



Welcome to the Chateau du Touvet,

This house and its gardens were opened to the public in 1985 and are both classified as “Monuments Historiques” (UK equivalent: “Grade 1 Listed Building”). They represent over five centuries of history in the same family and the “lived-in” castle is currently home of the Marquis and Marquise of Quinsonas-Oudinot and their children.

The house’s history began during the Middle Ages when it was a stronghold dominating the so-called “Valley of the Hundred Castles”. By the 13th century, records tell us about a fortified house which would have represented roughly the Northern wing. Remains of the medieval castle can still be seen: the rampart wall, the 5 towers (one of which houses the chapel) and the water-filled moat to the north and to the west. The stronghold, like others in the valley, was probably built to defend France from the Dukes of Savoy (Savoy only became part of France in 1860) between the 13th and 15th century. Many castles fell into decay after the wars periods ended apart from a few houses like Le Touvet that were bought by local lords. Le Touvet was acquired in 1528 and has been occupied by the same family ever since.

In 1750, the Count Pierre of Marcieu undertook to transform the medieval castle into a more comfortable country house with majestic gardens, more aligned with his rank of King Louis XV’s Army Corps General (French: *Lieutenant General des armées du Roi*) of the Dauphiné province. Since then the castle and the gardens haven’t experienced any notable transformations.

THE ENTRANCE HALL (French: *le Vestibule d’Honneur*)

It was formerly an inner court, closed off during the transformations of the 18th century. Little wooden staircases were used to lead to the apartments. They were destroyed and these more impressive stairs were built instead.

The staircase was in those times very often in proportion with the power of the castle’s owner. This monumental staircase was created in 1750 by Mister Dupuy, Royal Civil Engineer for the Burgundy province. The depth and width of the stairs made a bold undertaking of what was at the time an audacious new

THE EMPIRE ROOM (French: *le Salon Oudinot*)

This room is totally devoted to the memory of one the family’s ancestor and war hero Marshal of France Oudinot.

Nicolas Charles Oudinot was born in 1767 of humble origin, simply a private in the French Army. He made his way up the officer’s ladder thanks to courage and conviction and became a general under Napoleon. He won his Field-Marshal’s (French: *Maréchal*) title and became the first Duke of Reggio as a reward to his victorious participation at the Battle of Wagram (1809). Many souvenirs from this very prestigious destiny are exposed in the nearby cabinets. Oudinot is buried in Les Invalides (Paris), the burial site for some of France’s war heroes, most notably Napoleon.

On the other side, you can see many souvenirs and a portrait of his son, General Oudinot. In 1849 he hounded out the revolutionaries who had occupied Rome and returned the Papal States to the Pope. He also played a big part in the colonisation of North Africa and he was given the difficult task of looking after a famous prisoner, Emir Abdel-Kader (a military leader who led a struggle against the French colonial invasion). The two men, both expert riders became friends and Oudinot received many presents, most notably the two Arab pistols.

THE DINING ROOM (French: *la Salle a Manger*)

The most remarkable element in this room is the 17th century gold leather wall covering which gives the room its warm atmosphere. The technique is originated in Cordoba (Spain). The leather was first pinched to give it relief, than painted (here in black and red) and finally a thin layer of gold was fixed on the figures. The magnificent décor is on its own classified as French “Monuments Historiques”.

The room was converted in a dining room in the 19th century and the large table is relatively recent (1920). It is made out of a single and two-hundred-year old yew tree taken from another familial estate nearby.

The twin 17th century console tables were made in Florence (Italy) and the patterns are beautiful. The silverware chests were used by the Maréchal Oudinot during military travel.

You have now completed your visit of the house. Please visit the gardens and feel free to wander around to your liking. Thank you for coming. We do hope you have enjoyed the visit of our home and gardens, and please do consider, for a moment, that our home is your home.

Bruno and Isabelle de Quinsonas-Oudinot

technique. If you inspect the staircase more closely you will see no pillars holding the stairs and that the walls support entirely all its weight. The iron stair banister was wrought on site.

On your left a beautiful 17th century Antwerpen tapestry representing Aeneas' departure from Carthage and the very distressed Queen Didon. This tapestry was part of a series of eight telling Virgil's Eneid. On your right in the stairs a very elegant painting of The Marquis de Marcieu (1728-1804) who was imprisoned in Lyon during the French Revolution, his possessions confiscated and put up for auction. A rich merchant from Grenoble – whom the Marquis had bailed out in the past – acquired the castle and then returned it to the Marcieu in 1803.

Among the various family hunting trophies, the most outstanding one is certainly the black wolf. Black wolves did not exist here. There were many wolves in the region in the past, but the local ones were of tawny colour, like the stuffed head above the black wolf.

THE GALLERY (French: *la Grande Galerie*)

It is in this big room that all the important events such as balls and receptions took place. This room is still used for special events by the family as their wedding parties.

This gallery was restored by the owners in 2008 to point out the pastel colours and the Italian decoration style of the room. Stuccoes on the wall were created by an Italian plasterer (*called Javina*) and you can see them more particularly above the doors and next to the chimney front. They represent the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter.

Two portraits require attention. The oldest Guignes Guiffrey, Lord of Boutières, is a Renaissance man who bought the castle in 1528; his elegant portrait in a refined frame is beside the Northern window. The owners are the direct descendants of the Guiffreys. Guignes Guiffrey was a trusted friend of French King François I and once knighted, was sent to England as French ambassador to the King of England Henry VIII.

Above the chimney piece is a portrait of the Count Pierre of Marcieu who undertook the great reconstruction of the 18th century. He was a man of exquisite taste, and a true 18th century gentleman. Very learned, he enjoyed travelling, especially to Italy where much of his inspiration for the gardens and castle decoration came from.

THE MUSIC ROOM (French: *le Salon de Musique*)

This room was devoted to listening and practising music with its two “fortepiano”, a term reserved for early pianos.

The wall colouring is from the 18th century and the wall's wooden panels provide both thermal and sound insulation. There was one main colour plus usually white for the decorations applied in relief. If you pay attention to this room you will notice everything is perfectly symmetrical. The two mirrors are on the same axis as well as the glass painted door, the window and the fountain outside.

The floor is of particular beauty, it was made in this region with three different local woods: walnut wood (dark), cherry wood (less dark) and sycamore maple wood (lighter).

The paintings displayed on the walls in this room are exclusively ladies painting. They are all related (wives, sisters, mothers in law etc.) to the successive owners or heirs of this castle and a testimony of the evolution of women's dress between the 17th and early 19th century.

THE BEDROOM

This room was, according to the times, a living room or a bedroom.

In fact, around 1750, Count Pierre de Marcieu having difficulty moving, had his room installed here, on the ground floor. He occupied it until his death in 1778 at 90 years.

It contains a canopy bed of rare elegance. Its green silk trim is of great richness. It was restored in 1990 and its « in situ » conservation is exceptional.

The panelling of the room is made of wood in « Rocaille » style and the furniture is typically Louis XV style: chairs known as “queen convertible” designed to adapt to the fashion of basketed dresses, an Ottoman sofa, waxed walnut table and chest, small harness topped with a ball to arrange its wig during night - tapestry fireplace screen to protect from the direct heat of fire.

THE CURIOSITIES ROOM (French: *le Cabinet de Curiosité*)

Following the bedroom, you will cross a small room, called «curiosities lounge», arranged in an old medieval tower. This fair testifies to the nobility's interest in the sciences and inventions of its time. On the table, an electrostatic friction machine called «Ramsden machine». It allowed, through the rotation of a cylindrical glass tray, to create static electricity loads. It dates from 1756.

The marble medallion represents the famous writer Beaumarchais and the bust, Henri, 6th Marquis de Marcieu died in 1943.