

= Château de Chinon =

Château de Chinon is a castle located on the bank of the Vienne river in Chinon , France . It was founded by Theobald I , Count of Blois . In the 11th century the castle became the property of the counts of Anjou . In 1156 Henry II of England , a member of the House of Anjou , took the castle from his brother Geoffrey after he had rebelled for a second time . Henry favoured the Château de Chinon as a residence : most of the standing structure can be attributed to his reign and he died there in 1189 .

Early in the 13th century , King Philip II of France harassed the English lands in France and in 1205 he captured Chinon after a siege that lasted several months , after which the castle remained under French control . When King Philip IV accused the Knights Templar of heresy during the first decade of the 14th century , several leading members of the order were imprisoned there .

Used by Charles VII in the 15th century , the Château de Chinon became a prison in the second half of the 16th century , but then fell out of use and was left to decay . It has been recognised as a monument historique by the French Ministry of Culture since 1840 . The castle , which contains a museum , is now owned and managed by the Indre @-@ et @-@ Loire General Council and is a major tourist attraction . In the early 21st century it was restored at a cost of 14 @. @ 5 million euros .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

The settlement of Chinon is on the bank of the Vienne river about 10 kilometres ( 6 mi ) from where it joins the Loire . From prehistoric times , when the settlement of Chinon originated , rivers formed the major trade routes , and the Vienne joins the fertile southern plains of the Poitou and the city of Limoges to the thoroughfare of the Loire . The site was fortified early on , and by the 5th century a Gallo @-@ Roman castrum had been established . Theobald I , Count of Blois built the earliest known castle on the mount of Chinon in the 10th century . He fortified it for use as a stronghold . After Odo II , Count of Blois died in battle in 1037 , Fulk III , Count of Anjou marched into Touraine to capture Château de Langeais and then Chinon , some 22 km ( 14 mi ) away . When Fulk arrived at Chinon the castle 's garrison immediately sought terms and surrendered . In 1044 , Geoffrey ( the count of Anjou ) captured Theobald of Blois @-@ Chartres . In exchange for his release , Theobald agreed to recognise Geoffrey 's ownership of Chinon , Langeais , and Tours . From then until the early 13th century , Château de Chinon descended through his heirs .

= = = Counts of Anjou = = =

According to contemporaneous chronicler Robert of Torigni , on the death of Geoffrey Plantagenet , Count of Anjou in 1151 his second son , who was also called Geoffrey , inherited four castles . Robert did not specify which these were , but historian W. L. Warren speculated that Chinon , Loudun , and Mirebeau numbered amongst these castles as they were in the territory which may have been traditionally the inheritance of the second oldest son . Geoffrey rebelled against his older brother , Henry , in 1152 . Henry negotiated with the castellans of the castles of Chinon , Loudun , and Mirebeau to surrender before laying siege to Château de Montsoreau . Following the loss of Montsoreau , Geoffrey surrendered to his brother . By 1156 Chinon , Loudun , and Mirebeau were back under Geoffrey 's control . That year he readied them for war as he rebelled against Henry a second time . In the intervening years , his brother had been crowned King Henry II of England at the end of a long @-@ running civil war . Henry besieged and captured Geoffrey 's castles in the summer of 1156 and kept them under his control , giving Geoffrey an annuity of £ 1 @, @ 500 in compensation . The presence of a treasury and one of Henry II 's main arsenals marked Chinon as a particularly important castle in the 12th century . It was a primary residence of Henry II who was

responsible for construction of almost all of the massive castle .

In 1173 Henry II betrothed his youngest son , Prince John , to the daughter of Count Humbert , an influential lord in Provence . John had no land , but as part of the arrangement Henry promised him the castles of Chinon , Loudun , and Mirebeau . Henry II 's eldest son , also called Henry , had been crowned King of England alongside his father but had no land of his own and was angered by the situation . His discontent grew and Henry the Young King demanded some of the land promised to him be handed over , claiming to have the support of the English barons and his father @-@ in @-@ law , King Louis VII of France . While the king was at Limoges he was informed of a conspiracy involving his wife and sons to overthrow him . Choosing to keep his eldest son by his side , Henry II set off north to Normandy , ensuring along the way that his castles in Aquitaine were prepared for war . En route they stayed at Chinon ; under the cover of darkness Henry the Young King escaped and set off to Paris to join the court of Louis VII . Two of Henry the Young King 's brothers , Richard and Geoffrey , joined him in rebellion along with the barons of France and some in England . War followed , lasting until 1174 , and Chinon , Loudun , and Châtellerault were key to Henry II 's defence .

After the revolt ended in 1174 , relations between Henry II and his sons continued to be strained . By 1187 Henry the Young King was dead , Richard was in line to inherit , and Henry II was on the brink of war with Philip II . In June that year Richard travelled to Paris with Philip II and struck up a friendship with the French king . Concerned his son might turn against him , Henry II asked him to return . Richard went to Chinon and raided the castle 's treasury so he could fund the repair of his own castles in Aquitaine . In 1189 Richard and Philip were wreaking havoc in Maine and Toulouse , capturing Henry II 's castles ; the king was ill and went to Château de Chinon . He left briefly in July to meet with Richard and Philip II and agree a truce , and died at Chinon on 6 July . The king 's body was taken to Fontevraud Abbey and Richard became king .

In 1199 , John succeeded his brother as King of England . By 1202 his lands in France were under threat from Philip II of France , threatening the east , and the barons of Brittany . In January 1203 John sent a band of mercenaries to retrieve Queen Isabelle from Chinon as it was under threat from rebels . In the spring Hubert de Burgh , 1st Earl of Kent , took over as commander of Chinon 's garrison ; the war was not going in John 's favour and in August that year he ordered the demolition of several castles , including Château de Montrésor , to prevent them from being used by the enemy . By 1205 , Chinon was one of the last castles in the Loire Valley . Château de Chinon fell to French force in the Easter of 1205 after a siege of several months ; damage to the castle meant the garrison was no longer able to hold out so sallied to meet the French outside the castle walls . Hubert de Burgh was injured and taken prisoner in the event , and would remain in captivity until 1207 . Soon after Château de Chinon was captured , Philip II took Normandy from the England crown . The French king was a prolific castle @-@ builder and was responsible for building the cylindrical keep at Chinon , the Tour du Coudray . The round keep was typical of French design the period , a departure from usually square keeps , and was repeated by Philip II at the castles of Dourdan , Falaise , Gisors , Laon , and Lillebonne .

= = = French rule = = =

Though it was not the reason they were built , castles could often be used as prisons . One such instance from the 14th century illustrates this aspect of Château de Chinon 's history . Founded in the Holy Land as a crusading military order in the early 12th century , the Knights Templar had , by the close of the 13th century , gained swathes of lands in Europe , particularly France . King Philip IV of France had the members of the order in his kingdom arrested , accusing them of heretical practices . The leaders of the order , including the Grand Master Jacques de Molay , were imprisoned at Château de Chinon , in the Tour du Coudray built by Philip II one century earlier . Graffiti carved by the imprisoned knights can be seen on the walls of the tower . In August 1308 , Pope Clement V sent three cardinals to hear the leaders ' confessions . The outcome was that in 1312 the pope issued a bull , the Vox in excelso , suppressing the order and its property was given to the Knights Hospitaller . The leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment , apart from Jacques de

Molay and Geoffrey de Charney who were burnt at the stake .

The Hundred Years ' War in the 14th and 15th centuries was fought between the kings of England and France over the succession to the French throne . The war ended in 1453 when the English were finally ejected from France , but in the early 15th century the English under King Henry V made significant territorial gains . The Treaty of Troyes in 1420 made Henry V the heir apparent to the French throne but when the French king , Charles VI , and Henry V died in the space of two months in 1422 the issue of succession was again uncertain . The English supported Henry V 's son , Henry VI who was still a child , while the French supported recognised Charles VII , the Dauphin of France . Between 1427 and 1450 Château de Chinon was the residence of Charles , when Touraine was virtually the only territory left to him in France , the rest being occupied by the Burgundians or the English .

On 6 March 1429 Joan of Arc arrived at Château de Chinon . She claimed to hear heavenly voices that said Charles would grant her an army to relieve the siege of Orléans . While staying at the castle she resided in the Tour du Coudray . Charles met with her two days after her arrival and then sent her to Poitiers so that she could be cross @-@ examined to ensure she was telling the truth . Joan returned to Chinon in April where Charles granted her supplies and sent her to join the army at Orléans .

In 1562 the château came briefly into the possession of the Huguenots and was turned into a state prison by Henry IV of France . Cardinal Richelieu was given the castle to prevent it from coming under the control of unfriendly forces , though he allowed it to fall into ruin . Château de Chinon was abandoned until 1793 when , during the Reign of Terror , the castle was temporarily occupied by royalist Vendéans . Soon after , the castle lapsed back into decay .

The 19th century saw increasing public interest in France 's heritage and efforts were undertaken to preserve historic buildings . In 1830 the newly crowned Louis Philippe I created the role of Inspector @-@ General of Historic Monuments . Prosper Mérimée , better known as a writer , assumed the position in 1834 and helped halt the decay that had set in at Château de Chinon and instigated repairs to the structure . Since 1840 , the castle has been recognised as a monument historique by the French Ministry of Culture .

Between 2003 and 2010 the castle was the subject of a massive excavation and restoration project , costing 14 @. @ 5 million euros . It was hoped that the restored castle would attract 250 @, @ 000 tourists a year with a visitor centre built in the Fort St @-@ George , which was entirely excavated in advance . Before the visitor centre was built , the Fort St @-@ George was the subject of an archaeological excavation which covered nearly 4 @, @ 000 square metres ( 43 @, @ 000 sq ft ) , unearthing the entire interior of the fort . The royal lodgings ( logis royales ) which were roofless for two hundred years , were restored inside and out and given with a mock 15th @-@ century interior . In addition about 150 metres ( 490 ft ) of the ramparts were also restored as well as the Tour du Coudray . Today , it is owned and managed by the Indre @-@ et @-@ Loire General Council and is a major tourist attraction .

= = Description = =

Standing on a rocky outcrop above the Vienne river , Château de Chinon has natural defences on three sides and a ditch dug along the fourth . Writing in the 12th century , the chronicler William of Newburgh commented that even before Château de Chinon came under the control of Henry II " its strength was such that nature seemed to vie with human art in fortifying and defending it " . That said , in the 12th century Henry II undertook a project of rebuilding the castle and much of the extant remains date from this period . The stone used to build the castle was quarried on the site .

The castle is divided , along its length , into three enclosures , each separated by a deep dry moat . There are some similarities with Château Gaillard , built by Richard the Lionheart in the closing years of the 12th century , which also consists of three enclosures and sits on a promontory above a nearby town .

The easternmost enclosure is known as Fort St @-@ Georges , the central is the Château du Milieu ( the middle castle ) , while the westernmost is known as the Fort du Coudray . The Fort St

@-@ George was built under Henry II and contained a chapel dedicated England 's patron saint . The Château du Coudray was added by Philip II in the early 13th century , while the Château de Milieu was built in the 12th and 14th centuries . The round Tour du Coudray built by Philip II ( which has parallels at Dourdan , Falaise , Gisors , Laon , and Lillebonne ) guarded the bridge linking the Fort du Coudray and the Château de Milieu . While the curtain wall stands in many places , the buildings within the château do not survive to the same extent , and in many cases little more can be said about them than the location of their foundations and possible use .