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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.

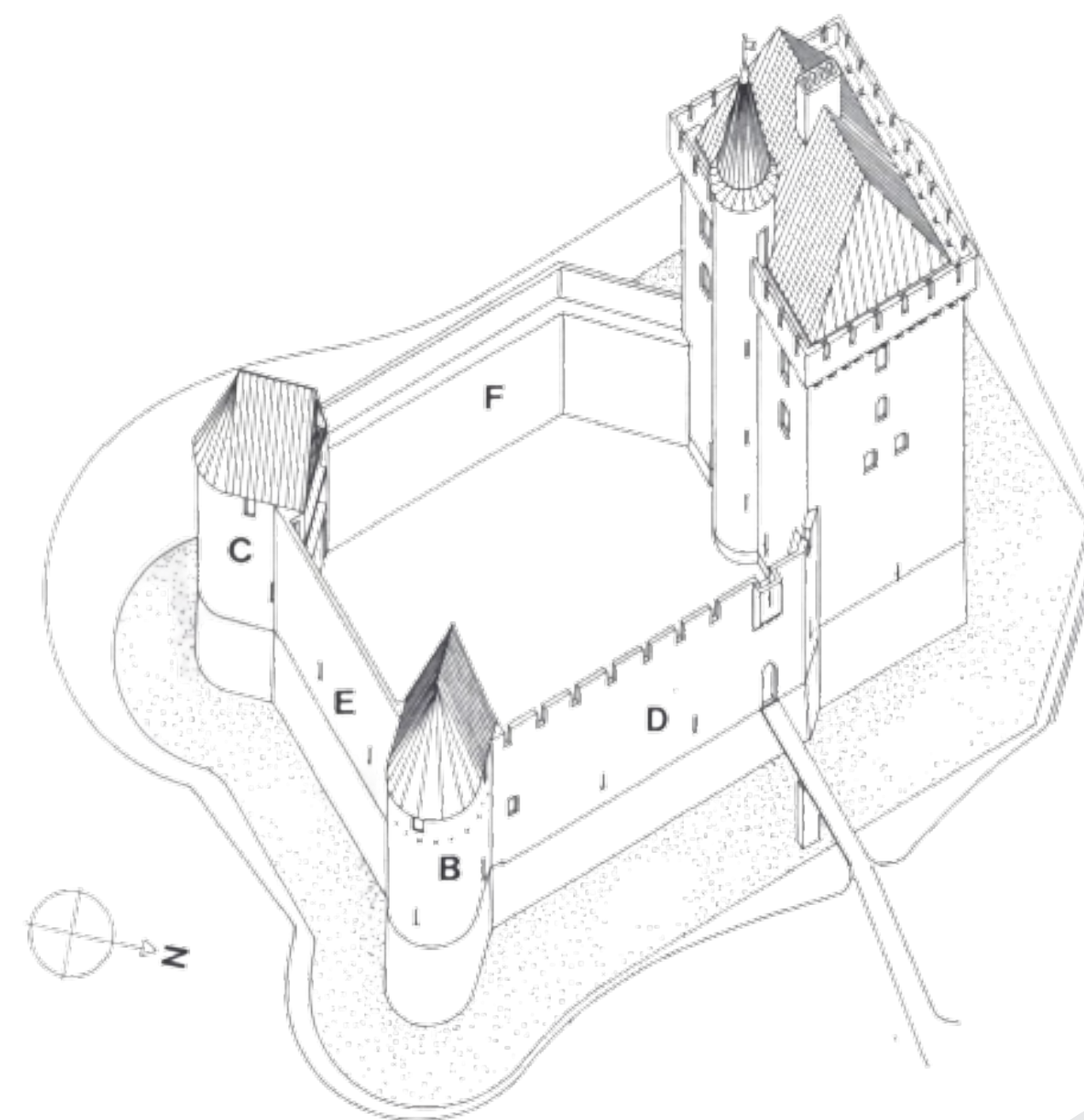
## A fort made of limestone

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.

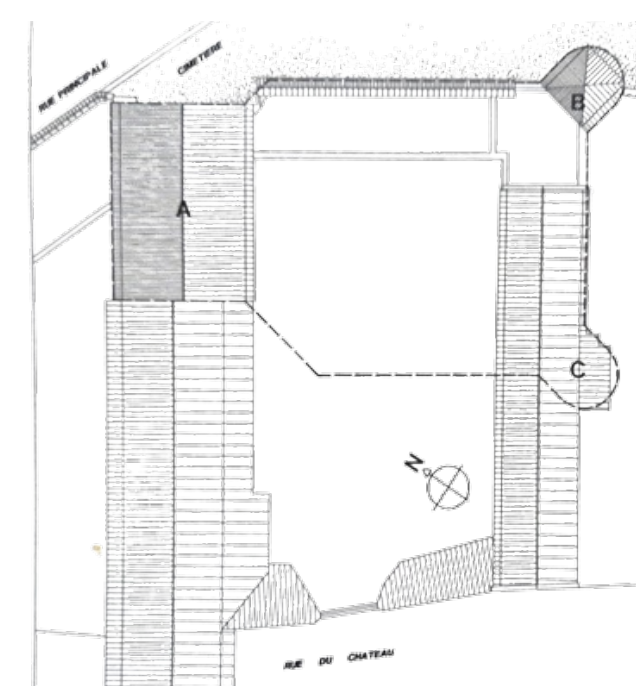
## Change in function in the 18th century

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.

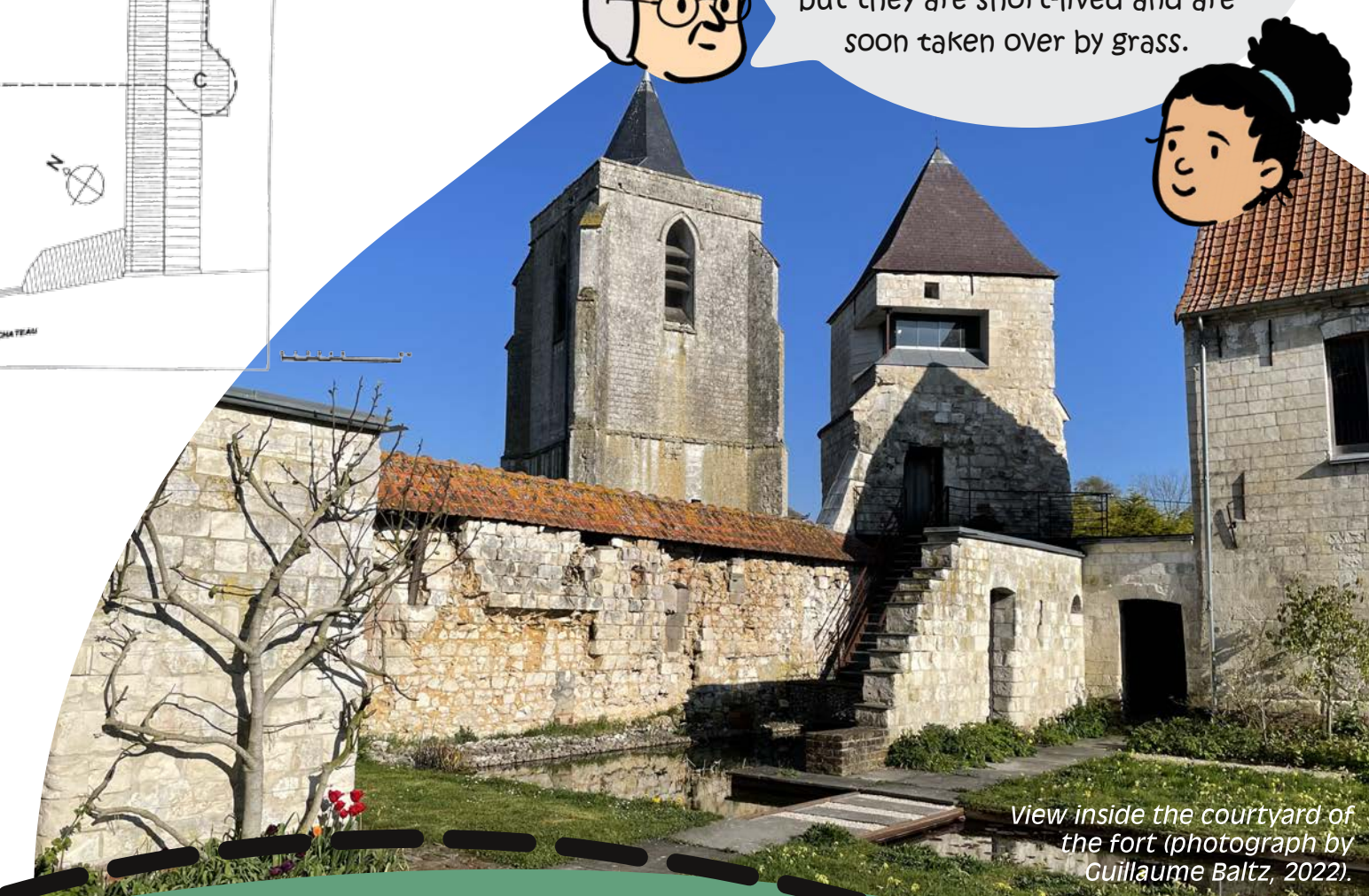


Perspective model of the fort and plan of the "fortified farm" (François Bisman, 2000).

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

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