

staircase leading to the upper levels, housing the bells, which still ring to this day.

Historical landmarks

1127 first mention of the castle

1227 consecration of the church of Saint-Laurent

1313 enlargement of the church

1671 the castle was abandoned as a ruin (destroyed on the orders of the king of France, Louis XIII, at the request of Cardinal Richelieu).

OLARGUES

The castrum

A century of building...

It was in 1127 that the lords of Olargues set up home on this crag, whereas, prior to that, or so it would seem, they lived in a fortress clinging to a rocky pinnacle of Le Caroux, known as Olargues-le-Vieux.

The barons of Olargues would take a century to build their fortified town.

Within these walls stood the old church of Saint-Laurent, consecrated in 1227, the lordly residence, numerous houses and workshops, and the village's communal bakery.

Traces of the old rampart can still be seen from the road. Around the castle you can glimpse vestiges of the ancient fortified village, in the form of cellars, lanes, small squares, and stairways hewn in the rock.

The fortified village

Foundations point to an active populace clustered around the castle (dwellings and workshops). The town was built from the top downward, in stages, which has earned the whole site the descriptive term "acropolis".



PAYS HAUT LANGUEDOC ET VIGNOBLES
Translation S. Pleasance & F. Woods



Here you will note the sites of two old ovens at the communal bakery, one of which was found in a very good state of repair. The flours used were spelt and chestnut.

The main building and the lordly residence

Excavations have made it possible to identify the lordly residence : foundations, thickness of the walls, the larger areas of the rooms used by the lords, and the presence of a pool acting as "baths" or a "fish tank"...

At the top we find traces of an L-shaped building forming a corner to the east.

It is divided into two parts, one on either side of a tower. This was probably the area meant for living in.

Imagine that you are on the ground-floor : the complex must have reached the level of the main tower. Lower down, on several levels were shops and craftsmen, as well as the homes of the villagers.

You will note the presence of a tank and cold room essential for castle life.

The castle church of Saint-Laurent

Adjoining the north wall of the old keep, this is an east-facing church with five spans.

This edifice has a flat chevet flanked by two small apses, and the choir is

raised, with a central main altar. Through this latter you can reach the nave. The passage was made between two round pillars supporting three arches.

Major works to enlarge the edifice, in due course a parish church, were mentioned in 1313.

This period probably tallies with the rebuilding ; the opening of the large gothic window in the lower room of the main tower established a direct link between the tower and the church's choir.

The main tower

This tower is all that remains of the defences of the castrum.

There were three other towers, and it takes considerable imagination to visualize what this monumental complex must have been like.

Dating from the 12th century, the ground-floor still has the mark of a noble abode, covered with a vault of cross-arches ending in abutments decorated with human figures.

The tower's lower room was then used as a sacristy.

The tower, which was rebuilt in the 17th century and turned into the belfry of the present-day village church, withstood the Wars of Religion.

Not to be missed : a wooden spiral

