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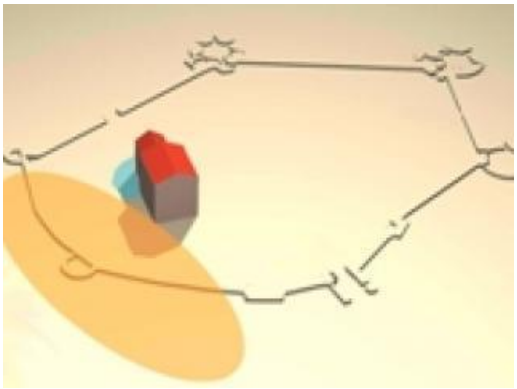
CHÂTEAU DE BLANDY

ENGLISH

HISTORY

From a simple fortified manor to a fortified castle during the Hundred Years' War, from the Renaissance residential castle to the Ferme des tours (Farm of the towers), the castle of Blandy-les-Tours has gone through the centuries and has counted many prestigious families among its owners. Restored by the Conseil général de Seine-et-Marne, this castle, rare example of medieval military architecture in Île-de-France, strikes up a permanent dialogue between patrimony and contemporary artistic creation.

The Merovingian and Carolingian Cemetery (7th-10th century)



The necropolis VII – Xth centuries and the former chapel

The site of Blandy has been occupied since Prehistory. During Antiquity, the territory was owned by Blandius wh o gave his name to the village of Blandy (Blandiacum in Gallo-Roman). Between the 6th and the 10th century, a merovingian* and a carolingian** necropolis spread between the Saint-Maurice church (present day church of t he village) and a former chapel which has now disappeared.

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* Line of kings descendants of Mérovée and Clovis who reigned from 511 to 751 AD.

**Line of kings descendants of Charlemagne who reigned from 751 to 987 AD.

The Fortified Manor (11th-13th century)

North part of the castle's enclosure Photo credit : Yvan Bourhis

The Viscounts of Melun built a **fortified manor** in Blandy which goes back possibly to the 11th century. In 1016, the earldom of Melun was incorporated in the royal domain. Such a stronghold was therefore the expression of royal power and held a strategic position in order to watch over the shared border with the impetuous Count of Champagne.

The surrounding walls still remain in the North part of the castle and are dated between the 11th and the 13th c entury. They follow a moon-shaped outline which includes two towers: the **square tower** (tower gate) and a sm all cylindrical tower, the **tower of justice**. A **square keep** was built opposite the tower-gate; its lower room may h ave been the storeroom. Dwellings were built along the surrounding walls. A ditch surrounded the manor.

The Fortified Castle (14-15th century)

The fortified castle in the 14th century

As from 1316, the Viscounts of Melun form an alliance with the Counts of Tancarville. New structural changes f ollowed by several construction campaigns during the 14th century transform the old stronghold into the **fortifi ed castle** we know today.

A fortified gate with a drawbridge reinforces the 13th century manor. A new**dwelling** is built in the courtyard. Th e back of its wall falls in to the initial ditch, replacing the old curtain wall. New building work (mid 14th century a nd 1371-1384) enables the extension of the surrounding walls and the reinforcement of the defences.

A new curtain wall and three new towers are built in the south. The old curtain wall, in the north, is raised and rei nforced. The new **keep**, main tower of the castle, has a stair tower (door and portcullis still standing) and a latri

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ne tower. The 6th level is the parapet walk, encircled by machicolations. The **watch tower** (with a parapet walk) and the **archival tower** (with a latrine turret) are a little less high. According to the desire of the Counts of Tanca rville, Blandy becomes a place of defence as well as a residence at the threshold of the Hundred Years' War.

View of the castle of Blandy, Mid XVIIth century, gouache on paper stuck on a wooden panel (property of the municipality of Blandy-les-Tours)

The Residential Castle (16th-17th century)

Painted coating, XVIth century, painting on plaster Place of discovery : seigneurial dwelling

For two and a half centuries after the Hundred Years' War, the castle belongs to the most illustrious families of t he kingdom : its owners are allied to the Orléans-Longueville, the Bourbons-Soissons, the Savoie and the Nemou rs families.

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The residence is refurbished according to the taste at the time : galleries, jeu de paume (tennis court), comfort f ittings, decoration of the dwellings, ornamental garden.

During these two centuries, the outline of the 14th century surrounding walls doesn't evolve in a significant way anymore. Within the enclosure of the castle, more and more buildings are added. The building work undertaken by the Orléans-Longueville aims to improve the comfort.

The « Ferme des tours » (Farm of the Towers) (1707-1883)

The "Ferme des Tours" (Farm of the Towers)

In 1707, the seigneury of Blandy is bought by the Marshall de Villars, owner of the castle of Vaux-le-Vicomte. Th e castle becomes a farm. The roofs of the towers are taken off and sold. During the French Revolution, the castle is so devoid of all signs of feudalism that it is not sold as a national property.

Towards the Restoration of the Castle (1883 to today)

Ruins of the castle of Blandy

In the middle of the 19th century, the castle ruins arouse the interest of local scholars and of the "Commission d es Monuments historiques". In 1883, the count de Choiseul-Praslin agrees to sell the castle to the municipality t hanks to the intervention of its mayor, Pierre-Charles Tuot. The ancient castle is saved being listed as a historical monument in 1889. Its repurchase by the Conseil général de Seine-et-Marne in 1992 is an important r eference point of its history, a date which will be remembered in the future.

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Restoration of the roofs

The first building work is carried out as from 1984. Volunteers clear the monument invaded by vegetation. A village hall created in the auditorium then enables the inhabitants of Blandy to regularly visit the site. The municipality entrusts Jacques Moulin, chief architect for historical monuments, with the study for the restoration of the castle (1986). With the help of the State and the Conseil général de Seine-et-Marne, the roofs of the archival tower and of the north tower are put back in place (1986-1988).

A Project for a Use

After the repurchase of the site by the Conseil général de Seine-et-Marne (1992), all the surrounding walls are restored as from 1993. Archaeological excavations follow : recognition of the ditches, prospecting of the enclosure.

The data, collected by the Service Départemental d'Archéologie (Archeaological service of the Département) (1998-2007), contribute to a better understanding of the site (former Merovingian necropolis), of the monument and its chronology. After a second preliminary study (1998), the last building campaign is prepared with the support of the Île-de-France Region.

This stage (2005-2007) is the most important : achievement of the restoration, construction of the reception building for the public, creation of a permanent exhibition room and of a visit itinerary (layout of the courtyard, visit of the towers and strolling along the curtain walls). Two rooms are also opened in the auditorium in order to host a cultural programme of quality.

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