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The Fort

"The last of Saint-Omer's defensive positions"

It is the strategic location of the village near to the border that explains why there is a fort here. During **the Hundred Year's War**, there were so many attacks on the area that the local people asked the monks of Saint-Bertin, their protectors, to build them a place of refuge. **King Charles VI** granted them their request and the fort **was built between 1410 and 1416**. It remained the main place of safety during **the battles between the French and the Spanish in the 16th and 17th centuries**. In 1525, the watchers from the church were dismayed to see the soldiers of the French-Italian alliance looting and setting fire to the fort.

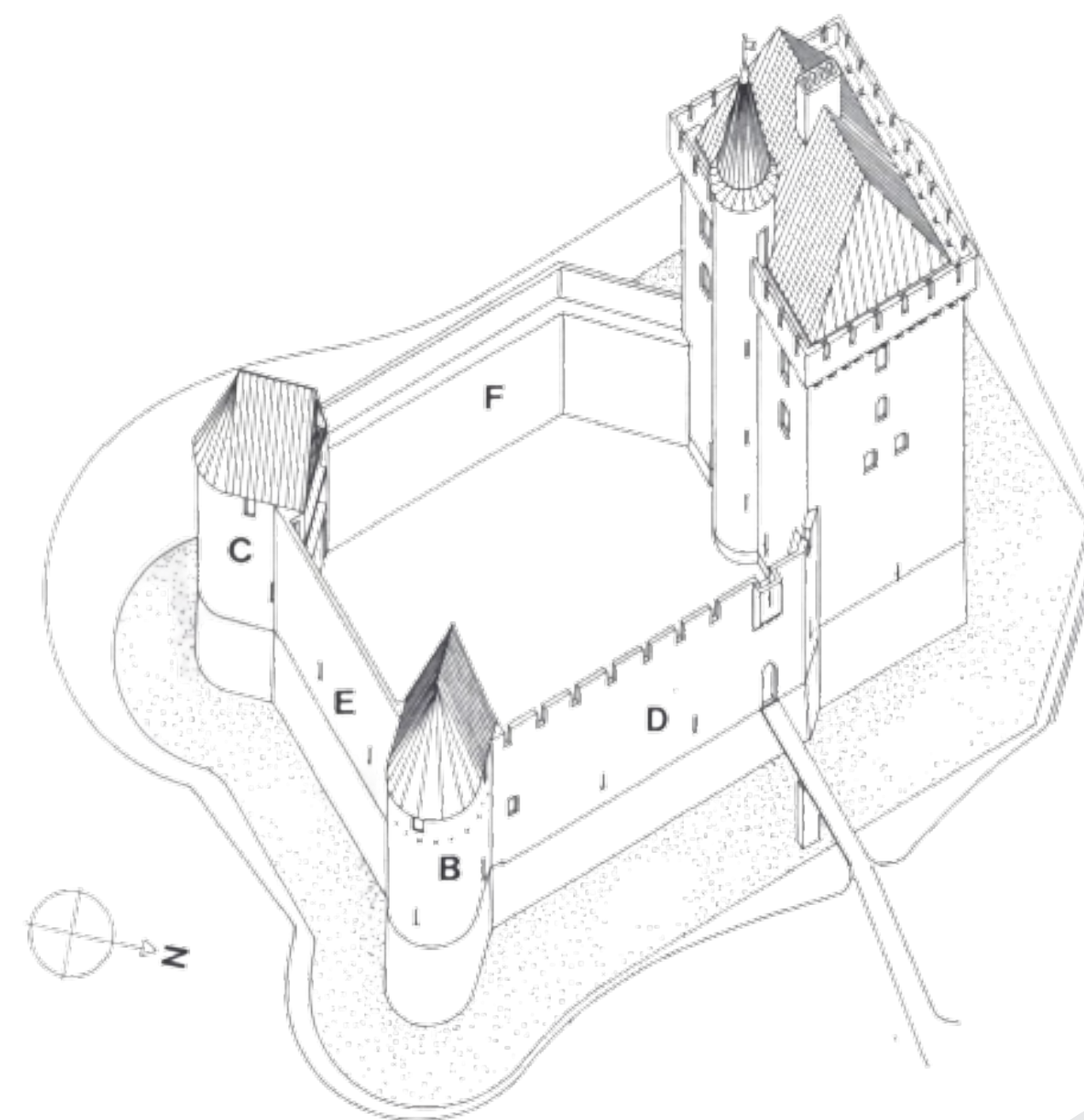
A fort made of limestone

Like the other buildings in the village, **local materials** were used to build the fort. Its strong stone walls rest upon a clay or flint base. **A tower joined to curtain walls** with arrow slits can still be seen from the main

street of the village. A single house is all that remains of the **crenelated keep** which used to be three storeys high, just as high as the church bell tower! It still contains **a 23 metre well** which supplied the people and their beasts with water during the repeated sieges. A reconstruction by heritage architect François Bisman allows us to imagine what the building was like at that time.

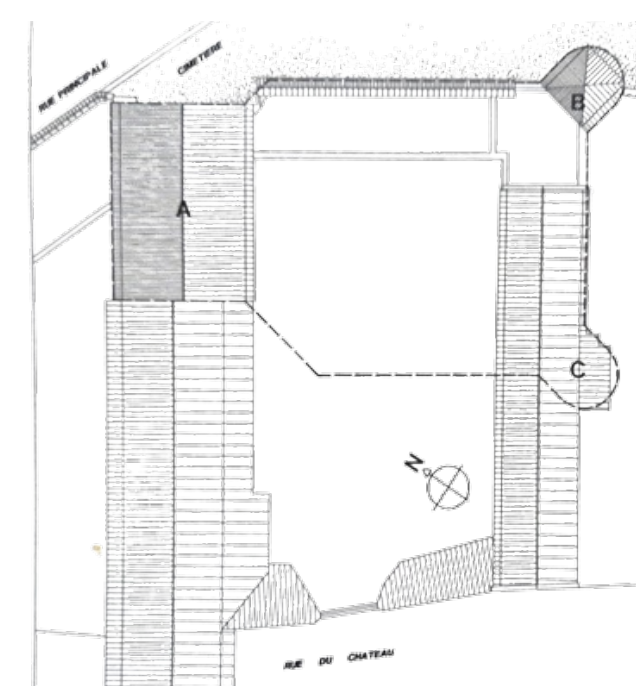
Change in function in the 18th century

As peace returned to the region in the second half of the 17th century, the fort ceased to have a military function. Around **1770**, two of its curtain walls and one of the towers were replaced by **farm buildings**. In **1791**, the site which at the time was known as **the "fortified farm"** no longer belonged to Saint-Bertin's abbey. Charles-Guillaume Le Normand, a **wealthy landowner from Paris** bought it from an Acquin farmer, François-Joseph Becquet. Although now a private property, occasional access to the fort is possible for those wishing to visit it.

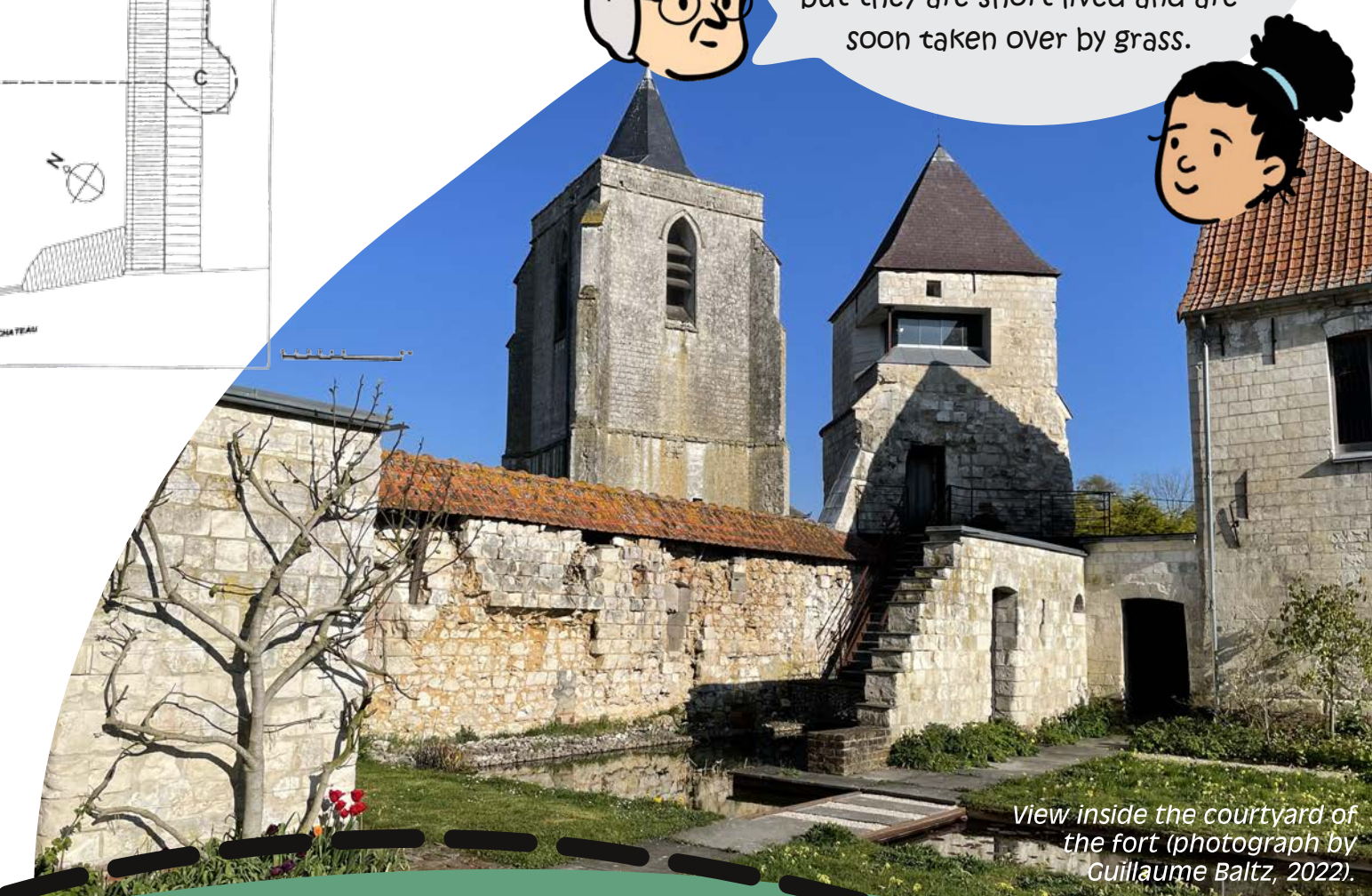


Perspective model of the fort and plan of the "fortified farm" (François Bisman, 2000).

- A – Master Tower (keep)
- B – East Tower
- C – South Tower
- D – North-East Curtain Wall
- E – South-East Curtain Wall
- F – South-West Curtain Wall



If one day you have the opportunity to visit the fort, the old curtain wall destroyed around 1680 has been marked out by a row of white daffodils. You can only see them in the springtime, but they are short-lived and are soon taken over by grass.



View inside the courtyard of the fort (photograph by Guillaume Baltz, 2022).

View from the church and fort of Acquin from the north-west, around 1605-1610 (Album de Croy, J.M. Duvosquel, Belgique).



et conception : Mathilde Duval et Sophie Léger, CHHP, 2022.

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