

Presentation of the house
(VMF ... MH ... various)

Pierrefitte which means: stuck stone, erected stone, name of many localities of which one still exists on the Commune of Poussanges (region of Aubusson Felletin), where in 1370 Dauphine de Lestrangle married Roger-Hugues de Bort.

Both families are chivalric extraction and have been famous in the region for several centuries.

The Bort are very old chivalry, many were knights of the orders of the King. They participated in the 4th Crusade, founded the Monastery of Bort, and gave many knights of the Temple (they testified during the famous lawsuit brought to the Order by Philip the Fair).

They enjoy a considerable situation in the region: they have formed illustrious alliances, distinguished themselves in the many wars of their time, and derive important benefits from the privileged position of the city of Bort, the largest shopping center region (the annual product of the Leiden will rise in 1482 to 200 pounds tournaments).

The Lestranges, meanwhile, have very ancient seigniorial rights in Marche and Limousin, and in 1370, Dauphine counts, among her brothers, three eminent prelates (Guillaume in Rouen, Elie in Le Puy, and Raoul, Legate of Gregory XI (whose doctor was called Jean de Tournemire), himself a nephew of Clement VI, Pope Limousin who had promised to install in his province "a rose tree that would flourish forever").

The Bort are then installed in the castle of Ribeyrolles whose Doctor Longy said that there were some remains on the right bank of the Dordogne in front of the castle of Madic (nobody in Ribeyrolles no longer knows the exact location of this old facility).

But the newlyweds decide to restore an old fortress that was located here, in the middle of the meadow below the present castle, to which they probably give the name of Pierrefitte, named after the limousin appanage of Dauphine. It will become the residence of the family.

We are not surprised that they were conquered by the beauty of the site: from east to west the mountains of gold, dominated by the Sancy, the "Banne d'Ordanche" which hides the Puy de Dome at some 90 km. from her, one to west, the view is 80 km, bordered by the hills of Marche and Limousin.

A hundred years later, the old castle of Pierrefitte was to threaten ruin, or no longer be related to the fortune of the family and Charles de Bort, gentleman of the House of Charles VIII, husband of Antoinette de Saint Avit, order the construction on this site of the new castle Pierrefitte that you have in front of you.

The work begun in 1471 (about thirty years after the construction of the castle of Val that we can see from here), will last seven years and Antoinette complains that the food provided by its properties are insufficient to feed the workers paid by elsewhere from 10 to 20 deniers per day according to their abilities (a month's salary was equivalent to the price of a fat pig).

The foundations of the castle were built in 1471 by Robert Rigal, Master Mason. The work was then stopped for two years to allow settlement to occur. In 1474 the masonry was resumed, and the timber was cut in the forest of Pierrefitte. Pierre Bahut was then master mason, and Peyrat, the master carpenter. In 1478 the construction was almost finished. The roofs of towers were covered with tinsplate cemented with a putty in whose composition came pitch. The main building, which during the construction had been protected with straw, was covered with shale. (Dr. Longy's notes)

This splendid "package of candles" is originally slimmer than it is today. The towers, crowned with crenellated and jagged superstructures, whose remains are still noted, are five meters higher; the feet of the southern towers are cleared and protected by ditches today filled.

On the south facade, only the openings of the first floor exist.

The gateway to the north leads into the central tower that houses the spiral staircase serving the three floors and terraces.

The letters patent of Louis XI, dated 1483, indicate that Charles de Bort, lord of Pierrefitte, "Owns, because of its castle, high and low jurisdiction" and that "the castle is old and very old foundation by people of giant and noble house". Charles de Bort enjoyed such a respect that Pope Sixtus V (who had the

Sistine Chapel built) granted him in 1474 a writ conferring on him the right to have a portable altar, and to have Mass celebrated there during his travels, for him, his family and his servants.

Charles's powerful relations will be very useful to him to resist the attacks of his neighbor, cousin, suzerain and nevertheless rival, Gilbert de Chabannes who owns the powerful castle of Madic whose ruins (property of our friends Couturon) still dominate the Dordogne, 6 km from here, below the Organs de Bort. In 1481, Gilbert de Chabannes to attract people on his lands around Madic and divert to his advantage the commercial activity of the city of Bort, takes advantage of an absence of Charles de Bort to build (with the woods of Pierrefitte !) a bridge over the Dordogne and a port at the foot of his castle. These books were demolished the following year on royal instructions (letters patent given to Tours January 27, 1482) and the town of Bort again became the undisputed center of commercial transactions of the Country.

For 300 years, ten generations of Bort succeed Pierrefitte. At the time of the Revolution, Léonard-Antoine de Bort, owner of Pierrefitte, is incarcerated in Ussel, then relaxed. He will die leaving only girls and a precarious material situation. In 1861 the last descendant of the eldest branch of this family died, Octavian of Bort, brother of the previous one, single, knight of Malta, taken prisoner by the troops of Bonaparte in 1798 with the seat of Valletta. He will be Mayor of the city of Bort under the Restoration, from 1816 to 1830.

In 1793 Pierrefitte, whose owner is in prison, will become an easy prey for an equipped with revolutionary thugs who were called "Marseillais". Probably excited by the feudal aspect of the building, they invest the premises, climb on the roofs and put down the most fragile elements of roofs and superstructures. Dr. Longy says they had to give up their work of destruction because of the strength of the walls.

The house will remain uninhabitable for nearly 40 years. It had been sold since 1822 by Sophie Antoinette de Lagrange, daughter of Léonard-Antoine cited above, to an Antoine Delamas, , to be finally bought (for 42 500 F) in 1830 by the young Eleanor Clara Ruel La Motte who had married an old Monsieur de Bailleul, Marquis de Croissanville, 40 years his senior ... It is likely that at the end of his life, the old Marquis saw in this marriage only an opportunity to endow the young Eléonore Clara, whose feelings he probably knew for a young man from the region, Henri-Louis de Tournemire, whose family, several times allied with the Bort, lived nobly but poorly in Margerides, some miles far from here. The old marquis died in 1833 and two years later, Eleanor married her loving François de Tournemire. The chimney of the salon carries in the middle the arms of the young household, on the left those of the Marquis de Bailleul, and on the right those of the family of Bort.

Henri-Louis was son and grandson of two Pierre de Tournemire, who had both been part of a 15 Tournemire tribe imprisoned at Ussel during the Revolution. One of them, Joseph de Tournemire, called Jouselou, or sometimes "the playful zealous of the aristocracy", left bad memories to his guardians "He abused his condition of prisoner to play the clarinet to any time of night and by express to the windows from which the sound could be heard from afar ". "All that is not forbidden in the law can not be prevented," he had read in the new Constitution! He was confiscated the instrument. He also liked to catapult his dishes over their heads, dragging them onto a bench that he used as a launching pad.

These Tournemire descended from an old family, already installed under the name of Tornamira in high Auvergne in the Gallo-Roman era (10th century) . Tournemire dominated the valley of the Dore, a few km from Saint Cernin. They stayed there "Mighty Lords" until, ruined by the crusades, military equipments, and their quarrels for nearly two centuries with the Anjony (a family that became from the fifteenth century an enviable place in the aristocracy of Upper Auvergne, and to whom they sold recklessly over the years, land, quarters of dungeon and other seigniorial rights), they had to leave fief of origin to come wander in our region, "richer of parchments than of ecus", as said my uncle Guillaume, the elder brother of my grandfather.

Henry-Louis and his wife Eleonore undertook the necessary repairs: the central building is covered with slates Travassac, the towers are "equalized" and protected pepper covered tile.

The household has three sons, the eldest, François, married in 1865 Berthe de Seroux Bienville and succeeds

Henry-Louis.

We keep in the living room the portrait of his wife, my great-grandmother, all petite, in a black lace dress that is still waiting in a trunk trunk of the shoulders more frail than those of the current generation.

Francis fills the ditches that protected the south facade of the castle, builds the terrace that constitutes; today the main courtyard and the same door opens the current door and the windows of the ground floor.

In 1918, François and Berthe succeeded Uncle Guillaume, my grandfather's older brother. Naval officer, he was born in 1866. It was he who built the ditches to clear the loopholes that alone illuminate the excellent cellars of the house.

In June 1944, the Corrèze lives tragic hours: the division SS "Das Reich" which has been ordered to rally since Montauban the front of Normandy is delayed by the hand-operated by the resistance ... The various maquis FFI , FTP, AS, who often maintain conflicting relationships, multiply the hand-in-hand investments of weapons depots, set fire to "Vichy" installations, murder "collaborators" and German officers, sometimes in atrocious conditions (it is reported that one of them was devoured by pigs). German troops are unleashed. The disappearance of Sturmabführer Kampfe, under conditions still poorly understood today, is perhaps at the origin of the massacres of Tulle (99 hanged on June 9, Oradour (642 inhabitants burned alive June 10) ... The big The "Das Reich" division resumed its northward march on June 12, but General von Jesser's Brigade remained in place to "clean" the resistance nests.

On June 30th, the AA 1000 reconnaissance battalion, which had lost about twenty men during the June 7th ambush in the Chavanon gorges near Bourg-Lastic, arrives near Bort les Orgues where our family house is located. The commons of Pierrefitte were then used as refuge to the french guerrillas who abandoned the position a little hastily at the approach of the german army.

After carrying out a large maneuver that could hardly justify the resistance that could oppose them my uncle and his wife (they were 160 years between them), the German unit commanded by a young "hauptman" invested the place.

Uncle Guillaume is then summoned by the German officer who reads the instructions he is carrying:

weapons were found abandoned in the barn, the castle and its outbuildings must

to be burned and its inhabitants shot. Before he dies, the uncle asks permission to retire for a moment and comes down half an hour later in full naval officer's uniform.

The captain of the Reich has uses. It freezes in an impeccable attention to you to greet properly a superior officer in rank. Uncle Guillaume then offers to accompany him for one last time to go around his house.

As a good historian, he tells the story of Bort and Tournemire with talent in the Middle Ages and the following centuries. Pieces after pieces, the German meets our ancestors and their history ...

The visit is punctuated by long stations in front of their portraits: parents, grandparents, brothers and uncles often in uniform. They served in particular on the Austrian front in 1870 then of course in 14/18. The house piously keeps the letters addressed to Pierrefitte throughout the conflicts.

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My uncle also tells how, captain of a frigate, he had returned to service in 1914 to command a destroyer during the Great War. He explains how, in 1916, he had taken great risks, saved the crew of a German submarine he had just sunk ... and how, a few years later, he had been splendidly received in Germany by the German commander who had received him at home in uniform (he had meanwhile become "kapitan zur see") and had given him a framed picture of the submarine he commanded at the time, crew at attention ... remember that the uncle kept in his office for more than 20 years.

Trapped, uncomfortable, the officer hesitates a long time, then courageously makes his decision: the execution will not take place, he will sacrifice the only "Grange Vieille" to the fury of his leaders ... As we

already had a "New Barn", the barn rebuilt a few years later will become for my children "the Red Barn". I have always hoped to see this honest-man-officer returning as a tourist who may have paid with his life for having contravened orders.

Uncle Guillaume died in 1961, he had never had a car. At 93, he still harnessed his mare to go alone to deliver the cheeses he demanded "good farmers and loyal merchants" in settlement of his rents. It is also in this crew that just after the war he came to Clermont to get the "little Guillaume" I was, regularly leaving the monastery in which he was a boarder to visit his old uncle and godfather, inexhaustible storyteller stories of old times.

In 1932, the uncle who had no children, had written to his nephew & godson, my father, then officer of the AI on the borders of the Moroccan Sahara. He was growing old, had to make decisions because of his death that he felt was next; he proposed to adopt him legally to be his successor to Pierrefitte. "You take 24 hours to think if you think it useful, if you accept, send a telegram to the Commander of Tournemire, - Always good - William, if not, address it to the Count of Tournemire, - "Am in good health - Guillaume" this code answered his desire not to keep his wife aware of his project. I found the rough draft of the letter in the uncle's papers, carefully pinned to a telegram addressed to the "Commander". I also found the letter and the notice given 4 months later, to the officer of the spahis by the vaguesestre of Erfoud, in the papers of my father. Uncle Guillaume died ... but thirty years after this mail exchange, in 1960.

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A few steps from the front door, a small two-seater kiosk, very friendly, masked by a lilac, had taken the place of cabinets since, for sanitary reasons, the old watchtowers had, 50 years earlier, been decommissioned. "At home you eat very well" wrote a correspondent in his castle letter, "but the opposite is wrong, I was very cold!"

In fact Uncle Guillaume had just done a huge work to give access to toilets on first and 2nd floor ... "under the lilac", as we called the spot, was only used from the ground floor.

Uncle Guillaume warmed his house "just a little", his visitors, frozen, sometimes had the comfort of seeing a small flame flickering behind the mica of the "Mirus" installed in the living room, but the uncle cheated a little, he placed a candle in the stove!

In less than a year Pierrefitte has a new look and adapts to his new vocation.

My father had 7 children who will give him, in 20 years, a troupe of 32 little children, many of whom will regularly spend their holidays in Pierrefitte. They share today with some 700 other descendants of the first Tournemire in Pierrefitte the memories attached to our old "pack of candles".

I wish my son (whom you guessed it bears the name of ... Guillaume!) and his successors, to find the same pleasure to live ... and tell yours the rest of the adventure.

