

### **Old Cavagliano Castle: knowledge and restoration**

by Ilaria Guaglio and Maria Chiara Valli

Tutor: Maria Ida Cametti

Co-tutor: Carlo Tosco

Located about 10 kilometres from Novara, where the morenic hills rise over the Terdoppio valley, the small village of Cavagliano has preserved many characteristics of the ancient area. These can be related to the age when it was fortified, that is between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century. There, the most outstanding building is the castle which lies on the top of a hill and dominates the fields surrounding it.

Our study aims to analyse the state of conservation of a historically relevant building which preserved some features still making it one of the most important sites of the fifteenth century in the area, despite its long-time-state of neglect. This is the reason why it concentrates on the building which is locally known as "Castello Vecchio" (old castle) and that stands in front of the road up to the castle. This construction has definitely very ancient origins and it might have been a part of the rural settlement of the castle.

In the 1970s restoration works were carried out in order to make the ancient wall structure visible, which had been covered in plaster for a long time. During the works the three ogival single-lancet windows opening on the main facade, and characterized by a gaudy brick decoration, were re-integrated with imitations of tiles which are similar to the originals.



Old Cavagliano Castle

Our analysis started from a preliminary study of historical cartography, through which we reconstructed the former aspect of the site. Thanks to a subsequent comparison with the present appearance, we noticed that its urban structure maintained ancient texture and layout.



*Catasto Teresiano*, plan of Cavagliano, 1723  
Archivio di Stato di Torino, Sezioni Riunite, all.A, pf.148, foll.XIII-XIX

In order to clarify the preservation and elaborate a building chronology of the building phases, a research in different archives was pursued, but only few information were obtained thereby.

The next phase consisted of a direct study on the building.

Metric survey was preceded by an abundant photographic reporting, essential for a good comparison with the present situation. Research was then extended to the fabric – barrel vault, lacunar, wooden roof cover, side-walls.

Structural relief was followed by an analysis of the preservation status, by surveying the eventual slits and material deterioration. A stratigraphic analysis completed the survey and made us identify four main working phases upon the castle facade. After individuating and verifying the main elements of the structure, we concluded that tension data are within admissible limits.



Old Cavagliano Castle  
Single-lancet window, baked clay decoration, 15<sup>th</sup> century

In order to complete this phase a deep research upon architectural baked clay was led. Comparative analysis of baked clay decorations on buildings in the region of Novara let us find out that the castle single-lancet windows probably date from the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The castle is now being restored.

Restoration works began in the 1970s and were authorized by the Soprintendente in charge at that time. Their goal is to turn the castle back into a residential place.

For further information:

Ilaria Guaglio, e-mail: [ila.g@mail.beer.com](mailto:ila.g@mail.beer.com)

Maria Chiara Valli, e-mail: [kialli@tin.it](mailto:kialli@tin.it)