



Moated Chateau Heaven

With Sarah Francis

Magnificent moats and wondrous stories



Moats, whether dry or water filled, form a very effective defence mechanism. They were originally devised to prevent a tunnel being dug beneath the castle, and its inhabitants being taken by surprise when an attack from below.

Sifex list a beautiful XVIIth century brick and stone Chateau with an impressive dry moat, in Calvados, land of cider orchards and liqueur. It's popular for its proximity to the pretty port of Honfleur and seaside resort of Deauville with its Casino, where the beach huts are named after Hollywood legends.

Recently, rare XVIIIth century documents revealed the castle had been the subject of a protracted and complex drama spanning many years. At the end of the reign of Louis XV, the Chatelain, owner of many vast estates of which this was the jewel, died suddenly

leaving a young widow and five children. An opportunist soon married the widow and, producing a son, decided to rid himself of his predecessor's offspring and leave the estate to his heir. The children were dispatched far and wide. The eldest son, sent to London, found himself bound for St Petersburg on the ship of an English Captain who befriended him. As his story slowly unfolded, the Captain's brother, a vintner to whom he was apprenticed, approached the French Ambassador, who set up an enquiry about the fate of his family. So touched was the Empress of Russia when she heard the story, she educated the eldest son and gave him money to recover his inheritance from his mother, and wicked stepfather.

Having won his case in France, the young man kept in touch with his Russian benefactors, visiting them regularly. He set about enlarging the Chateau, to make it worthy

to receive the Empress on her proposed state visit to France. The beautiful avenue of lime trees, over one kilometre long, and the water 'bassin', were all created in her honour. Sadly she never visited due to the revolution, and the young man was one of the last to lose his head to the Guillotine in 1794. In the aftermath the Chateau became home to a celebrated chemist and inventor. In 1870 the Prussians occupied the chateau, and in World War II it was the turn of the Germans. Rumour has it they buried their booty under the floor of the immense 'Pigeonnier'. After the war the son of a famous financier bought the property. It was listed ISMH by the Monuments Historiques in the 1990s, but subsequently the chateau fell on hard times until sympathetic proprietors bought it and returned it to its former glory. With its pretty double aspect rooms the Chateau is wonderfully light, restored to a high

level of modern day comfort, but also retaining its elegance, charm and authenticity.

The second moated property amongst those listed by Sifex is an elegant Renaissance Chateau with glorious formal gardens. It's surrounded by water filled moats, an island and a sporting estate of 47 hectares, approached by a magnificent tree lined driveway. Set on the edge of a peaceful sleepy village, the only sound you can hear is the constant chorus of cuckoos, peacocks and numerous other birds. This gives the impression one is in a nature reserve, as the swallows swoop and the songbirds sing. This castle had its origins in the Middle Ages when it was built to protect an important river route. Some vestiges remain in the walls of the moats and most notably, the XVIth century tower with arrow slits and machicolations, through which missiles or boiling oil could be hurled at marauding forces.

Just before the beginning of the famous siege of Saint-Jean-d'Angély in 1621, Louis XIII and his army occupied local parishes, and the King requisitioned the Chateau as his headquarters, staying for a few weeks. Legend has it before he left the region, the King chose to return for a while to rest and remain at the Chateau, purely for pleasure.

The buildings are in excellent condition, meticulously restored to achieve comfort and luxury. The main hall with an attractive black and white floor, has a beautiful turning staircase. The adjoining outbuildings form an 'L' shape, overlooking a lovely courtyard with a swimming pool and palm tree, further outbuildings and the famous XVIth Century tower. There is a hunting room, billiard room, reception rooms, and eight en-suite bedrooms in the Chateau and outbuilding, as well as an additional floor yet to fit out to the

new owner's requirements. Former stables have become a magnificent reception, and a caretaker's cottage is by the entrance gates.

This stunning and remarkable property has enormous scope whether as a private home, with undoubted appeal to those who enjoy fishing or hunting, or for any kind of commercial venture.

It has undoubted appeal to those who enjoy fishing or hunting, or for any kind of commercial venture. One hour from La Rochelle and Bordeaux with its international airport and high speed train to Paris, it's perfectly placed.

Video and additional images on
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