

A castle in the making

Dear virtual visitors,

People often ask about our plans for the finished castle; the truth is that we are less preoccupied by the end result than we are by the construction process itself. For us the pleasure lies in savouring each new phase and sharing the experience with you all: workers, “bâisseurs”, and visitors.

The Guédelon team is on site throughout the season, building the castle and talking to visitors, but our “bâisseurs” make up an extraordinary team of 650 individuals who, each year, in all weathers, give up their time and energy to literally “muck in” - mixing mortar, making tiles – and always with good grace and good cheer.

As this 2012 season draws to a close, I wish, in the name of everyone here at Guédelon, to offer them our sincere and heartfelt thanks!

Maryline Martin

The work in progress

On the eastern corner tower

The domed vault is complete



The vault in the ground-floor chamber of this corner tower was a different type of vault to that built last season and therefore a different building technique was required. The dome was built by laying sloping slabs of sandstone one on top of the other; the interior radius of the dome was marked on a pole mounted on a hinged base allowing the masons to follow the curve of the dome. These slabs were bedded with mortar, thus slowly forming the required demisphere.

Once the stones were at a certain angle, to ensure the safety of the masons working below, wooden poles were used to prop up each slab giving the masons time to complete each ring.

Once the ring was complete, the stones wedged against each other and the risk of stones slipping was removed. The wooden props were then re-used to support each subsequent circular course of masonry.



The dome nears completion, the limestone oculus* still requires fixing.

Oculus
A circular opening in a wall or vault



To fix the oculus, a wooden framework was installed inside the chamber to support the four stones of the oculus until they are wedged in by the final sandstone slabs. The masons then removed the props and all the stones making up both the oculus and the dome came under load.

This chamber, a shooting gallery fitted with three arrow loops, will form part of the castle's defense system. The oculus provides a small opening at the apex of the dome which, in case of attack, could be used to supply food and weapons to defenders on the upper floor. Should this chamber be taken by assailants, soldiers above could use the oculus as a murder hole through which projectiles could be thrown on to the enemies below.



On the western corner tower

The arrow loop corbels have been fixed

Work on this corner tower is rapidly catching up with its eastern sister, both the inner and outer walls have been brought up to the height of the arrow loops' lintels. The corbels at the entrance and for each of the three arrow loops have all been fixed. Work on this tower will continue next season with the fixing of the lintels and the building of a domed vault.



In the north range's antechamber

Mural paintings



Jambs and corbels at the tower's entrance



Corbel

A projecting stone, for the support of a beam, lintel etc.



The mural paintings, started this summer, have drastically changed the appearance of this chamber. The lime render and the paintings have made the room both lighter and brighter. Work on the paintings is currently on hold; it will start again next year after further research has been carried out into decorative motifs and pigment production.

The first tiled floor

Thanks to the human chain of "bâtisseurs" (see article below), in just one day, nearly 6 tonnes of earth was shifted from the courtyard up into the great

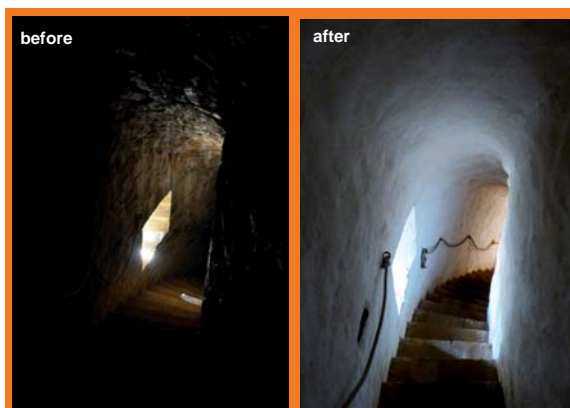


hall's first floor (USA = second floor) antechamber. The work of laying the first paving tiles – made and fired in the surrounding woodland – is currently under way.

On the great tower

Let there be light

The walls of the mural stair leading to the great tower's first floor (USA = second floor) have been lime rendered, brightening up this once gloomy space. Similar work has also taken place in the corridor leading to the wall work on the castle's north side.



The current season may not have finished yet, but plans for 2013 are already under way. We are already taking group bookings and Guédelon will re-open to the public on **March 18th 2013**.

The first "Meeting of "Master-Builders"* took place at Guédelon on Saturday 22nd September

For the first time, 160 of our "Master-Builders" got together on the construction site for a day packed with both fun and hard work! In partnership with the Association des Amis du Chantier Médiéval, "Master-Builders" from the past six seasons were invited. The programme of the day: an immense human chain to transport nearly 6 tonnes of earth from the courtyard up on to the north range's first floor to cover the antechamber's floor; meeting up with old friends and making new ones; a falconry and equestrian show in the castle's courtyard followed by dinner. A wonderful day, enjoyed by all!

It is possible that we no longer have your current email, and that as a result we weren't able to invite you. If this is the case, please contact Virginie so that she can up-date her file: participer@guedelon.fr



The human chain transporting earth



Big-hearted "bâtisseurs"!



Hélène and Zéphir (the horse) from Hippogriffe

The next meeting of our Master-Builders will take place on **Saturday June 1st 2013**.

*The "Master-Builders" (bâtisseurs) are individuals who actively participate in the construction for a few days.