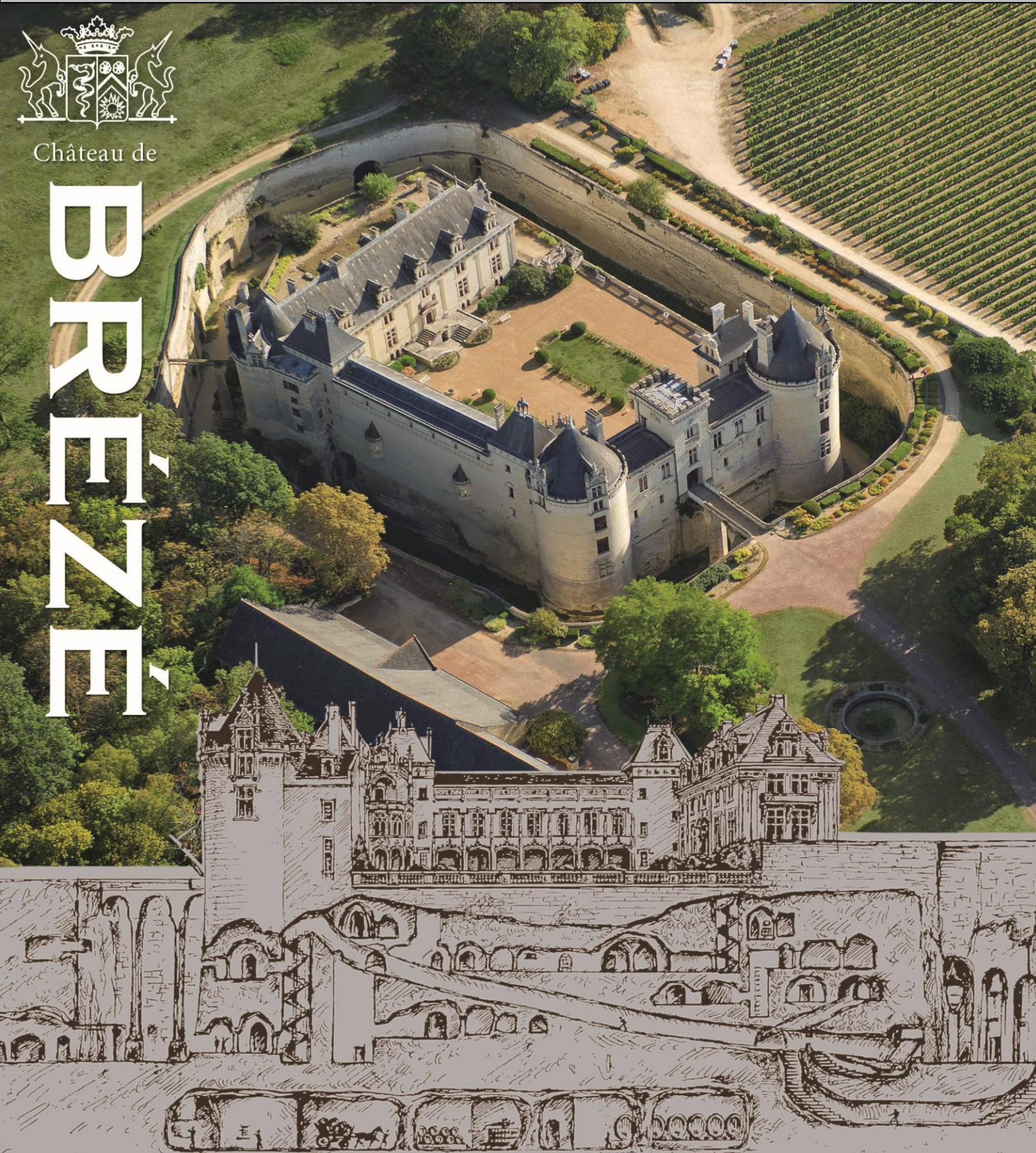


# Press kit 2014



Château de

BRENEVILLE





UN CHÂTEAU SOUS UN CHÂTEAU



# Contact

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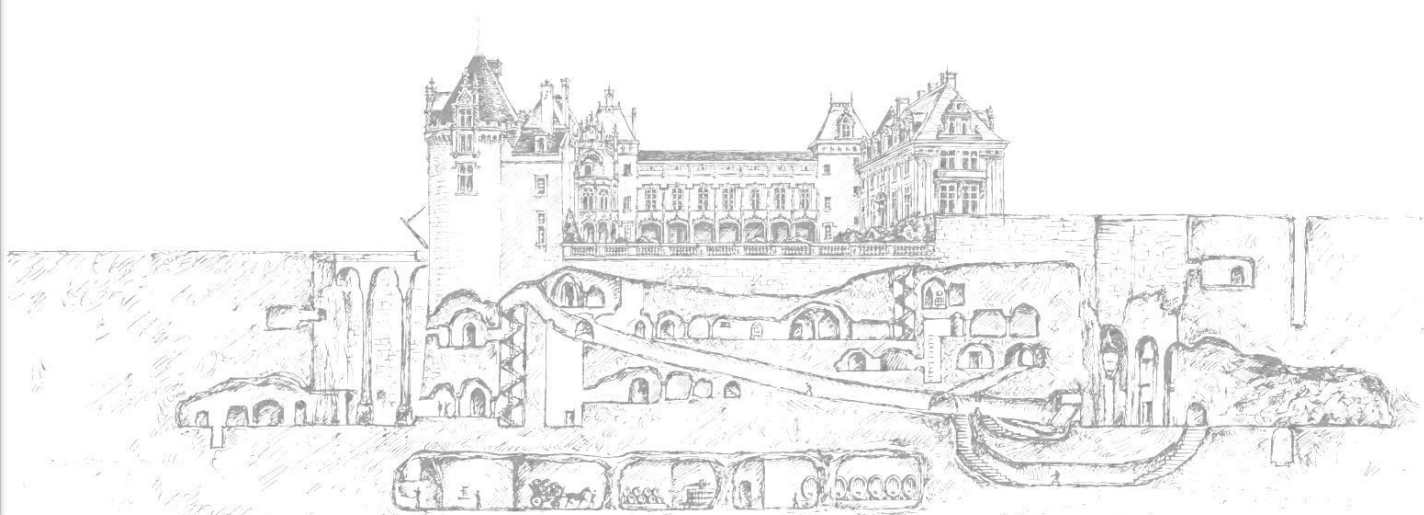
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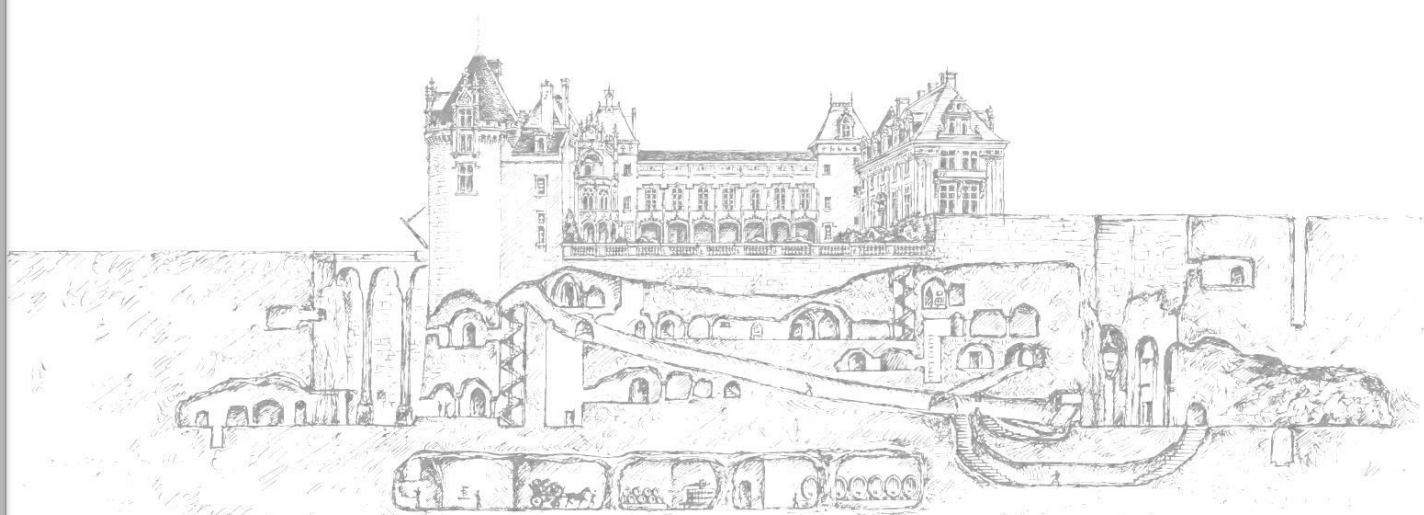
# A familial chateau

The Château de Brézé is classified as a Monument Historique and was opened to the public in 2000. Since then, it has been managed by its owners, the Count and the Countess Jean de Colbert.

Built between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in the middle of a vineyard of several tens of hectares, the Château de Brézé has belonged to the powerful Dreux-Brézé family during centuries. It then went through marriage into the Colbert family, descendant of Louis XIV's minister of finances

## **An unusual visit:**

The site originality comes from the extraordinary underground network dug in the tuffeau stone, which makes it the largest underground fortress in Europe. During your visit, you will see the old seigneurial residence and the stables, a patrol-path, a silk-worm farm, a bakery, cellars and huge presses; all those rooms have an opening on the deepest dry-moat in Europe. In summer and winter, numerous events bring to life this impressive dwelling (exhibitions, concerts, conferences, games, etc.). Thanks to its originality and the dynamism of its events team, the site was a great success. 14 years after its opening to the public, the Château de Brézé receives each year around 90,000 visitors from all around the world, which makes it the most visited private chateau in Maine et Loire, the 6<sup>th</sup> most visited chateau in the region of Pays de la Loire and the 20<sup>th</sup> most visited tourist site in the Val de Loire



# The Château history

**1063**

The existence of a « château » at Brézé is mentioned for the first time in the year 1063, in records from Saint Hilaire Saint Florent Abbey. One century later, Brézé is an important fiefdom.

**1302**

Geoffrey of Brézé divides his holdings. His granddaughter Catherine inherits the lands of Brézé.

**1318**

The lands of Brézé come into the hands of Pean de Maillé as dowry for his marriage to Jeanne de l'Etang, daughter of Catherine de Brézé. Records of the time make reference to Pean kidnapping Jeanne before their wedding. This union gives rise to the Maillé-Brézé family, who would hold sway over Brézé for nearly 300 years, from the 14<sup>th</sup> through to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**1448**

Gilles de Maillé-Brézé obtains permission from King René of Anjou to fortify his lands and to establish a garrison. The castle moats are dug out partially for the first time, attaining a depth of 10 to 12 metres in some parts.

**1560 -1580**

Arthus de Maillé- Brézé razes the remnants of the medieval fortress, reconstructing the château in the Renaissance style and completing the incredible defensive system layered upon the underground fortress. The U-shaped body of the chateau and two massive round towers reaching the bottom of the moat are dated to this era.

The moats are dug out entirely around the castle for the first time and reach depths of up to 18 metres.

**1565**

Arthus receives the young king of France, Charles IX and his mother Catherine de Medici, at Brézé. The sovereign compliments his host on his "lovely little chateau".

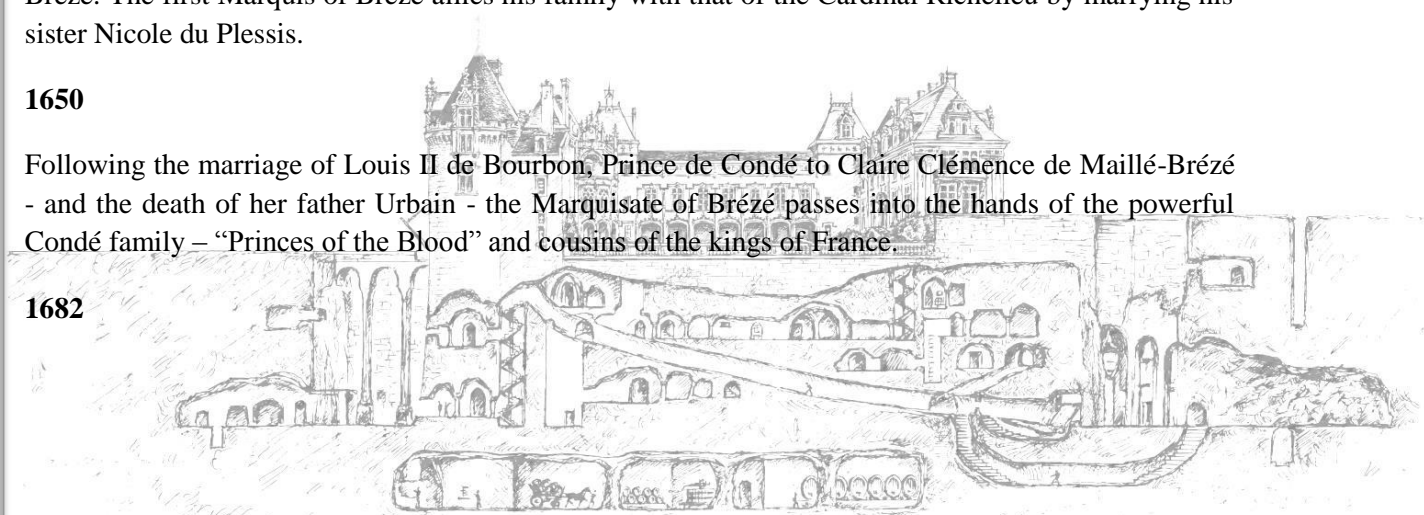
**1615**

The lands of Brézé are elevated to the rank of Marquisate by Louis XIII in favour of Urbain de Maillé Brézé. The first Marquis of Brézé allies his family with that of the Cardinal Richelieu by marrying his sister Nicole du Plessis.

**1650**

Following the marriage of Louis II de Bourbon, Prince de Condé to Claire Clémence de Maillé-Brézé - and the death of her father Urbain - the Marquisate of Brézé passes into the hands of the powerful Condé family – "Princes of the Blood" and cousins of the kings of France.

**1682**



The Prince de Condé exchanges Brézé for the Brittany holdings of Thomas Dreux, parliamentary advisor. The Marquisate is reconfirmed for the Dreux-Brézé family 3 years later.

## 1701

The Dreux-Brézé family obtains the hereditary role of Grand Master of Ceremony to the Kings of France. This position was created by King Henri III. This charge involves the ordering of all public functions of the Royal Court.

Thomas II de Dreux-Brézé is the first Dreux-Brézé to hold this function, which remained in the family until 1830.

## 1789

Louis XVI entrusts his Grand Master of Ceremonies, Henri-Evrard de Dreux Brézé, with the order of the first Assemblée Nationale. During the turbulent opening acts of the French Revolution, Dreux-Brézé, sent by the King to dissolve the meeting of the Third Estate in the tennis courts of Versailles, would be the victim of Count Mirabeau's most famous phrase: "Sir. Go and tell your master that we are here by the will of the people and will not leave but by the force of his bayonets."

## 1810

The Dreux-Brézé family returns after their exile during the Revolution.

## 1820

The principal Renaissance wing of the estate is extended by Henri-Evrard de Dreux-Brézé and his wife Adelaide de Custine.

## 1838

The flamboyant neo-gothic style is employed at Brézé for the first time by Master Decorator Charles Cicéri, in the dining room situated in the Renaissance wing of the Château. This style was used to accommodate the fabulous collection of arms belonging to the Grand Master.

## From 1850

The Château is significantly restored by the family, in the neo gothic style. These works are undertaken by the famous Anjou architect René Hodé. Two of the three wings and the outer facades are drastically modified with the creation of the Great Gallery, the Medieval Tower and the upper part of the Clock Tower.

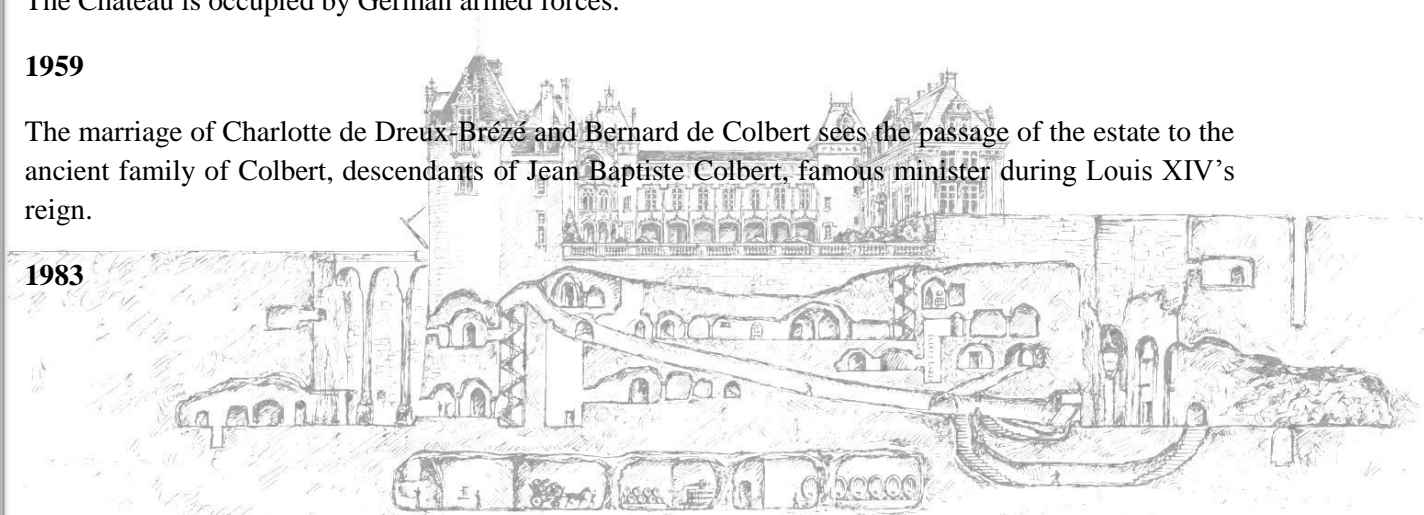
## World War II

The Château is occupied by German armed forces.

## 1959

The marriage of Charlotte de Dreux-Brézé and Bernard de Colbert sees the passage of the estate to the ancient family of Colbert, descendants of Jean Baptiste Colbert, famous minister during Louis XIV's reign.

## 1983



The Chateau de Brézé is classified as a Monument Historique.

**1998**

The Chateau de Brézé is open to the public

**2001**

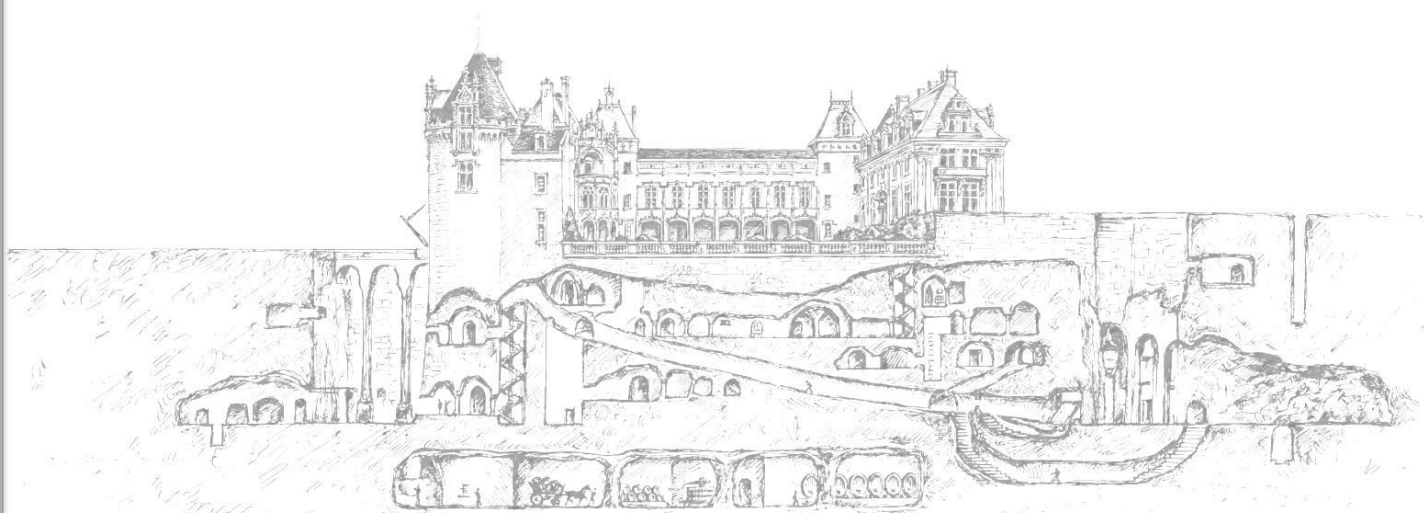
The visit of the underground fortress opens for the first time.

**2005**

Bernard de Colbert's son, Jean, and his wife, Karine, take over the management of the Chateau. They undertake significant works in order to develop the park and restore the Chateau. New rooms are opened to the guided visit.

**2006**

Work is undertaken on the Great Gallery, embellishing it in a style reminiscent of the Neo-gothic style of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Amaury de Combolas, a renowned Parisian artisan, is chosen for this restoration.





# Cultural programme 2014

## *Anjou Vélo Vintage*

Date: Sunday 29 June

Hundreds of cyclists coming from the beginning of the last century will stop off at the Chateau de Brézé. Antic cars and motorbikes will escort them to the park, where a country-style picnic will take place.

Anjou Vélo Vintage is a relaxing day touched by the carefreeness of the Golden Twenties!

## *Sampling of fouées*

Date: Tuesday 15, 22, 29 July and Tuesday 5, 12, 19 August 2014

The Chateau de Brézé invites the gourmand to sample the local specialty: the fouées! Those are small, airy French bread that you can fill with pork rillettes, salted butter, goat cheese, etc., according to your taste.

The fouées are cooked in old stone ovens in the troglodytic bakery in the moats, thus uniting authenticity and tradition.

## *Heritage Day*

The Chateau de Brézé is opened during the European Heritage Day to permit the visitors to discover the Chateau, its history and its architecture.

## *Halloween*

The Chateau de Brézé welcomes you to shudder during a mysterious and enigmatic journey in the underground and the haunted rooms of the Chateau. A snack will be offered to the children for a nice family time!

## *Christmas Market*

About fifty artisans will expose their works in the underground network of the Chateau. Numerous animations are organized for this family celebration and mulled wine as well as warm fouées cooked in the traditional oven of the Chateau will be prepared to warm up our visitors.

