

The belfries (France)

No 943 bis

1. IDENTIFICATION

<i>State Party:</i>	France
<i>Name or property:</i>	The belfries of Flanders, Artois, Hainaut and Picardy
<i>Location:</i>	Region: Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Picardy Departments: Nord (11 towns) Pas-de-Calais (6 towns) Somme (6 towns)
<i>Date received:</i>	19 January 2004
<i>Category of property:</i>	

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

The nominated property is a *transboundary extension* of the set of buildings inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1999 on the basis of criteria ii and iv: *Belfries of Flanders and Wallonia* (24 belfries in Flanders and 6 in Wallonia).

Brief description:

It should be remembered that belfries are both civic buildings and symbols. They are a highly significant token of the winning of civil liberties.

The 23 belfries in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Picardy region (corresponding to the 3 departments Nord, Pas-de-Calais and Somme), submitted for inscription on the World Heritage list, are part of a series of cultural properties belonging to the same area, and consequently to the same cross-border socio-cultural group, in continuity with the 30 Belgian belfries (of Flanders and Wallonia) inscribed on the list in 1999.

Thus the title of the proposed listing:

Belfries of Flanders, Artois, Hainaut and Picardy, refers to the terminology of the former French provinces, as they existed before the French Revolution in 1789. Two provinces (Flanders and Hainaut) were divided by the fate of history and now straddle the Franco-Belgian border.

Many of the comments made in the ICOMOS evaluation of the belfries of Flanders (Belgium) in 1999 can therefore apply to this dossier.

Architecturally, all the belfries are built on a *similar vertical plan*, adapted to the multiple functionalities of the building and comprise 4 levels:

- the foundations (the lowest section of the tower),
- the shaft (the square-shaped body of the tower),
- the summit (the upper section, for general surveillance purposes),
- the roof (usually a spire roof).

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

Apart from the architectural structure specific to most belfries, in the case of *communal* towers, their typology varies considerably depending on:

- the history of the towns,
- the period of construction,
- regional and/or local building materials,
- the master builder.

The different typologies are listed below:

a/ Categories:

- *Civic belfries*: town towers (examples in the submission include: the Belfries in Douai, Saint-Riquier, Arras, Bailleul, etc.),
- *Church belfries*: bell-towers (examples in this submission include: the *Tour Saint-Eloi* in Dunkirk and the *Tour Saint-Martin* in Cambrai).

b/ Belfries in an urban context:

- *belfries isolated in the urban fabric* (e.g. Saint-Riquier),
- *belfries attached to a market hall* (e.g. Bergues),
- *belfries attached to a town hall* (e.g. Douai).

c/ Architectural style:

The first period of belfry construction extended from the 11th century to the 17th century. A distinction is made between:

- *belfries in the Roman style* (e.g. Boulogne),
- *belfries in the Gothic style* (e.g. Arras),
- *belfries in the Renaissance style* (e.g. Comines),
- *belfries in the Baroque style* (e.g. the *bulbous roof of the belfry in Comines*).

d/ Building materials:

Their role was paramount, both technically and aesthetically.

- From the 11th century to the 14th century, most civic buildings were constructed in *wood*,
- From the 15th century to the 16th century *stone* triumphed,

- From the 15th century to the 18th century, there was diversification in the materials used (including *brick*).

The submission for inscription provides a detailed and very clear description of the 23 belfries proposed.

History

Whilst Italian, German and English towns mostly opted to build town halls, in part of north-western Europe (now in France, Belgium and the Netherlands), greater emphasis was placed on building belfries, even before a town hall was considered.

The density of belfries is greatest in regions where feudal society was the strictest, notably in France and in the County of Flanders (Belgium).

Originally, a belfry was erected as a sign of communal independence obtained by charter, and as the very symbol of freedom. It was therefore considered sacrosanct by the burghers.

Compared to the keep (symbol of the *seigneurs*) and to the bell-tower (symbol of the clergy), the belfry, the third tower in the urban landscape, symbolizes the power of the aldermen through its physical presence.

Over the centuries, belfries took on other meanings: through thriving trade they came to represent the influence and wealth of the towns.

But with royal centralization, municipal power gradually declined and, between the 15th century and the 18th century, the reign of the belfries faded, and they became devoid of the meaning originally attached to their construction.

It was not until the French Revolution and the emergence of the concept of cultural heritage that belfries recovered their former values and regained sense and meaning.

In the 19th century, the municipality was idealized and the symbolic rebirth of the belfry grew under the Third Republic in France, becoming an ideological symbol to counter churches and castles.

Urban growth in the 20th century was also a factor in the development of belfries, which became a symbol of independent status and prosperity.

For each of the 23 belfries, the inscription dossier submitted provides a full and precise description of their background and evolution over the years:

- Nord:
 - Armentières: 1923-1934
 - Bailleul: 1923-1932
 - Bergues: 1952-1961
 - Cambrai: 1447-1474
 - Comines: 1927
 - Douai: 1387-1471
 - Dunkirk (Saint-Eloi church): beginning of the 15th century.
 - Dunkirk (Town Hall): 1896-1901
 - Gravelines: 1827
 - Lille: 1929-1932
 - Loos: 1883-1884

- Pas-de-Calais:
 - Aire-sur-la-Lys: beginning of the 18th century
 - Arras: reconstructed from 1924-1932
 - Béthune: 1388
 - Boulogne-sur-mer: 12th/13th centuries
 - Calais: 1911-1923
 - Hesdin: 1875-1878

- Somme :
 - Abbeville: beginning of the 13th century
 - Amiens: beginning of the 15th century
 - Doullens: 1613
 - Lucheux: 1380
 - Rue: 1446
 - Saint-Riquier: 1283

Management regime

Legal provisions:

The belfries submitted are owned by the corresponding municipal authorities and hold the status of *public building*.

All are protected:

- either as historic monuments,
- or under a protection order
- 8 belfries are listed prior to the law of 1913: Bailleul, Douai, Dunkirk, Lille, Aire-sur-la-Lys, Arras, Béthune, Lucheux.
- 14 belfries are inscribed in the additional inventory: Armentières, Cambrai, Comines, Dunkirk (Town Hall) Gravelines, Loos, Boulogne, Calais, Hesdin, Abbeville, Amiens, Doullens, Rue and Saint-Riquier.
- 1 belfry is in the process of receiving protection: (application for listing filed) Bergues.

Management structure:

- Local level:

The municipal authorities ensure general, day-to-day management of the property.

A deputy mayor has special responsibility for culture and heritage and, in that capacity, is particularly involved in managing the belfry.

- Department level:

Architects, engineers and technicians from the *Service Départemental de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine* (Ministry of Culture and Communication) undertake preservation missions, provide advice and check the work carried out.

- Regional level:

For its part, the *Conservation Régionale des Monuments historiques* (Regional Directorate for Cultural Affairs) is responsible for all matters related to the protection and development of historic monuments.

- National level:

The Ministry of Culture and Communication is involved in the protection of belfries:

- through the *High Commission for Historic Monuments*,
- through the *Architecture and Cultural Heritage Directorate*.

Resources:

- For listed belfries:

State subsidies for drawing up restoration, repair or maintenance applications.

Typical funding scheme:

State: 50% of the total
Department: 0 to 20%
Municipality: 30 to 50%

- For inscribed belfries:

Subsidies granted by the Prefect of the region, subject to a proposal emanating from the *Conservation Régionale des Monuments historiques*.

This aid is legally capped at 40% of the total.

Typical funding scheme:

State : 40% of the total
Department: 0 to 20%
Municipality: 40 to 60%

In addition to these legally regulated sources of funding, the European Commission may grant subsidies for the development of cultural heritage, under the Community Initiative Programme, Interreg. IIIB in the North-West of Europe, hence in the cultural area of the belfries.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

23 belfries in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Somme departments are submitted for inscription on the World Heritage list. This initiative follows on naturally from the listing of belfries in Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia) in 1999.

All these belfries, on either side of the border, are part of a series of cultural properties belonging to the same cultural area (as already defined in the dossier for Belgium) and to the same socio-cultural group.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the sites in August 2004 and examined each belfry and its environment.

Conservation

Conservation history:

As civic buildings and as symbols, the belfries have been constantly maintained.

Some, which suffered war damage, have been meticulously repaired and certain parts have sometimes been identically reconstructed.

All are protected and promoted.

However, it was often found that interior maintenance needs to be stepped up.

Lastly, there is a problem with pigeon droppings virtually everywhere.

State of conservation:

Generally, the belfries are in a satisfactory state of conservation, as the towns owning the buildings undertake repairs and restoration work as soon as deemed necessary.

The inscription application provides a full account of work completed since 1990, indicating its nature and the funding devoted to it.

Management:

The belfries are protected buildings and are subject to ongoing and periodic inspections, either at the request of the corresponding town, or on the initiative of the regional or departmental services in charge of cultural heritage.

Regular inspection reports are drafted, and the property is monitored in accordance with legal and regulatory provisions.

Risk analysis:

- Development pressures:

The belfries are public buildings located in an urban setting and usually in the historic centre of the town. Their immediate environment is therefore protected and they cannot be subjected to town planning pressure.

- Environmental hazards:

Due to damp and the possibilities of water infiltration, rainfall is considered as a factor affecting the property.

The belfries therefore require careful monitoring, particularly to check waterproofing and maintain the binding with which the building materials are assembled.

As regards pollution, particular attention is paid to road traffic.

There remains the problem of pigeons and their acid droppings, which has not yet been solved everywhere.

- Environmental constraints:

No risks of flooding, landslides or earthquakes were found.

However, as public buildings, all the belfries do have insurance cover against water and fire damage, and theft.

Authenticity and integrity

As already stated for the belfries of Flanders and Wallonia, it would be a laborious or even impossible task to analyse the degree of material authenticity of the 23 belfries described here.

It is more a matter of considering their *authenticity over time*.

Indeed, belfry construction has always been linked to material conditions closely related to historical events, economic conditions and the social situation of the time.

However, they have continually kept their original basic design, and later refurbishments or restorations have not adversely affected their structure.

Comparative evaluation

As the illustration of a movement of ideas and of political assertion, belfries are an ensemble that can only be compared to each other. The 23 belfries in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Picardy region are part of a series of cultural properties that are typical of France and Belgium – and, to a lesser degree, the Netherlands – communal towers, an ideological symbol to counter keeps (*seigneurial* towers) and bell-towers (ecclesiastical towers). As these belfries form a continuum with the 30 belfries in Belgium inscribed on the list in 1999, the comments figuring in the ICOMOS evaluation drafted in 1999 can be applied in this case.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

Although the powers exerted on towns today are radically different from those of the Middle Ages, belfries are still endowed with meaning and symbolism and are a central, living urban feature

The significance of the belfry extended to the expression of local freedoms, independence, or even the very identity of a town, or sometimes a region.

This explains why some of the towns in the region in question have recently-constructed towers:

Calais, which inaugurated its belfry in 1925, and *Lille* in 1932 (remember that Charleroi, in Wallonia, inaugurated its belfry in 1936).

Evaluation of criteria:

As this application is submitted as an extension of the group of buildings listed in 1999, reference should be made to the same criteria ii and iv and to the same evaluation.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

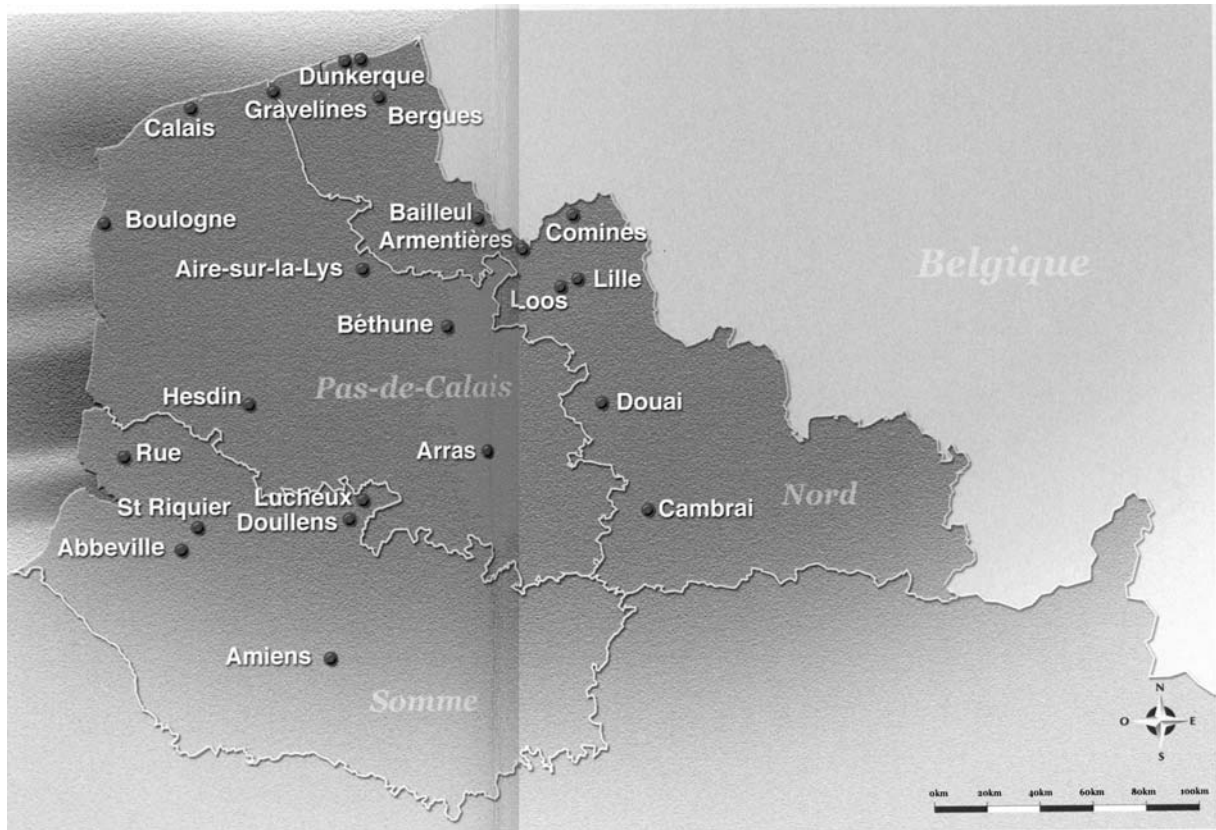
Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-05/29.COM/8B,
2. Approves the extension on the basis of the ***existing criteria ii and iv***.
3. Notes the changing of the name of the property (including the Belfry in Gembloux), which as extended becomes: “The Belfries of Belgium and France”.
4. Decides that the list of inscribed Belfries is hereupon closed.

ICOMOS, April 2005



Map showing the locations of the nominated properties



Belfry of Abbeville



Belfry of Armentières

The belfry in Gembloux (Belgium)

No 943 bis

1. IDENTIFICATION

State Party: Belgium

Name of property: The belfry in Gembloux

Location: Gembloux, Walloon region,
Province of Namur

Date received: 1st December 2004

Category of the property:

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *monument*.

The nominated property is a *minor modification* to the group of buildings inscribed on the World Heritage list on the basis of criteria ii and iv, in 1999: *Belfries of Flanders and Wallonia* (24 Belfries located in Flanders and 6 in Wallonia).

Brief description:

It should be remembered that belfries are both civic buildings and symbols. Indeed, they are a highly significant token of the conquest for civil liberties acquired through the dissolution of an abbey that had remained sovereign since the High Middle Ages. The belfry in Gembloux belongs to this category.

The belfry, which is located at the tip of a rocky spur, is the former bell-tower of the parish church of *Saint-Sauveur*.

Once released from ecclesiastical authority, the town of Gembloux acquired the church in 1797, deconsecrated it and sold it to a private owner who finally demolished it after 1825, sparing only the tower with its old *bells*.

It is consequently this tower, converted into a belfry and equipped with five new bells (including the tenor bell) in 1905 and a carillon in 1962, that symbolizes civil liberty and sets the tempo of public life.

Since 1906, it has been crowned with a spire bearing aloft the *coat of arms* of the town on its weathervane.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

This belfry is on a rectangular plan and has three storeys beneath its spire. Its thick walls of local sandstone rubble have a brick facing with blue stone surround and banding

in a composition typical of the “traditional style” of Gothic influence in Flanders and Wallonia:

Partially splayed base, quoins, dripstone moulding underlining recessed masonry, horizontal courses linking the louver windows, string-courses and cornice.

The large louver windows are framed in the same stone. A clock dial is positioned below each one.

To the East, the section of wall to which the nave of the former church was connected is in rubble stone.

Access to the ground floor, which was originally through the church, is now from the South.

The ground floor room had a wide opening into the nave through an arch. It is covered by a rubble stone, groined barrel vault.

An angled, intramural stairway occupies the southwest corner and opens out onto the floor of the first storey, under a high, rubble stone, barrel vaulted ceiling.

The facing of the second storey, which is slightly dwarfed beneath the beams bearing the belfry, was partly reconstructed after the fire in 1905 and has large modern recesses.

A wooden stepladder leads to the final storey where the bells are housed.

History

Gembloux, a small town in western Hesbaye on the northern limits of the province of Namur, bordering on the province of Brabant, is better known for its cutlery tradition and its Agricultural College than for its history, and even more so its archaeology.

Indeed, apart from a few Merovingian burial places in the vicinity of Gembloux, this region seemed to be largely deserted between the 5th and 7th centuries. In this landscape of fallow lands, it was only in the 7th century that the rocky spur dominating the river Orneau was occupied.

However, it was not until the 10th century that a Benedictine abbey was founded on the site. The abbey acquired substantial economic rights as early as the 11th century, as the village of Gembloux grew, and it was elevated to the rank of a regional trading centre.

The founder of the abbey is said to have constructed a dwelling with a keep on his land, at the same time a he was laying the foundations of the adjoining parish and abbatial church endowed with a bell-tower, and dedicated to Saint-Sauveur.

To this very day, the tower bears witness to the restorations carried out after the fires in 1136, 1185, 1678, and notably 1905.

An architectural study and an archaeological analysis suggest the following chronology as knowledge stands at the moment:

- *12th century* (particularly after the fires in 1136 then 1186): the first two storeys entirely in rubble stone; the ground floor arch and west window; the intramural stairway, the loopholes of the upper storey and the window onto the nave.
- *15th century* (in 1478, mention is made of a super-elevation for the “clock tower”): new barrel vault on the second level, and partial construction of the third storey.
- *16th century* (more towards the end): facing of the outer walls with brickwork and blue limestone

Comment: an engraving from 1605-1608 shows this “cladding”.

- *18th century* (between 1730-1735 and 1761, the year in which the restoration of the church was declared complete) after major fire damage in 1678; restorations, construction of the current bell storey in classical style beneath an octagonal spire.
- *Shortly after 1810* (when the “tower” was converted into a “belfry”): rebuilding of the base, blocking off of the former access between the ground floor and the nave, creation of a south entrance.
- *1887-1896*: massive restoration, including identical replacement of much of the brick facing from the 16th and 17th centuries, and creation of two frames for the southern and western clock dials.
- *1905-1906*: following the fire on 12 September 1905, interior repairs and construction of the current bulbous spire of the belfry.

Management regime

Legal provisions:

The belfry lies in the domain of the town of Gembloux.

The belfry is protected as a monument by the royal decree of 13 January 1977 and thereby benefits from the highest level of legal protection.

Moreover, the local town planning legislation defines the rules of protection and/or construction in the vicinity of the belfry and in the buffer zone.

The specific rules in this zone are applicable to dimensions, materials, layout and facings, along with preservation of noteworthy views of the belfry.

Management structure:

In its capacity as owner of the property, the *Municipal Council* manages the belfry.

The other management body in charge of issuing permits for work on the building and for public premiums and subsidies (along with technical supervision of the work) is the *Ministry of the Walloon Region*, Directorate General for Town Planning, Housing and Cultural Heritage.

Resources:

Upkeep and development are funded from the municipal budget.

For its part, in addition to supporting scientific and technical services, the Walloon Region grants subsidies for restoration (up to 80% of the total cost of work).

Justification by the State Party (summary)

This is a “proposal for a minor modification to the delimitation of the belfries of Flanders and Wallonia, in order for the belfry in Gembloux to be included in Wallonia”.

This proposal is submitted as an *extension* to the group of 30 belfries on the 1999 World Heritage list.

In justification, reference is made to the previously adopted criteria: ii and iv.

Lastly, like the other belfries, the belfry in Gembloux is an illustration of a movement of ideas and of cross-border political assertion.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

The property has not been visited, but after examining the documents supplied by the Belgian authorities ICOMOS is convinced that it meets the requirements of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

Conservation

Conservation history:

The belfry is a listed building and a public monument. Its preservation is ongoing and complies with:

- * Civic standards,
- * The assessment of the heritage service of the Walloon Region,
- * The opinion of the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments, Sites and Excavations.

State of conservation:

The building is in sound condition. There are neither fungi nor moulds. There is natural ventilation on all storeys. Special protection has been installed against bird damage.

The Gembloux Protection Service makes an in-depth inspection of the monument each year, checking the access stairways to the different storeys and the electrical installations.

On request, the Gembloux Tourist Office records the numbers of visitors to the monument.

Every 5 years, the Ministry of the Walloon Region updates the records on the condition of the listed monument.

Management:

The belfry and the buffer zone benefit from the highest level of protection by virtue of:

the sector plan, drawn up by the Walloon Region and approved by its Government on 17 May 1986,

the local town planning legislation and management scheme, drawn up by the town of Gembloux, adapted by its Municipal Council and approved by the Walloon Region in 1996,

the Royal Decree of 13 December 1976 laying down *general building legislation*, applicable in town planning protection zones,

the ministerial memo dated 4 August 1986 relative to *the application of atlases of the archaeological subsurface* of ancient urban centres.

Risk analysis:

- Development pressure:

As the historical centre in which the belfry is located is in an urban protection zone, any construction not integrated into the site is banned.

- Environmental restrictions:

The belfry is located in a pedestrian area and is therefore free from the harmful effects of road traffic.

- Natural disasters:

The property is equipped with a lightning conductor. Its location on a rocky spur protects it from flooding.

- Visitor/tourist constraints:

Public access is limited to a maximum of 30 visitors per group.

Visits are supervised and perfectly controlled.

Authenticity and integrity

The Gembloux belfry, which is located on a rocky spur whose integrity has been maintained over the centuries, is an ancient bell-tower of Romanesque origin. Its authenticity is not in question, despite the damage to the monument, its restoration and substantial refurbishments.

Like other belfries on the World Heritage list, the authenticity of this belfry has to be judged in accordance with its symbolic value, the fact that it has existed since the 11th century at least, and the continuity of its function.

Comparative evaluation

Belfries are an ensemble that can only be compared to each other.

Given its history and its characteristics, the belfry in Gembloux belongs with the belfries of Wallonia (6 properties) and Flanders (24 properties) already on the 1999 World Heritage list.

Quite rightly, the application for inscription assimilates the Gembloux belfry to the belfry in Thuin, a former bell-tower that is also of Romanesque origin, left isolated after destruction of the church to which it was functionally attached.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

Like the other belfries already on the list, the one in Gembloux is a highly significant testimony to the conquest of civil liberties (acquired during the revolution) when an abbey was dissolved.

It is the illustration of a movement of ideas and of political assertion.

Evaluation of criteria:

Belfries are eminent representatives of civic and public architecture in Europe. Through the variety of their “functional” forms and the changes they have undergone (from a “seigneurial keep” to a “communal keep”), belfries have been a vital aspect of civic architecture in Europe since the 13th century.

Criterion ii can therefore justify the inscription.

Belfries are unique constructions reflecting the development of civil authority that marked the history of Flanders (in its historical sense) from the Middle Ages onwards. Belfries are a unique incarnation of the desire for emancipation which led to significant local democracy in the history of humankind.

Criterion iv can therefore also justify the inscription.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

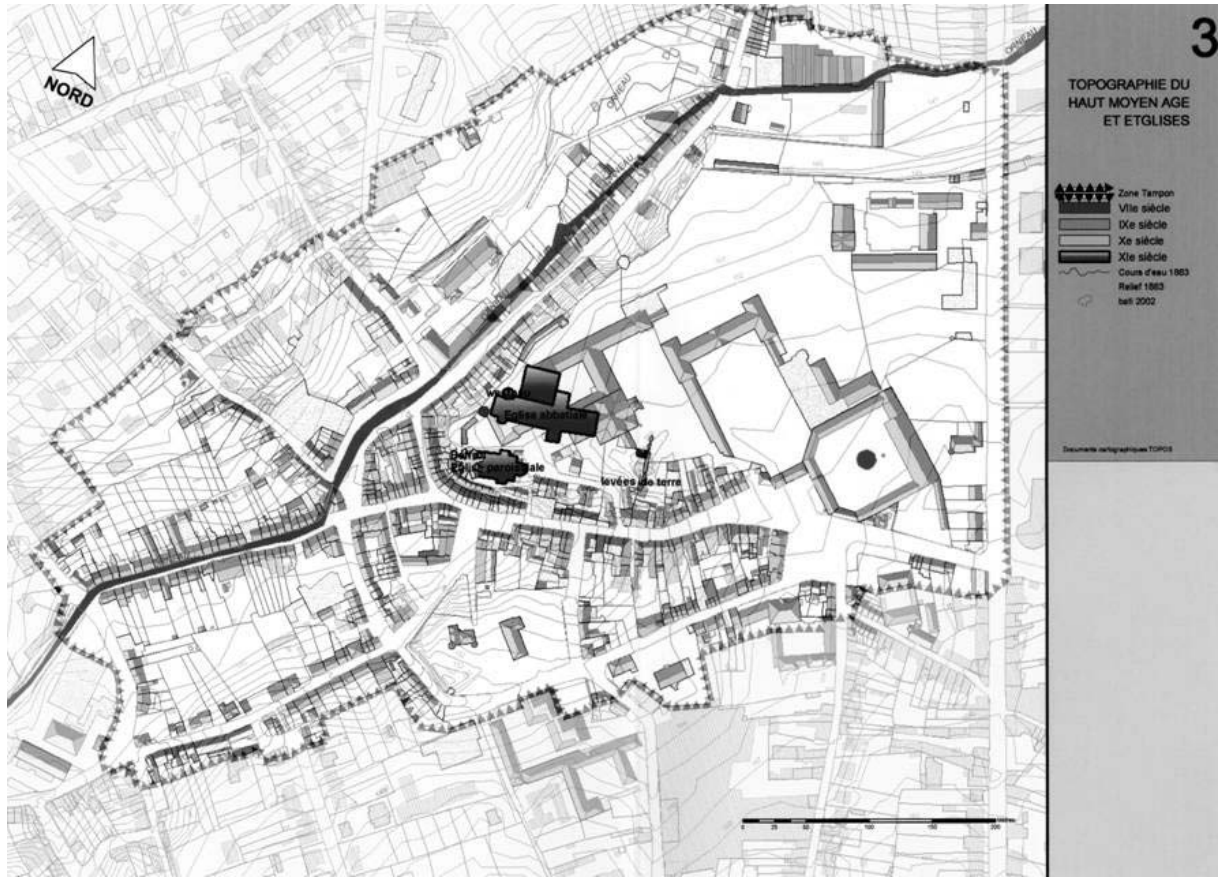
Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-05/29.COM/8B,
2. Approves this minor modification on the basis of the ***existing criteria ii and iv***.

ICOMOS, April 2005



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



Aerial view of the Belfry of Gembloux



The bells