

La Chartreuse

Rue Pierre Allio in Brec'h



Built in the classical style, the Chartreuse of Auray is the only example of carthusian architecture (built by Carthusian monks) that remains in Western France. It is commonly known as the Chartreuse d'Auray although it is situated in Brec'h.



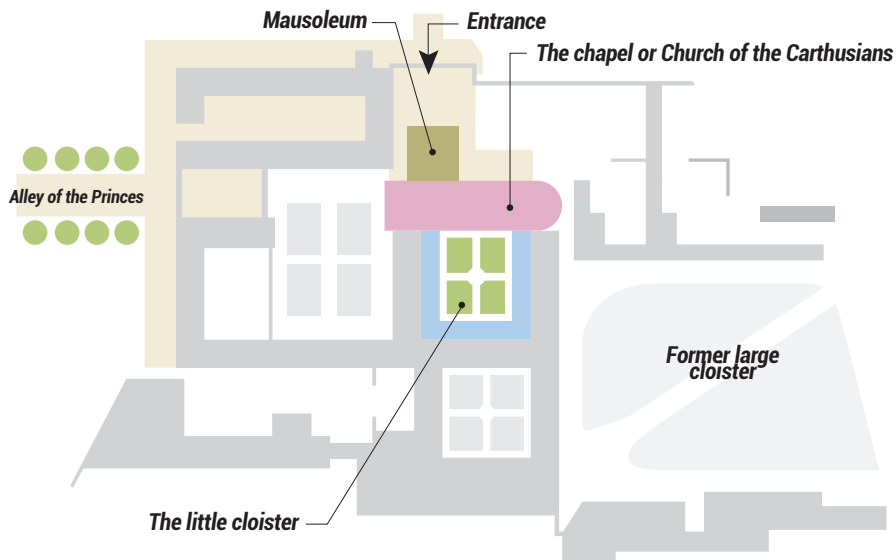
QUICK FACTS

- Built between the XVI and XIX centuries
- Classical style
- The cloister is a listed historic monument since 1928
- The chapel, refectory and mausoleum were listed Historic monuments in 1943
- The chasuble is the only listed object.

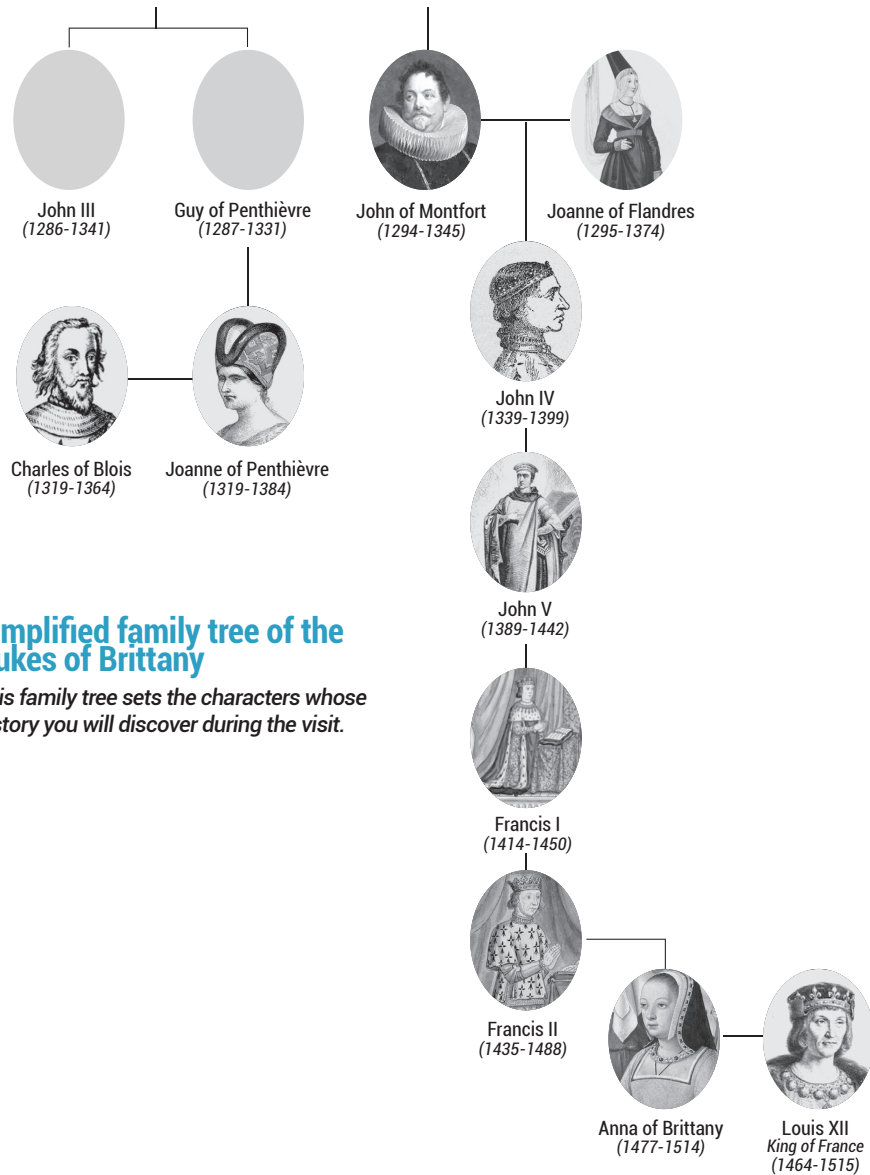


Rue Pierre Allio in Brec'h - 1km from Auray train station

• lat.47.683 - long. -3.003



The site of the Chartreuse is quite extensive. The various buildings of the estate are from different periods. Nowadays, it is still a place of residence, only a small area is open to the public. The coloured areas are the ones that can be visited unaccompanied. The grey areas are still in use and cannot be visited.



Simplified family tree of the Dukes of Brittany

This family tree sets the characters whose history you will discover during the visit.

The war of Succession and the Battle of Auray

In 1341, John III Duke of Brittany died without a heir nor an order of succession. He had two potential heirs. One was **Joanne of Penthièvre**, daughter of his brother Guy of Penthièvre. She was married to **Charles of Blois**, nephew of Philip VI, king of France. The other contender was **John of Montfort**, half-brother of the Duke John III, married to Joanna of Flanders. According to French law, the succession could not be passed on to a woman unless there were no male heirs whereas the Breton law allowed it. Philip VI officially stood up for Charles of Blois. John of Montfort died around 1343, leaving a son also named John of Montfort (**the future John IV**) brought up in England. In 1364, John of Montfort besieged the castle of Auray held by Charles of Blois' troops. As soon as the news reached Charles of Blois, he came back to defend his estate. On **the 29th September 1364** the battle of Auray took place along the edges of the Loch marshes. Both leaders were supported by experienced warriors. Overall, it is estimated that 8,000 to 15,000 men battled. Charles of Blois was killed on the battlefield. John of Montfort had his body transported to Guingamp (where a pilgrimage takes place), out of respect for the great devotion of his late opponent. On **12th April 1365**, the **Treaty of Guérande** was signed and John of Montfort became **John IV, Duke of Brittany**.



Bataille d'Auray

1364

The legend

The legend claims that before the battle, Charles of Blois' greyhound (symbol of faithfulness in the mediaval fantasy) left him to go to the enemy. This was interpreted as a sign of victory by John of Montfort advisers.

1364
Battle of Auray

1482
Settlement of
the Carthusians

1791
Eviction of the Carthusians

1808
Redemption of
the Chartreuse

1829
Inauguration of the Mausoleum
and Expiatory Chapel

XIV

XV

XVI

XVII

XVIII

XIX

XX

1341-1365
War of Breton
Succession

1532
Unification
Brittany/France

1545
Council
of Trent

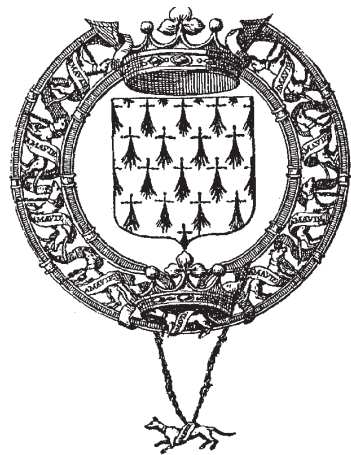
1789-1799
French Revolution

1905
Separation of the
Church and State

1364

The collegiate church of Saint-Michel du Champ

The same year of the battle, John IV decided to have a chapel erected in honour of Saint Michael the Archangel. It was a symbolic act as the battle took place on September 29th which is the Saint patron's day of this angel warrior. The building is a **collegiate**, meaning a church with a college of canons. The canons were devoted to pray for the souls of the militaries who died on the battlefield as well as for the ducal family. Saint Michael collegiate formed a square of three buildings and the church with a little cloister in the middle. The collegiate provided lodgings for the religious and rooms to accommodate the Duke and his court during the Assembly of the Order of the Ermine. In 1381, the Dean and eight chaplains settled at the the Collegiate. **The Order of the Ermine Knights** was set up by John IV to bond with the influential Breton families.



The Order of the Ermine

The Order of the Ermine was purely honorific. It had the particularity of accepting women and commoners. The knights met at least once a year on Saint Michael's day. Nowadays, the Order still exists and is symbolic. It is granted to contributors to Breton culture, politics and economy.

The necklace was composed of two gold strings adorned with ermines and tied by a double ducal crown. It bears the motto « À ma vie ».

1482

Settlement of the Carthusians

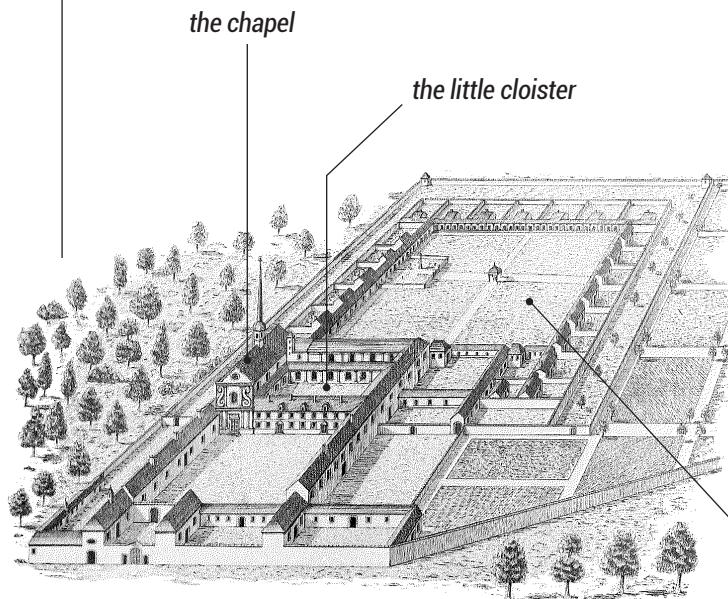
In 1480, in order to increase the number of religious at no extra expense, the **Duke Francis II** asked Pope Sixtus IV to change the Collegiate into a **Carthusian monastery**. In those days, a Chartreuse existed in Nantes, established by Francis I. On October 23rd, the change is approved by the Pope. On **March 29, 1482**, a Prior and twelve monks arrived to replace the canons. The Carthusians stayed on until the Revolution. They lived on their income and thanks to the annuities from private benefactors (local lords or kings).

The Carthusian Order

Saint Bruno was born in Cologne around 1030. He read theology in France. He became a professor and the Bishop of Reims chancellor. He gave up his position following the Bishop's misconducts. Aged 52, he sold all his belongings and with a few friends made a first attempt at hermit life. Pope Hugh who was one of his pupils, granted him a solitary site in the mountains near Grenoble that will become the head monastery of the Grande Chartreuse. Called upon by Pope Urban II but wishing to resume a solitary life, Saint Bruno obtained some land in Calabria where he founded a new community. There, he passed away in 1101. He was canonized in 1506. Unlike the other founders of the order, Saint Bruno did **not leave any written rules**. Later on, some followers wrote the Customs before introducing the Statutes. The Carthusian order is a half-eremitical order. The rule prescribes solitude and silence. Saint Bruno recommended to his followers to practice both spiritual and physical exercise. It is one of the most austere religious orders.

The impact of the Carthusian architecture in Brec'h

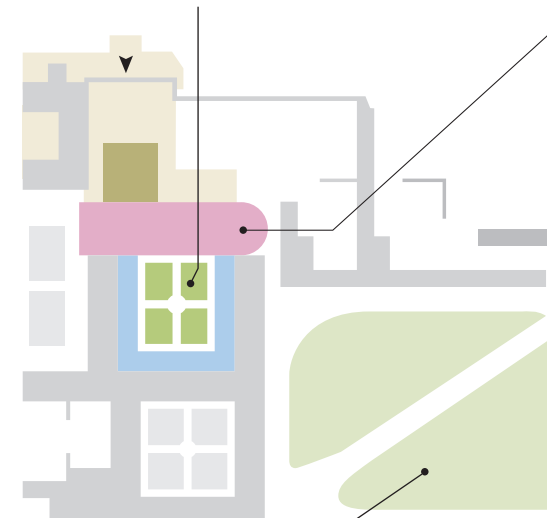
The current organization of the buildings corresponds to the one developed by the Carthusian monks in the **XVII and XVIII centuries**. The arrangement of the architecture follows the rules defined by the Order for buildings and their surroundings. The rigorous architecture and layout of the space around is the same across all Chartreuse monasteries. The Carthusian used to redeem lands to create the **desert** necessary to run their daily life.



The Chartreuse in the days of the Carthusian monks

Reconstruction of the little cloister Second period of the building works

In the mid XVII century, the little cloister and its premises were rebuilt. Between 1706 and 1707, glass panels were fitted to the arches of the cloister. From 1724, paintings representing the life of Saint Bruno were installed. They were painted by a lay brother and two other artists, one of which was **Lhermittais**. These are 17 reproductions from the famous gallery **Eustache Le Sueur** created for the Carthusian cloister of Luxembourg in Paris. There are 22 original paintings kept in the Louvre. The ones in the Chartreuse which are listed **Historic Monuments** were restored about twenty years ago. It is the most important painted cycle of the county.



The large cloister First main period of the building works

The large cloister, that has disappeared, was built by the Carthusians from 1574. It was surrounded by twenty cells. The monks lived and worked in these individual accommodations. Community life was restricted to prayers and relaxation. The monks had a library of 3,000 volumes, confirming their intellectual activities. The cloister was dismantled in the XIX century. Only three cells remain today.

The chapel or carthusian church

In 1680, the monks decided to build a new church in the baroque style on the site of the previous one. It was consecrated on November 3, 1693. Now, the carthusian church corresponds to the chapel. Of that church, **only the facade and the carved timber door remain**. A roodscreen used to divide the nave in two sections : one for the Brothers and for the Fathers. There used to be a **baldachin** in the chancel. It was a common carthusian feature above altars. The church also had exceptional carved stalls. Two important fires in 1816 and 1968 altered the appearance of the chapel.



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1791

The Chartreuse and the Revolution

In March 1791, a decree from the Constituent Assembly reduced the number of religious communities. **The Carthusians were expelled**. The Chartreuse was raided shortly after before being redeemed by the State. The large cloister was demolished to recover the materials. The site was then sold to the vicars of Vannes and to Jean Marie Barré. Around 1808, Jean Marie Barré gave usage of the Chartreuse to Gabriel Deshayes, a priest from Auray. With the education of the deaf mutes and impaired children in mind, Father Deshayes brought over Parisian teachers and set up a community of Daughters of Wisdom. From 1955, the educational purpose went into decline. The site became a retirement home for sick nuns. Nowadays, several organizations and associations occupy the Chartreuse. They are involved in **educating and supporting** people with disabilities.



Georges CADOUAL (June 1771-June 1804)

A leader of the Chouannerie, he was appointed Lieutenant General and Commander of the Royal troops in Brittany. His whole family was involved in the Chouannerie in the Auray region and in Vendée. In 1804, he organized a conspiracy to kidnap and assassinate the First Consul, Bonaparte. Betrayed, he was sentenced and guillotined in Paris on June 25, 1804.

The Chouannerie, a local history

In Brittany, the Revolution was a different experience than elsewhere in France. From now on, the Britons had to pay tax to the Republic when previously, they had managed to escape royal taxes. The Constituent Assembly reformed the Church and enforced a new legislation that incorporated the Clergy to the State. The refractory priests were deported and executed. The Bretons loathed this situation as religion was a core component of their life. Truly **dissatisfied** with the consequences of the Revolution, folks of Brittany and Vendée set up the **Chouannerie** to restore the monarchy. From 1794, the State made several decisions : the appointment of General Hoche to **pacify the rebels in the West** and the amnesty of December 2, 1794 for those who would lay down the arms.

The Battle of Quiberon and its aftermath

The nobles and the Royalists exiled in England, formed an army and organized landings between Carnac and Auray end of June 1795 in order to restore the monarchy. This is known as the **Battle of Quiberon**. However, the disagreements between the Chouans leaders and the information given by a deserter allowed **Hoche** to counter the Quiberon landing. The human losses were important. 750 émigrés and Chouans were sentenced to death between July 25 and September 7, 1795. The Chouans leaders were the first executed. 206 prisoners were shot at the Champ des Martyrs near the Chartreuse where they were summarily buried. In 1814, the **Duke of Angoulême** stopped at the **Champ des Martyrs**. His wife was Marie-Thérèse of France, the only surviving daughter of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette.

In honour of the fighters, he dedicated a **Mausoleum** located at the Chartreuse. An **Expiatory Chapel** was built at the Champ des Martyrs, with the approval of Louis XVIII. On September 20, 1823, the Duchess of Angoulême laid the cornerstone of this chapel. Both monuments were designed by the architect **Auguste Caristie**. On October 14, 1829, a ceremony for the translation of bones took place. It attracted a huge crowd including 2 out of the 3 bishops of Brittany and over 15,000 Bretons.

1795



Louis Lazare HOCHÉ (June 1768 - September 1797)

In 1789, aged 23, he started a brilliant military career. At 28, he was appointed to head the armies of Brest and Cherbourg to pacify Western France. Informed about the Quiberon landing, he defeated the Chouans and became Commanding Officer for the Western armies. He turned down the Ministry of War. He died of tuberculosis at the age of 29.

The monument of Quiberon

Next to the chapel, the monument was erected to commemorate the events linked to the Battle of Quiberon. Inside, the walls are made of white and black **marble**. In the centre, the marble mausoleum sits above the tomb where the bones are buried. The door was probably created by the Royalists, using a cannon. The monument was made by **David d'Angers and his pupil, Louis Petitot**. Two dates are carved in Roman characters : 27th June 1795 (Quiberon Landing) and 21st July 1795 (ceasefire). The names of the 952 victims show on the facades of the mausoleum. The main officers of the expedition are embossed on medallions. At the entrance of the chapel, two marble carvings illustrate the Duke of Angoulême praying for the buried and the Duchess hammering the cornerstone of the Expiatory Chapel. The **chasuble** is the only **listed object** of the site. It was sewn in 1848 by Mme de Blossac in honour of her father, an emigré who was executed in 1795. When it was restored in 1995, a parchment was found, saying that the chasuble was made from her parents' wedding garments whereas traditionally, the story tells that emigrés' rags were used.

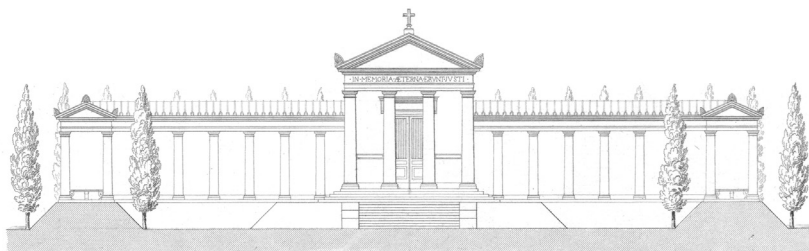


The mausoleum

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The Expiatory Chapel of the Champ des Martyrs

The Champ des Martyrs (Field of the Martyrs) is one km away from the Chartreuse heading towards Sainte-Anne d'Auray. According to the documents kept at the Morbihan Archives Department, the chapel should have been impressive with two massive aisles added to the current chapel. The Latin inscription on the facade says « Here, they fell ».



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Pierre-Jean David known as **DAVID D'ANGERS** (1788-1856)

David D'Angers was a well known French sculptor who specialized in monumental buildings like memorials and funerary monuments. He made the pediment of the Pantheon in Paris. He went into exile after becoming Republican and an opponent to Louis Philippe constitutional monarchy. His last works were inaugurated in his absence. From 1840, his signature was « David d'Angers ». His home town houses many of his artworks.