOIGE & NIP, 2015, p. 10, 12).

As Lowenthal states:
“…no physical object or trace is an autonomous guide to bygone times; they light up the past only when we already know they belong to it” (LOWENTHAL, 1985, p. 238).

6.1. Commemoration and remembrance

In the Late Middle Ages, death was not deemed to be the end of earthly life; rather, it was seen as a process. In the experience of medieval people, the life course entailed the liminal existence after death as well (GILCHRIST, 2012, p. 1). The notion of death in medieval community was inherently linked with Christian beliefs and ideals (BINSKI, 1996, p. 9). Death was seen as a marker between the earthly world and the realm hereafter (TELLENBACH, 1984, p. 203). The belief in an afterlife served as a means of comfort for most of the Christians (TELLENBACH, 1984, p. 211). Central to the morals of Christianity is the ability of the faithful to pray for the salvation of the souls of deceased Christians (TELLENBACH, 1984, p. 202). The faithful community would pray for the souls of all members: the deceased; the living; those whose names are mentioned in documents, such as benefactors; and the important figures of the Church (TELLENBACH, 1984, p. 202).

Rituals and objects contributed to the important rite of passage to ease the transition from this world to another (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 13-14). Ideas about a good death and accompanying rites and rituals were created and developed in medieval monasteries (BINSKI, 1996, p. 28). The rites, however, could differ from community to community (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 136). The most ideal way to die was a so-called "tame death". This term, first coined by the historian Philippe Ariès, refers to a death in which the dying person welcomes death and is prepared to make the transition from the earthly stage to the spiritual stage (BINSKI, 1996, p. 36). A person was able to die a good death when he or she was free of all sins conducted over time (BINSKI, 1996, p. 37). The development of mortuary rituals accompanied the belief in purgatory and salvation (BINSKI, 1996, p. 33). Mortuary rituals showed care for the dead, as if the deceased were still alive after passing away (BINSKI, 1996, p. 30). The idea that the dead were capable of returning to the realm of the living was widespread (BINSKI, 1996, p. 11). It was believed that the bodies of the deceased were in a state of sleeping. On judgement day, body and soul would rise again (ANGENENDT, 1984, p. 81).

6.1.1 *Memoria* and anniversary of death

Religious houses were concerned with the remembrance of their dead from the fifth century onwards. They made use of lists to record the names of the dead and of prayers that were to be conducted in their favour (PETRUCCI, 1998, p. 44). The significance of prayers is already present in funerary liturgy from the eighth century onwards (FIERO, 1984, p. 272). The ecclesiastical

community used writing to synthesize and spread the ideas of Christian funerary practices. These ideas were present in the listing of names of deceased members (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 104).

German scholars point out that medieval remembrance, such as prayers, transcends the category of rites. Particularly, German scholar Otto Gerhard Oexle studied medieval *Memoria* and states that it was a total social occurrence (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 542; DEPLOIGE & NIP, 2015, p. 2). The Latin term *Memoria* refers to commemoration and is inherently linked to the memory of both people and objects (OEXLE, 1984, p. 385). *Memoria* and the art of remembrance mean that objects that carry or mention the name of the deceased and that refer to the deceased have a mnemonic purpose (VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 12; VAN BUEREN & DE WINKEL, 2009, p. 116). It refers to the keeping alive of the memory of the dead by the living. The practice was developed in ecclesiastical communities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 123). The dead of monastic communities were almost always known by name (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 105). The remembrance of the dead, as well as the practice of intercessory prayers, are an important part of *Memoria* (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 518). The calling of names and the visual representation of the deceased are linked (OEXLE, 1984, p. 387). When the dead were addressed with their own names, they were kept alive in the minds of the religious community and remained part of it. Moreover, it was a means to commemorate the dead as persons and not as inanimate objects, separated from the living world (OEXLE, 1984, p. 385; LAUWERS, 1997, p. 106). The cult of *Memoria*, as conducted during the Middle Ages, may seem to be aimed at individual commemoration, but *Memoria* entails the memory of a community and is linked with the concept of a shared social past (OEXLE, 1984, p. 437). While *Memoria* is meant to refer to a shared past, the calling of names during masses and prayers is of course imbued with individuality (OEXLE, 1984, p. 437). In the Medieval West, communities cited names of saints, members of the community, and benefactors. The remembrance of dead members of monastic communities helped to form an identity (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 117).

The commemoration of the dead of a monastic community was an important aspect in the daily life of the members. Other events of remembrance, linked to the calling of names, were the anniversary of death and masses for the salvation of the souls (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 194). Anniversary refers to the commemoration, one year after the date of death, of either one or multiple persons, with a liturgical character. This commemoration was conducted with the aid of a list on which the names of the deceased were written down, so it had a personal character (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59; TRIO, 2011, p. 179). Commemoration of the dead was an act that brought the religious community together (WOLLASCH, 1984, p. 215). When a member of the monastic community passed away, it not only

meant a loss for the community but it strengthened the identity of the group (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 196). It meant that daily pursuits were subjected to rituals surrounding death. Most often, the deathbed became a central place of mourning an imminent death and of prayers for salvation (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 196-197). Having passed away, the burial was followed by a series of masses to commemorate the deceased person (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 197). Usually, all members of a specific order were buried within the grounds of the religious house (VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 52).

The Middle Ages are characterized by the use of rolls or scrolls for commemoration and remembrance by monastic communities and the Church (DELISLE, 1847, p. 361). One particular type of a rolled-up document is the mortuary roll. The mortuary roll, with its promised prayers, can be understood as a kind of binding object, though not legal. The text on the roll stresses that the community includes both living and deceased members (VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 13). The promised prayers had a valuable character and were deemed significant (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 43). The focal point in memorial objects is the concern for the fate of the soul in the afterlife. Like memory-scenes, mortuary rolls were displayed in a semi-public space (VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 12).

Mortuary rolls can be seen as making one's death tangible, with prayers as "currency". The encyclical brief and the entries remind the audience of a specific person, and this individual lives on in the minds of members of the monastic communities (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 13). As Boldrick states, the practice can be seen as,
"...an immaterial exchange of immaterial currencies" (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 20).

The entries that the visited religious houses were expected to write on mortuary rolls had a commemorative purpose (LESLIE, 1993, p. 116). Monasteries cared for their members: when a death occurred, they would send an announcement of this death via a mortuary roll. In this roll, a request for prayers was mentioned (BINSKI, 1996, p. 32). After all entries were collected, the mortuary roll returned to the religious house that sent it (LESLIE, 1993, p. 116). According to Petrucci, the persons to whom the mortuary rolls were dedicated were persons worthy to be remembered (PETRUCCI, 1998, p. 49-50).

In the case of the abbess of Forest, after a journey of many months, the mortuary roll of Elisabeth 'sConincs was back in the abbey, just in time for the anniversary of her death, in July of 1459. It would have been displayed on the main altar. In all probability, the mortuary roll was not entirely unrolled at this moment, with only the two images on the first sheet of the roll visible. This would

have been enough for the audience present at mass to commemorate her, as her name was mentioned that day; the roll itself thus became a symbolic object that referred to a deceased person; it thus became a true object of *Memoria*. Hearing her name, seeing it in the illuminations, and knowing that the mortuary roll is dedicated to Elisabeth ‘sConincs, helped to remind the community of the abbess and to keep her present in the community. The nuns would be aware that they are part of the community of Benedictines, which consists of the living and the dead members. Besides the mortuary roll, there were possibly other objects of *Memoria*. The grave of Elisabeth could have reminded the nuns of the Benedictine abbey of the fate of the abbess and of the community they were all part of. The seal of Elisabeth, issued in 1437, might have had a commemorative purpose as well, as an image of an abbess was displayed (see also Figure 2). In the presence of the mortuary roll, the community was reminded of the promised prayers on the roll by which abbess Elisabeth ‘sConincs was to be remembered. The nuns knew that the size and content of it reflected all the entries that were collected during the year-long journey. The commemoration took place not only within the abbey of Forest, but by others outside the community as well, on this day of her first anniversary and many more to come. It is likely that her name was included in necrologies of the visited religious houses (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 61). Her mortuary roll contains nearly 400 entries; the religious houses that wrote their *tituli* on the roll promised to pray for her salvation each year on the anniversary of her death. This way the abbess would not be forgotten. It was important that as many entries as possible were collected, in order to secure the transition of Elisabeth to the afterlife by keeping her name alive and by accompanying her with as many prayers as possible.

6.1.2. Significance of images as symbols

The images on a mortuary roll are important as symbols of its content and function. Images and illustrations were produced in monastic environments to serve a commemorative purpose and as means of devotion (APPLEBY, 2002, p. 85). Visual objects, like images in manuscripts and other medieval documents, were easier to remember than spoken prayers and sermons, while they often aimed at the same goal (RIVERS, 2010, p. 187). Oexle poses the term *Memorialbild* (commemorative image) for the commemoration of the deceased. While other types of images may create an ideal image of the deceased, commemorative images have a different purpose. This type of image creates a social context in which the deceased is represented as part of the community (OEXLE, 1984, p. 388).

Most mortuary rolls had a large illustration of the first sheet (see for instance Figure 10). These illustrations could either be composed of so-called deathbed scenes or of a grouping of saints (BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 14). The art used on the mortuary roll was in all probability conventional. Deathbed scenes, as well as the grouping of saints, were common in the art of the Late Middle Ages (HOWARTH & LEAMAN, 2003, p. 144-147; BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 14). These conventional images may also have helped the nuns in the community who could not read. In this way, the nuns were visually engaged in the commemoration of the abbess. Late medieval manuscripts contain several images that often deal with death and burial (FIERO, 1984, p. 271). We see an uprising in restoring ceremonies and practices associated with death and burial in the fifteenth century, after the disrupture of the Black Death (FIERO, 1984, p. 276). Deathbed scenes are not an uncommon feature of mortuary rolls (HOWARTH & LEAMAN, 2003, p. 144-147; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 204; BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 14).

Memory, in the sense of *Memoria*, refers to the ability to look at an object and associate it with the memory attached to it. Objects that bring about these associations are either logical or their meaning was attached through repetition (CARRUTHERS, 2008, p. 23). Objects related to the commemoration of a deceased person were in all probability placed on an altar during the commemorative services (TRIO, 2011, p. 179). Other commemorative objects, such as *Libri Vitae*, or Books of Life, were displayed on an altar; this may have been the case for the roll as well (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 42).

Appleby refers to both the personal memory in itself and its social function of belonging to a community:
"Commemoration might take the form of mere remembrance…. Or it could go beyond mnemonics to something with a deeper spiritual resonance" (APPLEBY, 2002, p. 101).

The mortuary roll of Elisabeth 'sConincs opens with a sheet on which two scenes are depicted (see also Figure 10). The two scenes refer to Elisabeth 'sConincs and her profession as an abbess (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125). As explained earlier, the sheet with the illuminations did not travel along with the sheets with the encyclical brief and the entries. Instead, it was produced in the abbey and attached to the parchments on the carrier once all entries were collected. Because of this later addition, it is most probable that it had a function for the own community and that the mortuary roll was displayed in the abbey on the main altar, whether permanently or temporary, showing this image. Moreover, the size of the image seems to be intended for the whole community of nuns instead of for a single person. It is imaginable that the first scene was displayed permanently, as it

refers to the community (see Figure 18). While the upper scene refers to the devotional life of Elisabeth ‘sConincs, the second scene refers to her death; possibly this scene was displayed only on her anniversary of death. The fact that the illuminations were attached to the roll and not displayed on their own, implies that they meant something in relation to the object. As the sheet with the illuminations shows signs of wear, such as cracks, it is possible that it was rolled up and unrolled again within the abbey on certain occasions. On the other hand, the wear could also have occurred in the time the mortuary roll spent outside the abbey, in the hands of antiquarians, collectors and librarians.

Figure 18. First sheet of the mortuary roll, which was attached to a leather end. Below, the sheets rolled up on the wooden carrier (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 001r)

Figure 19. Detail of first sheet of the mortuary roll, upper level scene (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 001r)

The scene of the upper level of the first sheet of the mortuary roll depicts four figures (see Figure 19). The nimbuses above their heads, decorated with gold foil, reveal that these figures are saints. This type of scene is already present in early devotional art in the West. In the later Middle Ages, this grouping of saints was often displayed on altarpieces (HALL, 1992, p. 222). On the far left, Saint Benedict, the patron of the Benedictine order, is depicted in his black habit. In his hands, he holds a book, in all probability his Benedictine Rule. He also holds a staff, one of his attributes (HALL, 1992, p. 40). On the far right, Saint Elisabeth is depicted. She, too, holds a book under her arm. In the middle we see the Virgin Mary, to whom the abbey was dedicated, holding the Child. Underneath these figures, the Latin names of the saints are written down. The background of the scene shows the interior of a tripartite church. The vaulting is painted in red ink, while the canopy and beeches are painted in white ink. The entire scene is framed with a thick red line. The quality of the illumination has deteriorated over the course of time: the parchment is cracked and parts of the ink are faded. The presence of Saint Elisabeth is an indication that this mortuary roll was dedicated to Elisabeth ‘sConincs. According to Dufour, the two scenes that are depicted on the first

sheet of the mortuary roll are re-used (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 124). If this were true, the female saint on the right is either transformed to be Saint Elisabeth, or the illumination was meant for someone else. In my opinion, the illuminations are especially made for Elisabeth's mortuary roll. The female figure on the right shows some resemblance with the figure depicted on the seal of Elisabeth 'sConincs (see also Figure 2).

Figure 20. Detail of the first sheet of the mortuary roll, lower level scene (The University of Manchester Library Image Collections, 001 r)

The second scene of the first sheet of the mortuary roll is a so-called deathbed scene (HOWARTH & LEAMAN, 2003, p. 144-147; see Figure 20).

The image of a deathbed can be seen as a sign of a death and a reminder of the community's duty to commemorate it (CARRUTHERS, 2008, p. 29). It is noteworthy that deathbed scenes of Saint Benedict and the Virgin Mary are known as well (HALL, 1992, p. 86-87, 324). Elisabeth 'sConincs

is depicted as a dying woman in her bed. She is surrounded by sisters of the Forest abbey (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 42). One of the nuns is holding a book; the nuns are probably praying for the salvation of the soul of the abbess. Another nun is holding a staff topped with a golden cross. At both ends of the bed, priests are conducting the last rites to secure a smooth transition to the afterlife. One of the priests is holding a staff. Several objects used in the mortuary rituals are depicted as well, such as a holy water-bucket, an incense-ship, and a monstrance. This scene has also been damaged over the course of time: there are several cracks in the parchment.

6.2. Prayers and afterlife

Monasteries were pre-eminently places where the ideals of medieval Christian death and the rites and rituals surrounding it were formed (BINSKI, 1996, p. 28). The most important task of the monastic community was to pray for its members (LAWRENCE, 1989, p. 32, 113). It was in monastic environments that the act of praying developed (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 104). Praying for the dead was common practice in the medieval Christian Church. Through the use of prayers, the living community played an important role in the salvation of the dead (BINSKI, 1996, p. 22-23). In monasteries, masses for the salvation of the souls of the deceased were aimed at deceased members of the community and at those still alive (FIERO, 1984, p. 272; PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59; RIVERS, 2010, p. 197). The practice of prayers had significance and value in the Middle Ages. Praying was believed to smoothen and hasten the transition from purgatory to the afterlife (BINSKI, 1996, p. 25; LAUWERS, 1997, p. 385). People felt responsible to pray for those in purgatory, as they felt connected with the dead (LYNCH, 1992, p. 267-268). Prayers for salvation, as well as masses and tangible objects, would often be commissioned by a person during life (LYNCH, 1992, p. 268; BINSKI, 1996, p. 25; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 200; BOLDRICK, 2012, p. 14).

The belief in purgatory first developed in the eleventh century and was firmly established in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It refers to a liminal place where souls not free of sins had to do penance before they could progress into the afterlife towards heaven or hell. The time spent in purgatory could be shortened by intercessory prayers from the living. It was therefore important to have the living community pray for one's soul (BINSKI, 1996, p. 33). The focal point of the act of praying is the aiding purpose: people tend to pray for the sake of themselves and of that of other Christians. In light of the impending judgement day, people want to do all that they can whilst still living (TELLENBACH, 1984, p. 203, 205).

6.2.1. Salvation of the soul

Salvation refers to the salvation of souls through the aid of intercessory prayers (VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 25). The living community could intervene in the fate of the souls of the deceased by praying for them (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 7; TELLENBACH, 1984, p. 202; BINSKI, 1996, p. 22-23, 33; VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 25). One the most important duties of medieval monasteries was the act of praying. From early medieval times onwards, the most efficient way to do penance was through prayer (ANGENENDT, 1984, p. 138).

The existence of an organized ecclesiastical system of writing practices aided the ability of the Church to foster relationships between the living and the dead (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 105). Several written documents could play a role in naming and remembering the deceased: diptychs, necrologies, association letters, obituaries, and mortuary rolls (DELISLE, 1847, p. 361). According to Lemaître, medieval people used a calendar on which they wrote the names of the deceased to be commemorated on the anniversary of their death; they called this calendar *Regula*, *Martyrologium* or *Liber*. Lemaître challenges the way mortuary documents are defined by earlier scholars such as Huyghebaert. He proposes to use the term "necrology" for documents in which the names of deceased members of the wider community are written on the known day of their death; this includes members of other religious houses with whom a prayer-exchange existed (LEMAÎTRE, 1985, p. 11). All deceased persons were added to a necrology, so the number of souls to be saved became larger with each death (LAWRENCE, 1989, p. 99-100). Mortuary rolls were in essence objects with a similar function as necrologies, although the names were not written down in a book but in an encyclical brief. For some members of religious communities, a rolled-up mortuary document was created (SIGNORI, 2014, p. 5). Usually, the citing of names from long lists was accompanied by prayers for the souls of the deceased. Most of the members of the monastic community were commemorated collectively, instead of individually (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 106). Praying for the dead served multiple purposes: it was a means of commemorating deceased members and a way to keep the memory of the community as a whole alive (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 121). The living and the dead formed one cohesive whole. Their relationship with each other was formed and fostered by prayers (LYNCH, 1992, p. 268).

6.2.2. Prayer in monastic communities: prayer-exchange

After the death of an abbot, abbess or bishop, the religious community would conduct multiple masses and say prayers (TELLENBACH, 1984, p. 211). The burial was not the only occasion for prayer to be said in honour of the deceased. Several other masses and prayer services were dedicated to the deceased, and by extent to all souls of a community, and were meant to guide the soul to the afterlife. Services dedicated to a specific person declined as time went on (VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 60). When the service was dedicated to a single person, such as an abbess, the name of the deceased was stressed (VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 59).

In medieval times, it was common to pray for the souls of the deceased on set days (ANGENENDT, 1984, p. 171; LAUWERS, 1997, p. 137). Often, monasteries and other religious houses retained special days on which the commemoration of all deceased members of the community was stressed (ANGENENDT, 1984, p. 179). Three or four times a year, on set dates, there was a general commemoration (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 323). There were annual days on which the dead were commemorated, such as the anniversary of death and All Souls (VAN BUEREN, 1999, p. 59). When a member of a monastic community died, the other members organized masses on the seventh and thirtieth day after one's death, as well as an anniversary of death (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 123, 137). There may have been a distinction between a *tricenarium* (thirty masses during thirty days), usually for abbots, and a *septenarium* (seven days of masses and prayers), usually for monks and nuns. How the prayers were conducted exactly—whether ringing of bells or reciting of psalms was involved, for example—is generally unknown (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 323).

But prayers would be said not only in the abbey of the deceased. By sending a mortuary roll, the community announces the death of a beloved member and requests other religious houses to pray for the deceased person as well. At the same time, they ensure that their prayers will be returned. The same reciprocity is true for the promise of the visited religious houses. To a certain extent, mortuary rolls can be seen as a category of epitaphs in which a deceased person is mentioned to be remembered. In this light, entries on a mortuary roll and epitaphs have a similar function, but only the mortuary rolls contain evidence of prayer-exchange: the assurance that when the receiving religious houses pray for the souls of the sending house, this favour will be returned (BEYER, 2014, p. 32). According to Signori:

"Reciprocity dominates the medieval commemoration of the dead" (SIGNORI, 2014, p. 5).

Almost all entries in the data-set taken out of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs contain a formulaic type of prayer. These formulas have a reciprocal nature and are imbued with expectation. The receiving religious houses write down their *tituli* and answer the request of the sending house to pray for the fate of Elisabeth ‘sConincs. The most common formula states that the religious houses will pray not only for Elisabeth but for all of the deceased of the Forest abbey. Likewise, as stated in the encyclical brief, the abbey of Forest will pray for all the deceased of the religious houses that are to respond. Some religious houses opted to include the names of their deceased in the *tituli* (see for example Figure 9), which meant that these were remembered by their names as well; however, this is not the case in the specified data-set.

We do not know why Elisabeth ‘sConincs had a mortuary roll dedicated to her. It may have had to do with the fact that she played a role in the development of the abbey buildings. For instance, we have already seen that, under her supervision, the construction of the abbey church was finished in 1435 (DESPY-MEYER, 1964, p. 205; BROUETTE, 1971, col. 1032-1034; DUFOUR, 2009, p. 125). It seems as though Elisabeth was appreciated for her work and was deemed a good abbess. This might also explain why the mortuary roll contains a large amount of *tituli*.
The 393 entries on the mortuary roll and the accompanying prayers undoubtedly contributed to save the soul of Elisabeth. But the prayer-exchange that was stimulated by the practice of the mortuary roll not only enhanced her chances of reaching heaven; it meant that members of 393 religious houses were, in their turn, remembered and prayed for by the community of the abbey of Forest.

6.3. Relationships and networks

Medieval religious orders were connected to each other in various ways. Of course, there were ties between orders that followed the same rule, like the Benedictines, or between houses that shared a common past, like the Affligem abbey and the abbey of Forest. Sometimes, ties between religious communities had a more formal character and houses became associated in (spiritual) networks. It may be assumed that the ten religious houses mentioned in Elisabeth ‘sConincs’ encyclical brief as places to be visited with her mortuary roll were formally associated houses. It is unclear what kind of relationship existed with the many other religious houses that were visited by the messenger. The mortuary roll gives us some insight but cannot be viewed as a conclusive indication, as the reasons for the messenger to visit them may have been dependent on coincidence.

As Lowenthal states:

"Memory, history, and relics continually furbish our awareness of the past. But how can we be sure that they reflect what has happened?" (LOWENTHAL, 1985, p. 187).

6.3.1. Religious houses present in the data-set

The term religious house in this thesis, and with regard to the places where the *tituli* were collected, refers mainly to a religious community, or in some cases, to a church or chapter. A religious community belongs to a specific order. Orders live in accord with various rules according to their founder. The core business of religious orders was to remember both individuals and groups. The first monastic communities in the Low Countries can be dated back to the seventh century, a period in which Christianity was not as widespread as some centuries later (DE GRIECK, 2001, p. 297). Religious institutions were concerned with all members, whether dead or alive (DEPLOIGE & NIP, 2009, p. 9; VANDERPUTTEN, 2009, p. 17). They were concerned with the individuality and spirituality of their members (DEPLOIGE & NIP, 2009, p. 9). Religious orders applied commemorative practices to foster the shared identity of their communities and to display their legitimacy (PAQUAY, 2007, p. 59; DEPLOIGE & NIP, 2009, p. 9; VANDERPUTTEN, 2009, p. 17).

The abbey of Forest followed the Benedictine Rule. Saint Benedict composed a set of rules which many monks followed (LAWRENCE, 1989, p. 19). The Rule of Saint Benedict was one of the oldest and most common ways of life within the early medieval monasteries (KUYS, 2004, p. 248). The Rule came to be within a cenobitical setting, one in which an ascetic lifestyle was aspired (LAWRENCE, 1989, p. 23; GOLDING, 1998, p. 521). Saint Benedict's ideal cenobitic community emphasized the community living together in one place, under the leadership of an abbot (LAWRENCE, 1989, p. 26). The order aspired a religious lifestyle that was as close to the Biblical life as possible (BINSKI, 1996, p. 27-28). Prayer and work were central elements (SMITZ, 1934, col. 1217-1223). A key aspect of the Benedictine Rule was hospitality. It was believed that all guests should be treated with the uttermost respect, as though it was Christ himself who visited the community (LAWRENCE, 1989, p. 27; LYNCH, 1992, p. 210). The Benedictine Rule made an attempt to maintain the Latin culture and language (BINSKI, 1996, p. 27-28). Most often, the members of the Benedictine order were of noble origin (SMITZ, 1934, col. 1217-1223). When monastic communities followed the Benedictine Rule, it was evident they had this rule as its core. Local traditions, however, were adopted at several religious houses (DE GRIECK, 2010, p. 68). Few monasteries could live according to the strict Benedictine Rule, so they opted for a loose

interpretation of it (DE GRIECK, 2001, p. 302). Due to reduced compliance to the Benedictine Rule, derivative orders were established, as in the Cistercian order (KUYS, 2004, p. 249). This happened from the late seventh and eighth centuries onwards (GOLDING, 1998, p. 521). Female Benedictine monasteries were present in the Low Countries from the second half of the eleventh century onwards. In the diocese of Cambrai, for instance, the abbey of Forest was a female monastery (DE GRIECK, 2001, p. 315). The female members of the Benedictine order were responsible for many societal activities, such as charity, education, writing and arts (SMITZ, 1934, col. 1231-1233). While they had a central role in the Central Middle Ages, the Benedictines moved to the background in the Late Middle Ages, (DE GRIECK, 2010, p. 10). After the middle of the twelfth century, no new Benedictine monasteries were established in the Southern Low Countries. Instead, monasteries established after this date belonged to other orders, such as the Cistercians and the Dominicans (DE GRIECK, 2001, p. 63).

For the specified data-set amongst the entries on the mortuary roll of abbess Elisabeth ‘sConincs, the cities of Ghent, Bruges and Ypres and their surroundings were chosen, representing 54 entries. In these three urban regions, a variety of religious orders was present. Ghent, Bruges and Ypres formed the heart of the historic county of Flanders, an affluent region. The practice of sending mortuary rolls was common amongst the Benedictines. But the mortuary roll did not visit only Benedictine communities. The entries in the data-set came from eleven different religious orders. This does not mean that there were no other religious orders present at the time in these regions. Sometimes, several houses that belonged to the same religious order were visited in one region or city. We can assume that it was considered necessary to inform and include each specific religious house. Most of the religious houses visited in the three regions of the data-set belonged to the Cistercian and Augustinian orders. Other common religious houses visited were from the Benedictine, Dominican and the Franciscan orders (see Table 1 and 2). Two religious houses under the Rule of Saint Victor, followers of the Augustinian Rule, were visited, one in Ghent and one in Ypres. Overall, both male and female houses were visited. Only one female Benedictine abbey was visited, while the other four Benedictines were male communities. The same holds true for the Augustinian, Dominican, and Carmelite orders: all but one of the houses visited belonged to male communities.

When we look at the religious orders per region in the data-set, ten different orders are present in Ghent, eight in Bruges, and nine in Ypres. Of the eleven orders in the data-set, ten occur in Ghent; only the Augustinian order is not represented there. Six Cistercian houses were visited in Ghent, as well as three Benedictine houses. In Bruges and Ypres, on the contrary, only one Benedictine house

was visited; and in each of both regions, three Augustinian houses were visited. Apart from the Augustinians, all orders present in the Ypres region were visited only once. Of course, we do not know whether all houses that belonged to a specific order in a region were visited.

As said before, both male and female communities were visited. In Ghent, all three Benedictine houses visited were male, whereas five out of six Cistercian houses were female communities. Of all the five Benedictine houses visited, only one, in the Ypres region, was a female community.

As mentioned before, the region of Ghent comprised a total of 22 visited religious houses: the region of Bruges counts 17 religious houses, and the region of Ypres 15 religious houses. In all three regions, several chapters and churches were visited as well (see Table 1). Of the total of 54 entries, 44 religious houses belonged to an order; the rest were chapters and churches. It is unknown whether this proportion is representative for the mortuary roll as a whole. As opposed to regular clergy, who live in monasteries or abbeys under the rule of an order, secular clergy live "in the world": that is, they are linked to a church or cathedral chapter and have made no vows (BOUDINHON, 1912). We may assume that there were no formal associations between the abbey of Forest and the secular clergy. We do not know the exact reason why the messenger visited them to collect an entry. Informal reasons may have played a role, whether based on personal relationships or practical circumstances of the journey.

The different religious orders are counted and listed in Table 2. The letter codes and symbols correspond with those used for Table 1, where more information can be found.

List per order	Order	Male (m) or female (f)	Name of religious house	Region	Entry number
1	AE	m	n.s.	Ghent	12
2	AE	m	n.s.	Bruges	310
3	AE	m	n.s.	Ypres	350
1	AU	m	Soetendael abbey	Bruges*	303
2	AU	m	Saint Bartholomy Eekhout abbey	Bruges	306
3	AU	f	Saint Trudo abbey	Bruges	313
4	AU	m	Saint Peter and Saint Vaas abbey	Ypres*	344
5	AU	m	Saint Martin's abbey	Ypres	346
6	AU	m	Zonnebeke abbey	Ypres*	354
1	B	m	Saint Peter's abbey	Ghent	7
2	B	m	Saint Baafs abbey	Ghent	9
3	B	m	Saint Salvator abbey	Ghent*	296
4	B	m	Saint Andries abbey	Bruges	317
5	B	f	Nonnenbossen abbey	Ypres*	353

1	CA	m	Saint Mary abbey	Ghent	14
2	CA	m	n.s.	Ypres	349
1	CI	f	Bijloke abbey	Ghent*	10
2	CI	f	Maagdendale abbey	Ghent*	295
3	CI	f	Doornzele abbey	Ghent*	297
4	CI	m	Boudelo abbey	Ghent*	298
5	CI	f	Ter Haghen abbey	Ghent*	299
6	CI	f	Our Lady Of New Jerusalem abbey	Bruges	314
7	CI	m	Clairmarais monastery	Ypres*	339
8	CI	f	Nieuwebos abbey	Ghent*	357
1	CL	f	n.s.	Ghent*	18
2	CL	f	n.s.	Bruges	311
3	CL	f	n.s.	Ghent*	337
4	CL	f	n.s.	Ypres	351
1	CT	m	n.s.	Ghent*	17
2	CT	m	Genadedal abbey	Bruges*	312
3	CT	f	Saint Anna abbey	Bruges*	318
4	CT	m	n.s.	Ghent*	335

1	D	m	n.s.	Ghent	15
2	D	m	n.s.	Bruges	307
3	D	f	Engelendale monastery	Bruges	315
4	D	m	n.s.	Ghent*	336
5	D	m	n.s.	Ypres	347
1	F	m	n.s.	Ghent	11
2	F	m	n.s.	Bruges	308
3	F	m	n.s.	Ghent*	334
4	F	m	n.s.	Ypres	348
1	P	m	Drongen abbey	Ghent*	16
1	V	n.s.	Saint Margareta abbey?	Ghent	13
2	V	f	Our Lady Ter Nieuwe Plant abbey	Ypres*	343

Table 2. Number of religious houses per religious order

6.3.2. Spiritual networks

The relationships between different religious houses were numerous (WYBRANDS, 1880, p. 309). Some had formal aspects, while others were merely spiritual. Spiritual reasons were the fundament of confraternities (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 333). Faced with Norman and other invasions, bishops who attended the Savonnières Council in 859 decided that spiritual communities would pray for each other (DUFOUR, 2009, p. 6). The ultimate goal of each confraternity is to ensure prayers for the associated deceased (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 327; LAUWERS, 1997, p. 134; GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 301, 322). The commitment to pray for the dead of other religious communities was not only conducted between communities of the same order, but could compose several religious orders (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 203). The commemoration of the deceased in a spiritual confraternity promised to pray for the dead of other religious houses. These spiritual bonds sometimes had a legal outlook (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 140). The database of Medieval Memoria Online (MeMo) provides a glossary for terms that are used throughout medieval times. The term mortuary roll is included in the glossary:
"Lists of names of the deceased, wound around a stick, which were distributed among the connected institutions" (MEMO ONLINE, GLOSSARY, p. 4). This definition implies that all religious houses included in a certain mortuary roll, are associated in some way.

Already from the eighth century onwards, monastic communities would associate themselves with each other to ensure that the dead were cared for (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 202). These agreements entailed not only the announcements of each death, but also the practice of praying and conducting masses for the souls of the associated monasteries (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 134; DIEMEL, 2011, p. 202-203). Particularly from the ninth century on, there were association letters between entire communities of all orders. Members of different religious communities declared they would treat each other like brothers and sisters and pray for each other (DELISLE, 1847, p. 365-369; WOLLASCH, 1984, p. 218). Later, particularly from the thirteenth century on, more mutual tasks were agreed upon, like welcoming each other's members and, in the case of neighbouring communities, settling disagreements and attending funerals (DELISLE, 1847, p. 365-369). Good relations and the wish to maintain and foster them without interference from the diocese or the bishop were also of importance (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 334). By the fifteenth century, there was a tendency to go back to a more simple and spiritual association. What was common all this time, was that the main reason for association was to ensure that the deceased were accompanied by prayers on their way to the afterlife. This was done on the occasion of the passing away of a member, at several other moments

in the weeks and months after their funeral, and on the anniversary of death. It was expected that the deceased of the associated religious houses would be entitled to the same prayers as the members of the religious community itself. Inscription in the necrology was fundamental to this; hence the need to make known to the associated communities that someone had passed away. This was an important function of the mortuary roll (DELISLE, 1847, p. 365-369; GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 308).

It was the responsibility of the monastery to announce all deaths to other religious houses that were in some way connected (DIEMEL, 2011, p. 199). This explains the use of encyclical briefs and of mortuary rolls (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 26). A messenger was given a list of associated religious houses—often mentioned in the encyclical brief—and sometimes a travelling route. He also had the possibility to take the initiative to visit other houses on his way, if they were willing to grant him hospitality. The associated houses on the list were asked to receive the messenger cordially (HUYGHEBAERT, 1972, p. 26).

The practice of sending an encyclical brief to other religious houses was also an opportunity to develop new relationships between monastic communities. It did not matter whether these religious houses were in proximity to each other (LAUWERS, 1997, p. 135). The practice of prayer-exchange was the core business of the monastic communities engaged in relationships with one another. Signori states, however, that the promised prayers mentioned on the mortuary rolls were by no means meant to last into perpetuity and were not obligatory (SIGNORI, 2004, p. 528). The presence of entries of certain religious houses on mortuary rolls may give an indication of the relationships they had with the sending religious house. It is useful to bear in mind the warning of Snijders not to take these indications at face-value for the existing of formal networks (SNIJDERS, 2009, p. 271). On the other hand, formal networks do not always entail a close spiritual bond, as the example of the abbey of Marchiennes shows (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 301-354). The abbey of Marchiennes was engaged in confraternities with several other religious houses, mainly with other Benedictine orders (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 301). The abbey of Forest is mentioned with a presumable date of association of 1239 (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 313). No names of members of the religious community of Forest, however, were entered in the necrologies of Marchiennes. The same is true for the abbey of Ename (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 307). In general, we can assume that the inscription of an abbot of the associated religious house in the necrology of Marchiennes is an indication of the intensity of the bond between the two houses (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 308).

When we look at the case of Elisabeth ‘sConincs, it is clear that female monasteries could engage in relationships with both female and male religious houses of different religious orders (see also Table 1 and 2).

The encyclical brief dedicated to Elisabeth ‘sConincs mentions ten religious houses that had a formal association with the abbey of Forest. All of them belonged to the Benedictine order. The sequence of religious houses in the encyclical brief refers to the significance and importance of the religious house to the sending abbey (BOLDRICK, 2000, p. 40). The abbey of Saint Marie in Groot-Bijgaarden and the abbey of Saint Laurence in Liège were in a confraternity with the Forest abbey. These religious houses were indeed visited by the messenger. The religious house of Groot-Bijgaarden was one of the first to be visited. The religious house in Liège was the eleventh house visited when Johannes Leonis came to Liège.

Besides these two religious houses, the encyclical brief mentions eight other religious houses. Based on the preliminary listing of the entries by James, it is clear that Johannes Leonis visited all these religious houses, except for St. Pantaleonis in Cologne. The religious house he visited first on the list of eight houses was the abbey in Affligem. This is not surprising, as the abbey of Forest was a daughter house of Affligem. The messenger did not follow the list in its sequence; while the religious house in Ghent is the third in line, he visited the house in Ghent before he travelled to Ename, which is the second on the list. Sometimes it is difficult to know the location of a religious house, as different names are used. The encyclical brief lists Zibbert, for instance, as the name of the place where a community is established. Presumably, the religious house meant here is the monastery of St Michaels Mountain in Siberch, as the writer of the *titulus* spelled it; this is current German Siegburg (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 206, entry 206).

It seems that practical circumstances also influenced the journey and not only the importance of the association with that particular religious house. That the mortuary roll has 393 entries may be explained by the fact that the messenger had instructions to visit at least these ten houses. Some of these houses more or less mark the borders of his journey to the eastern and the southern part; this is the case for Saint-Omer, Mons, and Cologne. This, however, does not explain why Utrecht is the most northern religious house visited. All religious houses the messenger came across on his way between one associated house and the next could be visited by him as well. Johannis Leonis did not visit all the religious houses from the encyclical brief in one journey. The religious houses of Affligem, Ename, and Ghent were visited during his first trip. Then, on his second trip, he visited the religious houses of Maria Laach, Siegburg, and Cologne. On the third trip, he visited the religious houses of St. Omer and Bergen.

We have evidence that the abbey of Forest was visited at least once by another mortuary roll. The Benedictine abbey in Saint-Trond collected at least 261 entries between March and August of 1450. The abbey of Forest was visited by the messenger on the 1st of July, 1450 (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 330). This was when Elisabeth was abbess. We can thus assume that the abbey of Forest was aware of the practice of sending mortuary rolls before they produced the one dedicated to Elisabeth 'sConincs. The Benedictine abbey of Saint-Trond was also visited by the mortuary roll of Elisabeth (TAYLOR, 1980, p. 203). Also worth mentioning is that the messenger of Saint-Trond visited many of the religious houses also present in the composed data-set of Elisabeth's roll (BERLIÈRE, 1892, p. 328-331).

Mortuary rolls were another means of bonding between communities, besides the more formal and long-lasting confraternities. Mortuary rolls may explain the mentioning of names of deceased from non-associated houses in necrologies. If there was no formal *confraternitas*, it was possible that a more informal *affinitas*, a spiritual connection, existed (GERZAGUET, 2000, p. 337).

7. Conclusion and discussion

This thesis attempts to answer two main research questions. The first question is concerned with the physical appearance or material characteristics of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs as well as with the journey it conducted. The second research question deals with the immaterial meaning or functions of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs. A data-set entailing 54 *tituli* was set up to take a closer look at a specified part of the mortuary roll. Without the mortuary roll, Elisabeth would have been one of the abbesses in a long list of the abbey of Forest, capable to do her job, but not outstanding. Based on the administrative documents in the archives of the abbey, Elisabeth may have been important for her own community, but we could not have imagined the impact of the announcement of her death in a wider context outside her own community.

7.1. Conclusion

The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs is a complete and well-preserved medieval mortuary document. The roll was prepared in 1458 and came back to the abbey in 1459. The fifteenth century is the period in which mortuary rolls gradually ceased to be used. The itinerary of the mortuary roll shows that the abbey of Forest had established relationships with other religious houses in a large geographical area. Johannes Leonis, the messenger, travelled far and wide to collect *tituli*; he went as far as the current German Rhineland and the Northern Low Countries. The messenger undertook four journeys; he came back to the abbey of Forest in between journeys. He visited some places twice. It is most likely that he travelled on foot, using the available means of travel on his way, such as waterways.

While the roll entails nearly 400 entries, this does not mean that the abbey of Forest had formal relationships with all the visited religious houses. Some religious houses were specifically mentioned in the encyclical brief; in other cases, it seems that the messenger decided on his way in a city or region which religious houses to visit. Although the religious houses mentioned in the encyclical brief all belong to the Benedictine order, religious houses of ten other orders were visited. Also, chapters and churches were included in the journey. Both male and female communities were visited.

The mortuary roll contains a sheet with two illuminations: one grouping of saints and one deathbed scene. Both scenes refer to the abbess’ devotional life and death. Scholars assume that these—rather conventional—illuminations were attached to the roll once all entries were collected. This

adding of illuminations most probably meant that the mortuary roll had a symbolic function in the abbey. The mortuary roll became an object of *Memoria*, as it represented Elisabeth and her entire community.

The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs opens with an encyclical brief; this is the announcement of her death. The encyclical brief stresses that, however worthy a person is, there always remains some flaw to be corrected after death. This remark is the introduction for the request for prayers. The expected reciprocity in terms of prayers is extended to the hospitality the abbey hopes for when sending the messenger Johannis Leonis on his way; he is mentioned by name. The formal associations with ten Benedictine abbeys are mentioned and confirmed. Two of them, St. Mary in Groot-Bijgaarden and St. Laurence in Liège, are mentioned in the text itself. The remaining eight houses are listed.

The entry usually contains the date of the visit of the messenger and the name and the order of the visited religious house before the request for prayer is responded to. It is clear that certain set of formulas in Latin were used to indicate the promise of prayer for the salvation of Elisabeth’s soul by a religious house. The most common prayer is, *Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris*. The formulas, however, show some variation. Central to the entries was the prayer-exchange: the visited religious houses promised to pray for Elisabeth and other deceased members of the abbey of Forest. In return, the Forest abbey promised to pray for the deceased of the religious houses that entered their *tituli* on the mortuary roll. The deceased of the visited religious houses, however, were rarely mentioned in the *tituli*; usually, the dead were referred to as part of the community. Even though the entries on the mortuary roll are collected in the span of just under one year, many different handwritings and uses of the Latin language are visible.

It is clear that the mortuary roll helped to create a perpetual memory of the abbess, both in the minds of the nuns of the abbey of Forest and in the minds of all religious houses who left a *titulus* on the roll and agreed to commemorate her. The number of different religious houses that were visited meant that, on her anniversary of death, the abbey of Forest, as well as the religious houses on the roll would pray for Elisabeth ‘sConincs. Equally, in the abbey of Forest, prayers would be said for the deceased of the other religious houses. In rare occasions, the names of those deceased were made known in the *tituli*, but usually the community as a whole was included in prayer.

The mortuary roll contributed in developing and fostering relationships between the abbey of Forest and other religious houses. Formal relationships existed between the abbey of Forest and several other, mostly Benedictine, houses. But as much more religious houses, of all orders and of the secular clergy, were visited by the messenger, a formal relationship was clearly not a limiting condition to be included in the journey. A spiritual connection, personal ties or even practical circumstances may have been reasons for a visit. Johannis Leonis seems to have had a certain liberty to create his own itinerary, so long as he visited the houses with whom a formal relationship existed.

7.2. Discussion and suggestions for further research

The mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs has been mentioned by several scholars. They, however, did not conduct thorough studies of the roll, but rather mention the roll as an example of a mortuary roll that is well-preserved and has travelled great distances. The roll has been studied most intensively, up until now, by Stacy Boldrick. James—who composed a catalogue on the objects in the John Rylands Library in Manchester that was later updated by Taylor—also studied the roll and transcribed small parts of all entries. While doing my research, it became clear that there is an inconsistency with regard to the number of *tituli* on the roll. James counts 380 entries. Boldrick disagrees; she counts 390 *tituli*. I, on the other hand, count 393 entries.

Scholars seem to agree that some 320 medieval mortuary rolls and fragments have survived. We can assume that the practice of producing mortuary rolls was far more common and widespread; a large number of mortuary rolls probably has been lost over the course of time. This may have been the case as well for mortuary rolls from the Low Countries. Another reason for the low number of surviving rolls may be the lack of knowledge on the part of libraries and archives. It is the responsibility of librarians and archives to recognize and acknowledge mortuary rolls as mortuary documents with multiple functions. When only fragments remain, however, they may be misinterpreted.

The aim of this thesis is to bring the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs to the attention of scholars and to draw attention to the study of mortuary rolls in general. Due to the limited time and scope of this thesis, not all aspects of the mortuary roll of Elisabeth ‘sConincs could be studied intensively. I have tried to adopt a multidisciplinary view of the subject, as I believe that several disciplines can contribute to our understanding of the mortuary roll. I have taken the viewpoint of

Gilchrist's life course perspective, and I consider the mortuary roll of Elisabeth 'sConincs to be an object with significance for its makers and users in the context of death, remembrance and community. The mortuary roll is material in a sense, but can only be fully understood if seen as an object of *Memoria*, of keeping alive the memory of the dead by the living while referring to the shared social past of the Benedictine and wider spiritual community. To take a closer yet still explorative look at the roll, a small data-set of 54 entries was composed. It is worthwhile, however, to conduct further research on this mortuary roll, as it is a fascinating object that can tell us more about medieval monastic history. It would of course be useful to transcribe all entries to study the mortuary roll from a philological perspective: use of the Latin language, handwritings, writing techniques and materials. This would also make it possible to check the list of religious houses that were visited. We know that the abbey of Forest wrote a *titulus* in the mortuary roll of the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Trond of 1450; this is roughly the same period as Elisabeth's roll. It would be interesting to compare the entries on both rolls. The entry of Forest could also be looked at with regard to the formulaic prayer used.

Up until now, the mortuary roll of Elisabeth 'sConincs is the only one we know of from the abbey of Forest. We know the messenger was supposed to leave mortuary briefs after a visit to a religious house. It may be interesting to search in the archives of the religious houses mentioned in the *tituli* to see if a mortuary brief is present that can confirm the arrival of Johannis Leonis and the writing down of a *titulus*. Mortuary briefs may act as evidence of the existence of mortuary rolls that are either not known to us or are already lost. Therefore, re-evaluation of existing archival fragments is worthwhile.

If what Dufour states is true and the illuminations on the first sheet of the roll are re-used, it is worthwhile to look into these illuminations from an art-historic point of view to find out who made them, whether they were indeed re-used, and if so, to whom the scenes were dedicated.

It is clear that Johannes Leonis visited far more religious houses than mentioned in the encyclical brief. At this stage, I do not know yet how the number of religious houses visited compares to the total number of existing religious houses at the time in each region of the data-set. It would be interesting to see which religious houses do not appear on the roll. A further suggestion would be to look into the archives of the abbey of Forest to see if there is a document that served either as an itinerary or as an instructional letter for the journeys Leonis had to conduct. Furthermore, it might be worthwhile to take a closer look at the person Johannes Leonis. According to Boldrick, he was

a professional messenger; it would be interesting to know whether he travelled with other mortuary rolls. Another strand of study concerning Johannes Leonis would be to examine how he travelled. Scholars still disagree whether he travelled on foot or on horseback. Reconstructing his journey, knowing the exact location of the houses and the distances he had to bridge in a certain span of time could give more insight in this matter.

The mortuary roll of Elizabeth is now kept in a library in England. We know that the abbey of Forest ceased to exist in 1796, and the roll is first mentioned in a collection in 1853. How and when the roll arrived in the United Kingdom is unclear. A suggestion for further research would be to look at where the archival objects of Forest were preserved after the abbey ceased to exist. Some scholars suggest that the properties of monasteries were bought by a governmental institution and that some items were sold to antiquaries. From there, they caught the attention of English collectors.

To see if the abbey of Forest was engaged in a reciprocal spiritual network with other religious houses, one might look for entries of the Forest abbey in known mortuary rolls—especially those from the religious houses in the encyclical brief. If the abbey of Forest appears in other mortuary rolls, this may be an indication of a relationship. Furthermore, documents that are proof of formal associations between religious houses can shed light on spiritual networks. The name of Elisabeth ‘sConincs may also appear in necrologies of the visited religious houses.

A final suggestion would be to look for archaeological evidence of material remains on the former site of the abbey of Forest. Remnants of the abbey, its church and buildings, as well as graves of members of the community, and especially the grave of Elisabeth, can help to understand the past.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Entries/ *tituli*

7: Rotulus iste presentatus fuit in monasterio sancti Petri iuxta Gandavum ordinis sancti Benedicti Tornace dyocese anno millesimo CCCC LVIIII V ides septembre Orate pro nostris et oremus pro vestris

8: Rotulus iste presentatus fuit in ecclesia collegiata sancti Pharahildis Gandensis in Tornacensis dioce hora primare ut oravimus pro defunctorum et alibi Anno Domini M CCCC LVIIII X die mensis septembre

9: Rotulus iste presentatus fuit in monasterio sancti Bavonis Iuxta Gandavum ordinis sancti Benedicti Tornacens dyocesis in hora maiore missa anno Domini M CCCC quinqagesimo octavo quarto ydes septembris Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

10: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio de Buloka iuxta Gandavum Cisterciensis ordinis Tornacens dyoce infra maioris missa anno Domini M CCCC LVIII undecima die septembris orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

11: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in conventu fratrum minorum in Gandavo Tornacens dioce hora magne misse anno Domini M CCCC LVIII undecima die septembris Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

12: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in conventus fratrum heremitarum sancti Augusti in Gandavo Tornace dioce hora sanctia post prandium Anno Domini M CCCC LVIII undecimal die mensis Septembris Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

13: Rotulis iste fuit presentatus in monasterio sancti Victoris iuxta Gandavum ordinis sancti Margarete Tornacensis Diocesis orate pro vestris anno domini M CCCC LVIII undecima die mensis septembris et oravimus pro vestris

14: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in conventu fratrum digentace Marie de Monte Carmeli in Gandavo ordanens dioce hora X^{a} post praedens anno Domini M CCCC LVIII undecima die mensis septembre Orate pro nostris oravimus pro vestris

15: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in conventu ordis fratrum Predicatorum in Gandavo Tornacencis dyocesis hora septima de mane anno Domini M CCCC LVIII XII die mensis septembris Orate pro nostris et oravimus vestris

16: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio conventu Marie Traiectensis ordinis Premonstranensis Tornacis diocis hora undecimal anno prandinum XII die septembris Anno Domini M CCCC LVIII orate pro nostris oravimus pro vestris

17: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio ordinis Carthus prope Gandavum Tornacensis diocesis hora octava de mane Anno Domini M CCCC LVIII tercia decima die mensis septembris Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

18: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio ordinis sancti Clare prope Gandavum Cameracensis dyocesis hora prima pre nona Anno Domini M CCCC LVIII tercia decima die mensis septembris Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

295: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio Vallis Virginium Sisterciensis ordinis Cameriasensis diosisio iuxta aldenardum anno Domino M CCCC LVX^{a} XXII die mensis aprilis

296: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio Benedictis Salvatoris eyamensis sic Cameracesis diocesis anno Domini M CCCC LIX^{a} XXII die mensis Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

297: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio Beate Marie de Doerrzele Tornacens diocesis anno Domini M CCCC LIX XXIIII^{a} die mensis aprilis Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

298: Anno Domini millesimmo quadringentesimmo quinquatisimmo nono XXV die aprilis presentatus fuit Rotulus iste in monasterio Beate Marie de Bodelo Cisterciensis ordinis Tornacens diocesis Orate precamur pro nobis et oravimus pro vestris

299: Anno domini M CCCC XXVI die aprilis presentatus fuit rotulus iste in monasterio Beate Marie de Haghe Cysterciensis ordinis Traiectensis dyocesis orate precamur pro nostris et nos oravimus pro vestris

300: Anno Domini millesimmo quadringentesimmo quinquatesimo nono XXVIII die aprilis Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in ecclesia Beate Marie Ardenburgensis Tornacens Diocesis post vespare Orate precamur pro nobis et oravimus pro vestris [Signature]

301: Anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimmo quinqgesimmo nono XXIX[a] die aprilis rotulus iste fuit presentatus in ecclesia Beate Marie de slusa supra mare Tornacens dyocesis infra fidinam missam orate pro nobis et oravimus pro vestris defunctes quod ? requiescant in pace amen [signature]

302: Anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quinqegesimo nono XXIX die aprilis Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in ecclesia sancti Iohanne in slusa supra marie Tornacens dyocesis primus vespare Orate precamur pro nobis et oravimus pro vestris [signature]

303: Anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quinqegesimo nono XXX Die aprilis presentatus fuit Rotulus iste In monasterio Beate Marie Dulcis Vallis ordinis sancti Augustis Tornace dyocesis hora vespare Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

304: Rotulus presens presentatus fuit In ecclesia collegiata sancti Donatiani Brugens Tornacens dyocesis Anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quinqagesimo nono altam may hora quasi septima ante prandens Orate precamur pro nobis et pro vestris oravimus [signature]

305: Rotulus presens presentatus fuit In ecclesia collegiata gloriese Virginis Marie Brugens Tornacens dyocis tempore summe misse Anno domini M CCCC LVX secunda May Orate pro nostris oravimus pro vestris

306: Rotulus presens presentatus fuit in ecclesia Canonitoris regularis Beati Bartholomei de Eechout in Brugis ordinis sancti Augustini Tornacens dyocesis Anno Domini M CCCC In profesti beati Iohannis ante portam latinam Orate precamur pro nobis et similis oravimus pro vestris

307: Rotulus iste presentatus fuit in ecclesia fratrum predicamonstratensis Brugens tempore magne misse in vigilia Iohannis ante portam latinam anno Domini M CCCC LIX vestris nostra damus pro nostris vestra rogamus

308: Rotulus iste presentatus Fuit in ecclesia fratrum minorum Brugens tempore magne misse In vigilia Iohannis ante portam latinam Anno Domino M CCCC LIX vestris nostra damus pro nostris vestra rogamus

310: Rotulus presentatus fuit apud nos freribus heremitarum ordinis Sancti Augusti Brugens tempore magne misse in die Iohannis ante portas Latinam anno domini M CCCC LIX vestris nostra damus pro nostris vestris rogamus

311:Rotulus presens iste presentatus fuit in ecclesia sancta Clara Brugens tempore magne misse in die Ioannes ewangeliste (sic) ad portam latinam anno domini M CCCC LIX vestris nostra damus pro nostris vestra rogamus

312: Rotulus presens fuit apud nos freribus Carthusiensis propre Brugens in flandria in Domus Vallis gratie anno Domini M CCCC LIX Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris septima die may

313: Rotulus iste fuit apud nos in monasterio sancti Trudonis iuxta Brugens ordinis sancti Augustini canonicanus regulanus anno domini LIX mensis may die VII Orate pro nostris propre defunctorum et oravimus pro vestris

314: Titulus ecclesie beate marie de noua Iherusalem iuxta Brugens Cistersiensis ordinis Tornacensis diocesis anime eorum et anime omnium fidelium in defunctorum per Misericordiam dei requiescant in pace amen oravimus pro vestris orate pro nostris. rotulus iste fuit apud nos anno domini M LIX die mensis septembris X VII.

315: Tytulus sororum sororum[1] hoerdiine conventum fratrum predycatorum de Valle Angelorum iuxta Brugiis anime omnium fydelium defunctorum per myserycordiam dey requiescant in pace amen orate pro vestris oravimus pro vestris Rotulis iste fuyt apud nos anno Domini quinqagesimo M CCCC Octauo huius may ghescreven den VIIIsten dach in meye

317: Titulus huius presentatus fuit apud nos in ecclesia sancti Andree Iuxta Brugis ordinis sancti Benedicti Tornacens dyocesis anno domini M CCCC LIX decima die mensis may Orate pro nostris oravimus pro vestris

318: Rotulus iste fuit apud nos et nobis presentatus in domo scilicet monialium sancte anne propre Brugens ordinis Carthusiens Anno Domini M CCCC LIX die octavo ascensiom decima Oretus pro nostris libenter Oravimus pro vestris

334: Rotulus iste presentatus fuit In Conventu fratrum minorum Iuxta Sanctum ordoniarum Morinens diocesis hora septima de mane mensis may die vicesimaprima anno Domini M CCCC^{mo} quinquagesimo nono orate pro nostris oravimus pro vestris

335: Rotulus iste presentatus fuit In conventio fratrum Carthusium iuxta sanctum Audonorum Morinensis dyocesis hora octava de mane mensis may die vicesimaprima anno Domini M CCCC^{mo} quinquagesimo nono Orate pro nostris Oravimus pro vestris

[1] The writer wrote the word ‘sororum’ twice in this entry

336: Rotulus iste presentatus fuit anno domini M CCCC LX monasterium sancti Audonorum ordinis predicamensis Morinensis dyocesis hora prandum de mane mensis may die vicesimaprima Orate pro nostris Oravimus pro vestris

337: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio sororum sancte Clare iuxta sanctum Audonardum morinensis dyocesis anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quinqagesimo nono visecima prima die may oravimus pro vestris orate pro nostris anime omnium fidelinum misericordiam Dei sine fine requiescant in pace amen

339: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio Beate Marie de Claromarisco Iuxta sanctum Audomarum Morinensis diocesis anno Domini M CCCC LIX XXIIII die mensis may oravimus pro vestris orate pro nostris Anime omnium fidelium defunctorum per misericordiam dei requiescant in pace

340: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in monasterio Beate Marie de Wastina iuxta Casseletum Morinensis diocesis anno Domini M CCCC LVX XXV die mensis may oravimus pro vestris orate pro nostris Anime omnium fidelium defunctorum per misericordiam dey requiescant in pace amen

341: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus in ecclesia sancti Petri Casletens Morinensis diocesis hora octava de mane tempore primarum sabbatum mensis may XXVI Anno Domini Millesimo quadringentesimo quinqagesimo nono Orate pro nostris oravimus pro vestris [Signature]

342: Rotulus iste fuit presentatus In ecclesia Beate Marie Casletens die vicesima sexta mensis may Anno Domini M LIX Orate pro nostris oravimus pro vestris

343: Anno domini Millesimo quadringentesimo quinqagesimo nono Mensis May die vicesima sexta iste rotulus presentatus fuit in monasterio Nove Planctationis Beate Marie de Ponte Rohardi ordinis Sancti Victoris Orate pro nostris defunctorum et oravimus pro vestris [Signature]

344: Anno Domini millesimo quadrigentesimo quinquagesimo nono jste rotulus presentatus fuit in monasterio Benedicti Petri et Vedasti in Euersham Morinensis diocesis ordinis sancti Augustinis vicesima septima may hora nona oremus pro inuicem ut saluemur [Signature]

345: Iste rotulus presentatus fuit in monasterio sancti Petri de Loo Morinensis diocesis anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quinquagesimo nono vicesima septima die mensis may hora quinta post prandium Oremus pro inuicem vt saluemur

346: Iste rotulus presentatus fuit in monasterio sancti martinj Yprensis ordinis sancti augustinj Morinensis dyocesis anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quinquagesimo nono vicesima octava die mensis may hora sexta post praendium Oremus pro inuicem vt saluemur [Signature]

347: Iste rotulus oblatus est nobis priori et conuentui ordinis Predicatorum conuentus Yprensis antedicte dyocesis XXIX may anno domini Millesimo quadringentesimo quinquagesimo nono hora dies septima ante prandium orate pro nostris et nos orabimus pro vestris

348: Iste rotulus presentatus fuit fratribus ordinis minorum conuentus Yprensis Morinensis dyocesis XXIX may anno domini 1459 hora decima ante prandium Orate pro nostris et nos orabimus pro vestris

349: Iste rotulus presentatus fuit fratribus ordinis fratum Beate Marie de Monte Carmeli Yprensis conuentus Morinensis dyocesis et huiusmodi XXIX die mensis may Anno Domini 1459 hora duodecima prandii orate pro nostris et nos oravimus pro vestris

350: Iste rotulus presentatus fuit fratribus ordinis fratrum heremitarum sancti Augustini conuentus Yprensis Morinensis diocesis et huisimodi XXIX die mensis may Anno domini 1459 hora prima orate pro nostris et nos oravimus pro vestris

351: Rotulus iste presentatus fuit in monasterio Sororum sancte Clare iuxta Ypris in dyocesis Morinensis anno Domini M CCCC LIX die XXIX mensis may Orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris Anime omnium fidelium defunctorum per misericordiam dei requiescant in pace amen

353: Anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quinquagesimo nono jste rotulus fuit presentatus in monasterio Beate Marie de Busco iuxta Ipram Morinensis diocesis ordinis sancti Benedicti XXX die may Oremus pro inuicem ut salvemur

354: Anno domini millesimo quadringentesimo quinquagesimo nono rotulus jste fuit presentatus jn monasterio Beate Marie de Zinnebeka juxta Ypram Morinens diocesis ordinis sancti Augustini vltima die may orate pro nostris et oravimus pro vestris

357: Anno domini M CCCC LIX IIII idus june fuit rotulus iste presentatus in monasterio Beate Marie in Nouo Bosco iuxta Gandavum oremus inuicem vt salvemus et animam defunctorum requiescant in pace

Appendix B

Encyclical brief

Uniuersis sancta matris ecclesie filiis ad quos presents littere peruenire contigerint Margareta dei permissione Abaatissa et conuentus Monasterii forestensis ordinis sancti benedicti Camercensis dyocesis. Salutem et graciam in presenti et gloriam in future. Labilis sortis humane status miserabili lege constringitur. Qui momento horis incertis fine certo concluditur et in puluerem unde sumptus est reuertitur iusto dei iudicio pro ut in corpore gestum est recepturus. Sane uestis candida sancta et immaculata innocencie baptismalis licet omni diligencia seruetur et ? tutela paulatim et inperceptibiliter per successum temporis sordidatur. Et uix in hoc mundo qui totus positus in malign est macule que de terrenis contracte sunt contagiis Valent adeo candidari ut statim anime solute carnis ergastulo ad celestis unde oriunde sunt euolare possint gaudia mansionis. Quippe stele non sunt munde in conspectus domini ut ait iob. Per stellas singule bene uiuencium anime designantur. Quia quantis(cun)que uirtutibus fulgeant quam diu tamen in carne sunt carnis uinculis colligantur peccatisque aliquibus maculantur. ut post uitam semper aliquid remaneat ad purgandum. Restat igitur ut ignis purgatorii qui miro modo grauis est licet non sit perpetuus quod minus actum est quod minus mundum est exurat examinet et expurgate)-et) ueluti ignis aurum. Nullus enim nisi fuerit ut aurum probatissimum reponetur in domini thezauris. Hinc est quod uniuersitati uestre caritatis affectuosa precum instancia supplicamus quatinus anime dilectarum domine Elyzabeth Abbatisse sororumque nostrarum. Ode. margate. margarete. Margate. Katherine. Marie et Ghertrudis monialium professarum predicti monasterii nostri beate marie uirginis de foresto nuper defunctarum in domino ut speramus orationum uestrarum suffragiis succurrere dignemini. Ut uestris precibus adiute a peccatorum uinculis absoluantur et liberate de locis penarum seder cum populo dei mereantur in pulcritudine pacis in tabernaculis fiducie in requie opulenta. Que scilicet domina Elyzabeth abbatissa obit XILII kal. Augusti. Oda XI kal. Aug. Margareta VII kal. Aprilis. Margareta VIII Idus Aug. Margareta XII kal. Febr. Katherina III Idus nouembris. Maria VI. Kal. Januarii et Ghertrudis XIIII kal. Aprilis.

> Roligerulum exhibitorem presencium fauorabiliter scilicet Iohannem leonis cum uenerit recipere uelitis nos deposcimus et benigne. Ut uobis et uestris in casu simili gratam uicissitudinem rependamus. Datum anno domini .M. CCCC. LVIII die XVI. mensis augusti.

Iste sunt de fraternitate nostra. Ecclesia beate marie in maiori bigradus. Que tene[n]tur nobis missis et nos eidem totidem. Ecclesia S. Laurencij iuxta Leidium tenetur nobis in nouem missis. et nos eisdem in tribus psalteriis.

Ecclesia S. petri in Affligemo.

Eccl. S. Saluatoris in heena*m*.

Eccl. S. petri gandensis.

Eccl. S. Marie in laken iuxta renam.

Eccl. S. Bertini in S. Odomaro (S. Omer).

Eccl. S. Michaelis in Zibbe*r*t.

Eccl. S. Pantalionis in Colonia.

Eccl. S. Winnochi bergensis (Bergues).

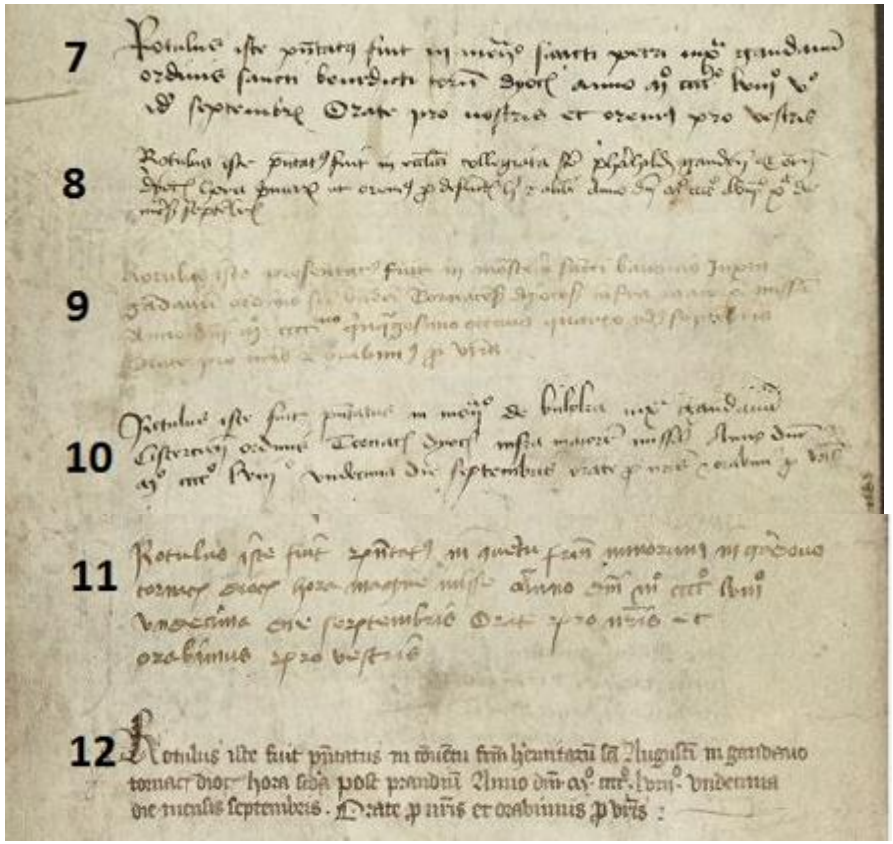
Singule ecclesie predicte tenentur nobis in tribus missis et not eisdem in uno psalterio

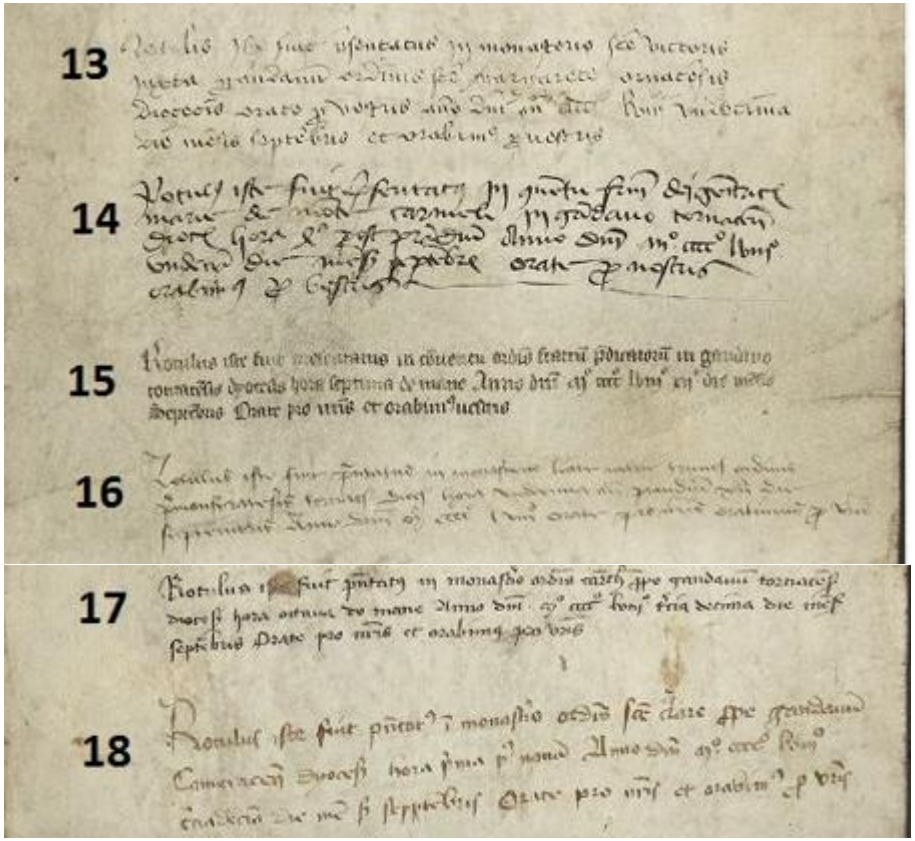
Appendix C

Numbering of tituli and corresponding photographs

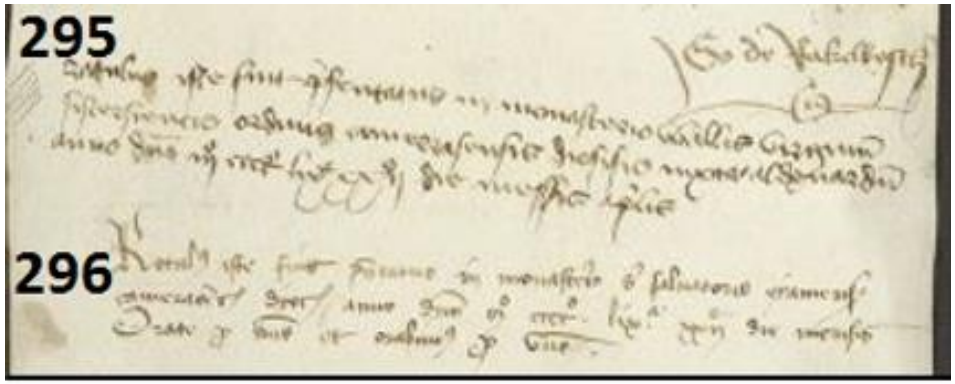
Note: For research purposes, the entries can be viewed and zoomed-in on through the links mentioned above the photographs

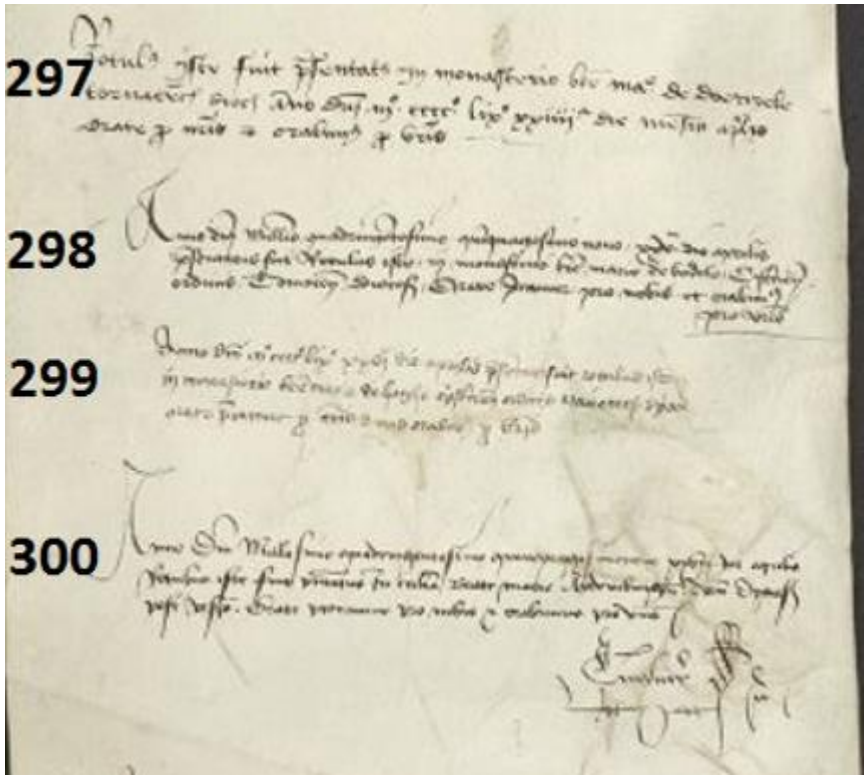
004r; entries 7-18 http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Man4MedievalVC~4~4~759480~130881:Mortuary-Roll-of-Elizabeth-Sconincx



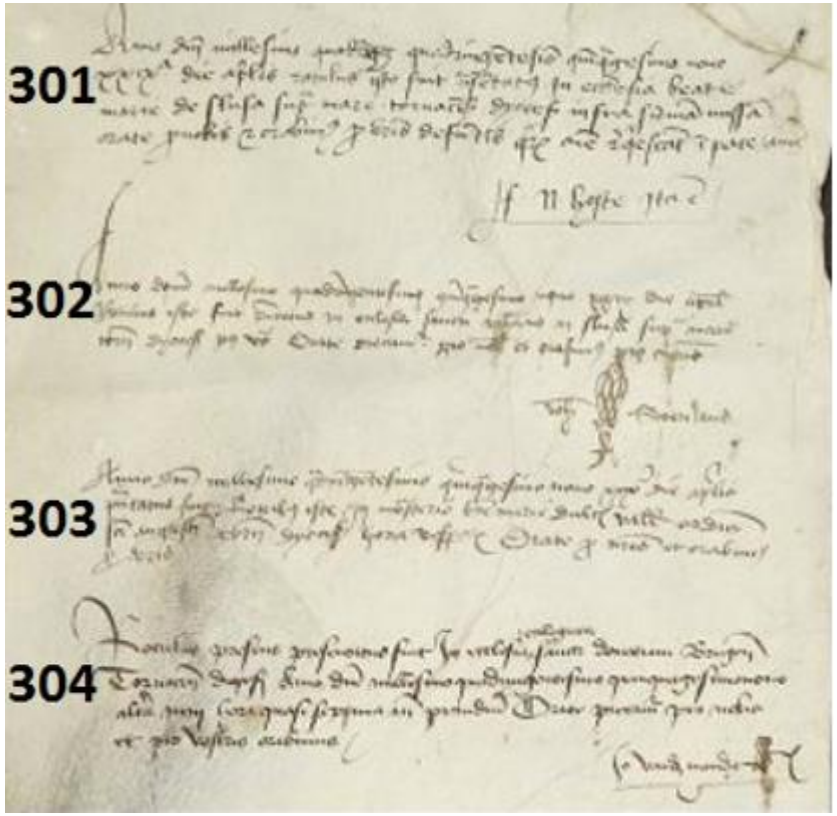


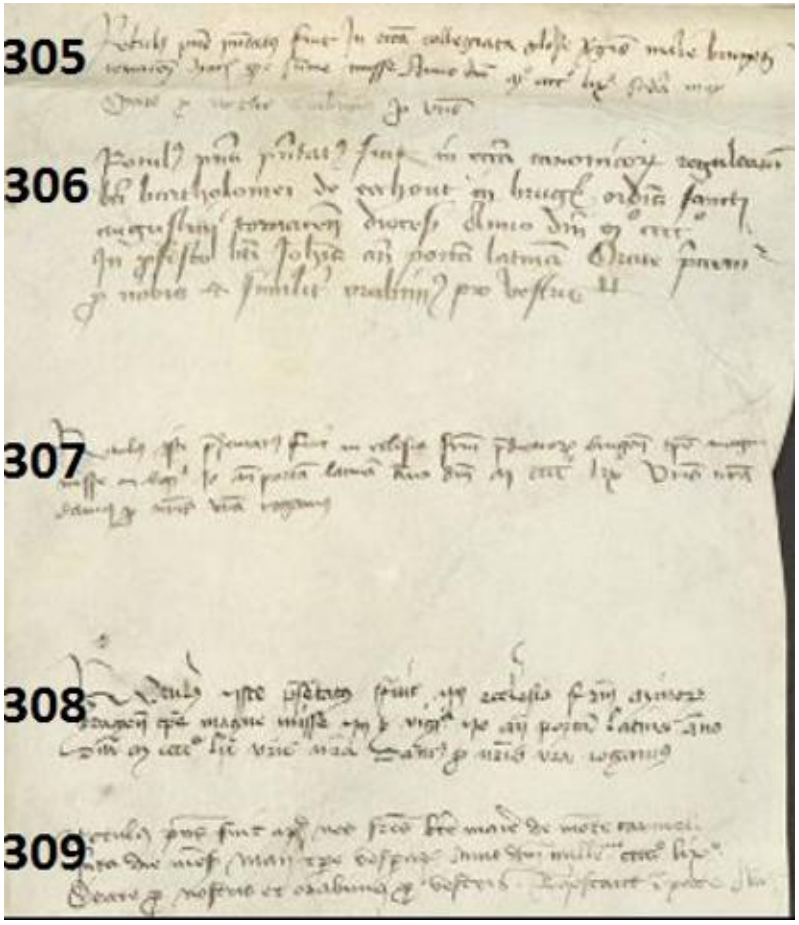
022r; entries 295-300 http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Man4MedievalVC~4~4~760755~127439:Mortuary-Roll-of-Elizabeth-Sconincx

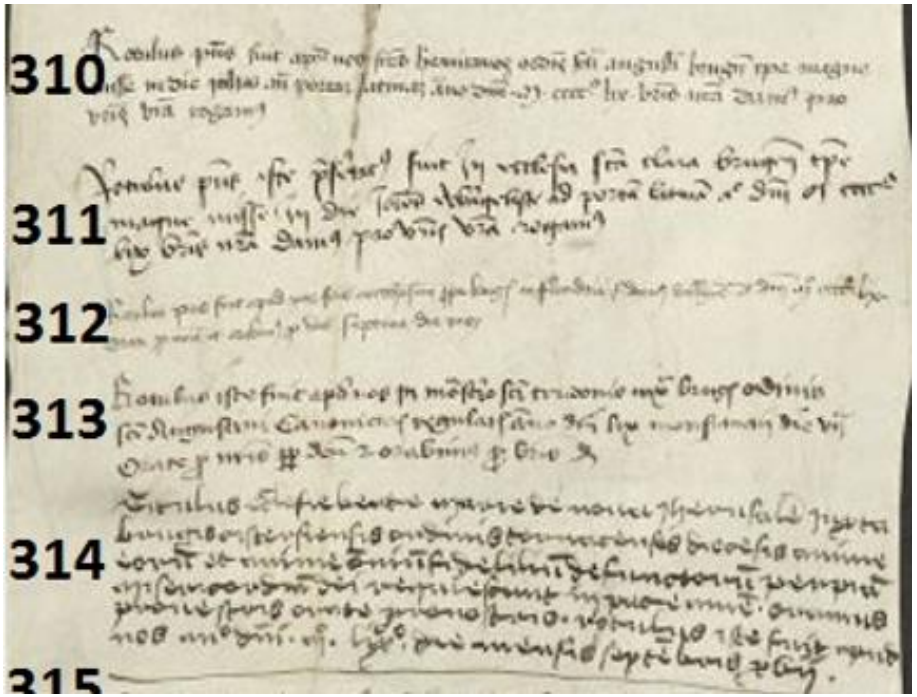




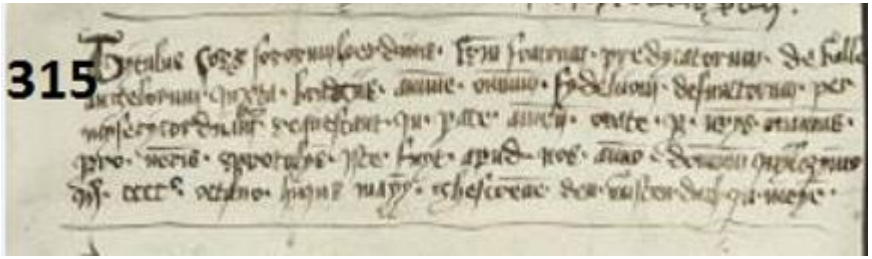
023r; entries 301-314 http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Man4MedievalVC~4~4~760803~127440:Mortuary-Roll-of-Elizabeth-Sconincx

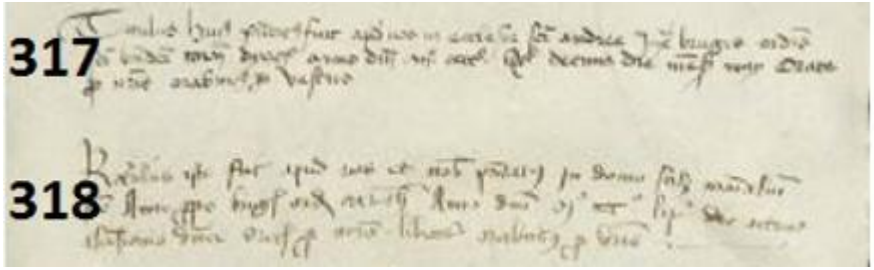






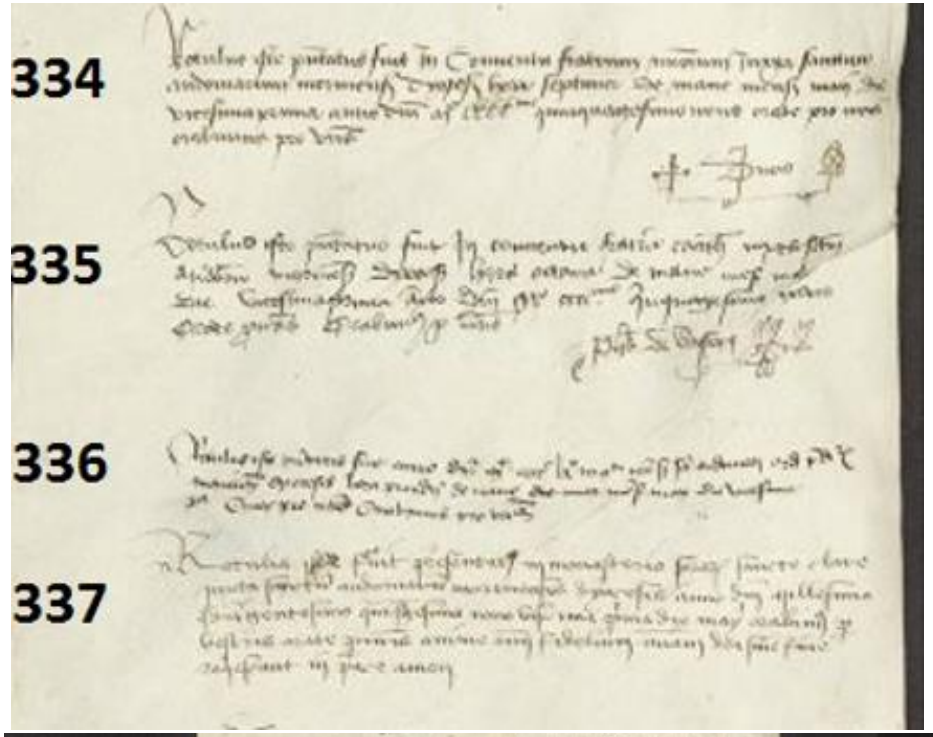
0024r; entries 315, 317, 318 http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Man4MedievalVC~4~4~760971~127441:Mortuary-Roll-of-Elizabeth-Sconincx

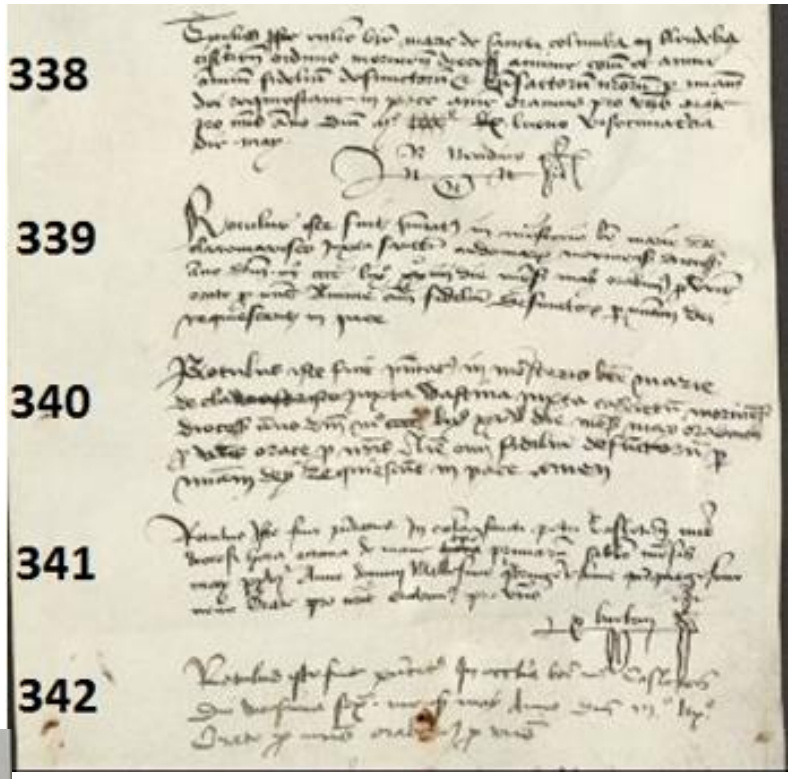


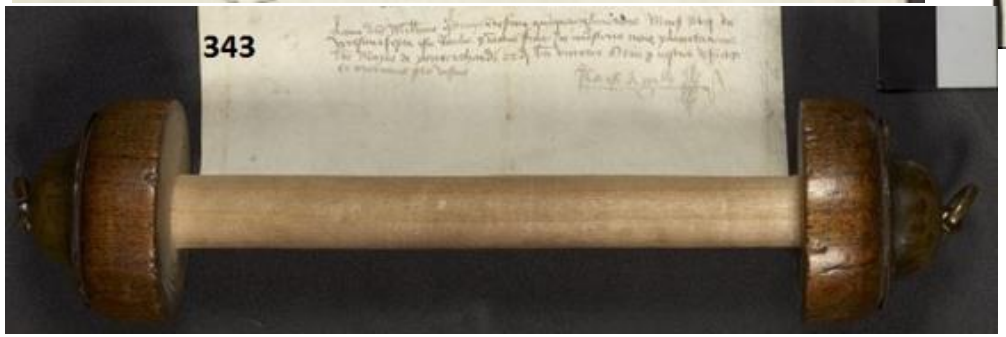


026r; entries 334-343

http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Man4MedievalVC~4~4~761067~127443:Mortuary-Roll-of-Elizabeth-Sconincx

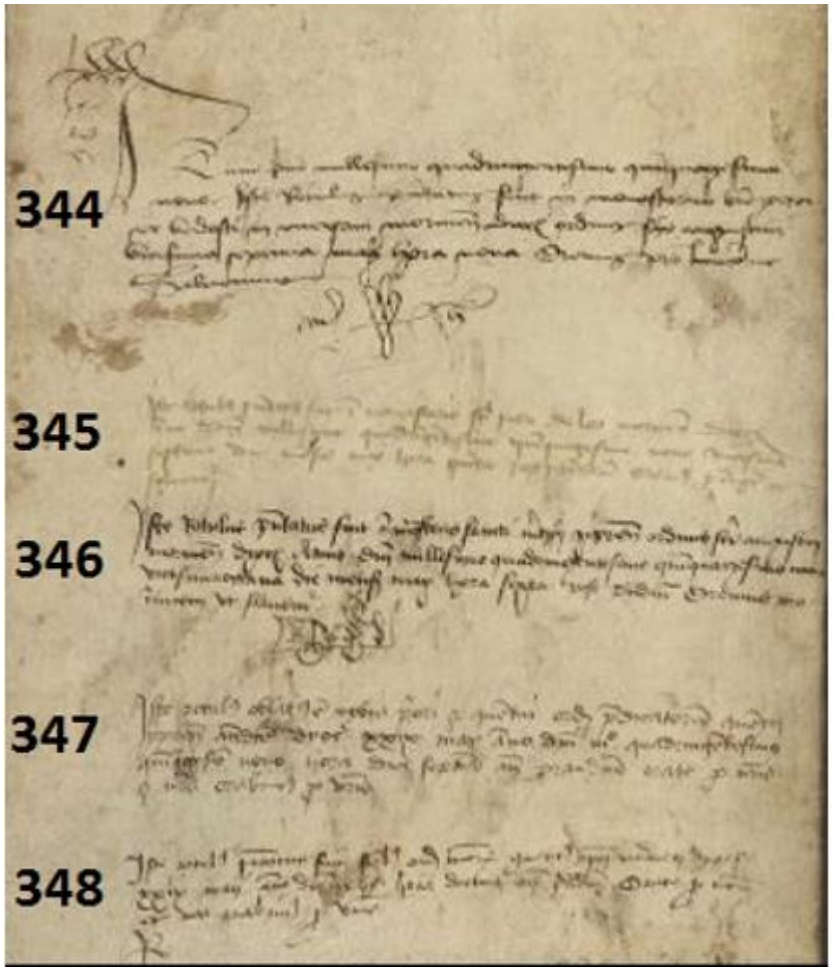


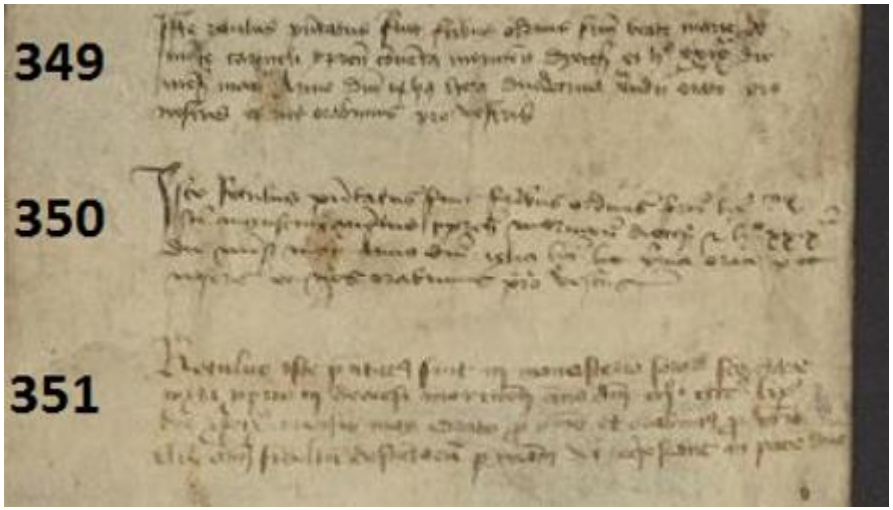


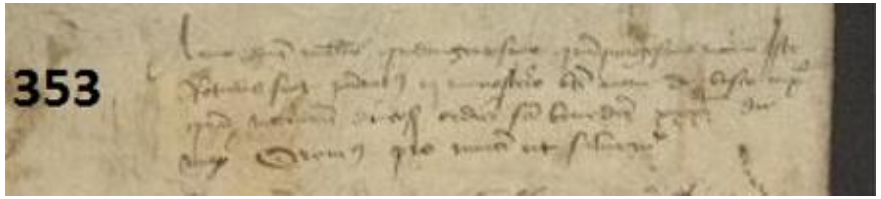
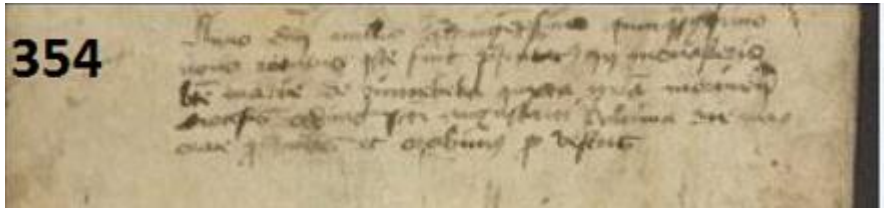
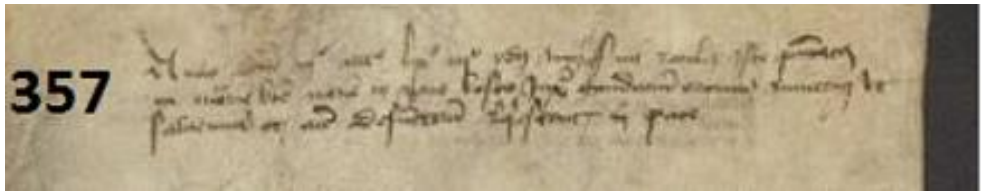


004v; entries 344-351

http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Man4MedievalVC~4~4~761307~127447:Mortuary-Roll-of-Elizabeth-Sconincx





005v; entries 353, 354, 357

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