

Some words of History



Tourrettes-sur-Loup on its rocky promontory, so favourable for its defence, has experienced 30 centuries of turbulent history. A tribe of Celtic Ligurians settled here the beginning of the 9th century B.C.. Later in 262 B.C. the Romans came to occupy «turre alta» (the observation point) which name would later give birth to «Tourrettes» and stayed until 476 A.D. when a period of 500 years of invasions began. The village was invaded by all possible barbarian tribes:

Visigoths, Huns, Franks and Lombards until the Saracens fortified the place and occupied it until 972.

It was after a conflict with the House of Duras and the Count of Provence that Marie of Brittany, mother of Louis II of Provence, gave Tourrettes-lès-Vence to Guichard de Villeneuve in 1387 and thus it is that until the Revolution, the history of Tourrettes is bound up with that of the Villeneuves. Antoine Villeneuve had the present château built in 1437 and encompassed the old belfry of the 11th century. The church of the same period (12th c.) was rebuilt in the 16th century and renovated in the 19th.

From 1463 onwards Tourrettes suffered innumerable misfortunes: the black plague wreaked havoc in the country for 70 years, this was followed by the Wars of Religion, the War between Austria and England (1744-1748), the War of the Spanish Succession and the French Revolution during which the last of the Villeneuves fled the château through an underground passage only to be recognized and put to death outside Ventimiglia. The château was then transformed into a hospital for the Italian army before being sold as a state property.

Tourrettes has been given the name «Constantine provençale» because of its dominant situation between 2 ravines surmounted by viaducts. One of these was destroyed in 1944 by retreating German troops. These viaducts were built for the railway operating between Nice and Draguignan during the end of the 19th century.

The village was called «Tourrettes-lès-Vence» until the Revolution. In 1894 it was renamed «Tourrettes-sur-Loup» because of the river indicating the limit of the commune and in order not to be confused with «Tourrettes-Levens». The derivation of the name «Loup» comes from the fact that this valley was known to be filled with wolves. This also lies behind the name of the village «Villeneuve-Loubet» since



«loubet» means wolf cub in provençal.

On the hills surrounding Tourrettes there are terraces where the cultivation of vines, wheat and beans used to take place as well as that of the orange trees (bigaradiers) used for the manufacture of perfumes. Now these have been replaced by aloe vera cacti, fig trees and pine trees. However there are still olive groves, a very important industry during the 19th century, and violets -

which have given Tourrettes the name of « Village of Violets». The cliffs, such as the ones to the west of the village, are called 'loves' or 'lauves' coming from the Celtic word for «large boulder.»

Tourrettes remains a place where artists of all persuasions congregate. In the past there were «la belle Garance,» the mime Baptiste, Lacenaire, Frédéric Lemaître: all the characters of the famous film «Les Enfants du Paradis» were conceived here. During the II World War, Jacques Prévert stayed in a bastide outside the village and in 1942-43 he directed the film. Along with him there was also Joseph Kosma, composer of the music, and Alexandre Trauner, the scenic designer. Both Jews, they were ready at any moment to flee if



need be. Thus this masterpiece of the cinema was conceived here before it was filmed by Marcel Carne. More recently, other artists and film professionals have also chosen the village as a residence. Amongst these are Claude Lelouche, Marthe Keller and Guy Bedos.

For more information visit our website:

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