750 Years of History at Bogard

One doesn't own a place. It is the place that owns him.

Welcome to the Château de Bogard!

In the pages that follow, we will tell you the extraordinary story of a place that has come down through time from the Middle Ages to the present day, through the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution, a place whose history, local and familial, crosses paths with the great History of Brittany and of France.

This history of Bogard, forgotten for more than 200 years, was discovered by chance in July 1964 when a few dusty floorboards were lifted in the château's attic, finding old documents hidden beneath a pile of wood, a treasure that would reveal to us the secrets of the place.

We speak of the History of Bogard, but we should rather speak of the "histories" of the place. For the history of the Château de Bogard is in fact the sum of many family adventures, of heroic and romantic destinies that for more than 750 years have followed the upheavals of the great History.

Through this document, we will also give you the keys to understanding the architectural features that make this place exceptional. For the Château de Bogard holds within it various symbols inspired by the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment and by eighteenth-century Freemasonry, elements invisible to the uninitiated, but which we will reveal to you during your visit.

And for those who love tales of ghost, we will also tell you the story of an aristocrat who has haunted the tower of this château since the 17th century…

All the information we share with you in this account comes from the private archives of Bogard and from the Departmental Archives, from meetings with specialists in various historical and Masonic subjects, and from a whole body of research carried out over more than 40 years by Messrs Harald and Baudoin Capelle, the two brothers who own the estate. Everything you are about to read is therefore historically true. Except perhaps the existence of the ghost, though who knows…

As with all good stories, the tale always begins with: "Once upon a time". So, once upon a time there was a place called Bogard…

1274

Origin of the name
Family genealogies
Nobility of the sword in the Middle Ages
Nobility of the robe in the Renaissance

The official history of Bogard begins in 1274. The place is older still and the memory of those who lived on this land is lost in the mists of History. But the oldest document found that mentions the name “Bogar” and its manor house dates from 1274. That was 750 years ago.

It is a “charter”, a contract by which the owner at the time: Alain Le Noir, knight, son of Guillaume Le Noir, lord of La Ville Payen (today La Ville Pain in Quessoy), baron of Yffiniac and owner of a manor house at “Bogar” attached to the castellany of Moncontour, undertook to pay a certain number of tithes to the Abbey of Saint-Melaine in Rennes. Tithes were at that time a tax on harvests that had to be paid to the Church. This legal document is therefore the oldest historical record attesting to the existence of a manor house on this place called “Bogar”.

At that time, the fief of Bogar was attached to the town of Moncontour, an important medieval town under the authority of the Duke of Penthièvre, himself a vassal of the Duke of Brittany.

So we are in the 13th century, in the heart of the Middle Ages. Saint Louis has just died. Philip III the Bold succeeds him. The age of the Crusades is drawing to a close. Cathedrals are rising all over France. The Sainte-Chapelle in Paris is under construction, as is the cathedral of Saint-Brieuc, commissioned by Bishop Guillaume Pinchon, who would later be canonised and become Saint Guillaume. The Catholic Church of Rome reigns as absolute master over the crown of France. The Holy Inquisition severely punishes heretics and the ungodly. It is a pious age. There is no salvation outside faith in God and in Jesus Christ. It is also a rough age. Territorial struggles between baronies are settled by the sword. It is also the time of the troubadours, of the first romances and of courtly love, which taught knights to temper their amorous ardour to better respect and win the hearts of women.

Alain Le Noir is thus the owner of the manor house at the place called Bogard. It is a “juveigneurie” that his father had left him as an inheritance. A juveigneurie is a fief bequeathed to a younger son. And, as was customary at the time, the family took the name of the land it lived on. Hence the “de Bogar” family, which would reside on this land until the end of the 16th century.

We know the history of this family and of this name thanks to the “charter” we have already mentioned, but also thanks to the “aveux” and the “montres”. The “aveux” were declarations of assets. And the “montres” were military musters held to take stock of the armed forces available in a territory. The nobles of the day were thus sometimes summoned in the King’s name to their parishes so that their weaponry could be counted and inspected. They had to come armed, and the condition of their military equipment was checked. The nobles also had to declare their income. The least wealthy had an annual income of 10 livres in silver. The wealthiest had up to 100 livres. If you had 1,000 livres, that was enormous. So we know of the existence of these families through the “aveux” and the “montres”, which are archival documents.

More info about the “Montres”

In the 14th century, the kingdom of France abounded in men-at-arms, accustomed to waging war but not necessarily well equipped or disciplined. Soldiers could also easily flee the battlefield or turn into looters during periods of truce. Moreover, since taxes were hard to collect, waste in military spending had to be avoided. Yet it was common at the time for soldiers to present themselves in several companies, lending one another their equipment in order to draw several wages — or even for nobles to claim rights they did not have so as to avoid paying certain taxes. To know and control his troops better, King John II, known as “John the Good” (1319–1364), established on 30 April 1351 the principle of a census of the armed forces available in his kingdom. This is what was called a “montre” (a muster). The King thus obliged his vassals throughout the kingdom to take part in a census of their military equipment. The nobles were gathered in their parishes in order to assess the forces available for the defence of the kingdom of France. They had to come armed so that their military equipment could be inspected and inventoried. The equipment required depended on each man’s rank and fortune. Exemptions were possible, but those who failed to appear faced penalties. Soldiers also had to belong to a company under the command of a captain. Barons, vassals and rear-vassals were all treated alike and incorporated into the companies. The captains of these units were then responsible for the order and readiness of their troops and were accountable to the constables and marshals. Horses were branded to prevent the same mounts from being shown in two different units. Wages were paid on the spot at the end of the muster, which made it possible to pay the fighting men only once, and only if they were properly equipped. This ordinance of King John II created the principle of a genuine royal army in place of poorly disciplined seigneurial troops.

More info about the “Aveu”

In seigneurial law, the aveu was a written declaration that a vassal had to provide to his overlord when he came into possession of a fief (by purchase or inheritance). In it he acknowledged the property he held from his overlord and described his rights and duties towards him. The aveu was accompanied by a detailed description of the property making up the fief, including the lands owned by the vassal, the amount of annual rent due for the use of that property and the obligations attached to it. If the land was noble, the aveu stated the amount of rent owed by the vassal to the overlord. Noble lands were originally the lands of vassals who followed their overlord to war, and as such they enjoyed tax exemptions. Commoners’ lands did not enjoy these exemptions. Noble lands could be owned by commoners, who granted their use in exchange for labour services (corvées), a share of the harvest and/or money. Conversely, the estates of nobles comprised a mixture of noble and common lands. The aveu could also be the declaration of assets on the death of a relative. One would then “avow” what the deceased had owned in order to settle the estate.

Origin of the name “Bogard” (or Bogar)

From the very beginning “Bogar” was written with or without a “d”, depending on the document. In the Middle Ages, proper names often had a fluctuating spelling. Over time the spelling “Bogard” became fixed, as it is written today, with a “d”.

But where does the name “Bogard” (or Bogar) come from the name of the place that this family of men-at-arms would bear?

The linguist Albert Dauzat, in his book “Le village et le paysan de France” (1942), states that “Gaulish estates, which were centres of land clearance, were designated by compound names, the first element of which referred to a feature of the estate and the second to the method of cultivation”. It is therefore thought that, etymologically, the name Bogard comes from the combination of the word “bogue”, of

Gaulish origin, which designates the husk of the chestnut, and “ardere”, a Latin verb meaning “to burn”. There must originally have been a chestnut wood here that was cut down and burned to make way for a first dwelling on the site.

The village of Quessoy, to which the Bogard estate belongs administratively, is likewise thought to derive from the Latin “cassanetum”, meaning “oak forests” (note that Quessoy originally belonged to the Gallo country, on the western frontier where the Romance dialects met the Celtic tongues).

In Latin you have the verb “essarter”, which means “to clear land”. Hence the many places called “Les Essarts”. Other places have names ending in “-igny”, because “ignis” in Latin means fire. All these names recall the medieval period, when land was cleared and burned in order to cultivate and enrich the soil, for ashes are a fertiliser. In the Middle Ages, “slash-and-burn” farming was practised to maximise agricultural yields. It is a practice that still exists today in many countries.

A few words also on the origin of the name “Bretagne” (Brittany). At the time of Julius Caesar’s conquest of Gaul, present-day Brittany was called “Armorica”. This Gaulish name designated the people who lived near (are) the sea (mor). The inhabitants of the region were therefore Armoricans. In Roman times the name “Britannia” designated present-day Great Britain (England). And the Britons were the Celtic inhabitants of the island of Britain. In medieval Latin, a distinction was made between “Lesser Britain” (Britannia Minor, today the region of Brittany in France) and “Greater Britain” (Britannia Major, today England). Hence the adjective “britannicus”, which gave “British”. At the end of the 3rd century, the Armoricans had to face Saxon and Frankish raids. Towns were then fortified and citadels built to defend the coastline better. It was at this time that the chief towns took the names of their peoples. Thus Vannes, Nantes, Rennes and Corseul owe their names to Gaulish peoples. In 410, Rome abandoned Britain. The Roman Empire needed all its resources to protect the Rhine frontier. After the island of Britain (England) was invaded in the east by the Angles and Saxons, Germanic peoples, and in the west by the Irish, Britons (mainly from Cornwall and Wales) crossed the Channel to settle in Armorica. These Germanic invasions thus changed the names of countries: Britain became England (the Land of the Angles), Armorica became Brittany (the land of the Britons who came from the great island) and Gaul became France (it too invaded by a Germanic people, the Franks). The Britons also settled in other regions. They did not only give their name to Brittany: several places in France bear a name derived from the Breton origin of their inhabitants: Bretteville (in Normandy), Brétigny, Brétignolles, Brethenay, Bretonneux… Some even settled in Galicia (north-western Spain), where a monastery bears the name Santa María de Bretoña.

Family successions

It is worth knowing that the various manor houses built at Bogard, and later the château, were passed down for 750 years exclusively by inheritance or by marriage. Women, moreover, played a major role throughout the history of these transfers. The only time in its entire history that the property passed outside a line of family descent was in 1962, when Antoinette Capelle bought it. But apart from this single sale, the property was passed down for 750 years exclusively by inheritance or marriage within four great Breton families: the de Bogar family, whom we have already mentioned; the Le Métayer family; the de La Noüe family, of whom we shall speak at greater length; and the du Plessis de Grenédan family.

The de Bogar family, for more than 300 years

The de Bogar family, whose earliest mention dates back to 1274, would occupy this place for more than 300 years, from at least the 13th century until the 16th century. It was a family of feudal lords who mainly produced men “of arms”, officers who took part in many of France’s battles and paid for this

military commitment with their blood, but also churchmen and officers of justice. The whole line of descent of the de Bogar family can be traced in the aveux and montres we have mentioned.

Historians (A. de La Borderie and B. Pocquet, in the book “Histoire de Bretagne” published in 1985) record the participation of Guillaume and Olivier de Bogard in the battle of Gicoint in 1419 and then in that of Pontorson in 1470, between the English and the French during the 15th-century wars of succession in Brittany. Likewise, in 1470 Guillaume de Bogard is mentioned as accompanying Jean de Rohan, brother-in-law of the Duke of Brittany, in a delegation to Louis XI to organise military action once again against the English.

And so we come to the end of the 16th century, when the last descendant of the de Bogar family would be described as “more of a Leaguer than any”. Why this nickname, “more of a Leaguer than any”? What does it refer to? We are in the 1580s, in the period of the Wars of Religion between Catholics and Protestants. The Catholics united in the Holy League would not accept the idea of a Protestant king such as Henri IV. And this religious and political opposition would plunge the kingdom of France into a bloody fratricidal war.

The Wars of Religion were terrible in Brittany between 1585 and 1595. Moncontour was at the time a town with a large community favourable to the future Protestant king Henri IV. The last descendant of the de Bogar family, Jean de Bogar, “more of a Leaguer than any”, was for his part an ultra-Catholic. His nickname conveys the fierceness of religious divisions during that painful period. We shall return to this page of history a little later with another famous figure from the de La Noüe family.

The line of the Bogard name comes to an end in 1621, when Jean de Bogard, Seneschal of Moncontour, died childless.

The Le Métayer family

Through marriage, the Bogard property passed in the 17th century to the Le Métayer family. Rollande de Bogard, lady of Bogard and of Le Bois-Hamel in Plédran, married Mathurin Le Métayer (Le Métaër). Mathurin was a first name often given in the region at the time; the church in Moncontour is also dedicated to Saint Mathurin. Their union produced an only daughter, Anne, who in 1632 married Henri de La Noüe. The Métayer family therefore owned Bogard for only a few years.

The de La Noüe family

The name La Noüe may also be written La Nouë, as recorded by the historian Frédéric Saulnier in his book “Le Parlement de Bretagne, 1554–1790”, published in 1909. A cousin branch of the family that left for the New World, to Quebec, in the 18th century still bears the name today in the spelling La Nouë.

Once again Bogard passed down through the women. Anne Le Métayer, heiress of Bogard, married Henri de La Noüe, steward to the Duchess of Orléans, himself from a family of ancient knightly lineage and local notables established in Touraine, at the Château de Vair. From then on, after more than three centuries of knights-at-arms, Bogard passed to the nobility of the robe.

What is meant by “nobility of the robe”? In Ancien Régime France, the nobility of the robe comprised all the nobles who held government offices, chiefly in justice and finance. These men, particularly the jurists, had to have studied at university and therefore wore the robe or gown of university graduates. They were nicknamed “robins”, men of the robe, and formed the “noblesse de robe”. The expression “nobility of the robe” would later be contrasted with “nobility of the sword”, although the latter expression appeared later.

The La Noüe family was a family of parliamentarians who, across eight generations, played an important role in the Parliament of Brittany. There were indeed six consecutive generations of La Noüe de Bogard who served as Councillors in the Parliament of Brittany, themselves following two generations of La Noüe de Vair, including Guillaume de La Noüe de Vair, who was advocate to King Charles IX (1550–1574) and intendant of the King's armies in Brittany. The de La Noüe family thus flourished in the nobility of the robe for eight generations.

Generation after generation, the La Noüe descendants increased their financial and landed power. The family's social rise reached its peak with the couple François-Guillaume de La Noüe and Félicité Meslé de Grandclos, who in the 18th century built the Château de Bogard that you see today, which has remained unchanged ever since.

But before telling you more about the famous couple Guillaume-François de La Noüe and Félicité Meslé de Grandclos and their architectural project, let us continue with the family successions that followed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The du Plessis de Grenédan family

Guillaume-François de La Noüe and Félicité Meslé de Grandclos had three children, including a daughter, Pauline, who passed the property on through marriage to Louis-René-Marie de Grenédan. The Château de Bogard, its 400 hectares of land and several farms then belonging to the estate thus passed to the du Plessis de Grenédan family, a family well established in the region that already owned many properties around Quessoy. The Capelle family. The château, with 40 hectares of farmland and woodland, was then sold for the first time in its entire history in 1962 and bought by Antoinette Capelle, née Vendeuvre, wife of Philippe Capelle. The Capelle family is of Norman origin, and the chances of life brought it to Brittany, a magnificent adopted region that has become its new homeland. The château has since been taken over by the family's two sons, Harald and Baudoin, who have brought out the best in the historic heritage of the place.

We shall speak at greater length about the Capelle family and its contribution to restoring the historic heritage of the Château de Bogard in the last chapter of the book. For now, let us continue the chronological account of this visit…

A few words on the history of Brittany in the Middle Ages: at the end of the Roman Empire, Armorica (Lesser Britain) saw an influx of population due to the immigration of island Britons (from Great Britain), who had themselves been driven from their lands by the invasions of the Angles, Saxons and Irish. The region then became a collection of principalities that were united in the 9th century in an attempt at a Kingdom of Brittany. But this kingdom did not survive the wars of succession, and from 938 to 1547 Brittany became a duchy dependent on the kingdom of France. The duchy corresponded to the present-day region of Brittany plus a large part of the Loire-Atlantique department, where the city of Nantes and the former Pays de Retz are located. The dukes of Brittany maintained alliances with both the French and the English royal families, most often through marriages with princesses of the respective nobilities. In the game of feudal ties, Brittany became an important stake between the King of England (who claimed the throne of France) and the King of France. Relations between the duchy and its neighbours depended essentially on the personal relations between their rulers. The policy of the dukes of Brittany was often conducted independently, but was sometimes dominated by the King of England and sometimes by the King of France. Taking advantage of the difficulties the royal power faced from the great feudal lords, the dukes of Brittany maintained political independence from the King of France, particularly from the 14th and 15th centuries onwards with the accession of the Montfort dynasty. This policy of emancipation reached its height under the reign of Francis II, Duke of Brittany, who expelled the representatives of the royal administration from his territory. This expulsion plunged

Brittany into war against the royal power. Francis II suffered major military defeats that led to the peace treaty known as the Treaty “of Sablé”, signed with Charles VIII, King of France, on 19 August 1488. The King then took possession of the region, regarded at the time as a “colony” of the kingdom of France. Mistreated by the royal forces, the Bretons went to war again for three years, until in December 1491 Charles VIII married Anne of Brittany, thus ending the war. The definitive annexation of Brittany to the kingdom of France was sealed by the signing of the Edict of Union in 1532. The duchy of Brittany then became a province of the kingdom of France, until its administrative division in 1790 into five departments: Côtes-du-Nord (renamed Côtes-d’Armor in 1990), Finistère, Ille-et-Vilaine, Loire-Inférieure (renamed Loire-Atlantique in 1957) and Morbihan. Since then, the Brittany region has been reduced administratively to just four departments, which still fuels much debate today over whether or not Nantes is part of Brittany…

1512

The old manor house known as the “Pavillon Neuf”
The Wars of Religion in Brittany
François de La Noüe, “Iron Arm”
Anne of Brittany and the Cordelière with Golden Roses

The Château de Bogard still has a tower that was part of an old manor house known as the “Pavillon Neuf” (the New Pavilion). This manor was built or enlarged in the 15th century after one of the members of the Bogard family went with the brother of the Duke of Brittany as part of a delegation to Louis XI to conduct talks on rapprochement between Brittany and France (see again the note on the history of Brittany at the end of the first chapter, which explains the shifting alliances of the dukes of Brittany, sometimes with the King of England, sometimes with the King of France). It is thought that in return for this service he was rewarded with a large sum of money, which enabled him to build or enlarge this old manor house.

The old manor house was thus a Renaissance-style pavilion with a tower, which would be preserved and incorporated into the new architecture of the château, and whose bulb-shaped roof reflects the Italian influence of the period.

You will find this style of roof at the Château de la Touche-Trébry, and also at the Château de Valençay, which belonged to Talleyrand (diplomat and man of influence under the Revolution, the Empire and the Restoration). This 16th-century tower is the oldest part of the château today. It houses a wooden spiral staircase rising over four levels: three living floors and a fourth for the attic. Beside the entrance door you can also see a crossbow loophole, which allowed the tower’s entrance to be defended against unwelcome visitors. At that time the property still belonged to the “de Bogar” family. And, as chance would have it, Guillaume-François de La Noüe, who would build and live in the Château de Bogard in the 18th century and was a fervent Catholic, was also related to another famous figure of the de La Noüe family, a historical figure of great importance to Protestants: one François de La Noüe, known as “Iron Arm” (“Bras de Fer”), who fought at the siege of Lamballe in 1591 and would die of his wounds at Moncontour…

François de La Noüe, known as “Iron Arm”

Please note that in the de La Noüe family, the men were often named “François” or “Guillaume”. This does not make historical research any easier and can lead to confusion. So pay close attention to the second first name sometimes attached to tell the figures apart — for example: François, the famous champion of the Protestant cause in the 16th century, and Guillaume-François, a Catholic, who commissioned and owned the Château de Bogard in the 18th century.

François de La Noüe, known as “Iron Arm”, was also nicknamed “the Huguenot Bayard”. Bayard was the famous knight “without fear and beyond reproach” who knighted Francis I at Marignano. Marignano, 1515: every French person knows the date. The French are very proud of this victory over the Italians. But ten years later came the disaster of Pavia, of which, naturally, they are less proud.

François de La Noüe would have a heroic and romantic destiny. He fought all over Europe, against the Spanish and Dutch Catholics, and then in France, and in Brittany in particular, the region where he died. He is an important historical figure for Protestants. His portrait hangs in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. To give an idea of his standing, François de La Noüe owned a fortified castle at Montreuil-Bonnin, a castle that still exists, where he received Queen Catherine de' Medici, then Queen of France.

A companion of Henri IV and of William of Orange, he was sent to lay siege to Lamballe, a Catholic town that refused to accept the idea of a Protestant king. In July 1591 he had cannonballs fired at the town's ramparts. He wanted to see the effect. He climbed a ladder. It was very hot. He opened his helmet to look, and at that moment a bullet ricocheted off the wall and wounded him in the forehead. He fell from his ladder. He was carried to Moncontour, a town favourable to Henri IV, where he died on 4 August 1591. His body was taken back and buried in the chapel of one of his properties at La Roche-Bernard, near Dreux. His son Odet inherited his estate. But on Odet's death, the La Roche-Bernard property was sold to an ultra-Catholic who refused to have a Protestant's tomb in his chapel and had the remains of François de La Noüe thrown into the river.

We discovered this figure while going through the château's archives and through a series of encounters that allowed us to trace the thread of his story. In August 1991, thanks to the research of Baudoin Capelle, the memory of this valiant Protestant fighter was honoured with a commemorative plaque in the town of Moncontour.

Guillaume the ghost

Now let us come to the ghost who haunts the top of the château's tower… We said in the introduction that we would tell you the story of a ghost. Do you remember? Well, know that here, somewhere in the old manor house of which only the tower remains as a witness, towards the end of the 17th century, on 26 December 1677, to be precise, one Guillaume de La Noüe (yet another Guillaume!) was murdered by two local aristocrats. In which room of the manor did this tragedy take place? As the manor was demolished to build the château in the 18th century, we no longer know exactly where it happened. Nor why they fought. Was it a quarrel between neighbours? A love affair? A political or religious dispute? We do not know. What is certain is that there was a trial before the Privy Council of Louis XIV at Versailles on 18 September 1678, traces of which can be found in the Bogard archives. Since these were aristocrats who had murdered another aristocrat, the case had to go up to Versailles and be examined in detail. The two murderers were then sentenced to be broken on the wheel and hanged "in effigy" in the public square of Moncontour. So they died "in effigy", because, being nobles, they were not actually sentenced to death but only "in effigy". Their image was hanged and they remained alive. They were nonetheless condemned.

So one Guillaume de La Noüe was killed "in his house at Bogard, run through with sword thrusts". He was then buried in the cemetery of Quessoy. And ever since, legend has it that he wanders the house on full-moon nights.

But he is a kindly ghost. Bogard is a peaceful place. There have surely been sad stories, dramatic events that took place here and of which we know nothing, but it is a peaceful house. So do not worry. Everyone sleeps soundly here…

This Guillaume de La Noüe was also a contemporary of a famous revolt in Brittany, known as the Stamped Paper Revolt. You no doubt remember the "Bonnets Rouges" (Red Caps) protests of 2013 against the heavy-goods-vehicle tax that the government wanted to introduce and the toll gantries to be installed on the motorways. Well, you should know that if the Breton protesters wore red caps, it was in memory of another, older revolt, which took place in the 16th century, in July 1675, to be precise, throughout western France, against the introduction of new taxes imposed by Jean-Baptiste Colbert,

then Minister to King Louis XIV, which notably required the payment of a special stamped paper for notarial and legal deeds. Hence the name “Stamped Paper Revolt”. These fiscal measures had been taken to replenish the royal treasury, drained by the cost of the war against Holland. This increase in royal taxation was, however, very badly received by the Bretons, not only because it flouted the province’s autonomy, enshrined in the treaty of 1532, but above all because it burdened with new charges a population already crushed by poverty. The revolt broke out on 2 July 1675 in Rennes, where the inhabitants of the outlying districts ransacked the tobacco and stamped-paper offices and stoned the residence of the Duke of Chaulnes, Governor of Brittany. The movement quickly spread to the countryside. Led by a former notary, Sébastien Le Balp (1639–1675), the furious peasants, wearing red caps (or blue, depending on the area) as a rallying sign, after looting the sales offices, attacked châteaux, burned title deeds and led urban riots to the cry of “Long live the King, without the salt tax!”. They also acclaimed a text, the Peasant Code, a genuine list of grievances of the people of the land, more than a century before the “cahiers de doléances” of the French Revolution, proclaiming the abolition of the “rights of champart and corvée claimed by the gentlemen”. The revolt was ruthlessly suppressed by the Duke of Chaulnes. The parishes that had taken part in the rebellion saw their bell towers pulled down, so that the bells could no longer be rung to mark the hours of the day and the events of life. Many of the Red Caps had to flee and hide. The less fortunate were hanged without further ado. There were so many hanged men in the countryside that the Governor was able to write to the Court: “The trees along the highways are beginning to bend under the weight we are giving them.” In Rennes, a third of the Haute Rue district was also razed to the ground to crush the rebellion of the Parliament, which was defending Brittany’s fiscal privileges as set out in the Edict of Union…

Anne of Brittany and the cordelière with two golden roses

During your visit to the Château de Bogard, you will pass through the dining room. This dining room corresponds to the château’s former great hall in the 16th century. The room has a large fireplace whose jamb dates from the time of Anne of Brittany. This former hall of the manor house was incorporated into the structure of the château in the 18th century to become a kitchen, and was then converted into a dining room in the 20th century. The Chief Architect of the Bâtiments de France, who came in the 1990s to have the Château de Bogard listed in the register of Historic Monuments, stated that the base of the fireplace dated from the 13th century. This corresponds to the period of the oldest archival document found, dated 1274. The Château de Bogard was therefore built with the stones of the old manor houses that had successively been built, enlarged and altered on this site since the very beginning.

The fireplace has nevertheless evolved over the centuries. It was raised and widened. It also has a vertical lintel, an architectural feature which, in principle, appears from the time of Anne of Brittany (1477–1514).

The lintel of the fireplace is adorned with a carving of a cordelière (a knotted cord), which recalls the order of Saint Francis of Assisi, dear to Anne of Brittany. Like her father Francis II, the last Duke of Brittany, Anne of Brittany had a deep devotion to Saint Francis of Assisi. Since the 13th century, Saint Francis of Assisi had been one of the most beloved saints. The monks of his order, the Franciscans, were simply dressed in a homespun habit girded with a cord. Saint Francis of Assisi is also the patron saint of animals.

Out of her devotion to Francis of Assisi, Anne of Brittany founded in 1498 an order of ladies of quality called “the Order of the Lady Knights of the Cordelière”, otherwise known as the “Order of the Cordelière”, urging the women who bore its decoration to live holy lives. Further reading: This cordelière motif appeared in Brittany during the reign of Duke Francis I (also known as Francis the Well-Beloved, 1414–1450) in homage to his patron saint Francis of Assisi, and remained in use as an emblematic and decorative motif of the “House of Brittany”. It adorns the manuscripts, coats of arms

and interiors of all the subsequent dukes and duchesses and symbolises their attachment to the Franciscan order, whose friars were called “cordeliers” because of the cord they wore as a belt. The Order of the Cordelière became Anne of Brittany’s personal order. This cordelière appears in the emblem of Queen Anne of Brittany. It is a white silk cord surrounding the shield, but the Franciscans’ simple knots are replaced by love knots. This cordelière with love knots became the emblem of the order. For widows who joined it, the cordelière was a black silk ribbon interlaced with four figure-of-eight knots. The order’s motto was “J’ay le corps délié” (“My body is unbound”), while nonetheless urging its ladies of honour to live holy lives. The widows who belonged to this order thus placed the cordelière around their coats of arms.

The cordelière carved on the fireplace is also adorned with two small additions representing four-petalled flowers. These carved flowers in fact depict stylised golden roses.

An ancient tradition at the Vatican held that the Popes would give a golden rose to Catholic queens at the time of their coronation. Maria Theresa, the wife of Louis XIV, received a golden rose. So did Marie Leszczyńska, wife of Louis XV. And Marie-Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI. The last sovereign in France to receive a golden rose was the Empress Eugénie in 1856. This tradition of giving golden roses to Catholic queens continued into the 20th century, the last golden rose having been given to Queen Fabiola of Belgium.

Anne of Brittany, moreover, was twice Queen of France, since she was the wife of Charles VIII, who died a few years after their marriage, and then of Louis XII, whom she married next. She therefore received two golden roses. Hence the two stylised roses around the cordelière carved in her honour on the lintel of the fireplace at the Château de Bogard.

This tradition has now ended. The Popes no longer give golden roses to Catholic queens. But they still sometimes give them to states or towns, for example the town of Lourdes, which received two golden roses, the most recent given in 2004 by John Paul II.

Let us add three other famous figures of Brittany. First, Saint Anne, regarded as the “grandmother” of the Bretons. Anne is a Christian figure who appears in several apocryphal writings from the 2nd century onwards as the mother of Mary, and therefore as the grandmother of Jesus of Nazareth. She is venerated as such in the Christian tradition as well as in the Muslim tradition. She is not, however, mentioned in the four canonical Gospels. The cult of Saint Anne in Brittany dates back to the year 500. In Breton she is called “mamm gozh ar Vretoned”, meaning “grandmother of the Bretons”, because several legends link her to the region. The cult grew in the 17th century, after she appeared to a peasant, Yvon Nicolazic. The place of her apparitions then became a major site of devotion and pilgrimage for the cult of Saint Anne of Brittany. In July 1914 she was also proclaimed “Patroness of the Province of Brittany” by Pope Pius X.

Another figure from the history of Brittany in the Middle Ages, this time inglorious because of his crimes, was Joan of Arc’s companion-in-arms, Gilles de Montmorency-Laval, better known as Gilles de Rais. He was Baron de Retz, knight and lord in Brittany, Anjou, Poitou, Maine and Angoumois. He is above all infamous for having been a paedophile and a serial killer of young children. He was sentenced to death in Nantes in 1440, accused of having sexually abused, tortured and murdered more than 140 children. No doubt not all his crimes are known. Michel Tournier, the famous French writer, made him a character in one of his novels.

And finally, a third famous figure, an essential mythical figure of the Middle Ages in Brittany as well: King Arthur. The famous King Arthur Pendragon is said to have lived in the 5th century. He is said to have fought to protect the “Britons” from the Germanic invaders. His actual existence, however, has never been proven. The legend of King Arthur, and of the Knights of the Round Table who share his

adventures, is divided between “Lesser Britain” and “Great Britain”, each region claiming legendary traces of his passage, in the forest of Brocéliande, for example. Arthur is also a story of love and adultery, a consuming passion between his wife, Guinevere, and his most faithful knight, Lancelot. It is also the story of the struggle between good and evil, of power and the quest for the Grail, of honour and revenge, all under the spell of Merlin’s magic powers and Morgan’s evil forces...

1783

Guillaume-François de La Noüe
Félicité Meslé de Grandclos
Builders and owners of the Château de Bogard

Let us take a leap in history and move from the 16th to the 18th century. The Wars of Religion are long over. Louis XV reigns over France until 1774. Louis XVI succeeds him. He is 20 years old, and a tragic fate awaits him a few years later.

The Age of Enlightenment

The 18th century is, of course, the Age of Enlightenment, the age of the philosophers: Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and many others who reflected on new ideas such as the importance of the individual, free will in the face of political power, of God and of religion; who also reflected on the education of children and on Man's relationship with nature.

The Age of Enlightenment is a crucial period for our Western civilisation and for the rest of the world in general. The intellectuals of this period, carried along by the scientific, geographical and philosophical discoveries of the preceding centuries, and also by the emergence of a new social class: the bourgeoisie, enriched by economic development, would revolutionise our philosophical, literary, political and religious thought, praising reason and science against obscurantism, individual freedom against the power of the few, liberalism against despotism. These thinkers promoted the idea that only knowledge enables one to judge a situation without blindly obeying the authorities that enslave. Their aim was to "bring mankind out of darkness" and to "illuminate all things by the light of reason". Kant commanded: "Dare to know." To share this knowledge, Diderot and d'Alembert devoted more than twenty years of their lives to publishing the Encyclopédie, an enormous dictionary intended to gather together all forms of knowledge, a kind of ancestor of our Wikipedia...

The ideas of the Enlightenment would resonate throughout Europe and help bring about profound changes in Western societies. Many political upheavals would follow, including the French Revolution, the end of absolute monarchy and the advent of the Republic. These new ideas continue to inspire us in our daily lives even today.

The 18th century was also the century of women and of their influence on political power at the court of King Louis XV. It was, moreover, the century that saw the beginnings of Freemasonry, a new practice imported from England, which allowed gentlemen to exchange new ideas, under cover of a certain discretion to protect themselves from censorship, in order to develop their conscience freely.

Freemasonry in the 18th century

A few words on Freemasonry in the 18th century, which, as we shall see a little further on, served as a source of inspiration for the interior and exterior architecture of the Château de Bogard.

Freemasonry draws its inspiration from the medieval journeymen's guilds, the master masons who built the cathedrals, known as "operative" masons. Using the symbols of operative masonry and drawing on the geographical and scientific discoveries since the Age of Discovery as well as on the new philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment, members of the bourgeoisie, craftsmen and aristocrats began, from the end of the 17th century, first in Scotland and then in England, to meet to exchange ideas outside religious dogma, political conservatism and social hierarchies, cultivating a certain freedom of thought among "gentlemen". They thus founded what would later be called "speculative" masonry, now more generally known as "Freemasonry".

Freemasonry gives rise to many fantasies. It was condemned by the Catholic Church, which saw in its members' freedom of conscience and their criticism of religious dogma a loss of its hold over consciences. It was also condemned by the authoritarian regimes of the early 20th century, Nazism and Communism, which hunted down liberty-loving Freemasons. At times in its history it was an organisation of political influence, notably under the Empire and the Third Republic. Nevertheless, Masonic obediences are most often peaceful organisations that allow a few men and women driven by a quest for philosophical inquiry and self-improvement to meet, exchange ideas freely and progress on their personal path.

Freemasonry was introduced into France by James I, the deposed King of England, who had taken refuge at Saint-Germain following the wars of succession for the throne in London in the 17th century, and who had brought with him this new practice begun in Scotland and taken up by the English. Freemasonry then developed in France (the first official lodge being founded in Paris in 1725), as well as in the rest of Europe and in America.

At the time, as the saying goes, "everyone was in it". It was all the rage, whether you were an aristocrat, a bourgeois or a craftsman. The 18th century was a period of exchanging new ideas. Freemasonry was a way of meeting people of all ranks and exchanging innovative ideas on political, religious and philosophical matters. In Moncontour, for example, there was a lodge called "La Tendre Union" (Tender Union).

King Louis XV was also a Freemason. In 1775 there was even what was called the lodge of the "Three United Brothers", to which Louis XVI, the Count of Provence (the future Louis XVIII) and the Count of Artois (the future Charles X) are said to have belonged. Queen Marie-Antoinette was also part of Freemasonry. One of her sisters had nonetheless said to her: "But how on earth did you come to join that business?" And the Queen is said to have replied: "But everyone belongs to it, one hears about everything: where is the danger?"

Some would claim that the development of Freemasonry was a factor in spreading revolutionary ideas. But this theory has not been confirmed, for Freemasonry was also reviled by the revolutionaries themselves, who objected to the excessive presence of aristocrats in its ranks. Masonic lodges also virtually disappeared during the first period of the Revolution and were revived only by Napoleon, who used them under the Empire as an instrument to strengthen his political influence. Freemasonry was originally reserved for men. At least, that is what the founding texts said, such as Anderson's Constitutions, which excluded women. But women nonetheless took part in the movement from the outset through so-called lodges of adoption. The earliest evidence of a woman's presence in speculative Freemasonry dates from the very beginning of the 18th century, with the initiation of Elizabeth Aldworth in County Cork, Ireland. Legend has it that the young woman had secretly witnessed a Masonic meeting at her father's home. Having been discovered, her case was deliberated upon, and it was apparently decided to offer her the choice between initiation and death. She naturally accepted initiation and remained a member of the lodge until her death at the age of 80.

We should also mention Marie-Thérèse-Louise de Savoie-Carignan, known as the Princesse de Lamballe, who, contrary to what one might think, never lived in Lamballe. She obtained the title of Princesse de Lamballe through her marriage to the great-grandson of Louis XIV, Louis-Alexandre de Bourbon, whose father was the Duke of Penthièvre. The Princesse de Lamballe was a friend of Marie-Antoinette and would be cruelly martyred and beheaded with a knife during the French Revolution. She is worth mentioning here because she was initiated into Freemasonry in 1777. She was also elected Grand Mistress of the "Scottish Mother Lodge" in 1781. The Princesse de Lamballe was also interested in the Enlightenment movement, in the Encyclopédie, in the condition of women and in female friendship, which earned her malicious hostility.

Master masons wrote discourses throughout the 18th and 19th centuries to clarify how Freemasonry worked and, in some cases, sometimes in a misogynistic way, to explain the reasons for excluding women. Such was the case of the Reverend Anderson with the Constitutions of 1721. Or of the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England, Laurence Dermott, who stated that since women were legally minors they could not escape the authority of their fathers or husbands. In France, the Chevalier de Ramsay pronounced the same prohibition, but made it less a matter of misogynistic principle than one of protecting "the purity of our maxims and our morals", adding that he feared "that love, entering with its charms, might cause fraternity to be forgotten".

It would therefore not be until the end of the 19th century that speculative Freemasonry fully opened up to women without discrimination, in mixed or women's lodges.

We should also point out that Freemasonry is an eclectic movement, made up of many obediences, each with its own rituals and schools of thought. Rather than speaking of "Freemasonry", we should rather speak of "Freemasonries", so rich is the movement in obediences of every kind. The two main obediences in France are the Grande Loge de France (GLDF), traditional, focused on the analysis of symbols and on philosophical inquiry, and the Grand Orient (GO), more oriented towards social and political reflection.

The Parliament of Brittany

A few words on the role and importance of the regional Parliaments, and more particularly of the Parliament of Brittany, of which the 18th-century owner of Bogard, Guillaume-François de La Noüe, was one of the Councillors.

The Parliament of Brittany, like all the regional parliaments, was a sovereign court of justice whose power was delegated by the royal power to dispense justice and settle the day-to-day affairs of the region.

To be a Councillor in the Parliament of Brittany, one had to be able to prove one's quarterings of nobility. It was as much a legal as a political office, perhaps even more so in Brittany because of the Edict of Union of 1532, which granted the region certain specific rights. Parliamentarians thus had a kind of dual responsibility: to represent the royal power in judicial matters and at the same time to defend regional particularities. As a result, the regional Parliaments had real political power and often opposed the centralising will of the monarchy, notably through the "right of remonstrance", which allowed them to challenge a royal law or decree deemed contrary to the interests of the region.

It was also a very lucrative office. Court fees brought money directly to the parliamentarians and indirectly to the town, to the merchants, to everyone.

To obtain the office of parliamentarian, one had to buy it. Often one bought back one's father's or grandfather's office. Or else one bought an office that had become vacant and was up for sale.

It was also a very closed caste. People kept to their own kind. Parliamentarians were nobles of the robe, “robins”, very proud of themselves and not very welcoming to people who were not of their rank. This whole population of Councillors, Presidents of Chamber, Presidents of Requests and the First President formed a rather pretentious caste.

In the end, the parliamentarians were the expression of the Old Regime, the expression of a nobility of the robe anxious to preserve its privileges, which refused the reforms requested by the King under popular pressure. That is why, at the time of the French Revolution, the regional parliaments were abruptly dissolved.

Louis XV had in fact carried out a reform to reduce the influence of the regional parliamentarians. But they had been restored to their prerogatives by Louis XVI. Commentators at the time said: “He’s done for! He’s finished!” And it is true that the whole French Revolution would stem from popular opposition to the power and abuses of the regional parliamentarians. Yet in 1788 Louis XVI had attempted a reform of the justice system, abolishing certain prerogatives reserved for the parliamentarians, abolishing for example the “question préalable”, that is to say torture, and creating new courts closer to the litigants to dispense justice, called the “grands bailliages”. But this reform, considered ambitious, came too late and could not prevent the popular revolt that would overthrow the monarchy.

At the time of the abolition of privileges in August 1789, a delegation led by Jean-Baptiste Le Vicomte, lord of La Houssaye, went to the Constituent Assembly to declare to the deputies that it was impossible to register the abolition of privileges because of the Edict of Union signed in 1532, which united Brittany and France and granted Brittany fiscal and legal privileges, arguing that the region was entitled to retain some of its privileges. Jean-Baptiste Le Vicomte argued that if the Assembly abolished Brittany’s privileges, it would be acting against the Edict of Union. This delegation of Breton parliamentarians thus opposed the decision of the Constituent Assembly.

In response, Mirabeau, one of the most famous orators of the French Revolution, who, when the representatives of the people were gathered in the Jeu de Paume (Tennis Court) at Versailles at the time of the Estates General, had declared to the King’s envoys: “Go and tell your master [Louis XVI] that we shall leave here only by the force of bayonets. We are the Assembly of the People”, delivered a very harsh speech against the Breton parliamentarians, declaring that they were nothing but profiteers and that no one needed them, and adding: “I saw, and I still see, in this event, that is, the revolt of the parliamentarians of Rennes, the annihilation of the Revolution.”

The Breton delegation therefore went home with heads bowed. But more than that, the Constituent Assembly immediately dissolved the Parliament of Brittany by decree. And in the weeks that followed, it dissolved all the other regional parliaments as well.

Further reading: Mirabeau was a great orator of the Revolution. When he died, it was a major event. He had the honour of being the first person buried in the Panthéon. And then, once the King had been brought back to Paris on 5 October 1789, what was called Louis XVI’s “iron cabinet” at the Tuileries was searched, and it was discovered that the King and Mirabeau had been exchanging a great deal of information — that Mirabeau had in fact been playing a double game: that of the Revolution, but also that of the Monarchy. Hence a scandal. As a result, the first to be buried in the Panthéon was also the first to be taken out again…

The couple Guillaume-François de La Noüe and Félicité Meslé de Grandclos

Let us now talk about the couple Guillaume-François de La Noüe and Félicité Meslé de Grandclos, who were the owners and commissioners of the Château de Bogard as you see it today, unchanged since its construction in the 18th century.

Guillaume-François de La Noüe

At the end of the 18th century, the heir to Bogard was Guillaume-François de La Noüe. He was born in 1747, so he was 40 at the time of the Revolution. In his youth he was a Page at the Court of Versailles. He then studied at the university in Rennes, where he obtained a law degree. He was an intelligent and cultivated man who became a cavalry officer, a Councillor in the Parliament of Brittany, a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre and Lieutenant of the Marshals of France at Moncontour. He thus had a first career as an officer for some ten years, and then a second, legal and political career as a Councillor in the Parliament of Brittany for another ten years or so. We have in our archives his law diploma and his warrant as Councillor in the Parliament of Brittany, signed by Louis XVI. Everything suggests that he was also a Freemason. He was, then, a nobleman firmly rooted in his time.

To become a “Page” at the Court of Versailles, one had to belong to a well-established social category, that is, be able to prove a certain number of quarterings of nobility. This was the case for Guillaume-François, who was the first “Page” in the La Noüe family. On his mother’s side, however, she was born Geslin de Coatcouvrant, there had already been one or two “Pages”. So the young adolescent went off to Versailles to serve in the King’s Great Stables. Becoming a Page was in a sense to receive an officer’s training, at once physical, technical and social, which allowed one to mix with the royal Court and make many connections useful for one’s future career. At that time there were no secondary schools as there are today. Pages were between 14 and 17 years old. They could thus leave the royal military school with an officer’s diploma. It was a way of getting on in life, by acquiring an intellectual and social education.

The Knights of the Holy Sepulchre are a Catholic order of chivalry founded to protect and support the Christian holy places in the Holy Land, in particular the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, regarded as the site of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also known as the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, the organisation dates back to the Crusades and, according to legend, was founded by Godfrey of Bouillon in the 12th century. The order has evolved over time, reorganising in various forms over the centuries. It flourished at the end of the 15th century, when Pope Alexander VI instituted it to honour noble and wealthy people who made a pilgrimage to Palestine or who supported the Catholic Church in the Holy Land through charitable works helping to build and maintain churches, schools, hospitals and other religious institutions. The Order, which still exists today, is headed by a cardinal of the Catholic Church, appointed by the Pope, with the title of “Grand Master”. Membership is generally by co-option, often reserved for those who have shown a strong commitment to the Catholic faith and its works. Jean-Pierre de Gennes, in his book “Les Chevaliers du Saint-Sépulcre de Jérusalem”, states that Guillaume-François de La Noüe, Lieutenant of the Marshals of France, was described as “knight of our Order of the Holy Sepulchre, being for this reason under our protection and safeguard” by King Louis XVI in his letters of 1 July 1778.

When Louis XVI became King of France, he restored the regional Parliaments. Guillaume-François de La Noüe was thus able to take over the office of his late father, who in his day had also been a Councillor in the Parliament of Brittany in Rennes. He therefore bought back his father’s office and donned the red robe with bands of the parliamentarian’s attire. Guillaume-François de La Noüe was, moreover, a gentleman of character who was not easily intimidated. He was quick to draw his sword. In 1788 he was part of a delegation of parliamentarians who asserted before the King their right of remonstrance concerning the reform of the judicial system and the abolition of parliamentary prerogatives. In

February 1789, during the “Battle of the Bricoles”, which pitted the students of Rennes who supported the “Estates” against those who supported the “Parliamentarians”, Guillaume-François confronted the demonstrators on the steps of the Parliament and was wounded in the arm. He also fought with the sword in 1790 at the Château du Rumain. He was therefore a man of character who did not hesitate to confront his opponents and fight duels. But what interests us even more is the marriage this conservative aristocrat would make with the daughter of a wealthy shipowner from Saint-Malo, a marriage that would radically change the spirit and appearance of his old manor house at Bogard…

Félicité Meslé de Grandclos

Félicité was the daughter of Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos, a wealthy shipowner from Saint-Malo and the town’s largest taxpayer at the time. He was related to the Harringtons and other great Saint-Malo shipowning families. He was an extremely powerful shipowner. He even lent money to Louis XVI. He was a bourgeois who had made his fortune in maritime trade. He had the largest fortune in Saint-Malo, but did not flaunt it. He had a son and three daughters. He married his daughters to Councillors or Presidents in the Parliament of Brittany. Each of them received a very rich dowry.

Félicité had thus received a very fine dowry from her father. She must also have had a fine mind, for she grew up in a fairly advanced intellectual environment and had received an education that was, for the time, open to the modern world. When one looks, for example, at the library of Félicité’s father in Saint-Malo, one is impressed by all the books he owned, notably works of philosophy and on a great many other subjects. This was therefore a family that was wealthy but also intellectually educated and cultivated. This family, which had started out three generations earlier in the simple business of shipbuilding, had made its fortune in trade and achieved recognition as nobility.

The couple Guillaume-François and Félicité

On 17 October 1776, Félicité Meslé de Grandclos and Guillaume-François de La Noüe were married in Saint-Malo. It was the marriage of a bourgeoisie enriched by trade with a nobility that enjoyed privileges and had access to the King’s Court. This marriage thus represented an opportunity for social and economic advancement for both families. For the Meslé de Grandclos family, it was the culmination of a social rise through alliance with a noble family of ancient lineage. And for Guillaume-François, this rich marriage was the culmination of a steady material and financial rise.

What is also interesting is that they were a paradoxical couple who embodied the contrasts of the age, torn between tradition and modernity. And the Château de Bogard, in its architectural concept, would become the expression of their social rise and of their modern ideas.

Guillaume-François and Félicité were quite conscious of what they represented socially. They were also practising Catholics and members of the Fabrique council in Quessoy (a body that managed a parish’s religious buildings).

At that time the château had its own chapel. It stood slightly offset from the gable end of the 17th-century building, beside the present-day road. It was recorded in the inventory of National Property at the time of the French Revolution and disappeared in the 19th century. Its foundations were found when trenches were dug for the water supply in the 1960s.

And in the inner courtyard of what is now the Orangery, there was what is called a “fuye”, a dovecote which was a mark of a noble house. However, they did not wish to keep this building. It did not interest them. They also built stables framed with pilasters, which was not commonplace at the time. Pilasters are decorative elements on the façade, at the corners of the former stables (today the Orangery), and they are architecturally significant. It is a decorative element that shows a desire to honour the animal

kingdom. Perhaps they were something of Physiocrats? We do not know. But they may have shared some of their ideas.

Physiocracy is a school of economic thought that emerged at the end of the 1750s and developed until the French Revolution, reaching its peak in the 1760s and 1770s. The founders of this school were François Quesnay and the Marquis de Mirabeau. The doctrine of the Physiocrats is a mixture of economic liberalism and enlightened despotism. Physiocratic thought is organised around four main themes: nature, liberty, land and legal despotism. The State must be governed by landowners, because they alone have a homeland, homeland and patrimony being intimately linked. The Physiocrats were also hostile to all regulation. Their motto was “laissez faire, laissez passer”. The Physiocrats were supporters of absolute monarchy. Physiocracy was also an important current of legal and political reform in the 18th century, owing to its theories of natural law and legal despotism. The physiocratic movement reached its height during the second half of the 18th century and then disappeared, notably because of the development of industry in the 19th century.

They were pleased with their social rank, yet at the same time they did away with a number of significant markers of nobility. This push and pull often appears in their personalities and in their way of being, showing that they were modern, even iconoclastic, with regard to the very traditions they claimed as their own.

They were therefore certainly a modern couple. And Félicité very probably had a major influence on this modernity. It even seems that they were a truly balanced couple, in the sense that both he and she took the decisions about building the Château de Bogard. Félicité did indeed play a very large part in the construction of the château.

Evidence of Félicité’s involvement in building the Château de Bogard includes a letter from the owner of La Fontaine Saint-Père addressed to Madame de La Noüe. She must have told him about her difficulties in preventing damp from rising into the rooms at Bogard. What was to be done? And so he wrote to her: “I slept very badly after all the anxieties you yourself had, and I confirm that you must build little low walls and put charcoal between all those elements.” The château’s parquet floors are still original and are made up of joists resting on small low walls, which provide a natural ventilation system. The low walls are surrounded by a bed of charcoal that absorbs the damp.

Furthermore, if you look at the east façade of the château, you will notice that the central section is cut in a manner inspired by Saint-Malo, an architectural feature found in many houses in Saint-Malo, Félicité’s hometown.

So it is clear that this woman paid close attention to the building of the château. She must have had her own character, her own vision and her say in the couple’s affairs. It was, moreover, thanks to Félicité’s fortune that the manor of Bogard could be renovated and transformed into the Château de Bogard as you visit it today.

But why did François-Guillaume and Félicité choose to settle at Bogard? For Bogard was at that time a poorly maintained manor house. We know this from the archives, where some descriptions show a place in poor condition. What was it, then, that made the couple decide to settle here, in this place, to live in it and transform it?

Property twists and turns

The couple first lived in one of the properties of the father-in-law, Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos: the Château de Coëtcouvrant at Yvignac (from which came many of the logs used to build Bogard). At

the same time Guillaume-François, who was a Councillor in the Parliament of Brittany, lived in a town house in Rennes, the Contour de la Motte (as many Breton parliamentarians of the time did).

With Félicité's dowry, they first decided to buy the château and forest of La Hunaudaye, reasoning that with a shipowner father-in-law they could exploit the timber for shipbuilding and benefit from the hunting rights, which were rather lucrative. But in life there are often "buts": there was what is called a "retrait lignager" (a right of family pre-emption). And the Marquis de Talhouët, who would later be elected Mayor of Rennes, being one degree closer kin to a common ancestor (the Tournemine family) than François de La Noüe, said to his cousin: "My dear cousin, by virtue of my right of descent, I have priority to take over La Hunaudaye." Guillaume-François de La Noüe tried to assert his own rights but could not obtain satisfaction. He therefore withdrew his stake and continued looking for another property.

They then wanted to buy the seigneury of Le Guémadeuc at Le Val-André. This seigneury had a small fortified castle on the site of today's community hall. But at that point the shipowner Pierre-Jacques wrote to his daughter and son-in-law, strongly advising them against buying Le Guémadeuc because, in his view, the port of Dahouët would never develop and so the purchase was of no interest.

So the couple decided to settle at Bogard and renovate Guillaume-François's old manor house to build a more modern residence there.

Financing the Château de Bogard

Building the château cost the couple a great deal. And it was Félicité who financed most of the work with the dowry she had received from her father. She once wrote to her notary in Moncontour, Maître Harel, asking him to find out how much it would cost to renovate the old manor house in order to build a more modern château at Bogard. He replied that she should allow about 150,000 livres (€1.8 million today — one livre at the end of the 18th century being worth about €12 today). It is she who writes, which shows once again her involvement in this story.

Guillaume-François also put everything he owned into building the Château de Bogard. He asked his tenant farmers to pay in advance the rents he felt entitled to claim for future harvests. He had quite a few farms bringing in rents, because the lands of Bogard covered more than 400 hectares at that time. He also took on debts to supplement his personal contributions.

The Château de Bogard was therefore expensive to build, much more expensive than they had first imagined. They were constantly in need of money. We have even found letters from Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos, who wrote: "My son-in-law has extorted yet another "X sum" (editor's note) from me for Bogard"! Guillaume-François de La Noüe nevertheless got on well with his father-in-law, even if the latter liked to complain about the money he was spending.

To reduce costs, many elements of the old manor house were salvaged and reused. As many of the stones of the old manor as possible were recovered for the new building. Our ancestors did not wait for the 21st century to practise the circular economy! We realised this in particular because some years ago, after a storm, the masonry of the chimney of the great drawing room had to be repaired. And when the mason went up on the roof, he told us that there were stones from a mullioned window of an earlier period that had been used to build the chimney wall.

Despite these investments and this salvaging, when they went into emigration to flee the Terror (see next chapter), they left behind several debts to local contractors. These debts were nevertheless settled by Félicité when she returned after the Revolution. It was also she who, on her return, completed the

vista on the west side, with the installation of the gate on the Moncontour road (access from the D1 linking Moncontour and Quessoy).

The architecture of the Château de Bogard and its gardens,
inspired by the Enlightenment and by 18th-century Freemasonry.

Let us set the historical account aside for a moment and talk about architecture, an exceptional and rare testimony, unchanged since the beginning.

The Château de Bogard is an exceptional testimony to an architecture inspired by the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment and also by the symbols of Freemasonry, in both its interior and its exterior.

Moreover, nothing you see as you visit the Château de Bogard and its gardens has been altered since the 18th century. Architecturally, everything is identical to what was designed and created by Guillaume-François and Félicité before their deaths. No window has been opened up, nor anything added or removed for more than 200 years, either in the château or in the gardens. A few minor elements have been changed: a scullery has become a kitchen, the château's former kitchen has become a dining room, a bread oven hidden in a wall of the dining room has been restored, and we have added a pond to enhance the vista and create a wetland for biodiversity. In the 19th century a small balcony was also added to the front façade, in front of the library window on the first floor. But all these are details. Nothing fundamental has been altered, either in the architecture of the building or in the layout of the gardens. Nor has any construction come to spoil the view, nor has any building fallen into ruin or collapsed. It is the very essence of the château, inspired by 18th-century philosophy and Freemasonry, inside and out, that has been brought back to life by the Capelle family and that appears to you today, in the 21st century, in all its beauty and elegance.

So nothing has changed since the 18th century. The proof is the cadastral survey of 1807, which shows all the elements you can see. And that is what we state on the introductory panel at the entrance gate: "What you see is what was created just before the French Revolution and has never been altered since." That is what is exceptional here.

What is also interesting is that this is an architectural and landscape ensemble with an overall coherence. The château and the gardens form a whole. There is a vista that runs from the steps of the château's front door to the park gate opposite the property, 900 metres long, with a 10-metre drop where the ornamental pond lies. All these elements are part of an ensemble that has been preserved and must continue to be. Without it, the estate loses its meaning. And that is what we will explain to you in the pages that follow.

You should know that when the owners of the time remodelled the building, the site of Bogard looked nothing like this. At that time, in the 18th century, Bogard was a manor house built around an enclosed courtyard. The highest part, the old tower, still remains today, incorporated into the château. There was an L-shaped building with a courtyard and forecourt, walls, a large carriage gateway and a pedestrian gateway on either side. When the electricity network was buried a few years ago, part of the walls was found on the other side of the road. It was a classic Breton manor house. There was a chapel, now gone, whose foundations have also been found. The approach to the manor was by the road that runs along the north side as far as La Ville Guihen.

In 1740, then, Bogard was a manor house in poor condition. One anecdote tells that Madame de La Noüe, Guillaume-François's mother and Félicité's future mother-in-law, born Geslin de Coatcouvrant, who was worried about the state of the manor, had summoned local craftsmen to Bogard to survey the premises. She asked them to swear on the Gospels to say in all conscience what they honestly thought of the work needed to restore the place. When you think about it, if today we would ask a contractor

to swear on the Civil Code to certify the honesty of his estimate, one wonders what face he would have! The work would wait a few more years. The old manor house would finally be transformed at the end of the 18th century, and a château built in its place.

What distinguishes a manor house from a château?... It is sometimes difficult to tell the difference, so here are a few pointers. The word “château” comes from the Latin “castellum”, which originally designated a military building designed to defend the Lord and his people. In its origins, in the Middle Ages, it was a defensive seigneurial or royal residence. A castle thus generally has walls, fortifications, moats and a keep, and is capable of defending itself against an enemy attack. It is also called a “château fort” (a fortified castle), and its sturdiness recalls the harshness of its era. The word “manoir”, for its part, comes from the Latin “maner”, meaning a dwelling, a place where one lives. The owners of manor houses were generally landowners who, thanks to their income, could afford to build a fine stone building. A manor house is smaller than a castle; it is located in a village and is often the most important residence there, without being a defensive seigneurial castle. Gradually, over the centuries, châteaux became more open places of residence. From the Renaissance onwards, they were transformed into fine residences open to nature, often with a formal French-style garden, and became places well suited to receptions of all kinds. Sometimes certain manor houses call themselves “château”, but more out of social vanity than architectural reality. For manor houses often have a more rustic architecture, whereas châteaux have a presence and an elegance all their own.

Architectural transformations

As mentioned earlier, François-Guillaume de La Noüe and Félicité Meslé de Grandclos were initiated into the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers and into the symbols of Freemasonry. They would therefore put all these innovative ideas into practice in designing and building the Château de Bogard and its gardens. The Château de Bogard thus became both the crowning achievement of their social rise and the expression of ideas that were modern for the time.

For this project they called on Antoine Guibert, an important architect in Rennes. Antoine Guibert had notably been in charge of the renovation of the façade of the church in Moncontour. He had not drawn up the plans for the façade, as they already existed, but he was the one who carried them out. He is also said to have built the Maison de la Chouannerie in Moncontour, whose keystone above the entrance door is similar to the one at Bogard.

Construction work began in 1785 and was partly completed in 1789. They decided to change everything. They began by removing all the courtyards, forecourts and walls of the old manor house, and levelled part of what are called the “medieval terraces” (protective banks). They nevertheless kept certain walls of the manor, which they incorporated into the structure of the new château, from the tower to the small drawing room. That is why, during your visit, you will notice that some of the interior walls are rather thick.

They also redesigned the east and west façades, creating new openings and projecting bays at each end and in the centre.

They also raised the height of the château. The original manor had only two levels, a ground floor and one upper floor. They created an additional storey, the whole second floor that you see beneath the mansard roof. They also raised the roof, installing a new timber frame suited to the new building.

Openings and transparency

The residence is highly characteristic of the late 18th century, when a return to nature was prized. The idea was to bring light and nature into the home. This is what inspires the spaces and the vista. In the

same spirit, Queen Marie-Antoinette had her hamlet built at Versailles. It is the whole new education promoted by Rousseau and championed by a number of philosophers such as René-Louis de Girardin, who said: “Bring nature into your estate.” Here, thanks to the effect of transparency, you constantly have a view of nature on one side and the other, and nature also enters the house.

They therefore created new openings and enlarged the windows to let light into the house. Each façade of the château is designed symmetrically with the other, the east façade and the west façade, with the new interior gallery between them. The windows facing each other thus serve to amplify this effect of transparency.

The windows were also made taller, because it was the fashion of the time to have much higher windows. The windows were also fitted with large panes. In most old houses you have small panes. Having large panes was luxurious and very modern for the time. It is still the case today with the installation of large picture windows in our homes.

It is therefore an architecture of openness, meant to inspire broad-mindedness. The view is unobstructed. It is soothing. You can really breathe.

Battered walls

Note also that the walls of the château are built with a “batter” (“à fruit”), “one inch every twelve feet”. It is this slight inward slope of the walls, converging towards an imaginary common point above the château, that gives the whole building its impression of lightness and perhaps of gentleness.

Mansard roof

The walls are topped by a mansard roof, which adds gentleness and roundness to the building. This architectural invention, which creates a roof slope broken into two pitches, dates from the 16th century and is wrongly attributed to the architect François Mansart, who nevertheless spread its use widely in the 17th century. The roof is also enlivened by wooden dormer windows with triangular pediments, œils-de-bœuf (round windows) and granite chimneys.

Rendering in “Empress yellow”

If you look closely at the walls of the château, setting aside the old tower, you can see that they are covered with rendering outlined with a red border to create a visual effect suggesting false stonework. It is less visible on the west façade, but can clearly be seen on the east façade. So the walls were not the sand colour we see today, all the pigment in the rendering has faded, but at the end of the 18th century the walls of the château were yellow, typical of what is called “Empress yellow” (“jaune impératrice”). That is how things were done in 18th-century Austria. The rendering on the walls is original. It is made with sand from the Loire. Once there was a storm. The rain had soaked the east façade, which as a result had turned yellow again. It was very striking. So here too, they chose a decoration that is not that of a traditional Breton property. Traditional Breton châteaux are generally not rendered; the stones are pointed. Here they completely hid the pointed stonework and covered it with yellow rendering, which suggests an “Île-de-France” influence. Setting aside the granite side of the south pavilion (the 16th-century tower), this château could very well be in Île-de-France. One would not immediately think it was a “Breton” château. This is also what makes it unique in the Côtes-d’Armor.

Main entrance

Note the central section in dressed stone, breaking the monotony of the symmetrical openings, which rises above a flight of four steps leading to a round-arched entrance door surmounted by a balcony

with a wrought-iron railing. The frame of tall pilasters in dressed granite supports a triangular pediment, also a Masonic symbol, resting on terracotta corbels, which once bore the couple's coat of arms before it was hammered off during the French Revolution.

Gardens and landscapes

For the park and gardens of the Château de Bogard, Guillaume-François and Félicité called on a "decorator" named Guignette. "Sieur Guignette" was a cartographer in Saint-Malo, and a renowned one. He had drawn up the plan of the town of Saint-Servan, elements of which can be found in the archives in Rennes, as well as the plans for the park of Beaumanoir at Évran. At the time people did not say "landscape architect" as they do today; they said "decorator". So Sieur Guignette came on several occasions, on a hired horse, to lay out the alignments of the gardens at Bogard. Today we use cars. At the time people used horses, or horse-drawn carriages. Rennes to Bogard: 92 kilometres. Today the journey takes an hour. In 1785 it took two and a half days! Sieur Guignette therefore made the journey to lay out the alignments, including the vista in front of the château. At the narrowest point of the vista there was a farm, which was acquired and demolished in order to complete the vista. All that remains of it today is a pond, as a reminder.

Masonic elements

You are here in a place, inside as well as outside, entirely devoted to the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment and, even more, to Masonic symbolism. And that is something extremely rare in France.

What is certain is that the La Noüe couple did not build this château simply to create an ordinary residence. They truly designed it entirely around their philosophical ideas and Masonic symbols. What is more, these elements are not here merely as decoration, as is sometimes found in certain residences, but structure the whole architectural ensemble of the site and serve as its guiding thread.

Many elements suggest that Guillaume-François de La Noüe must have held the Masonic degree of Master. And also that Félicité Meslé de Grandclos was initiated. For it was she, for example, who completed the work on the garden vista on her return from emigration, although her husband had died many years before.

The couple thus wished to make the château and its gardens a place for the expression of their ideas, so that through its interior and exterior architecture it would become a space truly representative of Masonic symbols.

The east–west axis

Let us first take the time to discover the architectural project for the Château de Bogard carried out by this unconventional 18th-century couple and look at the model of the château and its gardens. The model helps you understand the architectural and landscape logic of the estate. The château is in the centre. The farm buildings are on the left. And there is a long vista at the front.

On the east side of the gardens, they first created an oval lawn, shaped like an egg. On the west side, in front of the main façade, they created a cour d'honneur (main courtyard), extended by a vista that is very wide at first and gradually narrows as it recedes towards the gate on the Moncontour road. The sun rises in the east over the egg-shaped oval lawn, which symbolises the beginning of life. The sun is at its zenith above the château, symbolising Man at the height of his youth and maturity. And the sun continues its course westwards to set at the end of the vista, the sunset symbolising old age and death. So it is the course of the sun, but it is also the course of life. The orientation of the garden is thus an allegory of human existence.

The north–south axis

On the north–south axis, they created two symbolic gardens. The first, to the north, is a garden of curves that leads to what are called “rooms”. A “room” is a space in a garden bounded and enclosed by a hedge or other plants. You can perform a short play or a piece of music there, or anything else. So it is a garden with different paths. They called it the “garden of uncertainties”. It is an allegory of life’s questions. Which path shall I take? What shall I do with my life?

To balance it, to the south, they created a garden made up of seven triangles, six of which converge towards a common centre, symbolising the seven members needed to form a lodge. The garden is thus structured by straight, geometric alignments that evoke the rigour of reason, in contrast to the curving garden of uncertainties. They called this garden the “garden of knowledge”. Symbolically, it is an allegory of effort: one must have worked on oneself to discover and understand the truth and to develop one’s conscience.

These symbolic elements are invisible to the uninitiated. When you stroll through the gardens, unless you are given the key to understanding these structures, you walk past them without seeing the symbolic significance of the paths you are following.

As at Nazca in Peru, some visual elements can only be understood from a certain height. The layman unknowingly walks on sacred ground, following a path that, unbeknownst to him, traces symbols whose presence and meaning he is unaware of, ignorant of the meaning of the curves and paths he follows. It is the same at Bogard. The place is imbued with Masonic symbolism on different scales, so that it is at once visible and invisible and sometimes reveals itself only to the initiated. Everyone can then freely follow the paths traced by the overall design of the gardens to meditate and develop their conscience and spirituality.

This symbolic Masonic architecture continues inside the château as well…

The profane world and the world of the initiated

On the ground floor, the interior of the château is divided into two distinct spaces. The great gallery, which leads to the kitchen and the 16th-century tower, symbolises the profane world, the world of those who do not know the Masonic symbols. But once you pass through the vestibule that once served as the main entrance, you enter the world of the initiated, made up of several elements: a lodge for meetings on the first floor, a small drawing room for agapes (fraternal banquets) on the ground floor, extended by a great state drawing room for receiving guests in noble style…

Masonic lodge on the first floor

Above the former main entrance (opening onto the steps in the centre of the château) is a library (not open to visitors), which most probably served as a Masonic lodge. This can be seen on the floor from the arrangement of the parquet boards, laid in particular directions. And next to the library there is a small space that must have served as a “chamber of reflection” (“cabinet noir”). In Freemasonry, when a candidate is received into a lodge for the first time, he goes into a dark chamber to reflect on the meaning of his life before being called to join the lodge as an apprentice. So we think the library was originally a space for lodge meetings at Bogard.

A Freemason friend to whom we told this story asked us: “But what is the ceiling like?” “Well, it’s white.” He said: “Are you sure it isn’t blue?” “No, it’s white.” After a few moments’ thought, we said to

him: “Wait, because bookcases were added in the 19th century, there’s a small gap; we’ll have a look.” We climbed a stepladder. And there, in the small gap, we saw that the ceiling had been blue!

So we really are in a space for the initiated. The lodge brothers went upstairs to meet in session. And then they came down to the dining room to share the agapes.

Ceiling mouldings

The room that now serves as the “small drawing room” was at the time a dining room. Having a dining room was something very modern in the 18th century. Before then, people took their meals in any room. Trestles were set up and boards laid on them, one “set up the table” (“dresser la table”), as they used to say, and people ate in their bedroom or in the drawing room, wherever they wished.

In Roman times, a room was dedicated to banquets, called the “triclinium”, with a central table surrounded by couches for the guests. Nevertheless, the birth and evolution of the dining room are part of a general movement towards the specialisation of rooms in the 17th and 18th centuries. The term “salle à manger” (dining room) itself was first used at the beginning of the 17th century. From the Middle Ages to the 18th century, living rooms served as “multi-purpose spaces”, where only the furniture determined their use. Thus, in noble households, the table was “set up” in a bedroom or an antechamber, with trestles and boards installed to serve the meal. The rest of the population, who were poorer, ate in the fields, in the kitchen or by the fire in a common room. The first dining rooms in the modern sense of the term appeared in noble and bourgeois houses in the 18th century. The table continued to be set up (in the Queen’s antechamber, for example), with “service à la française”: the dishes were laid out on a large table where guests came to help themselves. But the table became a permanent piece of furniture in the room instead of being taken down. A whole art of the table also developed. The urban bourgeoisie, who until then had eaten in the bedroom or the main room, transformed their homes, moved the kitchen upstairs and thus freed up a room that could henceforth be used for meals. The dining room thus became the place for receiving guests and socialising. The family ate there and received its guests in a setting that was sometimes richly decorated. The kitchen, for its part, was reserved for the servants. The dining room then became a symbol of social success. It was eventually adopted by the middle classes from the end of the 19th century. The protocol of service evolved with the transformation of the room: from the buffet where everyone came to help themselves, known as “service à la française”, the practice of “service à la russe” developed, in which dishes are presented one by one, individually. Today, with changing lifestyles and the shrinking size of homes, the trend is returning to the multi-purpose room model, causing the dining room to disappear as a room dedicated to a single use. Like a pendulum swing of fashions and customs, the main rooms today tend to merge once again into a single multi-purpose living space, kitchen, dining room, living room and sometimes even home office for remote working...

So what are agapes? They are part of Masonic practice in that, after lodge meetings, members like to gather around a table to eat and continue their discussions. Agapes are therefore a dinner among Masonic brothers or sisters. And it is here, in what is today this small drawing room, that the Masons invited by Guillaume-François, and, who knows, perhaps also by Félicité, who had met in the lodge upstairs came to enjoy the agapes. That is why, if you look closely at the friezes on the ceiling, you can also see elements recalling baskets of fruit with grapes and pomegranates. Now, the pomegranate is a Masonic symbol. Because from a pomegranate, a bit like when you blow on a dandelion, all the seeds scatter, and so all the ideas spread. The pomegranate is a symbol with many interpretations. The fruit also symbolises the cohesion of the members of the lodge.

Great Drawing Room

As explained earlier, the owners altered the structure of the old manor house, breaking through the walls to build a projecting wing to the north in line with the building and to create a room that would become the great drawing room.

The great drawing room is special in that it is a “lantern drawing room”. That is to say, it has six windows and a triple aspect. And here you can see very concretely what is called the effect of transparency. Opposite every window there is always another window. Hence the brightness of the room. This room is also listed as a Historic Monument for its panelling, its parquet floors, its ceilings and the overmantels above the fireplace.

One of the essential elements of this room is the central marquetry. This marquetry was made in Nantes in 1788. It was shipped along the coast from Nantes to the port of Le Légué at Saint-Brieuc. The fashion for mahogany furniture dates from the end of the 18th century, hence the mahogany furniture. The central rosette, part of which is also in mahogany, was thus transported to be set into this parquet floor.

This central rosette is made of nine different woods. In the centre there is a point of light, a point of mother-of-pearl, between two crosses. The light cross is the cross of Saint John of Jerusalem of the Templars. And the dark cross, which is a little harder to see, is the Templar cross. It is the symbol of self-knowledge through divine light. And then in the centre, slightly hidden, you do not see it at once, for we are still in the world invisible to the uninitiated, there is a small point of mother-of-pearl that symbolises what is called the divine spark. The divine spark is what must shine forth through the work of self-reflection, which is what the various brothers or sisters do in the lodge.

All around it there is also a Greek frieze, which symbolises eternity. You will remember that in architecture and drawing, a Greek frieze, as its name suggests, is an element that was used by the artists of ancient Greece. It is drawn using black ebony on a lemonwood background. It is the opposition between black and white. It is also the symbol of the chain of life and of infinity. There is no beginning and no end. This chain of life frames 33 rays of light, each with a light part and a dark part, symbolising good and evil, which are always linked, and also symbolising the 33 degrees of Freemasonry, the first three degrees being Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master.

And in the centre there is a wreath of acacia leaves, again in contrasting black on white. The acacia is the symbolic tree of Freemasonry par excellence, since it does not rot and is a symbol of immortality. It is also the symbol of the Master Mason. The origin of this symbol goes back to the myths of the Bible. Legend has it that at the time of the building of the Temple of Jerusalem (in the 11th century BC), the architect Hiram refused a pay rise to three workmen. The workmen in question then murdered Hiram and buried him. But from Hiram’s mouth an acacia branch grew. It is a legend, of course. It is symbolic. Acacia thorns were also used for Christ’s crown. So you have this acacia design in the central rosette. You also find it along the fireplace, on either side, with two columns decorated with garlands of acacia in gilded wood. A few years ago there were also quite a few acacias in the gardens, but they fell in the storm of 1987.

In numerology, the number 33 is considered a “master number”, carrying a high vibration of compassion, healing and blessing. It is often associated with spiritual guidance and the mission of raising humanity’s consciousness. Those who bear this number have a natural ability to guide and heal others, seeking to serve a higher good. The number 33 is therefore often associated with the completeness of life and with ultimate sacrifice. It appears in various literary, artistic and popular contexts, often to suggest a certain mystery or a particular meaning: Christ died at the age of 33; in Freemasonry, the 33rd degree is the highest degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite,

representing the summit of wisdom and spiritual accomplishment; in Kabbalah, Jewish mystical study, 33 has a special significance in relation to the 33 vertebrae of the human spinal column, which symbolise the rising of spiritual energy. 33 is also a semiprime number (the product of two prime numbers, 3 and 11, which themselves have their own symbolic dimensions).

An inventory made at the time of the sale of National Property during the French Revolution shows that the objects in the great drawing room also included an armillary sphere (an instrument formerly used in astronomy to show the movement of the stars, the Sun and the ecliptic around the Earth) and a terrestrial globe, two items regularly found in Masonic lodges.

And last year a specialist came and explained to us the symbolism of the two overmantels above the fireplaces. According to him, it is Apollo capturing the music of the cosmos, taking the music in his hand, playing it and presenting it here to our parliamentarian, who, with the symbol of the blazing sun, will make it shine out over the profane world.

One may therefore reasonably assume that the La Noüe couple were initiated into Freemasonry, she as much as he, because it is hard to imagine building a château entirely on this symbolism without Félicité, who was moreover paying for a good part of the work, being party to her husband's project. Not forgetting, too, that Guillaume-François, by his upbringing and his functions, was a rather conservative nobleman, whereas Félicité came from a merchant family that was no doubt more open to the world. So yes, she must certainly have been initiated. For transforming one's house and gardens into a Masonic lodge, over several hectares, in such a way that it was recorded in the cadastral survey of 1807, is no small thing! It is a project that requires great commitment and even exposes one to risk.

But we know very little about the La Noüe couple's Masonic involvement. It is very frustrating, because there is nothing in the archives on the subject. The only thing we have is the presence of these many architectural and decorative traces, which are indisputable. It is, however, something that we discovered and understood only later, through chance encounters and visits from specialists in the subject.

Perhaps it was also a taste for secrecy that led Guillaume-François and Félicité to write nothing down, so that only the initiated would understand…

1792

The French Revolution
Emigration and return
Descendants

Let us return to the course of History. The paint is not yet dry when the French Revolution breaks out. Guillaume-François and Félicité would therefore live on the property for only a rather short time. For 1792 saw the beginning of the Terror, and for their safety they decided to emigrate…

The Revolution and emigration

July 1789: the storming of the Bastille. August 1789: the abolition of privileges. “Unrest in the countryside” (“Émotion dans les campagnes”) was the term used at the time. Very soon the regime of the Terror took hold. This violence drove many aristocrats to leave their estates and emigrate to protect themselves.

What is more, we have mentioned the episode of the Constituent Assembly’s hostility towards the regional parliamentarians. And you will remember that in January 1788 Guillaume-François de La Noüe had fought alongside other aristocrats on the steps of the Parliament of Brittany. Guillaume-François was wounded in the arm on that occasion. We know this from the Gazette de Leyde, a newspaper of the time.

It is sometimes said that the French Revolution began in Brittany, with the “révolte des Bricoles” (a series of pre-revolutionary clashes in Rennes in January 1789 between students and nobles on the sidelines of the convening of the Estates of Brittany). Guillaume-François, worried by the turn political events were taking, therefore prepared with his wife Félicité and their children to emigrate to Jersey.

This departure was certainly hard to accept. But it was the problem of the whole aristocracy of the time, which had to emigrate because of the change of political regime and the violence it brought. Guillaume-François and Félicité are a very interesting couple because they lived through the same events as all the other aristocrats of France during this period of political upheaval.

This story of emigration also feels very modern to us, given the geopolitical context that today drives many people to migrate from one country to another. Over the two centuries that followed, there were revolutions in many countries, the Russian Revolution of 1917 for example. People then have to adapt, just as they adapted when they left Bogard for Jersey. Just as migrants today have to adapt when they arrive in France. So it is interesting to think that they too lived through all these things.

So the La Noüe couple did not enjoy this residence for long. Construction was completed in 1789. They enjoyed it until 1792, about three years, which is rather little.

When they left Bogard, they were in their forties. They left without knowing for how long. Perhaps three or six months, while the Revolution calmed down in France. But this absence would last longer than expected. He would never return, for he died in Jersey in 1796. Track was lost of one of their

daughters in London. His wife Félicité, their son and their second daughter Pauline would be a little luckier. They returned to Bogard under the Empire. Félicité recovered her property and died peacefully in her home. She was buried in Quessoy, but there is no longer any trace of her grave, the cemetery having been disturbed several times since. Their son also died fairly young, leaving his sister Pauline sole heiress to the property.

On her return from emigration, Félicité nevertheless completed some of the work, notably the vista in front of the château. But the whole financial and aristocratic rise of the two families was over. The Ancien Régime was over too, despite a temporary return of the monarchy under the Restoration. A new period was beginning, known as the "Modern era". The Monarchy gave way to the Republic…

Bogard sold as National Property

While they were away in emigration, the Château de Bogard was seized and sold as "national property". All the real estate and all the furniture were sold. Now, we told you earlier that Bogard had been sold for the first time in its entire history in 1962. You will say that we were mistaken, since the property was in fact sold twice. In reality, the château and its lands were bought back covertly by the shipowner father-in-law, Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos, officially by Olivier Gibet, of a family from Hénon. Olivier Gibet thus bought Bogard as a front man and returned all the property to Félicité when she came back from emigration. So it was a fictitious sale, the property having in reality always remained in the family. Part of the property was also bought back by Thérèse de La Noüe, an aunt who had stayed in Brittany and had no reason to fear the political events.

During this revolutionary period, the property was also looked after by the estate manager. The great drawing room was turned into a granary. Wheat was threshed there, much to the dismay of Félicité, who wrote to complain about it. That is why a wheat flail is kept in the drawing room today in memory of this story.

Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos

Emigration was hard to accept, but it nevertheless took place in fairly comfortable financial conditions. They were indeed helped financially by the father-in-law, Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos, who had English cousins. Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos was a wealthy Saint-Malo shipowner who had sensed the wind changing and had, as a precaution, placed part of his fortune with the Bank of England. As a result, Guillaume-François de La Noüe and Félicité Meslé de Grandclos went first to Jersey and then settled in London with the father-in-law's financial help.

Things also became difficult for him. The shipowner lived in Saint-Malo, on the rue de Toulouse, in a town house that still exists. On 8 December 1792, at five o'clock in the evening, he was informed that he was under arrest and was to be transferred to Rennes. He was confined to his house until the next day, his town house being placed under close guard. At that time, everyone knew that this kind of arrest boded ill. And since he had been expecting to be arrested, he had hidden a rope under his bed in a room on the second floor of his house. So, at the age of 70, he escaped by climbing down the rope from the second floor. He then went out through the Porte Saint-Vincent. He dived into the harbour of Saint-Malo to reach one of his ships, but because of the ban on leaving oars on board, to prevent ships leaving port without permission, he could not get away. He then made his way to what is called the Clos-Poulet, where he was hidden. And later he was able to reach London. The shipowner had managed to escape. But a price of 3,000 livres was put on his head.

Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos had, however, placed 1 million livres with the Bank of England at 3%. You can work out how much that might have earned him. So he had no money problems in

emigration. Nor did the La Noüe couple and their children, who benefited from his wealth in Jersey and London. He likewise helped a number of Breton émigré families financially.

He returned to France in 1798 and was able to recover a good deal of his personal property. Among other things, at the time of Bogard's sale as national property, there was stored in the château's stables a large yellow carriage drawn by four horses, well known to the inhabitants of Saint-Malo. It was his carriage. He wrote to the authorities of the day to say: "This carriage is mine; it belongs neither to my daughter nor to my son-in-law; I want my carriage back." And so he was able to recover his carriage.

His fortune having remained intact despite the political turmoil of the time, Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos bought the Château de Villers-Bocage after the Revolution. It is a magnificent château, in very fine condition, which has today been converted into a luxury residence.

The Terror in Brittany

In Brittany and in the Moncontour area, the Terror that took hold in 1793–1794 raged as it did everywhere in France. Several people in the region were guillotined. When we think of the Terror, we naturally picture Paris, Robespierre and all the bloody tragedies that took place on the Place de la Concorde. But there were all the other tragedies too: hurried departures into emigration, deaths during these journeys, financial losses, and so on. Not to mention massacres such as those in Nantes, where thousands of people deemed suspect by the Republic were drowned in the Loire on the orders of one Jean-Baptiste Carrier.

One may suppose, however, that relations between nobles and peasants could sometimes be calmer locally, because of the close ties between them. Take the example of the Marquis de Catuélan of the time, who was First President of the Parliament of Rennes. He emigrated with his wife and two sons. He drowned at Erquy with his two sons while trying to reach England. But when Madame de Catuélan returned to France, as Félicité de La Noüe would do at Bogard, when the Empire made it easier to return, she wished to visit the château she had left. She went to the person in charge of the château's keys. She did not reveal who she was. She visited the château, and during the visit she had moments of particular emotion that intrigued the person guiding her. At the end of the visit, the keeper of the keys invited her to the mill for some refreshment. He went away for a moment while his wife prepared the drink. And when he came back with his bunch of keys, he said to Madame de Catuélan: "Madame la Marquise, you did not make yourself known, but I recognised you. Here are the keys to your château." He thus gave her the chance to recover her property, with compensation, of course. This episode shows that locally there was not always necessarily antagonism or hostility between the social classes.

The only sign of hostility and damage at Bogard was the hammering-off of the La Noüe coat of arms, which had been carved in the pediment above the front steps. It was a time when all aristocratic symbols had to disappear. So the family's coat of arms was hammered off, as at many other properties during the French Revolution. It was a young man with a certain talent for climbing who hammered them off. The report is in the archives.

Descendants of the de La Noüe family

The descendants of Guillaume-François de La Noüe and Félicité Meslé de Grandclos would be very few, since only one daughter from their union survived, and she later married a du Plessis de Grenédan, himself from a family of "robins" (nobility of the robe). The whole fortune of Bogard thus passed by marriage to the du Plessis de Grenédan family. For the La Noüe family, the story of Bogard was therefore over. A new period was beginning. The du Plessis family would then remain at Bogard for four generations.

The name La Noüe is still borne in France. One of the descendants, from a younger branch of the family that built the Château des Aubiers in the commune of Hillion, was an airline pilot. He was the pilot of the plane carrying the boxing champion Marcel Cerdan to North America, which crashed into the Atlantic Ocean between Paris and New York in 1949. Marcel Cerdan was the lover of Édith Piaf. They were a famous couple.

This La Noüe des Aubiers descendant is buried in the cemetery of Pléneuf-Val-André. There you are: even the history of the La Noüe family is linked to recent history, with the death of Marcel Cerdan. It is surprising to learn that he was the pilot of the plane that crashed, isn't it?

There are also descendants of the La Noüe family in Canada and the United States. And that too is interesting. A branch of the family went to America and flourished there. It still exists, since we have welcomed to Bogard the descendants of that distant ancestor who left in the 17th century.

We must tell you this story… A few years ago we received a phone call. The voice on the line had a Quebec accent. It said: "I would like to know whether there are still members of the de La Noüe family at the Château de Bogard." This person was travelling in Paris. We met her, and she explained: "You see, I am descended from a member of the de La Noüe family. In the 17th century a younger son left to try to make his fortune on the American coast. And we are descended from that branch." So of course we invited her to come to Bogard, to the home of her ancestors! She was delighted. As a result, her father came too. And her brother as well.

1964

The Capelle family
Discovery of the archives
Restoring the history of the place

As mentioned at the beginning of this account, the Bogard estate was sold for the first time in its entire history in December 1962. And it was the Capelle family who acquired it. The property was bought by Antoinette Capelle, née Vendeuvre, wife of Philippe Capelle (yet another transfer through the women!).

Philippe and Antoinette Capelle

The Capelle family comes from Normandy, a family of landowners, but also of 19th-century industrialists, notably in linen manufacturing. The Vendeuvre family, for its part, is a family of lawyers, settled in Paris but originally from Champagne.

Imagine the property 60 years ago. Bogard was no longer the flamboyant château of the 18th century. The château was then a building with neither running water nor amenities. Today's reception rooms for weddings were then farm buildings housing a dairy herd. The inner courtyard of the Orangery was covered with a layer of mud into which sank the hooves of the cows that came to be milked morning and evening. The surrounding fields were used for grazing the animals and producing fodder for the winter. The lofts were filled with straw, hoisted up with pitchforks and elbow grease. The farm buildings and even some rooms of the château had beaten-earth floors and were used as storage spaces and sheds for farm equipment. A childhood memory too of Madame Rondel, who lived in one of the farm buildings, whose husband helped run the farm, and who made excellent buckwheat galettes that we came to enjoy every morning. May she rest in peace!

Discovery of the archives

And then, towards the end of the 1960s, one of the sons, Harald Capelle, while tidying up in the attic, discovered by chance some archives hidden under a pile of dusty planks, bundles of old documents tied with ribbons and piled up under the eaves.

This is the famous "treasure" we mentioned at the very beginning of this account, the story within the story. Not a treasure in the form of gold coins locked in a little chest at the bottom of the garden. It had no material value. But a treasure in terms of historical testimony. For these archives revealed to us the forgotten history of the Château de Bogard, the story of its construction, the story of its former owners and much other information about the history of the region.

So, by the greatest of chances, these archives were found in the attic, tied up in bundles and placed in the hollow of a small low wall on which the roof trusses rest. The documents on top had been affected by damp and had shrivelled. But the rest were in good condition. So, of course, there was great excitement. The archives were immediately brought down to the dining room. Everyone plunged into them to discover what they contained. They were archives of the de La Noüe family, the family in the

broad sense, and also archives relating specifically to the Bogard property. That is how we discovered that Guillaume-François de La Noüe had a law degree and was a Councillor in the Parliament of Brittany. There were also archives concerning Coatcouvrant, a château the La Noüe family owned at Yvignac-la-Tour. So they are quite varied archives. Among them is a document signed by the hand of Françoise de Dinan, one of the women who would take charge of the education of Anne of Brittany. There are documents recounting dramatic stories, such as that of a woman named Françoise Bahon, who had an abortion and was tried and convicted in 1577. It was rather horrible for her. When you see how this kind of thing was dealt with at the time, it was tragic. So there you are. There are many archives of historical interest.

What do you feel when you discover something like that? It was incredible! Imagine the excitement! So everything was brought down to the dining room so that the documents could be examined in more detail. And what is extraordinary is that for 200 years the archives had lain quietly in the attic amid general indifference, completely forgotten, probably put there to be hidden before the family left for emigration.

This discovery of the archives inspired a desire to breathe new life into Bogard. Before, it had been a family property. With the discovery of these archives, the Château de Bogard became a “historic monument”. The discovery of the archives was a real turning point, because from then on the property took on a whole new dimension.

The Capelle family’s contribution

Since this discovery, Harald and Baudoin Capelle, the two sons of Philippe and Antoinette Capelle, who had acquired the property in the 1960s, have never ceased in their efforts to restore the history of this place and the memory of its former owners. It is both the recovery of a forgotten history and, even more, the revelation of the place’s many secrets, including its Masonic symbolism. This work of historical and heritage restoration is truly the Capelle family’s great achievement at Bogard: through unceasing work over 60 years, they have given back to this property its lost and forgotten history.

The Château de Bogard is today listed as a Historic Monument. Its owners are members of La Demeure Historique (DH), Vieilles Maisons Françaises (VMF) and Parcs et Jardins de Bretagne (APJB). In 2019 Baudoin Capelle, currently Regional Delegate of the VMF for Brittany, was made an Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters for his work with associations for the benefit of local heritage and its promotion. The research and the promotion of the historic heritage of the Château de Bogard carried out by the two brothers, Harald and Baudoin, and the economic activity they have set up to preserve this heritage, were also rewarded with the Heritage Preservation Prize of the VMF and the IESA (Institut d’Études Supérieures des Arts) in 2003.

The Capelle family has thus brought the history of the Château de Bogard back to life. And it is this history that we have told you in these pages…

Epilogue

750 years after the first official record of its history, the adventure of “Bogard” continues. To preserve the heritage of the Château de Bogard is an act of resistance against time; it is to maintain an identity and a tradition that exist through time and will still exist when we ourselves are gone.

This place is an exceptional testimony to the 18th century, preserved intact ever since. A place where various influences mingle, including the ideas of the Enlightenment and the symbols of Freemasonry, at the crossroads between tradition and modernity, a witness to historical upheavals throughout history and more particularly at the time of the French Revolution.

Several events were organised in 2024 to celebrate the place’s 750 years of history. First, a very high-quality fireworks display by the Quessoy association Artisans d’Espoir, which drew more than 2,500 spectators, to whom the history of the place was told. Then an electronic music festival organised by the association Infamous Armada, which brought together nearly 7,000 young people from all over Brittany at Bogard to celebrate the end of summer for three days and two nights, in the manner of the ‘Ludi Romani’. This festival was an opportunity to involve young people in the European Heritage Days in an original way. This year Bogard was also used as a filming location for the series ‘Sur la dalle’, produced by France 2. And finally, we wished to write and publish this little book, which sums up the history of the place, recalls the memory of the families who lived here, and reveals to you certain secrets normally reserved for the initiated alone…

Come and enjoy a visit during the European Heritage Days in September or the Parcs et Jardins de Bretagne Days in May, or on a personalised tour by contacting us directly through our website. We will then have the pleasure of telling you more historical, family and heritage anecdotes…

And if you have enjoyed this story, or if you have useful information to share with us to enrich this Breton history, do not hesitate to let us know by writing to us or calling us (see the contact details on our “contact” page online). Be the first to hear our news by following us on social media: Facebook and Instagram.

https://www.facebook.com/ChateauDeBogard
https://www.instagram.com/chateau_de_bogard/

Kevano!

Further information

A visit to the Château de Bogard is also part of the “Circuit of Breton Parliamentarians’ Residences in the Pays de Moncontour”, which offers visits to many residences built in the 17th and 18th centuries. For more information, contact the Moncontour Tourist Office (Syndicat d’Initiative).

The Château de Bogard also hires out its indoor and outdoor spaces for weddings and all other ceremonies, as well as accommodation where you can relax and discover the region. If you are interested, you are most welcome, find all the practical information on our website: www.château-de-bogard.com.

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