

Le Caillou

Through time, the name of the farm of Le Caillou can be found in different forms. Ferraris calls the farm the cense du Caillou, but other names which are used are cense du Caillau, le Caillau, le Cailleau (¹), le Cailloux and le Cailliou. Instead of à Caillou, one can also find au Caillaux and Caiau.

The name may have been derived from the large stones from which the farm has been constructed. ² Another possibility is that the name was taken from the fact that the soil in this area contains a lot of stones. ³ Others claim that the name refers to a dolmen, dating back to the stone-age. ⁴

Since the 17th century the farm was in the possession of the family of Boucquéau. At that time, it was Jean Baptiste Boucquéau, husband of Anne-Marie Loir.

On the 20th of October 1698 Francois Boucquéau (1658-1720, husband of Jeanne-Marie Durieux, became the owner of Le Caillou. At the time of the battle Le Caillou was in hands of Henry Joseph Jérôme Géry Boucquéau (1737-1824), husband of Catherine Piéret. After the death of his father, he had acquired the building in 1774. Henry Boucquéau had a son, Géry-Joseph, who was married to Angélique Daumeries. ⁵

Le Caillou had suffered a lot during and after the battle by the plundering of the French and the Prussians. On top of this, at 6 a.m. of the 19th of June, the Prussians set fire to it. ⁶ The ruins were offered for sale on the 25th of July 1815. Ultimately, on 20th November 1818 the farm was sold to Joseph Aubry, from Vieux-Genappe. He restored the building and established an inn there. ⁷ In his turn, Aubry sold it in two turns to Désiré Francois, on 20th October 1823 and 12th October 1849. Francois rented the building to the mayor of Vieux Genappe, Vandevelde, who used it as a halting-place for carriages. On 5th June 1869 Le Caillou was transferred to Emile Coulon, architect and member of the Commission Royale des Monuments. He transformed the building into a villa. In 1905 the widow of Coulon sold Le Caillou to the countess of De Villegas, who would later marry to the historian Lucien Laudy. He died in 1948.

In all probability Le Caillou was built at the end of the 16th century. ⁸ Before the year 1815 Le Caillou was a complex of a few buildings of which a part remains. ⁹ In a notarial act of 1774 the complex is described as: "Certaine maison ou cense nommé Le Caillau [sic] située au Vieux Manant sous Promelles, consistente dans un grand corps de logis, écuries, deux granges, remises et rangs de cochons cour et placs de fumier, jardin murailé et jardin suivant renfermé de ses vives haies en dépendantes, avec un relevé de 5 à 6 pieds, et le vieux chemin longeant le dits jardins, l'abreuvoir ou étang au dessus des dites granges, avec toute la partie de fond inculté située au dessous et en decà des dites granges et étang, au long de la chaussée de Bruxelles à Charleroi, avec la pature et fruitier situés au devant de la dite ferme au long de la chaussée de Bruxelles à Charleroi. ¹⁰

In comparing this description of 1774 with the map of Ferraris (1777) there are great similarities. There is the northern, walled garden and the adjoining hedged garden. The old dirt track leading along the garden and the pool just south of the main building. The open field north of the walled garden, as well as the meadow and orchard opposite the main building.

Due to all changes in the main building this is no longer the *corps de logis* of a farm, but more like a villa.

Old prints, photos and other sources make it possible to describe how the farm must have looked like at the time of the battle.¹¹ The facade of the main building had a door in the middle and four windows on the first floor. At ground level there were two windows to the left of the door and one to the right. In the south part was a large gate for carriages. There are no details about the north and east facade of the building.

Against its south facade there was a small annex of which the roof was oblique. In its facade was a small window which was round at the top. On top of this window was a dove-cote.

There was a courtyard to the east of the building, which was surrounded by smaller outbuildings and walls. There are no details, however, how these outbuildings must have looked like, except of the one on the south side.¹² In the centre of this courtyard was a well, which still exists.

To the north of the farm was a walled orchard of which the north wall was somewhat higher than the remainder of the wall; at the south-west corner of the main building there was also a wall which extended for some distance along the great road.

Since 1815, some major alterations have been carried out. Some windows have been added in the facade of the main building: one on the first floor and two on the ground level to the right of the door. The old part which held the gate is also a part of the house. In the south-side of the house two windows have been established.

Later however, this part has also been brought into line with the main building.

From there the wall continues in a southern direction, having been interrupted by a wide, iron gate which leads to the courtyard. However, as all outbuildings have almost been destroyed there is no courtyard any longer; only the outbuilding in the extreme south part is still in existence.

On 13th September 1950 the buildings were transferred to the Société Belge d'Etudes Napoleoniennes, which turned them into a museum. This has been officially inaugurated on the 3rd of June 1951. The society handed over the complex to the region of Brabant on 11th of March 1973.

Sometimes it is being asserted that Coulon would have been able in 1871 to retrace the furniture used by Napoleon in 1815 from the Boucquéau family. This would have consisted of three tables, two chairs and a table-cover. In all probability, however, this furniture cannot have survived the devastation the farm went through after the battle.¹³

The current garden contains an ossuary which was established there by Lucien Laudy and Hector Fleischman on the 12th of July 1912. Numerous bones which have been discovered on the field of battle have found a resting place there. The tablet reads: Pro imperatore saepe, pro patria semper.

On the facade of the main building hangs a tablet stating: "Le Caillou: c'est dans cette maison que Napoleon passa la nuit du 17 au 18 Juin 1815."

In the walled orchard a simple monument can be found commemorating the presence here of the 1st battalion 1st regiment chasseurs of the imperial guard. It was inaugurated on the 11th of June 1965. Its tablet reads:

"Dans ce verger a bivouaqué pendant la nuit du 17 au 18 juin 1815 le 1er bataillon du 1er

régiment de chasseurs à pied de la garde impériale commandant Duuring. Ce bataillon s'étant illustré à Marengo, Ulm, Austerlitz, Iena, Friedland, Essling, Wagram, Smolensk, La Moskowa, Hanau, Montmirail 1815-1965”

The collection of the museum contains, apart from “authentic” furniture, numerous prints, engravings, documents and other relics relative to the campaign. The museum also has a specialized library, of which the foundation was formed by the collection of the founder of the society, Hector Fleischmann. The outbuilding which still exists (the *fermette*) is nowadays used for temporary exhibitions.

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1. This is the name used by the owner in 1815, Henri Boucquéau. Cf. his claim to the mayor of Vieux Genappe, dated 30th of June 1815. In: collection of the museum of Le Caillou.

2. Fleischman, Th. – Histoire de la ferme du Caillou p.6

3. Logie, J. – L'évitable défaite p.87

4. Logie, J. - L'évitable défaite p.87

5. He would write a poem on the battle in 1816 under the pseudonym of Couquébau, the anagram of his real name.

6. Cf. the declaration of the 19th of June 1815 written by the deputy mayor of Vieux genappe, Van Hemeljik.

The fact that all the furniture had been lost is confirmed by the claim done by H.Boucquéau. Cf. his documents in the collection the museum of Le Caillou.

Also see: Couquebeau. La Belle Alliance. Ode sur etc. p.16

7. This has given sometimes rise to the incorrect belief that Napoleon spent the night at the farm of Aubry himself (and not the one of Le Caillou), but this was not the case. Cf. Aerts, W. Etudes etc. Livre IV (manuscript), n.p.

8. Logie, J. - L'évitable défaite p.88

According to Fleischman the building as it stood in 1815 dated from 1757, but its origin would have been much older. Cf. Fleischman, Th. - Histoire de la ferme du Caillou p.6

9. Cf. Carte de cabinet des Pays Bas Autrichiens

Cf. Aerts, W. Etudes etc. Livre IV (manuscript) n.p.

Craan situates Le Caillou too far north, probably to incorporate it into his plan, without having to extend it much more. In: Plan du champ de bataille de Waterloo dit de la Belle Alliance etc.

Cf. Navez, L. Le champ de bataille etc. p.31-32

10. Cf. Aerts, W. Etudes etc. Livre IV (manuscript) n.p.

11. Hills, R. - Sketches etc.

Van Neck, L. - Waterloo illustré p.62, 63, 218

Lachouque, H. - Waterloo p.116

" Waterloo 1815 ", p.66

Logie, J. - Waterloo, l'évitable défaite. Paris. 1984. p.88

Fleischman, Th. - L'histoire de la ferme du Caillou (annexes)

Navez, L. - Le champ de bataille et le pays de Waterloo .p.102, 170

Chalfont, lord - Waterloo, battle of three armies p.78

La ferme du Caillou dans la bataille. SBEN.1984 p.30-33

Aerts, W. - La nuit de Napoléon et la matinée du 18 juin 1815. Réfutation de quelques légendes. In: Bulletin of the SBEN, 1952 nr.5 p.13

12. Henri Boucquéau mentions the presence of stables, a farm, sheep-stables and two barns, part of which was covered with slate.

From his description of the claim he makes, it can be seen that he had about 33 hectares of land.

A drawing made by Lucien Laudy depicts how the whole complex must have looked like in 1815, but the sources he has used, particularly for the outbuildings to the east, are unknown.

Cf. drawing in the Musée du Caillou, entitled Vue de la ferme Le Caillou.

13. Cf. accounts and declarations of the assistant mayor of Vieux Genappe, Van Hemelrijk and the owner, Henri Boucquéau. In: collection of Le Caillou.