

700<sup>e</sup> Anniversaire  
de l'Eglise Sainte-Soy  
de Contamine-Sur-Arve



## 700TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHURCH OF SAINTE-FOY OF CONTAMINE SUR ARVE

### The Surroundings

On the right bank of the river Arve, just below the Castle of Faucigny, approximately 25 kms from Geneva and 60 kms from Chamonix, Contamine-sur-Arve is a small community of 1,250 inhabitants. It is made up of a large village called Contamine, from the Latin "*Con Dominium*", meaning "commons or enclosed land" and a number of hamlets.

The Arve separates it from the parishes of Arenthon and Scientrier. The stretch of the river between Annemasse and Bonneville, on the North-West bank, where Contamine is situated, used to be called the "Provence of Faucigny", as much for its climate as for its abundant orchards and vineyards.

Contamine-sur-Arve is above all known for the history of the Priory situated in this area of Faucigny.

The province of Faucigny is at the centre of the department of Haute-Savoie, between the Chablais to the North and the Genevois to the South. Facing South-East/North-West, it includes the river basins of the Arve and the Giffre. Wider at the Mont-Blanc end, it stretches for approximately a hundred kms, narrowing towards Geneva. Nowadays, the way the Haute-Savoie has been cut up into "cantons" (parishes/municipalities) does not always respect the old limits of the province.

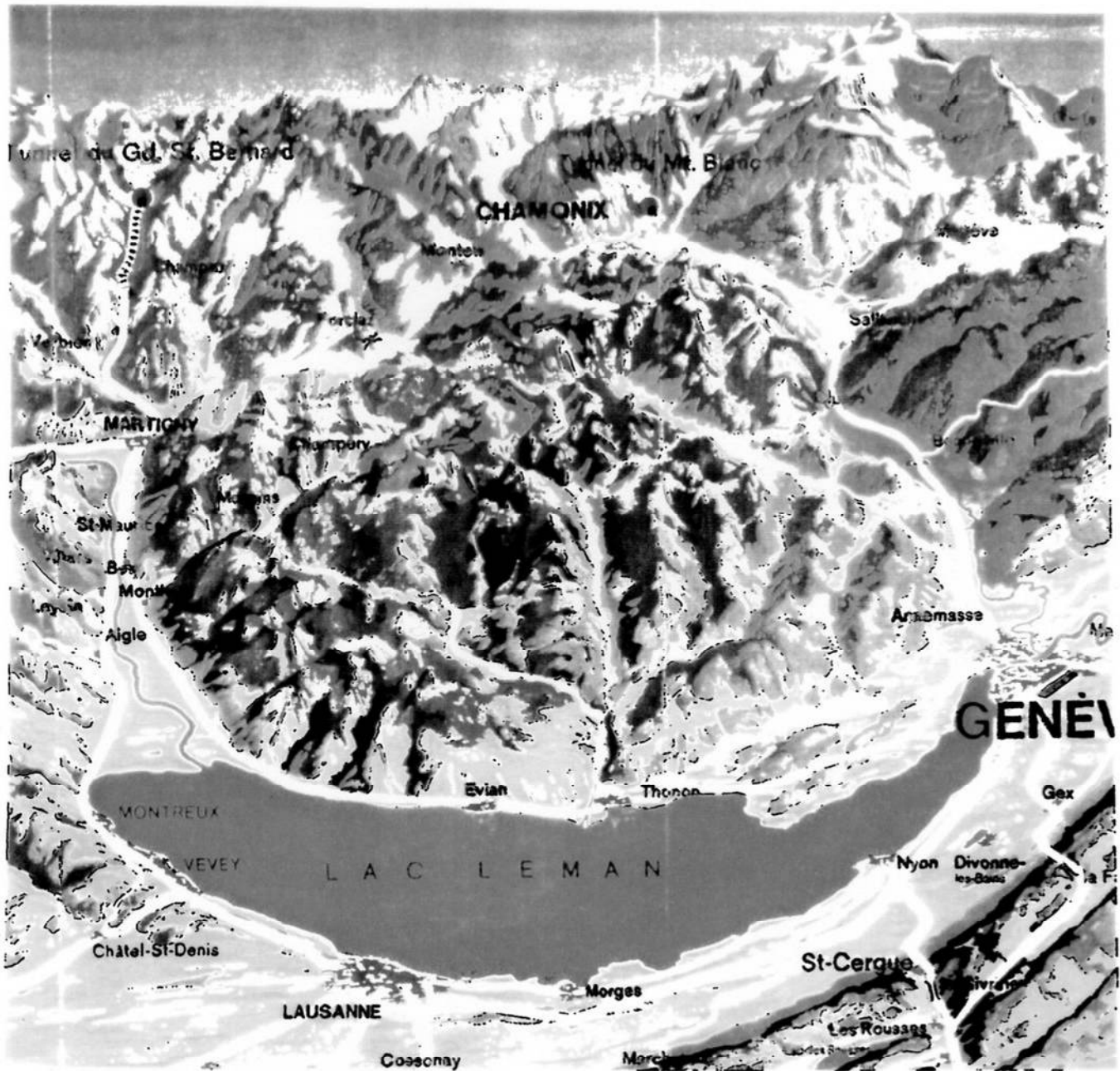
Geologically, Faucigny is a typical example of the different soils which appeared with the formation of the western part of the Alps. At the time of the alpine folding, in the Tertiary era, there was a very strong push to the East which pushed up the crystalline rocks of the Primary era and led to the formation of the Mont-Blanc range (4808 metres). This phenomenon led to the formation of the limestone Pre-Alps of the Chablais and the Giffre, to the South, the Bornes, and further West the Salève, a bastion of the Jurassic period. The land from Geneva to Bonneville is an essentially molassic agricultural plain opening up into the Chablais.

The valley of the Arve from Bonneville to Salanches, literally a channel cut by the river through the Pre-Alps, separates the valleys of the Chablais and the Giffre from those of Bornes. A highly industrialised zone, the valley of the Giffre from Marignier to Fer-à-Cheval delimits the Pre-Alps of the Chablais.

The valley of Chamonix, the area of the Mont Blanc with at its foot the glaciers of Bionassay, Bossons, Argentièrre and the Mer-de-Glace, is linked to Switzerland by the Pass of Montets and to Italy through the Mont Blanc tunnel.

Faucigny has a pronounced continental climate, with in certain areas a micro-climate such as that of Contamine, the Provence of Faucigny.

## Geographical layout



## The Church

Of all its former splendour, only the part of the church now used as the parish church remains. The three sections of the church are only a part of the original edifice.

The magnitude of the destruction caused by the Bernese, Genevan and French soldiers in 1589 can still be seen today. The present church confirms what was said by Jean Papon of Cluny, visiting the church in 1607: "We have now only half the church of former times".

The façade is made up of a double arch, separating two sections and roughly filled in, in the middle of which is the doorway. This is a part of the former priory church originally made up of three four-part sections and one nave.

Between the two buttresses is a partially-enclosed bell-tower with a stairway which provides access to the top part of the building.





## History

The illustrious house of Faucigny, which gave or drew its name from the geography of the place: *Fauces et aquum* (valley and river), appeared suddenly in the XIth century following a period of conflict, and ruled for two and a half centuries.

The lords of Faucigny lived in a castle overlooking the valley of the Arve, not far from Bonneville and dominating the village of Contamine. The original fort dates from approximately AD 930, and the ruins can still be seen on a rocky outcrop above the town. It was from this family that the bishops of Geneva were chosen. Guy de Faucigny governed the diocese of Geneva for fifty years, from 1070 to 1120. The jurisdiction of the diocese of Geneva stretched over three provinces: the Chablais belonging to the counts of Savoy; the Faucigny and the County of Geneva.

In 1083 Guy de Faucigny gave to the Abbey of Cluny the church of Holy Mary at a place called Contamine on the banks of the Arve "*juxta ripam fluvii qui vocatur arva*", as well as all the lands and goods belonging to the church including serfs of both sexes, vineyards, fields, common land, forests, etc. Thus begins the story of the Priory.

The church became the burial place of the Faucigny family. In a will dated 16 November, 1262, Agnes, wife of Count Pierre of Savoy, states that her father and her ancestors are buried there. In 1295, through the agency of Beatrice, daughter of Agnes and Pierre II, count of Savoy, the church was rebuilt as well as the Priory.

Beatrice of Faucigny called on the services of an architect, Master Jacques de Saint-Georges, who for a long time had worked in Wales. On 14 May, 1274, Master Jacques, living at the time at the Château of Chillon, was given fourteen "sols" to go to Contamine.

## Architecture

The church of Contamine in Haute-Savoie has quite a special architectural character with a number of unusual elements not found elsewhere in the region.

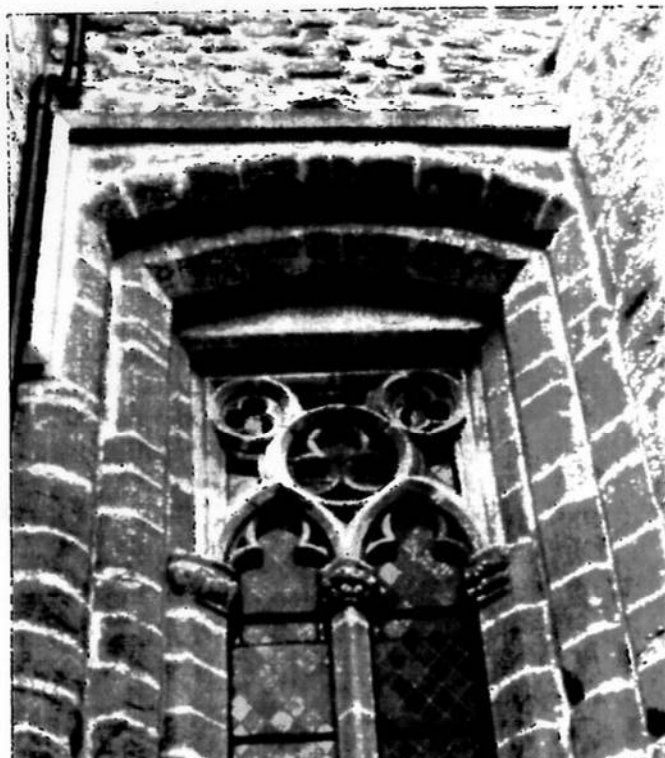
The side-windows are particularly interesting. Comparative studies demonstrate the English influence which traversed the Savoy on the windows of the ancient choir of Contamine.

Arnold Taylor draws links between the rectangular-shaped windows of the Domus Clericorum of the Château of Chillon and those of Kentgatehouse in the Welsh castle of Harleck. One can find prototypes of windows of the Priory of Contamine in the large rectangular windows, now in ruins, which lit the rooms of the royal quarters in the Castle of Conway. This was precisely the part of the castle for which, in 1283, the famous Master Jacques of Saint-Georges, fresh from the Savoyard building sites commissioned by the noble Jean de Bonvillars, a vassal of Othon I of Grandson (perhaps his son-in-law), was responsible.

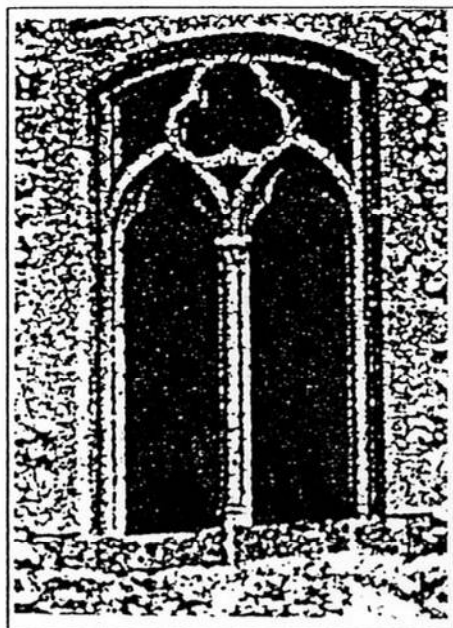
What is particularly striking is the similarity between the windows of the royal quarters in the Castle of Conway and the southern window of the bell-tower of Contamine, on one side three large trefoils and on the other just one. If the frame in Conway is strictly rectangular, one finds around it a projecting arch - unusual at that time in both the Savoyard windows: Chillon, Yverdon, and the Welsh: Harleck, Beaumaris - and the horizontal crosspieces frequent in Contamine.

All these elements give one to think that this type of English - but nevertheless somewhat Savoyard - military architecture, was applied for the first time, and also the last in the region, in the church of Contamine.

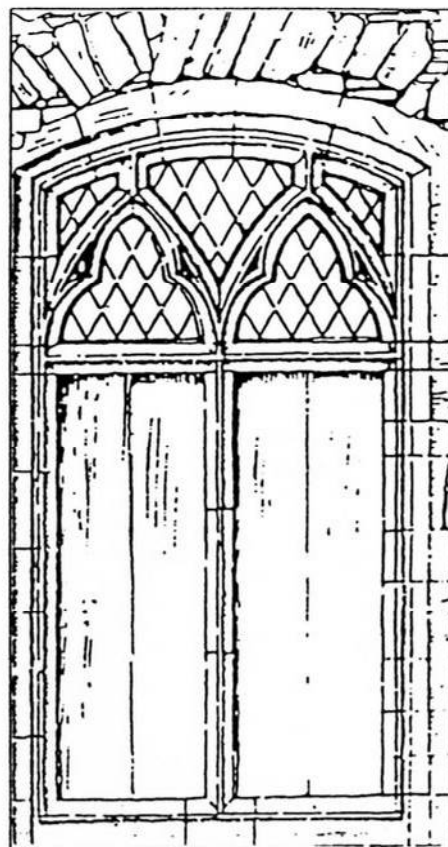
The doorway and windows of the Priory of Contamine



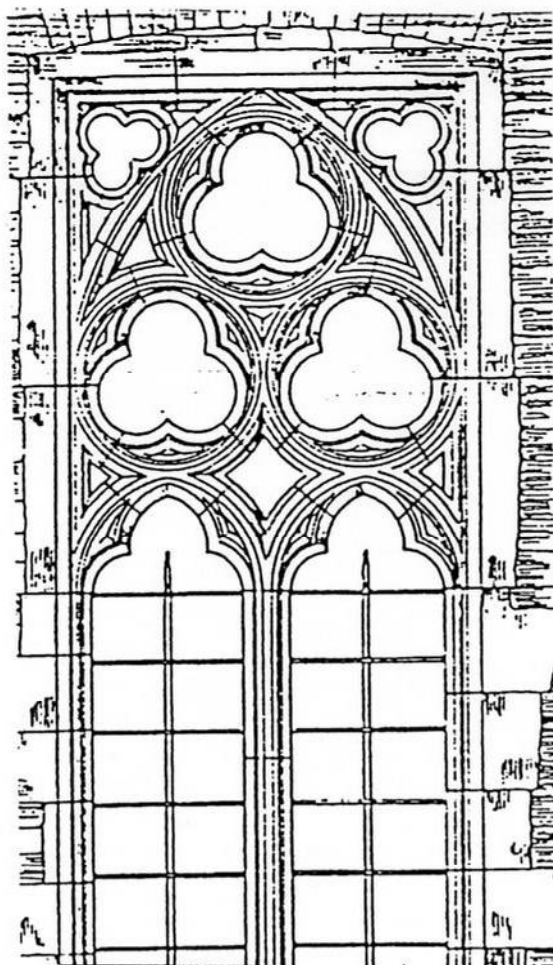
# Windows of Castles of Wales and Chillon



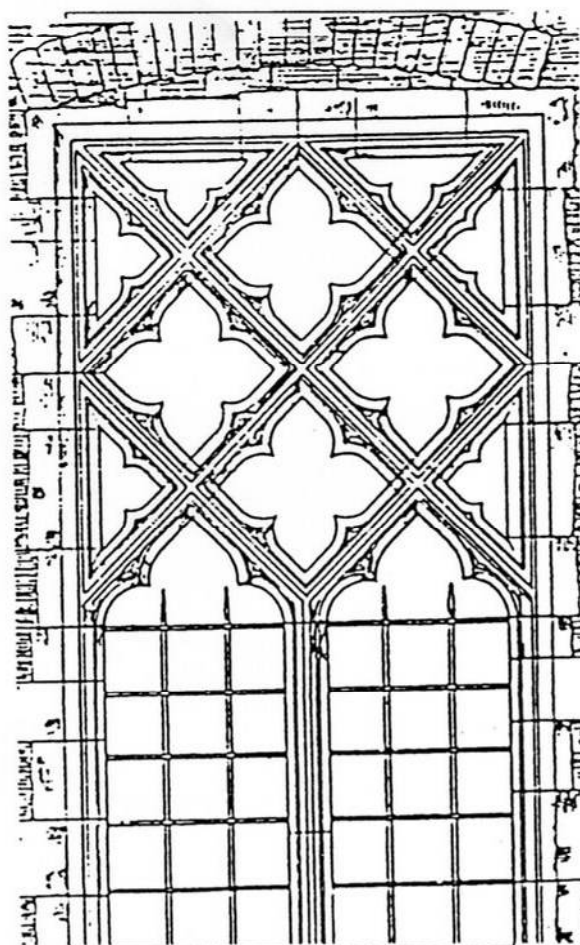
Chateau de Chillon



Chateau de Harleck



Chateau de Conway



Chateau de Conway



## The close and long-term links between the Savoyard rulers and England

From the time when the dynasty of Humbert "the White-handed" emerged, links have existed between the mountain peoples of both sides of the Alps and England.

The importance of the alpine regions was well-known to the English kings as early as 1027, the year when Rodolphe III of Burgundy, (whose lands, including Savoy, joined the Holy Roman Empire in 1032), signed a treaty with Canute the Great. At the time king of England, Denmark and Norway, he was one of the most powerful princes of his time. As principal lord of the alpine region, Rodolphe III promised toll-free passage and protection of their goods to English and Danish merchants and pilgrims using the mountain passes.

After the invasion of England by William the Conqueror (1066) and the formation of an anglo-norman kingdom, the new kingdom found itself in conflict with the Capet kings for dominion over the French provinces. Henry II Plantagenet (1154-1189), a contemporary of Humbert III, sought the support of the pope, the supreme authority as regards the legitimacy of kings. To achieve this it was essential to go to Rome as zealous proof of religious faith. To get there meant crossing the mountain passes controlled by Savoy and thus good relations had to be maintained. The plan to marry Alice, eldest daughter of Humbert III, to the English heir John stemmed from this. If this project had not failed, due to the death of the princess, the English would have had claims to the Alps much as they had in France where, in the middle of the XIIth century, half its territory (Normandy, Anjou, Maine, Guyenne, Gascony) had, through marriages and inheritances, fallen into the hands of Henry II Plantagenet. For Savoy, the desire for British support to counterbalance the pressures from France and the Empire, would remain a constant throughout the XIIIth century.

The golden age of relationships between the "White-handed" and the British sovereigns reached its peak during the XIIIth century. After the lengthy and fruitful reign of Humbert III, his late-born heir Thomas would inaugurate a halcyon period for the dynasty which would culminate, in the middle of the XVth century, with Amédée VIII.

A real "grandfather of Europe", this prolific sovereign had, according to genealogical accounts of the period such as the *Armorial of Foras*, eighteen children through his marriage to Beatrice, daughter of Count Guillaume of Geneva, without counting the illegitimate ones. Mediaevalists have identified to a certain extent his numerous descendants who, through his politico-marital strategies, were to be found all over Europe.

Four of Thomas I's sons would reign over Savoy, succeeding to the throne after complex struggles of succession: Amédée IV who reigned from 1233-1253; Thomas II; Pierre II (1263-1268), the husband of Agnes of Faucigny; Philippe I (1268-1288). The other sons were Humbert, said to have died in the war against the Prussians at the service of the Russian king of Moscow; Aimon, count of Chablais, as well as two prelates established across the Channel (of whom more later). As to the girls, Marguerite married the powerful German noble Hermann of Kyburg and Beatrice married Raymond-Béranger, count of Provence.

In his policy of encirclement against the French kings, Henry III Plantagenet (1216-1272) gained control of part of the Southern provinces by marrying in 1236 Eleanor, second daughter of Béranger of Provence and grand-daughter of Thomas of Savoy. The future bride was taken to London by her uncle, Guillaume (William) at the head of an escort made up of Savoyard knights. This William was an interesting man, bishop of Valence but also a valiant soldier. Henry III, who needed a foreign ally to impose his authority over the hostile English nobles, encouraged William of Savoy to stay with him, giving him vast domains and generous gifts. The soldier-prelate, who became one of Henry's closest advisers, was appointed bishop of Winchester where he died in 1239.



## Pierre II

The marriage of Eleanor made the sons of Thomas I the uncles by marriage of the king of England, and the Savoyards would take advantage of this relationship. When Amédée V succeeded his father in 1253, he found himself in tight financial straits; he sought support against his turbulent vassals contesting his inheritance and, for a large sum of money, swore allegiance to Henry III.

Amédée's brothers travelled to England. Philip obtained gifts and responsibilities which he kept when he was named bishop of Lyon before acceding to the throne of Savoy, where he reigned from 1268 to 1280. He was followed by Boniface, later to become archbishop of Canterbury.

Pierre II, who would reign for five only years (1263-1268) spent most of his life in England, leaving his wife Agnes, whom he married in 1233, to govern Faucigny. Made Earl of Richmond, Essex and Eagle and possessing vast domains, he was one of the greatest men in the history of Britain at this time. He rendered distinguished diplomatic and military services to the king but nevertheless remained sentimentally attached to his homeland. He spent large amounts enlarging his domains, those inherited in the Chablais, but also in Vaud, Valais (Wallis) and around Vienne (Rhône).

From his military campaigns in the English Guyenne, he brought back the plans of the round towers built by the Plantagenets, so much more efficient than the square fortresses built by the Savoyards (with blind angles a handicap in the defences). With his architect, Pierre Meinier, he introduced this system in his domains and this novelty was adopted in all the states of Savoy and Helvetia. The most typical of the castles are those of Langin in the Chablais, Monthey in Valais (Wallis), Romont and Yverdon in Vaud, Bonneville and La Roche in Faucigny, La Bathie and Feissons in the Tarentaise.

In London, Peter of Savoy had acquired a palace bearing his name, which subsequently was given to the neighbourhood and later to luxury hotels the world over - the Savoy.

## Human Relationships

Apart from the architectural links, it is also interesting to see the relationships between Savoy and England, and vice versa, in the XIIIth century.

In building, a particular master builder worked in both countries - Master Jacques of Saint-Georges, and some of his companions must have accompanied him on either side of the Channel. This is the object of studies by Arnold J. Taylor as from 1937 and to which he brought, during a long and fruitful career as a researcher, a considerable number of examples.

The nobles - patrons or patrons-to-be of these artisans - drew inspiration from the places they visited on their travels, military and other missions, meetings with artists, etc., and commissioned works.

The multiple relationships between Savoy and England, in a variety of areas such as diplomacy, war, the church or finance, throw light on the general atmosphere of the times, even if such relationships are not sufficiently documented to give us practical details.

If the travels of the indefatigable Peter of Savoy are well known, it is less well-known that his brother Thomas II, count of Flanders, and his nephew Amédée, that is, one of the successors of the count of Savoy, also sojourned in England a number of times. Another of Peter's brothers, Boniface, was particularly familiar with English affairs as he occupied the primate's seat of Canterbury from 1241 till his death in 1270.

Amédée of Savoy participated in the campaigns against Wales led by his distant cousin, King Edward I, in 1277 and 1278 and again in 1282 and 1283; the future count of Savoy headed for a time the operational base in Chester, led his troops in the siege of the Welsh castle, Dolforwyn, and also had

operational base in Chester, led his troops in the siege of the Welsh castle, Dolforwyn, and also had

the opportunity to see for himself the great fortresses of Monmouth and Rhuddlan. Several nobles from Vaud followed in his footsteps, some ending their life across the Channel.

In the wake of the House of Savoy and its vassals, the great family of Grandson, with its branches of Champvent, Estavayer and Vuippens, also sent representatives to England.

These nobles occupied important positions, all of which we cannot enumerate, but mainly they governed castles or held other positions of responsibility in the service of the king of England: for example, Ebal II of Mont (Mont sur Rolle) who, in 1254, was governor of Benanges, the vast fortress in Gascony, south-east of Bordeaux, and ended his life as governor of Windsor Castle, one of the principal residences of the royal family. When one knows that the governor of Windsor was directly responsible for guarding and educating the royal children (who, sensibly, did not follow the court), one realises the importance of such a position. (It is interesting to think that for a number of years a position of such responsibility was entrusted to a knight from our country.) And finally, the Queen of England, Eleanor of Provence, was executor of his will.

Pierre of Champvent, a cousin of Othon of Grandson, was highly esteemed by Edward I, who named him Chamberlain and Seneschal of the royal household.

The clan of Bonvillars was certainly related to the Grandsons, as shown by the regular appearance in their genealogy of names such as Aymon, Henri, Guillaume and Othon. Henry of Bonvillars, after having been Dean of Payerne, became successively Prior of two important priories in England belonging to Cluny Abbey: Bermondsey in Surrey (near London) and then Wenlock in Shropshire. He undertook several delicate diplomatic missions on behalf of the king.

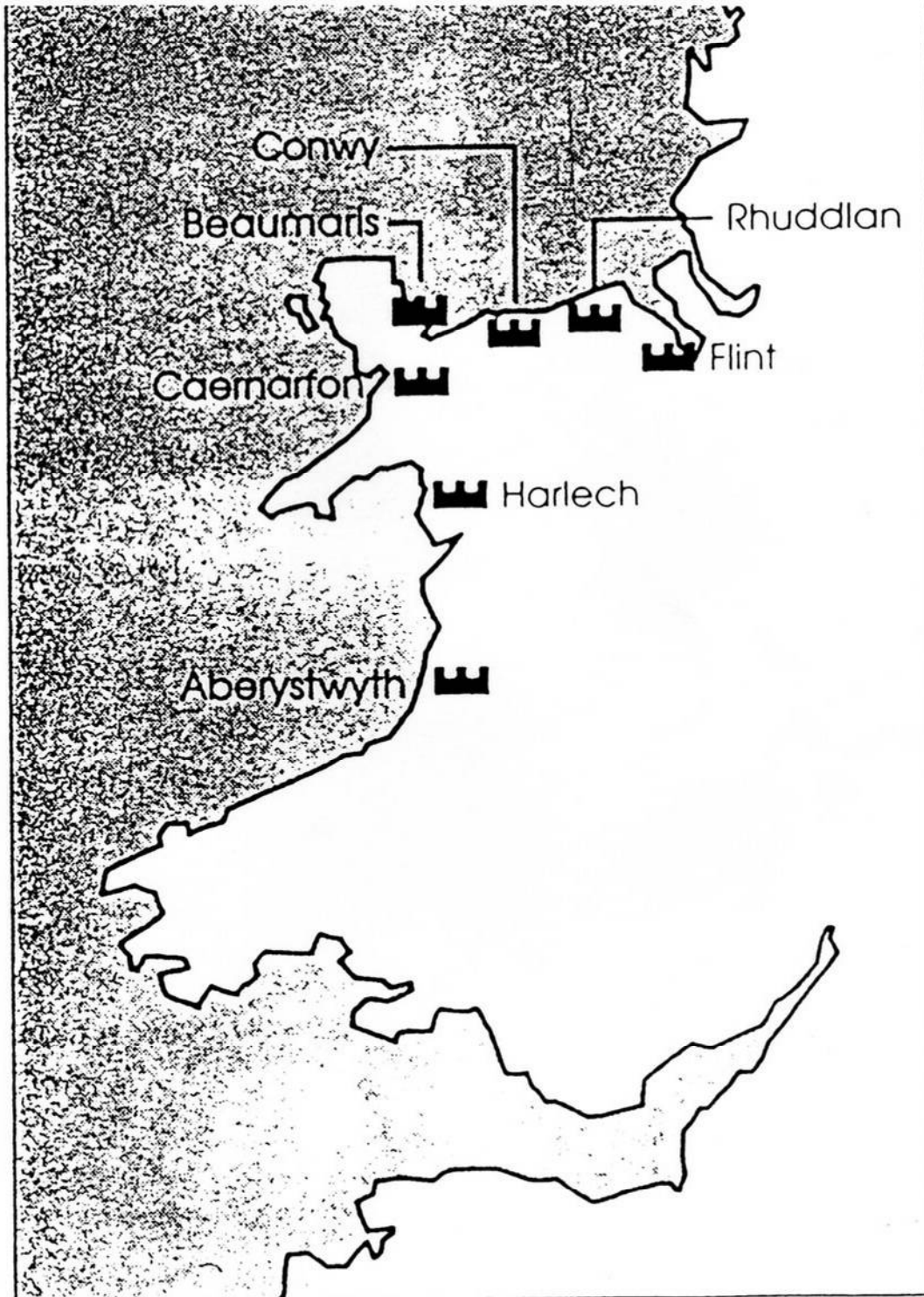
Othon of Bonvillars was a judge in the anglo-norman islands and Guillaume of Bonvillars was prebender of the diocese of Lincoln.

One of Henri's brothers, Jean of Bonvillars, participated in the campaign against Wales; the king used him as liaison officer with the heads of the expedition in 1277, Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln and Othon of Grandson. Shortly afterwards, he sent him to his lands in Gascony. All the above shows the confidence in which he was held by the king. He was subsequently named governor of the important castle of Harlech; in this position, he was responsible for overseeing the building of other great castles in Wales - Caernarvon and Conway. He headed the army of the vast territory of Gwynedd against the uprising of the Wesh. At the siege of Dryslwyn, in August 1287, Jean of Bonvillars and several others were inspecting the installation of a drill intended to breach the walls when it collapsed and he was killed.

This is one example among many of a Savoyard knight who paid with his life for his allegiance to a foreign king.

Considering that the only means of transport were horses and ships, however uncomfortable they might have been, the people of the XIIIth century were considerably more mobile than one might imagine today, and their relatively numerous travels enabled them to exchange views on subjects as diverse as military or religious architecture, commerce and government.

Castles built in Wales at the end of the thirteenth century with the help of Savoyard workmen



## **A great master-mason, Jacques of Saint-Georges**

In the financial documents relating to the reign of Edward I of England, kept in the archives of London, mention is made several times of a "master James of Saint-George". The first references to him, as master of works at the court, appear for the period from 23 March to 31 October 1278. They appear in a series of bills in the daily register of the "royal wardrobe".

In April 1278, Master Jacques was sent to Wales to direct the work in connection with the castles. From 1283 to 1293 he worked at Conway and Caernarvon. It was in this rebuilt castle that the son of Edward I, heir to the throne, was given the title of Prince of Wales. In 1293, Jacques worked at the Cistercian monastery of Conway. Beaumaris was the last site he worked at in Wales. He had under his orders 400 masons, 2000 labourers, 200 porters, 30 carpenters, 160 wagons and 30 boats. In 1295, Master Jacques followed Edward to Scotland where his first job was at Linlithgow.

The last trace of him is a payment of twenty pounds on 4 September 1306. He died in 1309.

Jacques of Saint-Georges of Espérance was born in 1235. He acquired his expertise working with his father, Jean, in the Vienne (Rhône) region and in Vaud (Yverdon in 1261, Chillon in 1266).



## Chronology of the Priory of Contamines

- **1083:** Foundation of the Benedictine Priory of Contamine-sur-Arve, under the authority of the Abbey of Cluny, by the bishop of Geneva, Guy de Faucigny.
  - **1274:** The court of Savoy, installed at the Castle of Chillon, allocates 14 "sols" to Master Jacques for him to go to Contamine.
  - **1295:** Construction of a new church under the aegis of Prior Guillaume de Bussière and Beatrice of Faucigny. It was Beatrice's son-in-law, the lord of Vienne (Rhône) who, having besieged Geneva in 1291, had the church built in the hopes of making amends.
  - **1443:** Mention is made of a high altar in the convent church.
  - **end 1444:** Fire. Felix V grants an amount of 140 florins for the restoration of the church.
  - **1476:** Another fire - extremely violent, as the bells melt in the heat.
  - **1516:** Pastoral visit by Monsignor Pierre Farseni, bishop of Barutensis, in the name of Jean of Savoy, bishop of Geneva. Philippe of Luxemburg, Prior. Everything is in a pitiful state of neglect. The bishop orders repairs, the manufacture and upkeep of church vessels and objects: missals, robes, chalices, lamps, etc. The bishop says: "I command, on pain of excommunication, the church to be put in order."
  - **1535-1536:** Invasion of Savoy by the Bernese. The Duchess of Nemours, Countess of the Genevois, widow of Philippe of Savoy, Duke of Nemours, requests the Bernese generals not to "disturb her estates". As the princess is a protégée of the king of France, the Bernese understand that there is nothing to be gained by further trouble. Gradually peace returns to Faucigny.
  - **1551:** Celse Morin Hedven becomes Prior. He had an extremely bad reputation and did nothing for the good of the priory. He abducted the wife of Louis des Cles, lord of Labitieu and refused to return her. He spent money on arms, horses, hunting, etc. He wore forbidden arms, led black masses, stole funds destined for almsgiving. The assistant prior, Antoine Vidal, denounced him and on 14 November 1559 he was sentenced to banishment.
  - **1589:** Henri III, king of France, irritated by the invasion by the Duke of Savoy of the earldom of Saluces, invades the Faucigny district with the help of the Bernese and the Genevans.
- Massacres, rape, pillage and fire. The parish and the priory churches of Contamine are ransacked: statues are mutilated, stained glass windows shattered, bells broken, etc. The priory is burnt down. The parish church dedicated to Sainte Foy, is totally destroyed.
- **1606:** Pastoral visit by Saint François de Sales.
  - **10 April 1607:** Visit from an envoy from Cluny Abbey, brother Jean Papon. The report of the visit states: "the Priory of Contamine is completely ruined, both the church and the surrounding buildings, roofless apart from half of the old church, which is in a very bad state, as much the monastery as the interior of the choir, where there are no seats for the monks except little benches; the lower walls are in a bad state, the floors unpaved, the windows for the most part are blocked with mortar and stones, which renders the interior so dark and deformed that it is impossible to hold holy worship there."

Only the sacristan's house was still in a fit state. The monks had had to leave their cells and lodge in the village. The effect of the war on monastic discipline had been disastrous. Cluny will be unable

to re-establish the monastery and will in due course be replaced by the another religious order, the Barnabites.

- **30 May 1618:** Canonical visit to the priory by Louis de la Tour. Jean de Lucinge, prior. The result of this visit is to take note that the church is still in a pitiful state. The windows of the choir are unrepaired, covered by plain cloth, torn in several places. The order is given to re-roof the church as soon as possible to prevent it caving in. The monastery buildings have still not been repaired.

In spite of the orders from Cluny, the church and monastery buildings are not repaired. The Barnabites, with the support of François de Sales, will finally undertake this work.

- **1619:** Father Cyrille Bouvier, Barnabite, is named vicar and prior. He will refurbish the monastery. He has the church re-roofed, plants vineyards, repairs the roads, reinstates the church's rights, hears court cases, etc.

On **11 May 1619** he succeeds in obtaining a rebate on the taxes due to the crown for each incoming administrator. He has a large house built called the House of Contamine. On **18 February 1620** he signs the contract for a price of 1,100 florins, a measure of wheat and a barrel of wine. In **1622**, he has important repair work done on the priory church. The date can still be read on the plasterwork on one of the windows on the north end of the church.

Father Bouvier succeeded in protecting the interests of his congregation, while respecting the Benedictine monks still living in the monastery.

The substitution of the Cluny community by that of the Barnabites was finally officially confirmed in **1625**. François de Sales, with the help of Charles Emmanuel I, seeing all the good that the installation of the Barnabites had brought (they are missionaries, educationists) finally has the Senate confirm their occupation by a legal brief of **20 March 1625**. The Benedictines leave Contamine. The same year, the monastery is finished.

On **20 March 1633** a contract is signed to "rebuild the walls around the big orchard and goat pen and to finish re-roofing the church. The enclosing wall will be covered with flat stones and the masons will take the stones from the barn of the old church as long as there are enough, the rest to come from the cloisters and after from the fields and the vines".

- **22 September 1650:** Pastoral visit by Mgr Charles-Auguste de Sales. The brotherhood is functioning normally.

- **1663:** Construction of the pulpit and probably the high altar.

- **1677-80 approximately:** Building of a priory chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Suffrage: (8 metres long by 4.50 metres high, decorated with wall paintings representing the adoration of the magi, the circumcision, the marriage of the Virgin, the presentation in the temple.)

- **1689:** The Vaudois again invade the Faucigny. The priory is occupied by the protestant officers. Neither the buildings nor persons are hurt, thanks to the diplomacy of Rev. Father Dom Burnod.

- **14 October 1792:** The population of Contamine votes unanimously to become French. The property and goods of the clergy will be impounded.

- **21 February 1795:** The priory is sold.

- **4 August 1803:** Reestablishment of the parish of Contamine. The priory church becomes the parish church dedicated to Sainte Foy. A rector will be nominated once the church has been refurbished. The

priory is sold and re-sold, transformed into a cotton mill and factory for cotton goods. The factory, employing 300 people, finally goes bankrupt.

- **1835:** Through public subscription, Rev. Jacques-Marie Frezier orders a new small bell. In **1842** a large bell is installed.
- **18 March 1847:** The religious order of the Redemptorists, authorised by a royal decree of 21 August 1846, takes possession of the priory.
- **16 May 1851:** Demolition of the sacristan's house, in danger of collapse.
- **28 July 1851:** Demolition of the West wing of the old priory, in ruins.
- **December 1851:** Discovery of the foundations of the original monastery.
- **1883:** Ribatto repaints the ceiling and interior walls of the church. Brother Nicolas restores the high altar.
- **1905:** The Redemptorists leave Contamine-sur-Arve. Creation of an agricultural school in part of the monastery buildings.
- **1914:** The present bell-tower is built: installation of the big bell.
- **1934:** Installation of the small bell.
- **1980s:** Restoration of the church under the aegis of the ministry of Historic Monuments.

## Probable dates of the wall-paintings

(From the most recent to the original level)

1.: Dated and signed on the interior wall by RIBATTO 1883. Brother Nicolas restores the high altar.

2. This must have been done with the encouragement of Mgr René DESMONTIERS DE MERINVILLE, bishop of Annecy and Geneva. He asked that the church be restored before nominating a rector. In 1807 a rector was installed. This second period must date back to about 1805. It is at that time that work on the big window of the choir is started.

3. Whitewash covers all the interior walls of the building to wipe out all traces of a place of worship (1790-95). This has a direct link to the revolution. All the goods of the Barnabites are taken from them.

4. White walls, grey embrasures. The church is light, very simply decorated, no doubt in line with the fashion of the time, the XVIIIth century, but also probably a political decision of the Barnabites in view of the revolutionary ideas in the air. It is at this time that the clergy restrict their economic hegemony over the area which had so exasperated the population that there had even been physical attacks on the clergy. Feeling under pressure, the Barnabites preferred to sell off their lands to the nobility. The proceeds of these sales will be put to good use in their numerous schools.

The sober decoration of the church is a reflection of the weakening of their economic hegemony and a withdrawal into their religious houses where it was felt better to keep a low profile.

The report of the visit of 7 September 1720 by Mgr Michel Gabriel de ROSSILLON of BERNEX indicates that the church is clean and well tended. If the above hypothesis is correct, the sober decor was probably at the instigation of the Rev. Philippe COTTET, priest and rector of Contamine.

5. White walls; window embrasures and foliation: red and yellow ochre on a pink background; white joints, wall-columns: pale pink and dark pink ochre; painted capitals; ribs of arches: red with white veined false marble, red and yellow ochre; black-brown false joints and frames around all five windows.

This could be called the baroque period of the mid-XVII century. The pulpit is dated 1663 and the decoration stops where it is attached to the wall-column.

6. White walls; embrasures, wall-columns, ribs: grey with white false joints. In our opinion, this corresponds with the installation of the Barnabites in the Priory, who undertook the refurbishment of the buildings. This must have been around about 1625-33. Like the fourth period, this was a rigorous time. They were trying to re-establish the religious community; it was also the period of the counter-Reformation. It should not be forgotten that Saint François de Sales produced directives on the decoration of churches: anything hinting of luxury, symbol of decadence, to be hidden, walls to be whitewashed, etc., and that it was he who installed the Barnabites in the Priory. It would therefore be normal to find whitewashed walls and grey arches.

It is interesting also to note that in the city of Geneva, so close by, the Reformed use the same decorations as the Catholics. As from the second half of the XVIth century until 1640, the interior walls of Saint Pierre (cathedral) are white, with grey ribs and white false joints. This corresponds to a stricter period which will influence considerably the way in which both public and church buildings are decorated.

7. Traces of false marble around the main window of the choir. Perhaps remains of Benedictine decoration?



On the stylistic level, the foliation around the window embrasures have been painted in such a free and spontaneous way, that they bring a breath of fresh air unusual for the period.

Once the building is restored, this style of decoration will give it a light, almost modern, aspect, depicting a period of the life of the Priory less austere than might be imagined.

It will also enable the sixth period, which is not uninteresting, to be preserved.

8. This is the restoration presently being undertaken (1994-1995) which is dealing with the fifth period (1663), under the direction of Gérard EMON, paint restorer.

## **Bibliography**

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