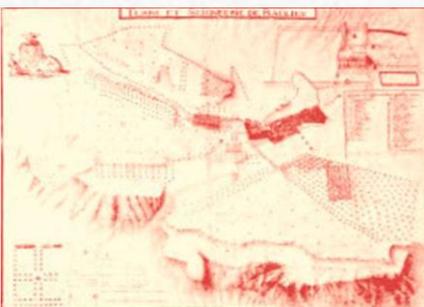


The history behind Beaulieu



Property of the Counts of Provence and established as a fiefdom by Henri III in 1576, Château Beaulieu has accommodated a line of the most noble Provencal families. The Alamanon, the Agoult, the Oraison, the Pontleroy as well as the Tournefort and the Candolle have all resided here, each taking great care to preserve this exceptional piece of land. A perpetual family tradition which is ongoing today. The history of Beaulieu has often been the subject of articles. H. de Saussure dedicated several pages to Beaulieu and its volcano in his book "Voyage dans les Alpes" written in 1796. Other authors such as Father Martin in 1800, Mary Tay in 1885, Charles de Ribbe in 1898 and Maurice Coquet in 1970, have all written books about Beaulieu.

Villa Baulieu

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The Greeks

The Salyens and Ligures had already plotted the ancient routes of antiquity and oppida (fortified towns) in this region when the Greeks of Marseille arrived. The Greeks embroidered the Provencal countryside as far back as the 6th century BC with what has today become the two characteristic images of Provence, two images which time has been unable to tarnish, the vine and the olive tree. For in ancient Greece the art of cultivating the vine was well established long before the Romans arrived.

The 5 trade routes

These 5 trade routes, older than the Roman paths in the region, were used for commercial traffic and all cross the plateau of Beaulieu meeting at Conil:

- Crau-Puy Sainte Réparate, the 'transhumance' route (seasonal migration of livestock to summer pastures), also known as the route from Arles to the mountains,
- The Berre-Durance Salt Route,
- The Marseille-Gontard Route (Passage of the Durance river),
- The Saint Cannat-Gontard Salt Route,
- The Entremont-Gontard Route.

The Romans

The arrival of the Romans was marked by the introduction of a land registry on the plateau of Beaulieu in which the Roman centurions are clearly depicted. The first columns settled due to the abundance of water and the rich soil in the area. An altar dedicated to the Goddess of Springs which dates back to the Augustan age was found at Beaulieu, as well as a number of statues, sarcophagus and millstones, all proving the presence of a substantial Roman Villa (a country house used mainly for agricultural purposes) at the end of the Roman empire.

The Aqueducts

The 3 major underground aqueducts at Beaulieu date back to the same period. The particularity of these aqueducts is that they open out just above ground surface, a technique introduced by the Romans to maintain the slope by using a system of wells at each point where there was a break in the slope. Two of these aqueducts still supply the grounds, fountains and ponds today. The dimension of the aqueducts often reached an impressive height of 2 metres and a width of 1.5 metres. At the beginning of the modern era, the poet Ausone defined the ideal property, the Villa, and Beaulieu was constituted, corresponding in effect to 262 hectares of land comprising 25 vineyards. The discovery of a barbarian cemetery to the south of Château Beaulieu leads us to believe that the Visigoths and later the Burgondes stayed in this Gallo-Roman Villa from the 4th century AD onwards.

The Counts of Provence

After the pillaging of lower Provence by Charles Martel around the year 737, the church took possession of the plateau of Beaulieu and a difficult autarkic period ensued. This ended around the year 972 when William the Liberator annexed the territories of Rognes and Beaulieu to the estate of the Counts of Provence. Due to the effects of depopulation and the end of serfdom and inheritance, the grand Gallo-Roman Villas were divided up and the feudal tenants grouped together to create the village of Rognes. However, the plateau of Beaulieu with the Bastide of the Seigneur of Rognes, the old Villa and future Chateau Beaulieu remained unchanged. This was also true for Brès and Tournefort. All these properties, which were located on the finest land, kept their land boundaries and owners, which was either the church or nobility. The estates remained with these owners who further handed them down through the generations, until the revolution in 1789 and thereafter until today. The presence of water and the influence of the Counts of Provence, Seigneurs of the plateau since the 11th century account for this unusual situation.

The Catalans

The Imberts, Coseigneur of Rognes, managed the seigneurial Chateau of Beaulieu throughout the 11th century in the name of the Counts of Provence who were also the Kings of Aragon. Around the year 1240 the Count of Provence definitively left the central estate of the seigneurie of Rognes, which included the Chateau of Beaulieu, to one of his faithful subjects who was of Catalan origin as the Count himself was. Pons of Brugerias who took the name Pons of Alamanon and whose son Bertrand of Alamanon, the Provençal troubadour and friend of Raymond Bérenger V, Count of Provence, had several children, notably Pierre of Alamanon and Bérengère who married the Seigneur of Venelles.

The Anjou

Charles I of Anjou, followed by Charles II, became Counts of Provence. Charles II, through his friendship with Pierre of Alamanon, protected his brother the Coseigneur of Rognes. In 1296, Rican of Alamanon became the first Admiral of Provence, establishing a link between Beaulieu and the sea, a link which was to recur in the history of Beaulieu. Rican of Alamanon also received the seigneurie of Pierrevert from Charles II. At the death of Rican, his son Pierre inherited the seigneurie of Rognes and the Bastide of Beaulieu. Pierre was taken to court by the people of Rognes for having closed and destroyed a public right of way in order to make way for a vineyard. Pierre, while in office as Admiral of Provence, accompanied Queen Jeanne to Naples in 1348. In 1376, Bertrand of Alamanon, heir to Pierre, decided to keep Tournefort while selling the Bastide of the Seigneur of Rognes at Beaulieu, and therefore respectively a third of the estate of the seigneurie of Rognes to Rostang Vincens. The Vincens family, traders and shipowners, and friends of the Alamanon, possessed their own galleys. Rostang was a notorious person in Provence, a royal chamberlain and treasurer of Provence. Despite his anti-Angevin position and the climate of banditry which prevailed in Provence at this period, Rostang Vincens managed to save the estate of Beaulieu from breaking up by passing it down to his son Raimond. This tradition continued with Raimond handing it down to his son Pierre who subsequently handed down the estate to his son Jean, father of Fouquet Vincens.

King René and the Agout. The fief of Beaulieu

Fouquet the godson, but also probably the son of Fouquet of Agout belonged to the prevailing family of nobility in Provence. Fouquet who was chamberlain to King René presided over the King's funeral in 1480. He opposed Louis XI during the annexation of Provence by France in 1483, but despite his opposition did not lose his standing with the powers of the day. Fouquet of Agout adopted the title Fouquet Vincens of Agout and Beaulieu remained his property until 1575 when his great-granddaughter Catherine married, and the estate then became the property of the Thomases of Sainte Marguerite through Nicolas. Nicolas was granted a fiefdom in November 1576 through letters patent from Henri III. This fiefdom became the seigneurie of Beaulieu. Through further marriage, the seigneurie became the property of Guillaume of Jullien who gave the estate its present appearance through the acquisition of the Chateau of Milhaude. The estate was further passed down to Pierre Besson whose daughter Marie, handed Beaulieu down to her nephew, Pierre of Oraison in 1687.



The present Chateau and its park

The Jullien and the Besson constructed, in 1635, on the solid basalt foundations what is today the Italian style Chateau which replaced the former Bastide. With the exception of some "modernising" work on the main courtyard and first floor in 1775, and the four towers built in 1805, the Chateau has remained unchanged since its initial construction. This can be confirmed by the plans of 1705 on display in the Chateau. The modifications carried out in the 18th century were probably under the charge of the architect Vallon. However, the white marble fountain in the main courtyard is attributed to Veyrier at the time of the initial construction in the 17th century. The park, which was designed in the 17th century as is visible on the plans of 1705, was modified in the 18th century with the creation of a French style garden in the southern part. Further modifications were carried out in the eastern part in the 19th century taking care to respect the original boundaries.



Villa Baulieu

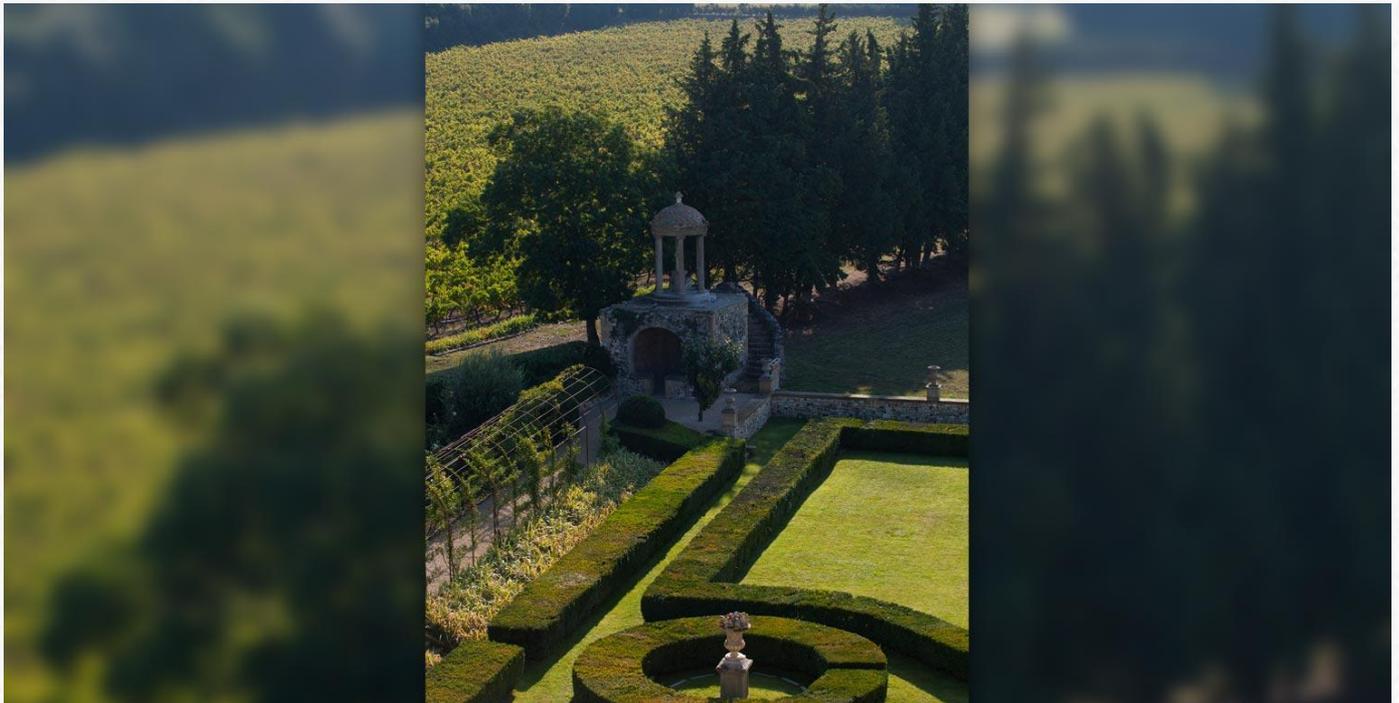
The Pontleroy, Robineau and Candolle

In 1705, Pierre of Oraison left Beaulieu to Baron Pierre Sarrebourg of Pontleroy, a Marseille shipowner whose son Jacques, the first municipal magistrate of Marseille, sold the estate to Pierre Robineau in 1754. The Robineau family, tax collectors and War Commissioners of Marseille, were also painters, poets and botanists, and remained owners of Beaulieu until 1867 when they handed over the property to their cousins, the Counts of Candolle, the family of the renowned botanist whose coat of arms still figures above the main door of Chateau Beaulieu today. This coat of arms is comprised of a gold azure shield depicting two lions each holding a banner with the motto "Aide Dieu en bon Chevalier" (Aid God as a faithful Knight). The Candolle left the estate to the silk manufacturing family, the Barlet from Lyon, in 1920. In 1939 the Touzet became owners and remained so until 2002.

Since 2002

Today the Chateau and its outbuildings in the park of Beaulieu are undergoing restoration work, taking great care to maintain the character of the environment and preserve its heritage and integrity. Now, Beaulieu is back to the old writing Baulieu, as a tribute to the Jullien/Julhan Family who rebuilt Baulieu in this Italian Villa style, Aix-en-Provence being halfway between Rome and Paris.

*Pierre, Nicole et Bérengère Guénant
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