



Projet Erasmus+ Namur - Marsala

" Patrimonia "



A la découverte du patrimoine historique, architectural et culturel

# « Crèvecoeur » Fortress



Sandy Koch



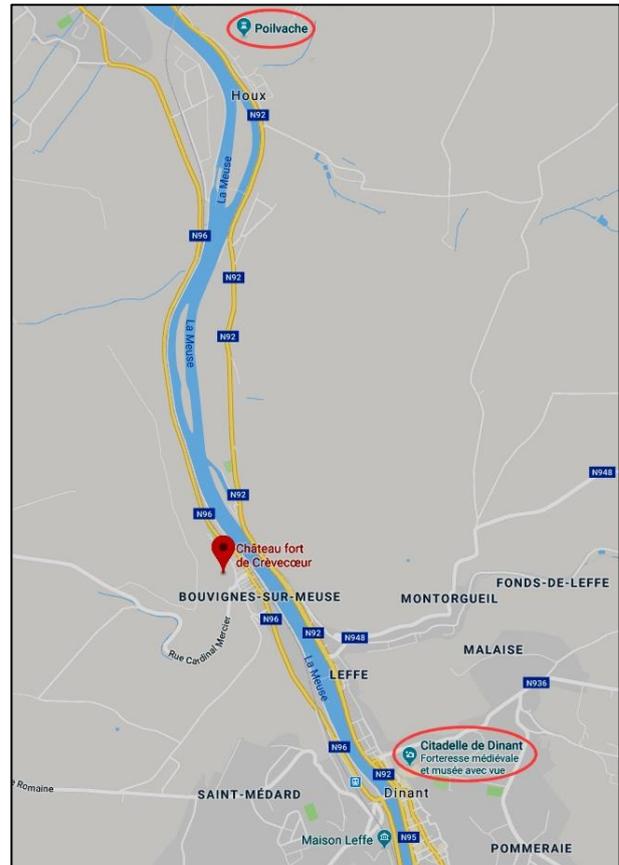
Institut « Ilon Saint-Jacques » - Namur

# ABSTRACT

## General presentation

### ❖ *Bouvignes, a long and sad story ...*

Just as Montaigne and Poilvache, the origins of Crèvecœur Fortress in Bouvignes-sur-Meuse are very old. In fact, the Romans had already built a "castrum" (camp) there and established a small garrison at the confluence of the Laval brook and the Meuse river. It was later consolidated by the Normans in the 9th century. The first written mention of Boviniacum or Bovingen dates from the 7th century. The discovery of a Merovingian cemetery and the Germanic origin of the name clearly indicate that at the beginning, Bouvignes was a Franc village

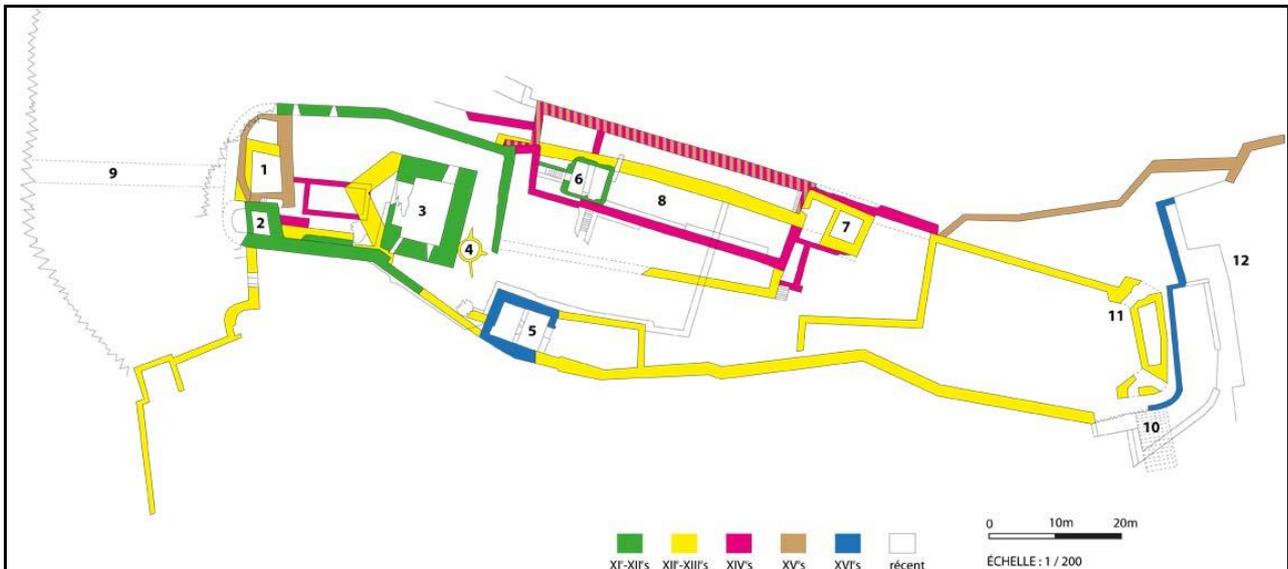


In the eleventh century, the counts of Namur, which step by step had appropriated the prerogatives of the Emperor, were fighting against the Prince Bishop of Liège for the possession of Dinant. In 1070, the Emperor decided to withdraw from the Counts of Namur all the rights they exercised in Dinant for the benefit of the Prince Bishop. But the Count of Namur would not give up so quickly and continued to claim their rights. Very quickly, to show his determination to assert his rights, Godefroid, Count of Namur, had a fortified house built 2 km from Dinant, an absolute symbol of feudal power. At the time, Bouvignes was a small town on the outskirts of Dinant

This dungeon and its enclosure with walls 2.5m thick is established on a surface of 15m by 11.5m. Until the middle of the 12th century, the dungeon was almost the only castral complex.

In 1176, Henri l'Aveugle (Henry the Blind) completed the dungeon's defensive system by adding a wall and several towers.

This vast seigneurial residence, set on a rocky promontory stretches on 3 terraces facing south to north. It covers an area of about 44 ares, a length of 160 m. over an average width of 25 m. The site is separated to the west by the ravine of the Val River and to the east by the Meuse River, while a wide rocky ditch prohibited any approach from the south.



***Map and building phases of the Count's Castel in Bouvignes (from G. Amand de Mendieta)***

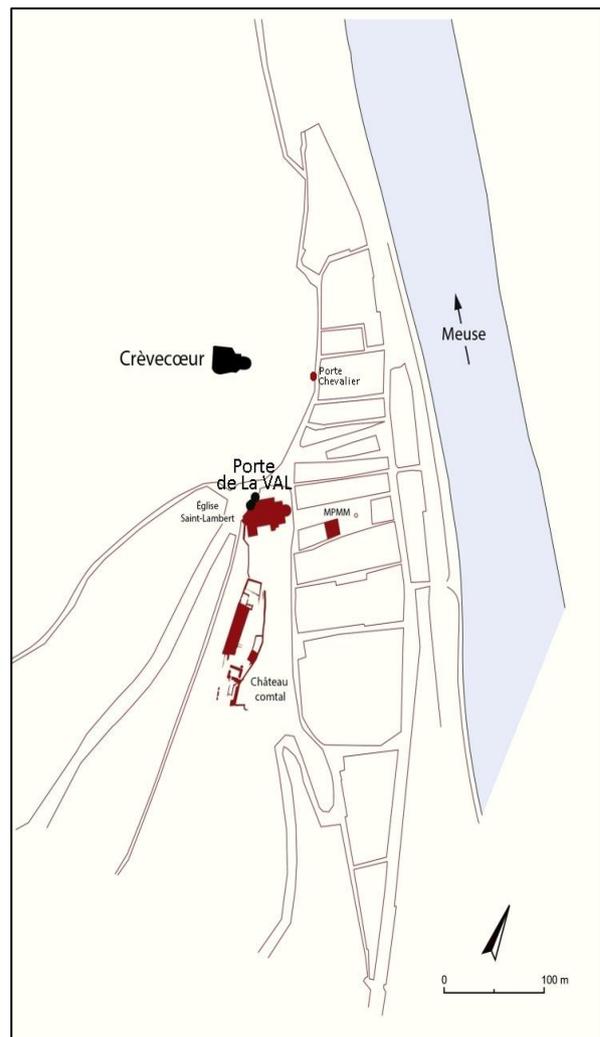
*(1) Porch tower, main entrance to the south; (2) Cellar; (3) Dungeon; (4) Well; (5) Cistern transformed into a guardhouse; (6) Cellar; (7) Median tower; (8) Receiver's Dwelling or Chairy; (9) Supposed location of access deck; (10) Pedestrian access to the north; (11) North-West Watchtower; (12) Saint-Lambert Church.*

Step by step, the town will gain importance and this new city will be built according to a regular cadastral plan in the shape of a ladder.

In 1213, Bouvignes received its « franchise charter » from the Count of Namur. Bouvignes became the second town in the county and the seat of a powerful bailout. It is therefore authorized to erect its first urban fortifications.

A rampart of limestone quickly surrounds the city from north to south by encompassing the primitive castle. This wall all around the city allowed the defence of Bouvignes and Namur County against its neighbour and everlasting enemy Dinant and the Liège Principality. In 1230, the Countess of Namur, Marguerite de Courtenay, added 16 towers to the city walls.

Bouvignes had become very prosperous with its tanneries, shops, canvases and especially its “dinanderies” (copper objects). All this wealth attracted the lust of its neighbours, the inhabitants of Dinant and the French.



At the end of the thirteenth century starts a terrible conflict, an implacable war during more than 400 years, tearing apart inhabitants of Bouvignes and Dinant...

Around 1321, in full turmoil, a tower-dungeon culminating at 142 m strengthens the defensive structure of the city because the castle by its position at the extreme south-western point can no longer provide the defensive coverage of the entire agglomeration, which is growing towards the North. This explains the strategic importance of this new tower, later called the “Crève-Cœur Fortress”.

Several times besieged by the episcopal armies of Liège (in 1321 and 1430,) Bouvignes did not yield. At that time Philip the Good reigned over all Namur County and it was from Bouvignes castle in 1466 that he ordered the destruction and looting of Dinant.

The castle, becoming step by step more and more a residential, judicial and administrative centre, loses its primary defensive aim in favour of Crève-cœur tower, best adapted to the artillery requirements. It becomes the accommodation of the local authority, the squire or superintendent.

In 1554, while the city is at its peak in terms of population and prosperity, Henry II, king of France in conflict with Charles V, will manage to enter and sack Bouvignes and Dinant. It was during the last tragic moments of this memorable siege that three ladies participating in the defence of Bouvignes would have thrown themselves from the top of the highest tower to escape the invaders. This heroic fact (or legend?) is part of the local folklore and is celebrated each year in the old parish of Bouvignes.

The «Crève-cœur Fortress », the Comtal Castle and the surrounding walls of Bouvignes are partially destroyed. Despite the restorations of 1567 to 1580 undertaken by Charles V and Philip II who hoped to revive the copper craft, the wall was finally dismantled in 1672 by Spanish government decree.

This is how the tragic story of the flourishing Bouvignes ended to become what it is today, a peaceful village bordered by the few medieval relics left behind by the troops of the King of France.



