



A HISTORY OF LE PARC

Le Parc was sold to us as a “*Logis*”, a term used to describe a house built by or belonging to a “Lord”. Many *Logis* were also built as halfway houses or staging posts so their owners could stay in comfort whilst travelling from Paris or between their estates especially as Gourgé is on a Pilgrims route.

The story of *Le Parc* seems to be a series of the estate being split up and then brought back together again. The main house, cottage (*Le Pavillon*) and sufficient land to sustain those living there were created as one entity.



MEDIAEVAL ORIGINS

It's not known who originally built or owned *Le Parc*, but the fact it is smaller than similar *Logis* suggests either the original owner was not rich or perhaps it was built not to be continuously lived in, such as a hunting lodge and hence the name "*Le Parc*".

Alberic Verdon the most eminent and leading archaeologist and historian in the Gâtine has inspected the house and believes both it and *Le Pavillon* date it and *Le Pavillon* to the mid to late 1500's.

We assume the cottage *Le Pavillon* was built to accommodate a farm manager and his family. At this period in history it is almost certain the land was a fiefdom held in return for homage paid or services rendered and to some extent this is confirmed in the 1713 act which states the land formed part of the *Lordship of Portvaul* although it is feasible that it was a seigneuries in its own right.



The estate was certainly deemed worthy of being given its own "place name" (or *Lieu dit*). A *Lieu Dit* in France has a legal significance similar to a village or hamlet or a defined area.

There is a map showing the boundaries of the *Lieu dit* which may well have been the original boundaries of the estate. To the west and adjacent to the river Thouet is an area known as "*les pres du Parc*", the "*prairies of Le Parc*", which suggests it also formed part of the original estate.

It is unusual that the house faces South / North across the hillside rather than East / West along the contours of the hill. A simple explanation may be because it gave the house more exposure to the sun, although it was the back door and not the main entrance that faced south.

In old documents the property is usually called simply *Le Parc* but occasionally was described as *Le borderie du Parc* (*Parc Farm*) or *Le village du Parc* implying that there were several houses or families living there. Certainly the cottage opposite the main house (*Le Pavillon*) was built at around the same time as the main house and there is evidence there may have been another dwelling next to it because of the existence of an old bread oven.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Le Parc has two truncated towers similar to the *Logis* at *La Chaussee*, the old house opposite *Le Marie* in *Gourgé* (pictured opposite) and *Le Château de les Roches des Enfants*. Unlike the British, the French had a habit of roofing in their ramparts and towers, more often than not with tall pointy roofs so it is not possible to say whether the towers at *Le Parc* originally had roofs on them or not.

There is evidence from the Napoleonic maps of around 1815, that there was a third much larger tower at the eastern end of the building that may have been raised to make way for the new extension.

The original house therefore was approached from the lower road to what appears to have been a gate with the outbuilding and other house(s) forming a three sided courtyard. The front door faced north and entered into the kitchen, from which there was an entrance into what we now use as the ground floor storeroom. Its possible this was perhaps for animals or servants' sleeping quarters. There appears to have been no entrance into either tower from the ground floor but it seems access to what is now the Mediaeval part of the building's master bedroom would have been by ladder. This room was almost certainly the master's living and sleeping quarters and had access to both towers.

The granite seat by the window in what is now the upstairs living/TV room (pictured below) suggests this was also used as part of the domestic living quarters. In the Mediaeval times it was common for the ladies of the house to sit for hours on end at these windows because of the lack of light. It is unusual that this room is at a higher level than the master quarters and doesn't have a fireplace. From this room the attic and two towers were accessed although it is unclear why, assuming the towers had no function at this level.

The pigeon holes in the south tower are probably from a later period but it was the case that you needed permission for pigeons and the number you were allowed depended on the owner's status.

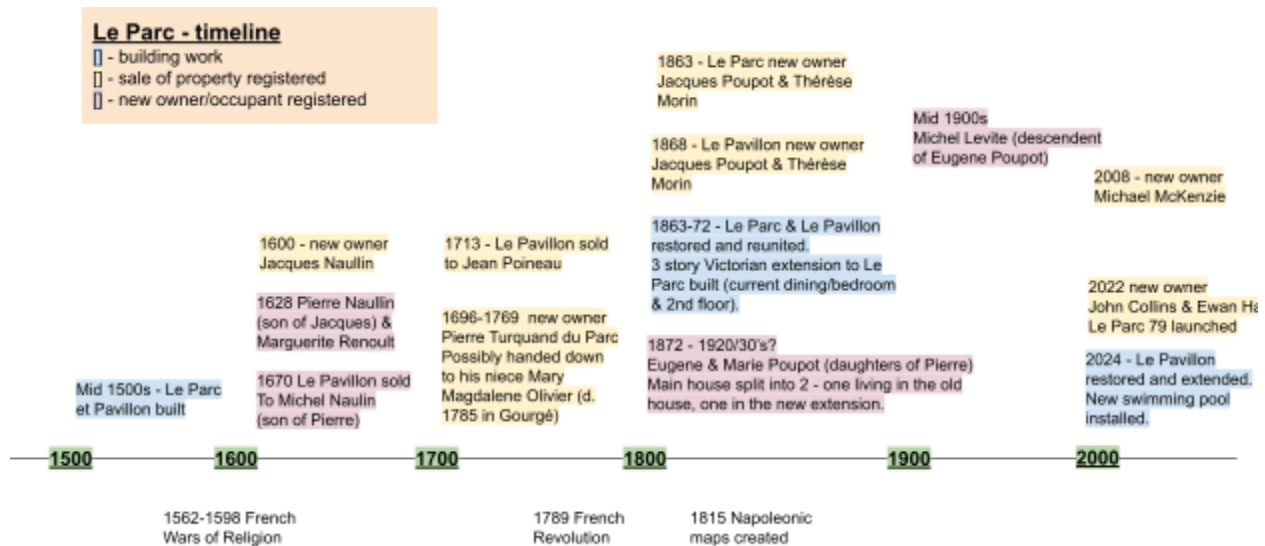
It is unclear what purpose the towers at *Le Parc* served, whether they were purely a sign of status or were they for defensive reasons. At about the time the *Logis* was built the French Wars of Religion were in full swing (1562-1598) between the Catholics and the Huguenots and the Deux-Sèvres and the Vendée were at the heart of the struggles. It seems unlikely that they were built for any other reason than for defence, although in reality they wouldn't have held an army at bay for long.



TIMELINE OF 'LE PARC'

Official records in France before 1785 are difficult to trace because many were destroyed during the revolution. Many were also destroyed by fire (as is the case in the Deux-Sèvres) or negligence. What is available are notary documents, or "Actes", which detail private transactions but can be notoriously hard to read or decipher. From Napoleon's time onwards records are meticulously kept and easy to locate, many of which can be found in the Deux-Sèvres departmental records in Niort.

Parish registers are a good source of information dating from 1600's onwards, but it can be difficult to read what is often illegible handwriting. These records can be found online from the Archives department website.



We know from the parish records that Pierre Naullin and his wife Marguerite Renoult were living at *Le Parc* in 1628 at the baptism of their son Francois, we know that Michel, Francois' elder brother, born 1625, owned *Le Pavillon* and some of the land in the 1670's but we don't know whether the family first occupied this property as owners or servants/workers.

The Naullin family records are relatively easy to trace because there was only one branch of the family living in Gourgé in the 1600's and in fact all subsequent branches of the family can be traced to Pierre and Marguerite. There's also a record of a Jacques Naullin acting as a godparent in Gourgé in 1604 and a possible baptism of a Françoise, daughter of Jacques Naullin (du Parc??) in 1603. Whatever the case Jacques will have been related in some way to Pierre and probably was his father. If so then perhaps he also lived at *Le Parc* in early 1600.

In any event between the time the house was built in the late 1500s and the mid 1600's some or all the estate was sold off. It is unclear whether this was because of poor financial management or because of a death with no inheritors.

From the 1713 Acte Of Sale between Michel's inheritors and Jean Poineau (a local miller) to the current day the cottage (*Le Pavillon*) ownership is quite clear but this is not the case with the main house. As previously mentioned we don't know who built the house in the 1500s although it is probable that the land before this time was owned by the *Seigneurie Of Portault* and we don't have any records of ownership until the late 1700's.

It is possible that the owners during this period were the Turquands, a noble family in Parthenay who were great landowners and all of the sons became either “*Procurateurs du Duc*” or “*Procurateurs du Roi*”.

Philippe Turquand was both a Procurateur of the Duke and the King and Siegneur de Peu(x), a village a few miles from Gourgé. His son Pierre (1696-1769) followed in his footsteps and to show his noble status he took on his marriage in 1720 the title of “*Sieur du Parc*” or *Lord Of The Park*. Now there is no other *Lieu Dit* in the Gâtine or in the whole of the Deux-Sèvres called *Le Parc* so there is strong circumstantial evidence that he must have had a connection with our *Le Parc*.

Pierre Turquand du Parc had two sons and two daughters, his two sons predeceased him but we can't find out what happened to his two daughters. Had they also predeceased him, not married or not had children then *Le Parc* would have been inherited by his nephew Philippe d'Auzay (the only branch of the family to have survived to this day), his younger brother Philippe having also predeceased him, and then possibly by his niece by marriage Mary Magdalene Olivier who is known to be living in Gourgé at her daughter's wedding and at her own death in 1785.

This is possibly a coincidence but also a likely explanation of the missing information regarding ownership in the 1700s.

RESTORATION IN THE 1860's

In 1850 the house was in such a state of disrepair that it had been suspended from the cadastral plan, presumably as it was unlivable. In 1863 the Logis was bought by Jacques Poupot and his wife Thérèse Morin and it states on the deeds that all he bought was the “ground floor” of the building, the main beams we have are without doubt the original so perhaps the roof had collapsed.

In 1868 Jacques also bought *Le Pavillon* and reunited the estate for the first time in over 200 years. Sometime between 1863 and his death in 1872 Jacques restored the Logis and built the Victorian extension we see today, the date of 1859 over the upstairs doorway in *Le Pavillon* (pictured opposite) may indicate that the cottage was refurbished around the same time.

Jacques and Thérèse had two daughters, Eugene and Marie, and the extended house was split into two with Eugene getting the Logis and Marie the Victorian extension. Both shared the spring in the front paddock for washing and the bread oven for their baking.



THE PRESENT DAY

At times over the past fifty years there were three families who owned and lived at *Le Parc* but the Logis and cottage again fell into disrepair until it was bought by an English family in 2008.

We bought the property in 2022 and have once again reunited both houses. So far we've landscaped the area to the front of the main house, opened up areas of the grounds which had fallen into disrepair and began updating the interiors.

Last year we also installed a new swimming pool on the grounds, and fully restored *Le Pavillon* into a functioning house for the first time in many generations.

It's a slow process, but we're really pleased to be playing our part in the 500 year history of the property and bringing Le Parc fully into the 21st Century and online for the first time at leparc79.com!



Notes and Comments

Most of this research was conducted with the help of Laurent Delaine at the Deux-Sèvres Archives in Niort.

The Naullins still live in the Gourgé area as does Michel Levite, a direct descendent of Eugene Poupot and once owner of the Logis.

Alberic Verdon is a French army officer and the leading authority on anything to do with the Gâtine and Parthenay in particular. He continues to research where and whenever he can and has promised to keep a look out for anything that concerns *Le Parc*. He can be contacted on verdon.alberic@wanadoo.fr