

The Ename abbey – how it all began

The **Benedictine abbey of Ename** was founded in 1063 by Adela of France, daughter of King Robert II of France and married to Baldwin V, the Count of Flanders. Turning the ruined stronghold of Ename into an abbey was more than an act of piety only, it certainly had the political goal of avoiding further military use of this strategically placed fort and harbour.



15th century depiction of Baldwin V and Adela of France (photograph: Hugo Maertens)

At first, the monks used the palace building of the ruined stronghold as their first abbey building. They turned the Saint Salvator church, which was the **parish church of the portus of Ename**, into their abbey church, they only had to add a **bell tower**. They took down the ruined keep and used its stones and roof tiles to build the other abbey buildings around a courtyard. They added a **wall and gate**, a **farm building** and some **utility buildings**. By 1070, the Saint Salvator abbey was ready and the palace building was turned into a lavish **chapel for Our Lady**. The monks also operated a **ferry** to cross the river Scheldt, generating extra income for the starting abbey.

This first abbey was depicted about 200 years later in *Le Viel Rentier*, a rent book of the local lord. The area was excavated in 1985-1987, supported by major historical research. If you like to **walk the 11th century Ename abbey**, choosing walking mode in the 3D toolbar and proceed to explore the abbey complex and don't forget to find **the entrance** and **look inside the abbey** !



The first abbey depicted in *Le Viel Rentier* (courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

Interactive 3D view on the first Ename abbey (Visual Dimension bvba)