



HISTORY OF THE CHÂTEAU DE MARÇAY

THE VILLAGE OF MARÇAY:

The commune of Marçay, situated in the canton of Richelieu and arrondissement of Chinon, was formerly part of the Loudunais. The parish, dedicated to St Peter, formed part of the diocese of Poitiers and the Jurisdiction of the archpriest of Loudun. The bishop of Poitiers presented to the living and the parish had 300 communicants.

The church offers nothing remarkable to see. The bell tower, which dates from the 12th century, nevertheless is fairly picturesque, and consists of a tower with two storeys, pierced by semicircular-arched windows with roman capitals on the lower storey, pointed arches on the upper, terminated by a stone arrow. It has recently been consolidated, since recent storms caused some stone detachment. The nave appears to have been rebuilt on several occasions; it was lengthened towards the 16th century. The door on the West facade is of renaissance date; the side door, a Tudor arch, is slightly older. On the north wall one can see a small window with an elongated trefoil, which proclaims the style of the 15th century. The other windows are more modern and have been reconstructed. The chapel in flamboyant style, founded by the family of Mondion d'Artigny, is dedicated to St John. It was bought towards the end of the last century by Mr Luc Gilbert, lord of Fontenay.

Although Marçay belongs to the diocese of Poitiers, the archbishops of Tours had important rights in the Parish. They were the patrons of the church, and received the tithes of corn, wine, pigs and lambs from the parish, where they were represented by a notary and a provost, who in this capacity could levy fines. In 1190 an agreement was made between Richard I, king of England, and Barthélemy, archbishop of Tours, on the rights to be collected from Chinon and Marçay. This ecclesiastical domain was completely distinct from the Château, lands and lordship of Marçay, a purely lay fief which never formed part of the temporalities of the archbishops of Tours, and to which we shall now turn.

LE CHÂTEAU DE MARÇAY :

Le château de Marçay et les terres qui en dépendaient ont appartenu à diverses familles. En 1213, ils avaient pour seigneur Gaudin de Rannefort, et vers 1260, Hugues de Beaussay. Ils passèrent ensuite dans la maison de Paye, dont un membre, Jean de Paye, a été archevêque de Tours au XIII^{ème} siècle. Le château et ses dépendances ne sortirent de cette famille que sous le règne de François 1^{er}. Par acte du 9 avril 1525, en effet, René de Paye, écuyer, seigneur de Marçay, et Jeanne de Vertou, sa femme, vendirent à René de Bastarnay, enfant d'honneur du roi, baron du bouchage, seigneur de Montrésor et du Bridoré.

Marçay était encore en la possession de la famille de Bastarnay à la fin du XVI^{ème} siècle. Le 3 Mars 1599, la dame Françoise de Bastarnay fit faire une visite pour constater l'état du chastel de Marçay-les-Chinon. Il fut reconnu que de nombreux dégâts avaient été causés au château par les gens de guerre de Mr. de Chavigny et par ceux de Mr. de la Trémolle, qui y avaient séjourné pendant l'année 1597. Les habitants de la paroisse de Marçay et ceux des paroisses voisines s'y retiraient avec leurs bestiaux, pour se mettre à l'abri des gens de guerre qui couraient la campagne, et avaient aussi participé aux dégradations.

Avec le XVII^{ème} siècle paraît une nouvelle famille. Le 28 mai 1607, messire Simon le Bossu, conseiller du roi, seigneur du château-fort, terre et seigneurie de Marçay, fait arpenter les domaines dépendants de ladite seigneurie. Il est évident que c'était un acquéreur récent qui voulait faire constater d'une manière précise l'état et la contenance de son nouveau domaine. Cet acte de 1607 renferme une description complète du château qui comprenait deux corps d'hostel, flanqués de trois grosses tours, deux rondes et une carrée (ou plutôt octogonale); un jeu de paume, basse-cour, caves, prison à mettre prisonniers, le tout entouré de hautes murailles et de fossés profonds. On mentionne le pont-levis qui donnait accès dans la cour. Simon le Bossu, laissa pour principal héritier Séraphin le Bossu, son fils, qui fut aussi seigneur de Marçay. Celui-ci se maria le 27 décembre 1629 avec Elisabeth Tronson, et décéda au mois d'avril 1657. Il eut pour enfants Alexandre-Louis le Bossu, son principal héritier, et plusieurs filles; deux d'entre elles Marie et Madeleine furent religieuses à Champigny. Alexandre le Bossu épousa Renée de Rivière, mais il paraît n'avoir pas laissé d'héritier mâle. A sa mort, Séraphin le Bossu, ruiné, avait laissé de grosses dettes. Le 21 Mars 1667, le château de Marçay et ses dépendances furent saisis à la requête des religieuses de Champigny, auxquelles Séraphin le Bossu n'avait jamais payé la pension de ses filles, religieuses en ce couvent.

On 7th April 1723, the lands and lordship of Marçay with all its dependencies were awarded to Dame Françoise Dreux, Widow of Messire Charles Odard, chevalier (knight) and Marie Dreux, her sister, the daughters of the late Guillaume Dreux, esquire, lord of Bellefontaine. This award was pronounced at the court of the bailiff of Loudun. The land of Marçay remained in the ownership of the Dreux family throughout the XVIIIth century. In 1789 it belonged to Dame Marie Anne Dreux, widow of Charles-Antoine-Henri d'Arcemale, baron de Langon, who held it by inheritance from Charles Dreux, her brother, who had died without issue. On Marie-Anne's death the château and lands were sold to Luc Gilbert de Fontenay, who left it to his heirs, the family of d'Espinay.

The Château of Marçay was a noble fief, directly under the royal domain and the Château of Loudun. Its buildings display the style of several periods. One of the round towers situated to the east is surmounted by battlements with elongated trefoils, which go back to the XVth century; the other round tower also has machicolation, but they have the flamboyant ornamentation of the early XVIth century. Another tower, octagonal in shape, and which once contained a staircase, was pierced by windows with leaf-like fringes, which also indicate the immediately pre-renaissance period. You reach the top of this tower by an elegant corbelled turret of the same period, gracefully suspended at the side of the main tower. From the top of this tower you can see the whole plain of the Loudunais, from the plateau of La Tour Saint Gelin as far as the hills that border the left bank of the river Thouet; you can see Loudun, Saint-Léger, Le coudray-Montpensier, etc. These three towers, with the central block of buildings and the West Wing which links them, form the old part of the Château. A second wing to the east and a fourth tower were added by Luc Gilbert. The moats have been filled in and the high walls partly destroyed; but enough remains to form an idea of the old layout of the courtyards and front courts.

In the outbuildings of the Château there was a chapel, now destroyed, which must have been contemporary with the octagonal tower.

THE LEGEND OF THE CHATEAU DE MARÇAY:

A rather curious legend is attached to the Château de Marçay.

One of the ladies of the Château used to become a monstrous werewolf at night. The farmer who shot her was terrified to find at dawn, instead of the werewolf he had seen in the night, a woman covered in a white shroud. He buried her in secret, and since that time the unfortunate chatelaine has come back every night dressed in her shroud, and crossed the courtyard uttering plaintive cries.

Since the Château de Marçay was opened as a hotel, our white lady has twice been seen by clients in the corridors of the Château. They said that she was a beautiful young woman of about twenty, and they all thought that she was one of the hotel staff, making an inspection tour.

We hope you may run into her while wandering around the property.



HISTOIRE, PATRIMOINE & MÉMOIRE DE MARÇAY

Since 2013, the Chateau de Marçay opened its doors to the association HPMM (History, Heritage and Memory of Marçay). This one works since to reconstitute, with the numerous documents which the Chateau has, its History and more widely the History of our municipality. The association publishes every year a bulletin, on sale in the reception. A beautiful way of to know more about it and at the same time, to contribute to an association!