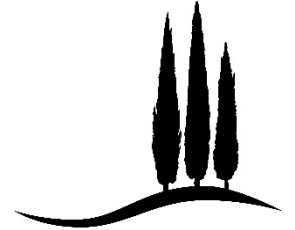


The incredible history of the Moulin Dumas estate



In the folds of Mount Rachas, watching over the Valréas plain, a vigorous Drôme river called "La Berre" traces its impetuous course.

Ever since the Dumas Mill was founded in 1768, people have been vigilant and respectful of this natural force, even when its waters overflowed in abundance. On stormy days, at various fords, the Berre could turn into a plague, sweeping away everything in its path: absent-minded men, careless animals or fragile carriages, ignorance or negligence often punished by its devastating wrath.

The millers, the discreet guardians of this haven of work, had the noble and little-known task of taming the river on a daily basis, ingeniously manipulating the reaches and flows to maintain a regular flow. In this way, the "wheels of stone and fortune" never interrupted their rotation, in an incessant ballet day and night, enabling the millers to carry out their work.

On the outskirts of the mill grounds, a long dyke wall is a reminder of the river's past vagaries, perhaps signalling tumultuous and spectacular episodes of flooding. The mooring rings discovered here bear witness to the river's former activity, where boats would have moored to unload precious goods such as wheat, barley and oats.

Surrounded by a robust building, a pond with a rich history, a garden dotted with olive trees and majestic cypresses, and bordered by a mysterious forest where the river of character meanders, the Moulin Dumas estate stands proudly in a valley preserved by nature!

How can you not succumb to its charm? How can you not be overwhelmed by a deep love for this generous, tolerant nature, complicit in the passage of time?

The Dumas family of millers, whose know-how enriched the famous flour of the same name sold throughout Provence in the 19th century, prospered as true craftsmen of the elements air, water, fire and earth. They solidified this place in every sense of the

word, on every level, breathing into it a vibrant, harmonious life that transcends linear time.

The intimacy shared between natural beauty and the eternal movement of time at the Moulin Dumas is in perfect harmony.

But do recent history and the experiences lived here explain the positive 'magnetism' of the place? You be the judge... I have my opinion...

We need to go back in time, to around 1768, when the first stone of the mill, under a name other than Dumas, was laid by the Boyer family, local rural builders in association with master miller and alchemist Panalis Raymond (from Réauville).

At the end of the 18th century, the whole place, the main building, the pond and its reach, trembled with the productive power of the permanent rotation of the heavy stone millstones, driven by the two impressive paddle wheels (one of which can be seen at the entrance to the estate, leaning against the north façade). The horse-drawn carriages constantly drove in and out of the mill. The winds blowing through the valley, the bearers of legends about the old mills and their "magical" curiosities, played a benevolent part in maintaining this power to transform the grain, by providing a gentle, ideal humidity to preserve the precious grain. Panalis Raymond regularly told his apprentices and journeymen that "hot, humid air generates the heat of fire and the humidity of water, for the pleasure of grinding the barley of the earth that we all are"?

At the same time, 1793 brought its share of tumultuous events. Mr Hippolyte Dumas, the deputy and mayor of Cairanne (a village in the Vaucluse about 40 km to the south of Grignan) led the 61 deputies of the Federation of 34 communes of the Haut-Comtat, assembled in the parish church of Ste Cécile les Vignes on 16 March 1793, with the aim of setting themselves up as a possible free state, independent of the former authority of the Pope (Enclave des Papes) and even of the new French society... This assembly, chaired by the ex-title-marquis Fournier d'Aultane, mayor of Valréas, unanimously decided to make energetic representations to the National Assembly to place itself under the direct protection of France, benefiting from its liberal laws but without bearing any of its burdens. The Comtat-Venaissin was purely and simply annexed to France on 14 September. At the heart of this turmoil, two deputies were imprisoned in Lyon gaols for their "indecent" proposal to the "Comité de salut Public" and sentenced to death as an example. They were Fournier d'Aultane and Dumas. Mr Fournier d'Aultane was executed in October 1793, while Hippolyte Dumas managed to escape a few hours before his execution. Like a fugitive, he found refuge in the wooded valley of what is now the Moulin Dumas estate (promenade des trois lavandes), on the banks of the River Berre. It was here that he met Panalis Raymond, who took him in and offered him the shelter and discretion of the Moulin,

which he needed to survive for more than 10 years and to learn something about nature.

At the end of the dark days of the French Revolution and the fever pitch of the Directoire period until 1799, Hippolyte, father of two young sons, Calixte and Amédée, and with the benefit of the six years of teaching he had received from Panalis Raymond, offered to buy the site from Panalis, who agreed to pass it on to him. Calixte and Amédée and their own descendants continued to develop Dumas flour production throughout the 19th century and to safeguard the site.

The twentieth century was a difficult one for the estate, having been hit by the steam engine revolution. But the agricultural production that was established there by the following generations also enabled the strength of the place to be preserved, and it became known as "Le Moulin Dumas" in homage to its incredible history, which is still remembered by the elders.

Ten generations later, in the 21st century, the story takes on a new momentum with the arrival of the Porcel family, purchasers of the Moulin Dumas, which they transform into an estate of emotions, around its building, its charming houses and its 4-hectare estate, opening the doors to a new future for the place, with the profound desire to reattach it to its history.

As a vigilant 'guardian' of the past and shaper of the future, I look forward, with emotion and kindness, to revealing to you, if you wish, other mysteries and curiosities of this enchanting place that I have been able to discover here.

Welcome to this haven of wonder, a fertile place where the timeless threads of history and nature intertwine.

Because the place that the millers of yesteryear knew how to discover, develop and protect, because this place has always offered, still offers and will always offer the most beautiful of journeys, the inner journey by...SMELLING the fields of lavender and the truffle fields, LISTENING to the birdsong and the lapping of the water, OBSERVING the scenes of nature and the variations in light, CARESSING the centuries-old living bark and the stones polished by time and work, TASTING the flavours of the Drôme and the nectars of the Adhémar, and FEELING the spirit of the place and the inner tranquillity, we want to share this place with our guests.

In memory of Hippolyte Dumas and Panalis Raymond,

Philippe Porcel, owner of the estate