

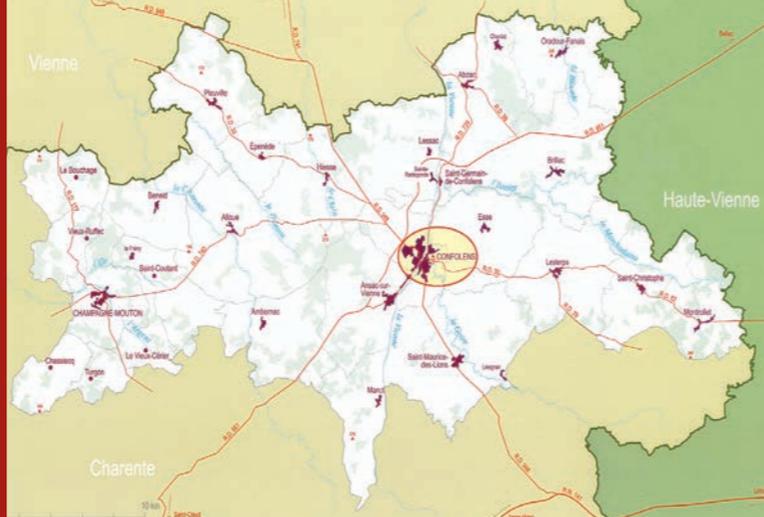
Tales of The Confolentais area, Land of art and history...
 ... in the company of a guide approved by the Ministry of Culture and Communication.

The guide welcomes you and gives you the keys to understand the scale of a place, the development of the town from one quarter to another and the surrounding villages. The guide knows the area perfectly and he is at your disposal. Do not hesitate to ask him your questions.

The heritage promotion service coordinates the initiatives of Confolentais, Pays d'art et d'histoire. All through the year it offers events for the inhabitants, schoolchildren and visitors. It is at your disposal for any project.

If you are a group

The « Pays d'art et d'histoire » offers visits all through the year by reservation. Information available at the **tourist office**.



This brochure was produced thanks to the results of the heritage inventory, conducted between 2003 and 2006 by the Community of Communes of Confolentais and the general inventory service of the cultural heritage of the Poitou-Charentes region.
 To contact the service : 05.49.36.30.07
<http://inventaire.poitou-charentes.fr>

The Confolentais is a member of the national network of Towns and Lands of art and history

The Ministry of Culture and Communication, directorate of architecture and heritage and regional directorates of cultural affairs, awards the label Town or Land of art and history to local authorities that implement actions to promote and enhance their architecture and heritage. It provides technical and financial support for these actions.

It guarantees the expertise of the guides, those involved in promoting architecture and heritage and the quality of their actions. From ancient relics to 21st century architecture, the towns and lands show heritage in all its diversity.

Today, a network of 202 Towns and Lands of art and history of which 79 Lands offers its expertise throughout France.

Nearby

In the Nouvelle Aquitaine Region : the towns of Bayonne, Bergerac, Bordeaux, Cognac, La Réole, Limoges, Pau, Périgueux, Grand Poitiers, Rochefort, Royan, Saintes, Sarlat, Thouars ; the lands of Angoumois, Béarn des Gaves, Châtelleraudais, Grand Villeneuveois, Hautes Terres Corrésiennes et Ventadour, Île de Ré, the Mellois en Poitou, Monts et Barrages, Parthenay-Gâtine, Pyrénées béarnaises, Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure, Vézère and Ardoise, Vienne and Gartempe.

«[...] Also examined all the intersecting ribs and found them all damaged by the partitions which had to be built when it served as prison for the Spaniards. (...) From there, we entered the sacristy and found it badly damaged by the amenities that we had to build for the said prisoners [...]»

ANONYMOUS QUOTATION FROM THE MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES (AROUND 1800?), IN P. BOULANGER, PROMENADE À TRAVERS LES RUES DE CONFOLENS (STROLL THROUGH THE STREETS OF CONFOLENS) P. 18 / 2003

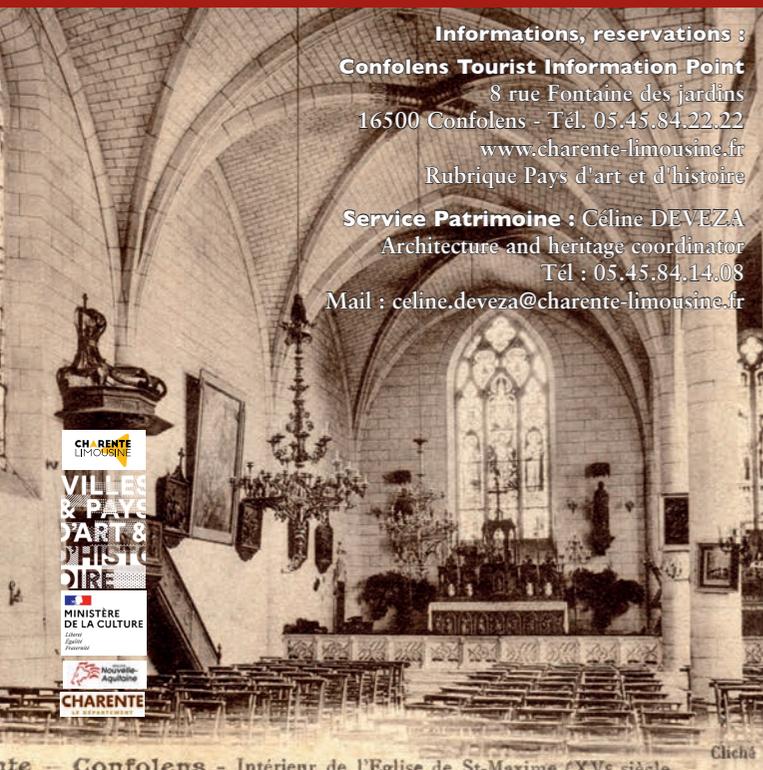


Land of art and history
The Confolentais

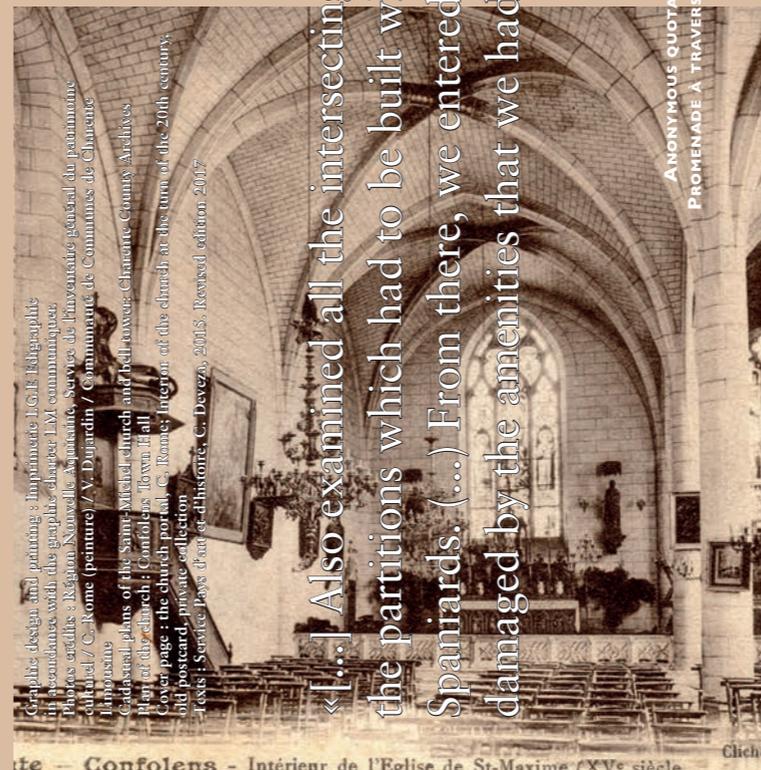


Tales of

the
**Church Saint-Maxime
 in Confolens**



Confolens - Intérieur de l'Eglise de St-Maxime (XV^e siècle)



Confolens - Intérieur de l'Eglise de St-Maxime (XV^e siècle)

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Its history

A first church is mentioned in this location in 990, attached to the abbey in Charroux. It became a priory-presbytery of the abbey in Lesterps in the 12th century.

Unfortunately, there is no trace of the original building. The current church dates from the 13th century and has undergone numerous alterations. Father Nanglard mentions major work in 1499, no doubt to repair the damage caused by the Hundred Years War. It was during this period that the vault of the nave was rebuilt, with no details of the original vault, and that the lower side was built.

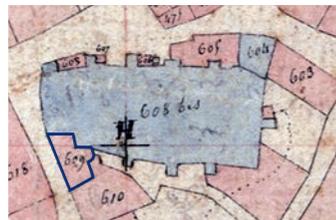
The Saint-Joseph chapel, or Sire chapel named after the family of merchants who built it, was built after 1511. It was converted into a sacristy in 1630 following a visit by the Bishop of Limoges. In addition to the main altar, the church had several secondary altars, including one dedicated to Saint Catherine and managed by the brotherhood of butchers.

During the Revolution, worship was banned in the church from 1793 to 1795 and it was transformed into a prison for Spanish soldiers, then a warehouse for requisitioned cast iron and iron. When worship was restored, the church was dilapidated and damaged. Work was done on the shingle cover of the bell tower in 1819 and 1841. However, this work was limited.

The church underwent its most important transformations under the impetus of Father Blaudy. When he started out on the work, the state of the building was in no doubt : the roof was in a pitiful state, the half-rotten roof timbers had collapsed on the vaults, cracks were visible on the facade, part of the building was suffering from seepage.

Father Blaudy began by renovating the interior of the church by adding Gothic-style tracery to the windows. The floor was excavated for about a metre, the earth and the graves were removed and replaced by a paved floor on a concrete and gravel screed.

The walls were raised by about sixty centimetres before the roof timbers and the roofing were fully repaired. Then he supervised the construction of the new bell tower between 1858 and 1859. It was built on Blaudy's plans on the site of an old outhouse visible on the Napoleonic cadastral plan and numbered 609 (see photo).



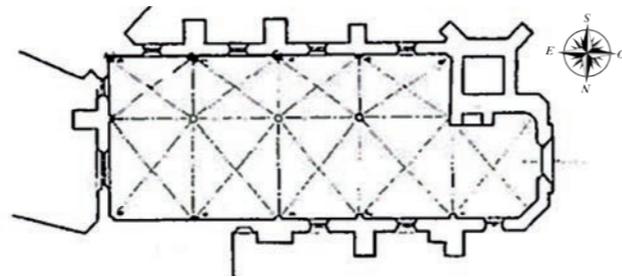
This location was not that of the old bell tower, which was further east at the second bay.

To ensure the stability of the bell tower, the abbot had foundations dug to a depth of six metres.

This base was made up of stones and tombstones of the Saint-Michel church and cemetery.

At the same time, Father Blaudy had the facade altered by piercing Gothic rosettes and the north portal was transformed into a neo-Gothic style. Father Blaudy was unable to finish these works because he died in 1860.

In 1863, the municipality financed the construction of buttresses which reinforced the existing flat buttresses. The stained glass windows were made between 1874 and 1876 by the Lobin workshops in Tours and financed by subscriptions. In the 20th century, the church underwent two major campaigns of works. The first, between 1942 and 1943, consolidated the building by installing metal tie rods. The second, between 1999 and 2000, led to the rediscovery of the inscriptions on the keystones. It was during this campaign that a window on the north side, blocked up since at least the beginning of the 19th century, was cleared and fitted with a stained glass window of Saint Cecilia. The church has been listed as a Historic Monument since 1973.



Its architecture

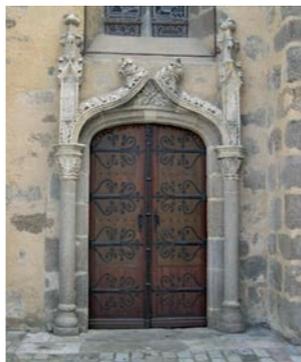
The church consists of a nave with a side-aisle, a bell tower over a bay of the side-aisle and a flat apse.

The portal is on the western facade. It is set in a projecting part marked by a cornice on modillions. It is made in large blocks of granite in a style called Limousin. It consists of four pointed arches lined with fine tori falling on piers and an impost decorated with crockets. Colonnets, now missing, were probably to be found at the base of the tori. It is very similar to the portals of the old Commandery chapel in Confolens and the Saint-Pierre church in Brillac. The two roses with tracery above the portal are in the neo-Gothic style and date from the end of the 19th century.

The corners of the facade are cut and house two niches with neo-Gothic decor. They were to receive statues of Saint Maxime and Saint Gauthier but this project never came to fruition.

The flat apse is supported by buttresses partly set into the adjoining constructions and a large buttress in the middle of the wall. It marks the separation between the nave and the side aisle. The apse is lit by two pointed-arch bays with tracery.

A door has been opened at the second bay (see photo).



It was altered in the 19th century and has a neo-Gothic decor with pinnacles and florets.

The capitals of the colonnettes are decorated with oak leaves. Until the mid-19th century, shops backed onto this elevation. Only one remains today. The south elevation is largely masked by the building and the courtyard of the presbytery. It is lit by four pointed arch bays.

The bell tower rests on a rectangular base, reinforced with oblique buttresses on the corners. On the ground floor, on the first and second floors, it is pierced with bays similar to those of the nave. Then it takes an octagonal shape. This level is alternately punctuated by bays and blind arcades framed in mitre shaped arches. There is a clock in each blind arcade. The octagonal spire has crockets on its edges and tiers of openings in the shape of trefoils.

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Upon entering the church, the visitor passes under the gallery. It is accessible by a stone staircase with a carved banister. This staircase was cleared during work at the end of the 20th century. This work led to the discovery of a large pointed arch with sculpted human heads.

The nave has five bays while the side aisle has four. The columns that separate the nave and the side aisle and the half-vaults from the side walls support the ribbed vaults, the traverse ribs and the arches.

The date «1836», engraved on one of

the keystones, corresponds to a campaign of work on the building. Blazons, symbols (ISH, AM), etc. can be seen on the other keystones. The south wall has a small three-lobed niche and a door with Gothic decor, set under an accolade, with pinnacles, florets and blossoming crockets. Its capitals are decorated with fantastic animals. The blazon under the accolade is inscribed SM.

The choir is separated from the nave and the side aisle by several steps. The carved elements embedded in the furniture of the choir (Paschal lamb, angels) come from the old Saint-Michel church. They were to form a decoration similar to that of the portals of the churches of Saint Barthélemy in Confolens and Saint Étienne in Esse.

With the exception of the Sainte-Cécile stained glass window, all the windows were made by the Lobin workshops in Tours. Those of the nave come, for the most part, from donations from parishioners.

The second occupies the western wall of the side aisle. It is a monumental painting depicting the Assumption of the Virgin (see photo).

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from the former convent of the order of Saint Clare who commissioned its execution a few years after taking the veil, in 1681. This painting was part of an old altarpiece of this convent (converted into a hospital from 1792 to 2015). Elisabeth Babaud paid the sum of 3,000 pounds for this piece.

The history of the Saint Cecilia stained glass window

The history of this stained glass window is closely linked to that of the small bay cleared on the north side during the works of 1999. Once cleared, it was necessary to close it with a stained glass window. The town of Confolens called on the Tusson stained-glass workshop to create this stained glass. Three artists worked there : Anne Pinto, Caroline Rogers and Serge Van Khache.

They decided to adopt a style close to the Lobin stained glass already present in the church of Saint-Maxime. They also decided to draw inspiration from the Confolens Festival to choose the represented saint.

Their choice was Saint Cecilia, the patroness of musicians (see photo). Saint Cecilia is depicted with several musical instruments at her feet and she holds in her hands a stringed instrument. It is set in a structured frame. Despite this classic style, there are several references to the Confolens Festival. In the cartouche under the saint, dancers are performing in a ring.

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While they have different clothes and skin colour, they are united in the dance. One might think that they are dancing to the rhythm of the music that Saint Cecilia is playing. The background behind the saint is made up of treble clefs, another reference to music and the Festival.

This stained glass window thus testifies to one of the foundations of the Festival : peace between peoples. It echoes the church's message of peace among Christians.

A forgotten church: Saint-Michel church

We have little information about this third parish church. Before 1678, the Saint-Michel church was a succursal chapel of the parish of Saint-Maurice-des-Lions. Like any parish church, Saint-Michel has a cemetery. The bell tower and part of the nave were destroyed by lightning in the 17th century and rebuilt around 1662. The bell tower is covered with shingles, the nave with tiles. In 1750, it is reported that the church «has the resemblance of a barn, without vault, without panelling and without any interior decoration other than the wood of an old altarpiece».

In 1765, part of his cemetery was alienated. The Saint-Michel church was closed to worship during the Revolution and it was abolished by imperial decree on July 31, 1806. Its demolition was ordered in the process and it was decided to use the materials for the repair of the church of Saint-Maxime.

Some of the materials were sold on November 9, 1819 for around 955 Francs. Among the buyers, M. Boulanger found several members of the local bourgeoisie such as Pougeard du Limbert, Meaudre d'Assit or Dubois de la Borde.

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Work was carried out both by the owner of the church site, Mr. Landry, and by the town. While it is visible on the 1826 cadastral plan (see the blue part on the photo), the exact date of its destruction is unknown.



The disappearance of the bell tower is in any case closely linked to the work which Father Blaudy carried out on the church of Saint-Maxime. The stones of Saint-Michel served as the base for the bell tower of the church of Saint-Maxime.

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