

# Château Venès

A Romantic Venue



## The history of Chateau Venes - 1. The Lords

All the lords of Venes are known since 1135 when the lordship of Venes was attributed to *Amélius Sicard*, viscount of Lautrec. It remained in the Lautrec family up to the 15th century.



In 1420, *Philippe II de Lautrec* sold Venes to *Hugues de Caraman*. His successor and son, *Guillaume*, had only one daughter (*Aldonce*) who married in 1518, her cousin *Jean de Foix-Caraman*. Their only daughter, *Marguerite*, married *Jean de Bernuy*, son of the famous pastel dealer of Spanish origin, who left in Toulouse, the magnificent mansion bearing his name. *Jean de Bernuy* was cleverer marrying his only daughter *Aldonce* to a member of a prominent family *Guy de Castelnau*, count of Clermont Lodève. Widowed, she re-married *Jacques de Montgomery*, the governor of Castres and son of *Gabriel de Lorges*, count of Montgomery who accidentally killed the king *Henri II* in a joust tournament.

(*Gabriel de Lorges, Count of Montgomery*)

Deceased before her husband, *Aldonce de Bernuy*, countess of Montgomery, bequeathed the castle to her son *Alexandre de Castelnau*, born from her first wedding with the Count of Clermont. *Jacques de Montgomery*, who wished to keep the castle, disputed the ownership of Venes. The Count of Clermont refused to cede and, with the support of the king, was granted satisfaction.

His family owned Venes during all of the 17th century.

(*King Henri II*)

*Louis de Guilhem*, Count of Clermont, Baron of Venes died in 1692 and bequeathed his properties by will to the Marquis of Caylus. His widow, *Jeanne d'Albert de Luynes*, refused to surrender the castle and took possession of the Clermont's property. It took until 1753 with a court decision from Paris, for the de Caylus to recover the property. *François-Joseph de Caylus* was the last lord before the Revolution.





During the Revolution, the government confiscated all the properties from the family 'Caylus'. Under the Restauration, the properties were returned to the Caylus. The domain of Venes was divided in three parts in 1819 and the castle sold to Holmière in 1820 who restored the castle keeping the neo-gothic spirit.

(Entrance to the South West tower from the interior courtyard of Chateau Venes)

## History - 2. Major Feats



The Venes castle played an important role during the religious wars in France.

Several battles were conducted in Venes between Catholics and Protestants.

On July 8, 1562, Venes fell to the Protestants of Castres while the president Bernuy and the captain de Crépiac, who were maintaining there a garrison of 300 men, were absent. Despite stiff resistance, almost all soldiers perished sword in hand. The 60 to 80 survivors



were brought to Castres, executed, and their bodies thrown into a well.

(Scene from the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants)



In the following century, during the second period of the civil wars, the food that the diocese of Albi had to provide to the army of the *Duke of Ventadour* was stored in June 1669 in Venes, where the regiment of the *Sieur of Montréal* was housed.

(Ancient coin of the period - town of Castres)

### History - 3. The Chateau of Venes today



The castle was already uninhabited and partly in ruins in 1740. It was restored during the 19th century by *Holmière* and became the family residence. The restorations have removed a considerable part of the premises but kept the main parts in which the present castle was built retaining a feudal character which recalls the former importance of this fortress.

The well constructed, extremely thick, stone walls, date from early times and have luckily, kept a large number of original features such as arrow slits, doors and ancient inscriptions.



Originally including six towers and surrounded by moats, the castle was built as a L- shape on the north-west and north-east axes of a courtyard. There are still four towers standing:

- To the North, a large round tower is topped by a terrace and displays a strong projection
- To the east, an isolated tower "*La Tour du Coq*" (tower of the Rooster) is the highest of the towers and has interesting Gothic inscriptions on its interior walls
- To the South-west, the tower which was rebuilt on its original foundations
- To the West, the former Donjon, which was a large square tower (adjacent to the body of the castle)



(The four towers of the castle and the gothic inscriptions in the "Tour du Coq")



Formerly, the castle had two courtyards, an upper courtyard, corresponding to the inner courtyard today, and a lower courtyard which has been transformed into gardens. The latter was an enclosure flanked by two towers; all constructions of this lower courtyard have now disappeared.

The former moat, which was deep and wide, still exists and is well preserved at least on two sides. The dry moat has no coating on the outside since in this area the foundation is limestone which lends itself to stone carving and has supplied the materials for the masonry of the

castle.