



BRUSSELS : THE SAINT NICHOLAS CHURCH



In the **Boterstraat / Rue au Beurre**, close to the Market Place, is one of the oldest churches of Brussels, the Saint Nicholas Church. The church was named after Saint Nicholas, the **patron saint of the traders**, which was not surprising because the trade center, the market, was just around the corner. The church was **built in an asymmetrical way** because in the earlier days an irregular and small brook used to run through this street.

The entrance to the Saint Nicholas church dates from the second half of the 12th century. The choir was completed in 1381 and the side-chapel, devoted to the Holy Virgin, was constructed in 1486. During the religious troubles in the 16th century, the church was plundered. In 1695, during the bombing of Brussels by the French troops, it burned completely. In one of the pillars of the Holy Virgin chapel one can still see a canon ball from that tragic event. During the Middle-Ages the relatively high church tower served as the city **belfry (watchtower)**, **but in 1714 it collapsed**, killing 1 man and 1 pig.

In 1868 the relics of the so-called "**martyrs of Gorkum**" were transferred from Holland to the Saint-Nicholas church. Since then a shrine containing these relics has been exposed to the public. These martyrs were catholic priests that had been tortured and executed on the 9th of July 1572 in the Dutch city of Gorinchem (or Gorkum) during the religious troubles between Catholics and Protestants in the Low Countries.



In 1929 a plan was proposed to demolish the church because it hindered the traffic in the Boterstraat. Fortunately, the plan was never executed. Very remarkably, the **old houses surrounding the church have been preserved until today**.

Location

Boterstraat / Rue au Beurre
1000 Brussels

