



# Church of Saint Pétronille

The silhouette of this church has greatly evolved over the years. When it was built around 850, it was a relatively simple building made of wood and flint. The Romanesque church that replaced it, **was burned down by the English in 1355** during the Hundred Years War. History repeated itself in 1477, but the abbot of Saint-Bertin, Antoine de Berghes, took charge of **rebuilding** it and the fort in 1526. You can see his coat of arms on the keystone of the belfry. In 1830, the church underwent further changes when **the side entrance to the north nave** was removed. The **three separate roofs** of this building had a complex guttering system, making the roof prone to leaks which had to be constantly repaired.



The side entrance to the church in 1824 (land registry plan, AD62, 3P 008/32).

## Church governed by the monks of Saint-Bertin

**From 1188 to February 1791**, when the monasteries were sold after the revolution, the monks of Saint-Bertin governed Acquin as its seigneurs. The fact that the church was dedicated to Pétronille, a name derived from "Pierrette", harking back to the time when the abbey church was dedicated to Saint Peter, shows just how long their rule was. The plain design of the church is typical of 15th century architecture. Its pointed windows and mouldings, with their profane *cul-de-lampe* carvings all relate to the **Gothic style**. Its buttresses show that it has a **vaulted ceiling**, a feature that is rare in this rural area. It is also built with **noble materials** such as chalk limestone, and slate for the roof. There are **graffiti marks** left on the walls by the stonemasons, wishing to immortalize their work. In the Saint Omer region, the church and fort of Acquin are considered to be **the finest**



A sculpted cul-de-lampe in the centre nave (photograph by Mathilde Duval, coll. CHHP).

**vestiges of the Saint-Bertin period**, even though they are not listed as *monuments historiques*.

## Some remarkable features

**One of the church bells** is dated 1564. Its name, Guérardine, comes from the first bishop of Saint-Omer and abbot of Saint-Bertin, Gérard d'Haméricourt. It narrowly escaped destruction during the Revolution and has been listed as a *monument historique* since 1908. In the north nave, **two vault keystones** sculpted with the coat of arms of Saint-Bertin and a scene of the Annunciation have also been listed since 1938. The **new stained-glass windows**, made from 1939 to 1960 by master glassmaker Henry Lhotellier, were added to the inventory of listed buildings in 1990.



Guérardine in his belfry (photograph by Philippe Hudelle).

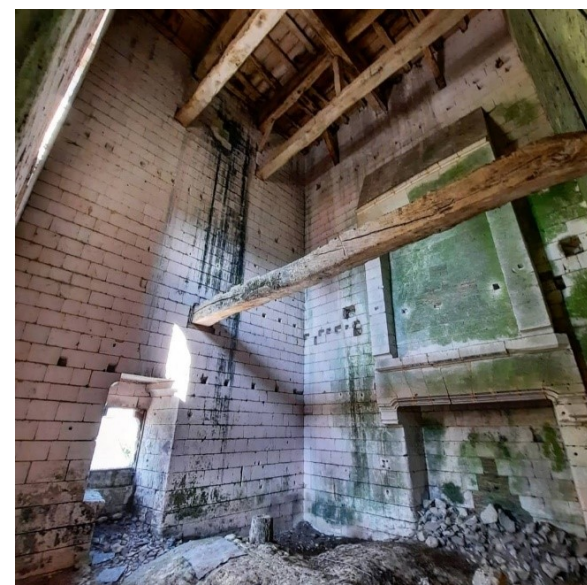


Listed keystones: coat of arms of Saint-Bertin (top); the Annunciation (bottom). Photographs by Mathilde Duval, coll. CHHP 2022).



## A sanctuary and a refuge !

In a region affected by **three centuries of war**, churches have often been used as a refuge, and this one is no exception. The highest rooms of the **powerful bell tower** were used as a lookout for the villagers. We can still see the **stone benches** in the embrasures of the windows on both floors of the tower, providing a useful lookout near to the fort.



In the bell tower: two former guardrooms with fireplaces one above the other, previously separated by a floor (photograph by Mathilde Duval, coll. CHHP 2021).

