

Sage

Ghent

Fire at the bell tower of St John's church

The bell tower of St John's church (currently St Bavo's Cathedral) was completely destroyed by fire on 2 September 1602.

Around ten p.m., the inhabitants of Ghent heard and saw a terrible thunderstorm. Suddenly, they noticed a bright spherical light that hit the tower, setting it on fire.

This ball lightning perplexed all those who witnessed it and could only be explained as the work of witches who had made a pact with the Devil.

At approximately the same time, two women had been accused of witchcraft in two other locations in the region, Harelbeke and Brussels.

When the news of the fire in the tower of St John's church reached these locations and people heard that supernatural forces were believed to be the cause, suspicion fell on these two women.

Although the suspects had probably never heard of St John's church before, they gave a full confession under torture.

As a result, both women were executed in 1603 for their alleged role in setting St John's church ablaze.

Many thanks to Nelly Van De Slijke

Source:

www.stedeninfo.be



