

The chateau of la Bavette. ¹

The site of this chateau has been inhabited since the earliest times as carved flint-stones have been found there.

It belonged to the duchy of Corswarem-Looz. The register of fiefs of the Lord of Wavre states in 1329 that Wautier de la Bawette owned several fiefs. It was in 1474 that Barthélémy de la Bawette built a house under that name.

The word "bawette" means loophole, a cleft through which one can see without being seen oneself. This toponym seems to indicate to the existence of an observation-post, which has given its name to a family of which parts got titles of the fiefs of Warnicamps and of Aische in Refail. The Bawettes kept their property up till the end of the Ancien Régime. Two farms bear their name; one on the road to Namur and the other one at Faulx.

The old feudal house which burned down was replaced in the period of 1662-1667 by the current chateau by Charles de la Bawette, captain in the regiment of Laverne. He had married Marie-Barbe du Cornet.

The chateau, which was built on the ruins of the former house, is built in style of Louis XIV. At that time the adjoining gardens and park measured 43 hectares and 45 *vierges*. ²

After the death of his grandmother in 1696 Charles-Francois Joseph de la Bawette became the young inheritant of the domain. This was during the war of the league of Augsburg. William of Orange, king of England and stadtholder of the United Netherlands and leader of the coalition against Louis XIV installed himself in the chateau.

Hiéronyme-Isabelle-Thérèse de la Bawette, last descendant of the family, married in 1736 Charles-Chrétien-Jean de Spoelberch, sir of Lovenjoul, member of the audit office of Brussels and son of the mayor of Louvain.

She survived him until 1793 and was the ayeule of the branch of the viscounts of Spoelberch-la Bawette. Her son, Jean-Charles, under the Dutch governemtn member of the order of knights of South-Brabant, handed over the chateau in 1806 to his brother-in-law, Ferdinand d'Olmen-Saint Remy. He sold the chateau in 1807 to Jean Plunkett de Rathmore. Plunkett, originally being from Ireland, was the son of an delegate in Hainaut. At the time of the campaign in 1815 the chateau was inhabited by Patrice Plunkett of Rathmore and his wife Marie-Louise, countess of Peralta y Cascales.

Later, the Plunkett's entrusted the domain to their agent Francois Raymond who sold it in 1827 in their name for 25.000 guilders to baron Louis Mertens (1777-1829). The park then comprised 27,5 hectares, 84 perches and 68 ells.

In 1847 Mertens' children sold the chateau to baron Ferdinand-Henri de Thysebart, major in the cavalry, and his wife Adélaïde de Ponty de Suarlée. He was the son of a curator of an art-museum and had been a page in the court at Brussels.

He redecorated the chateau according to latest ideas and had windows installed in the chapel depicting him and his wife dressed in medieval cloths. Through time, he also handed over small parts of the domain.

On June the 1st 1865 he sold "la Bawette" to Jean-Adolphe le Hardy de Beaulieu, engineer and politician. He extended the domain and died in 1894. He left the domain to his only son, viscount Théodore le Hardy de Beaulieu, husband of the baroness Anne-Hyacinthe de Crawlez, who was the daughter of the baron Théodore de Crawlez and of Jeanne Flore Pirmez.

It was during the first world war that the germans established themselves in a part of the dependance of the chateau. During the celebrations of 1830, prince Leopold and princess Astrid visited the chateau on the 6th of July.

In 1940 the domain was in the frontline: the British had dug trenches and the whole population of Wavre had been evacuated. A lot of the interior of the chateau was lost during the war. In

1941 viscount Théodore died in la Bawette.

Thanks to the efforts of the viscountesses Anne and Gisèle le Hardy de Beaulieu the whole chateau has been reconstructed and redecorated, especially the woodwork and the chapel.

Now, viscount Hugues, husband of Marie de Liedekerke Beaufort is the latest descendant of the family; his grandfather, baron Albert d'Huart, was married to the viscountess Marie-Henriette de Spoelberch-La Bawette, who was the last direct inheritant of Charles de Spoelberch and Isabelle Thérèse de la Bawette.

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1. Cf. Bergé, M. - Le château de la Bawette à Wavre In: Waterloo illustré, I/IV, nr.13. pp.5-10
The château is designated as a “cense” by Ferraris and Capitaine.

2. One bonnier is 1 ha 216609, a vierge is 30 m² 4152.