

Queen Victoria in Tresserve

The Devil's House

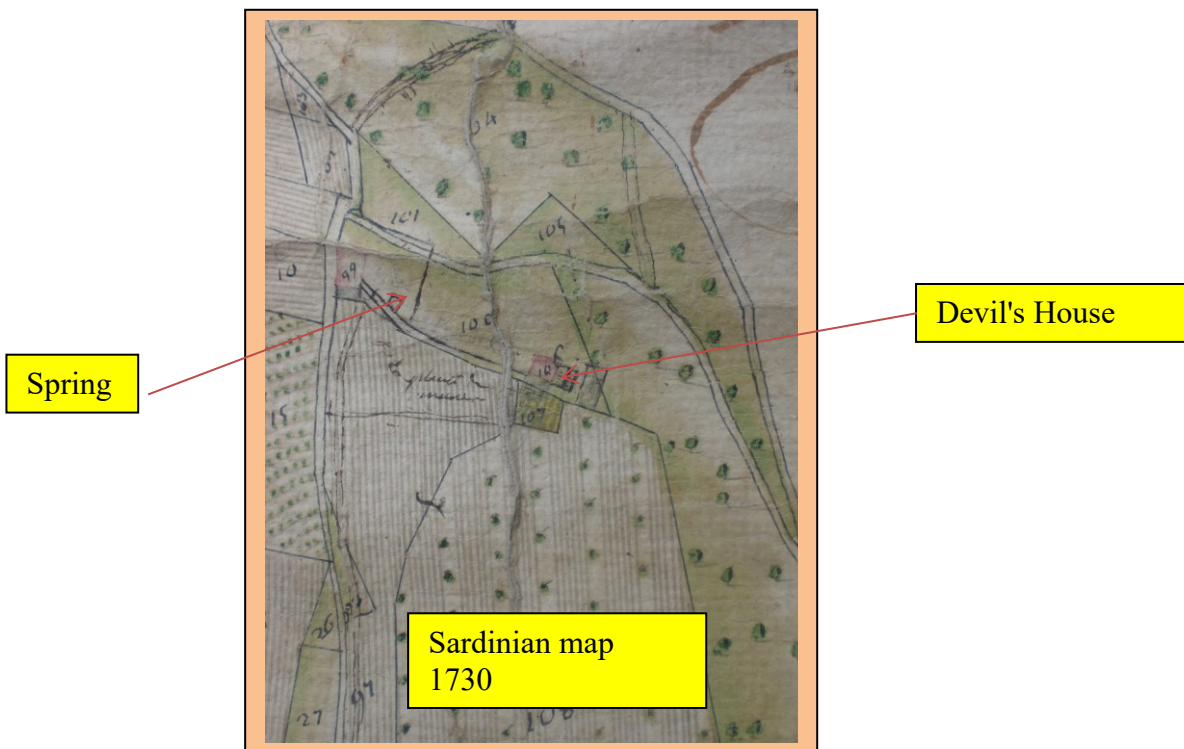
An ancient, dark and impressive residence, it stands like a tower at the end of the hill. The “molasse” stone from which it is built has worn away over time, rounding the edges of the large blocks left bare. It also looks like a prison with its thick walls and small openings defended by gates. Its name is chilling and there are many legends about its history.

- **1st legend:** The legend of a building built in one night by the spirit of evil, which may or may not take the soul of the person who has been unwise enough to have it work for him everywhere. An inhabitant of the hill had had his house built of blocks of stone so large that only a very strong devil could move it. This native of Tresserve, who was somewhat of a wizard, counted on his magic to settle his account and send the devil to all devils. But he had counted on his diabolical architect who, having put the finishing touches to his work and no doubt having to do elsewhere, killed the wizard with a claw and took his soul.
- **Second legend:** It is a little more realistic. A young shepherdess from Tresserve, who is said to have been called Toinette, while grazing her white sheep, let herself be talked about by a young and handsome devil, so much so that one fine day she could not conceal the state in which she found herself and was very happy that a charitable person was willing to take her to Lyon, where we do not know what happened to her. Only the mother, when asked what had become of her daughter, simply replied that 'the devil had taken her daughter'. Toinette's cottage happened to be next door to the Devil's House, so it was not surprising that she had been bewitched.
- **3rd legend:** It claims that at a very remote time, there lived a young lord, a relative or descendant of Robert the Devil, who courted all the girls and all the women and who, at each walk, brought back a new victim. All the husbands hid their wives, the fathers of the family emigrated with their families to escape the suggestion of Lord Berthold, who was obliged to extend his travels from Chambéry to Geneva, to find new amorous adventures. One day, while hunting, he met a pilgrim woman who was going along the path. Never had such a pretty face charmed the count, who knew himself to be beautiful. The pilgrim seemed tired, so the count dismounted and gallantly offered her his horse, which she accepted, and so they both returned to the castle, where the beautiful woman fainted on arrival. The count had the most beautiful room given to her, and spent the night with her, keeping watch. When she came to her senses, carried away by her new love, Berthold said to her: "Madam, to be loved by you, I would give all I have;" but she answered him simply: "My love cannot be bought, it must be earned. On the count's reply that, to deserve it, he would do anything she wanted, she replied, "We shall see. count Berthold, who drank heavily, laughed a lot, and hunted a lot, was seen to put water in his wine, to stop singing and hunting, in short, to settle down and spend his time sighing and moaning for love by the lake, like a simple troubadour. The beautiful pilgrim made him do whatever she wanted and he blindly wanted whatever she wanted. The locals were amazed and thought that it was the devil himself who had taken up residence with count Berthold in the guise of a beautiful woman. One day, the count fell dangerously ill; at midnight, the stranger appeared in the room, her eyes shining like flames. "Lord count, you are dead," she said, "commend your soul to God!" As the count answered her, the stranger's body became transparent. "Commend your soul to God," she said, "you have but an hour to live! I

am the soul of a poor girl whom you have seduced. I have obtained from God to make you do penance on earth. You have sinned by women, be saved by a woman. Farewell!" In the morning the count was found dead in his bed, in the attitude of prayer. The stranger had disappeared. During the night a strong wind had blown down the walls of a pavilion which he had built alone and of which only the building remains, to which popular tradition has preserved the name of the Devil's House.



In 1730, the "Maison du Diable" was only a small farmhouse located at the place called "La croix du Painé Vine", near a spring. It belonged to Louis Bolliet.



From 1807 onwards, several owners succeeded one another: Joseph Faure, Pierre Gautier and Jean Baptiste Forestier. The farmhouse includes meadows, fields, hutins, woods, chestnut

groves, pastures and vineyards, i.e. twelve hectares of land, buildings, livestock, tools, fodder and wine vats.



The house remained in the Forestier family for three generations: on the death of Jean-Baptiste in 1858, it passed to his son Jean-Baptiste. He built a house at the place called "Sous le Bois", and extended the "Maison du Diable" in 1865 by adding a wing. In 1882, part of the family property was sold. This represented one hectare of land, bounded by the road called "Chemin de Tresserve". The small round building used as a dairy, as well as the fountain, its spring and the ferry, although located on the property sold, were kept by the sellers with all rights of access.



The buyer is Henriette Rose Trench, wife of Knight Samuel Whalley. Lady Whalley immediately changed the ominous name of "Devil's House" to the much more seductive "Bellevue". The domain, where Lady Whalley likes to stay, becomes a goal of walk for the people frequenting the waters of Aix les Bains.

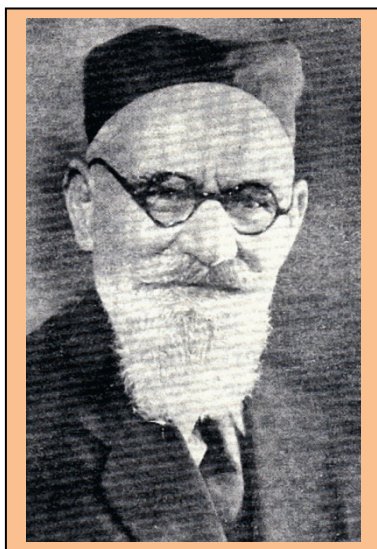


Lady Whalley died in 1906. In August 1908, her nephew, the heir, sold the property to a London banker, Frederick Huth Jackson, who made it his second home with his wife and 4 children for 36 years.

He had the house extended by the Aix architect Pin Aîné. The house was rented and then sold in 1949 by his children to the Association known as "Graduate School of Talmudic Studies and Science - Yechivas Chachemey Tsorpat",

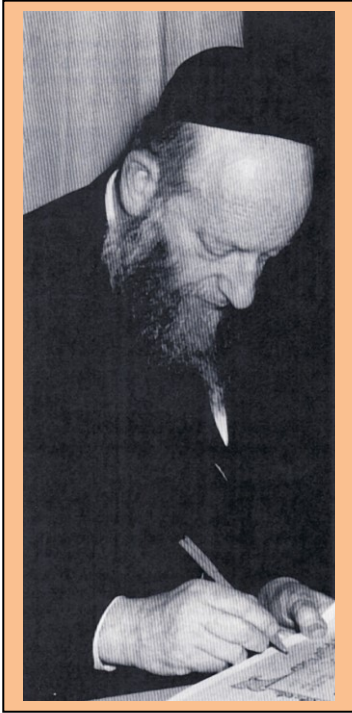
The Aix-les-Bains Yechiva

The school was founded on the initiative of Rabbi Ernest Weil, an Alsatian who wanted to create an important centre for Talmudic studies.



Before the war in 1940, he created a first school in Strasbourg with the young Rabbi Chajkin, originally from Lithuania.

During the war, Aix being in the free zone, close to Switzerland, many Jews took refuge there. Rabbi Weil opened a home for Jewish survivors on Boulevard de Paris, with the support of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or "Joint"), created in 1914 to help reconstitute the religious heritage of Eastern Europe. Quite naturally, at the end of the war, the Aix-les-Bains region was chosen to become one of the centres of Jewish renewal; the COJASOR (Jewish Committee for Social Action and Reconstruction) opened a retirement home there in 1945, which was run until 1993 by its founding father, Ignace Fink (today "Les jardins de Marlioz").



Rabbis Weil and Chajkin opened the Aix school in 1945. Mr Cahen, who had previously directed the Yeshiva in Strasbourg, became the administrator. They rented the Jackson property to accommodate about thirty students.

The school quickly established relations with the Jews of North Africa and was recognised as one of the main centres of Talmudic studies. The house was bought in 1949 and the first extension to the buildings was built in 1955.



In the same year, a school for girls opened on the heights of Aix-les-Bains, taking the name "Tomer Deborah".

In 1960, the association built a house for the director (extended in 1985), and in 1972 a residential home.

The "Devil's House", even if its name is no longer pronounced (!), has kept its nobility, but it has aged well! No longer offering the security guarantees, it now houses a study room for adults on the first floor; the ground floor is used as offices and a shop, now closed.

The "Allée" (built in 1865 and enlarged in 1908) houses offices, the refectory and the flats of the director and the rabbi.

The school in Tresserve, which is recognised throughout the world, now has 60 to 70 students. The very high quality of the teaching provided there, and the presence of some of the most important personalities in Judaism, have attracted many families who live in the immediate vicinity to share the same faith.

The Bois Lamartine Hotel

Jean-Pierre Excoffier, originally from Echarvines, near Talloires, married Angèle Réveillé. They had no children and moved to Paris to run a food business in the rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. At the time of the purchase of land by Queen Victoria, Jean-Pierre Excoffier was "maître d'hôtel" at the "Maison du Diable". He owned a house on the other side of chemin vicinal N°1 (now Montée Victoria). In 1895 he bought the fountain from Lady Whalley.



In order to sign the deed of purchase, he had to travel to London and, during his absence, the house caught fire. He then built a hotel, which was extended several times, in 1905 and again in 1911, which he called "the Queen's Domain".



HOTEL-PENSION DU BOIS LAMARTINE
Au Domaine de la Reine
(ANCIENNE PROPRIÉTÉ DE S. M. LA REINE D'ANGLETERRE)
AIX-LES-BAINS (Savoie)
à un kilomètre de la Gare
OUVERT DU 1^{ER} MAI AU 1^{ER} OCTOBRE
Vue magnifique sur le Lac du Bourget

J.-P. EXCOFFIER
PROPRIÉTAIRE

↳ Arrangements pour familles et séjours prolongés ↵



Jean-Pierre and Marie Excoffier ran the hotel until 1938, helped by their nieces Marie and Jeanne, then their great-niece Lucie and later her husband. They received an elegant clientele: Jean Nohain and his family stayed there in the 1930s.

Jean-Pierre Excoffier died in January 1939, Marie Excoffier then ran a furnished hotel at 49 avenue de Tresserve; the Tresserve property was sold to Louis Vincent, a trader from Chambéry, and then to the Aix Les Bains hospital, which transformed the hotel into a care home in 1995.

The latter was demolished and replaced by a modern building opened in 2001 by the “Centre Hospitalier Métropole de Savoie”.

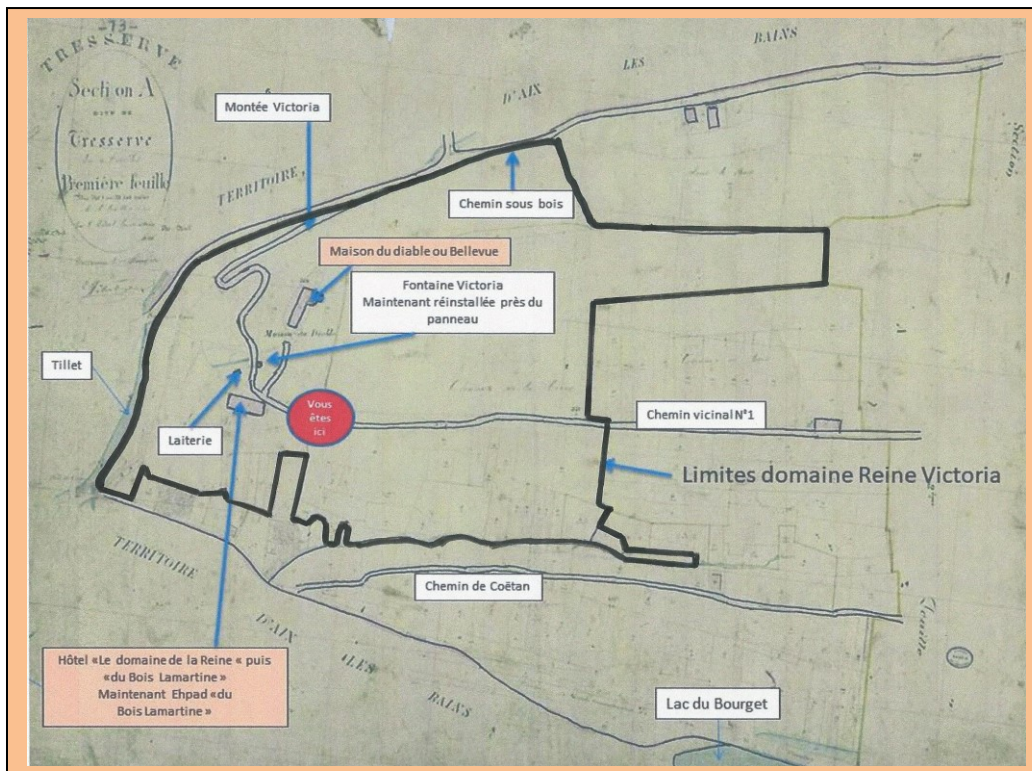


Queen Victoria in Tresserve

"Queen Victoria often went to Bellevue Castle, enjoying talking and luncheoning with the chatelaine, Milady Whalley... Signed The Earl of Loche, 1899

Victoria (1819-1901), Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India, came to stay in Aix-les-Bains in April 1885. This was a major event: the Queen was the most powerful person in the world at the time... She chose to keep a low profile during her stay in Savoie, hiding under the name of "Countess of Balmoral", and intended above all to rest, go for walks and lead a family life. The repercussions of her three stays in Aix (1885, 1887 and 1890) were immense: English and then Americans flocked to the waters of Aix and the Alps.

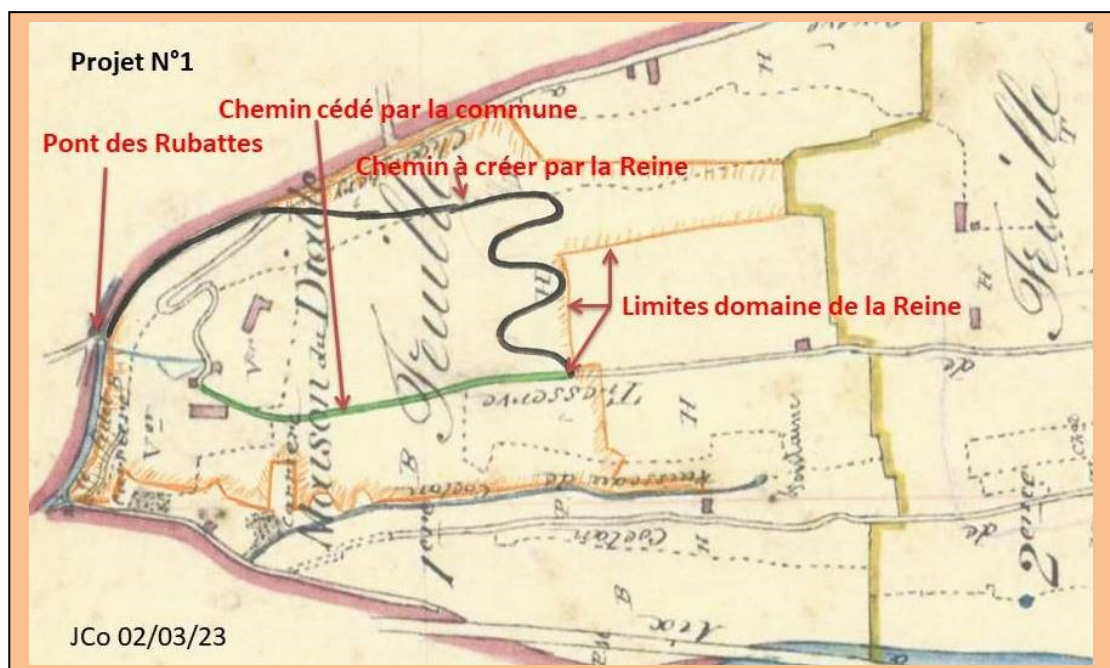
The hill of Tresserve is her favourite place to walk; besides General Menabrea in his villa Marguerite, she also visits Lady Whalley at Bellevue. And there, she elaborates a project which could have changed the destiny of Tresserve... and of the whole of Savoy ! Back in London, she delegated a solicitor, Arnold William White, to negotiate the purchase of land in Tresserve on behalf of the Crown of England. A judgement of expropriation was pronounced on 19 July 1886 against the Forestier heirs for their entire property in favour of Arnold William White. He also acquired neighbouring land and completed the Tresserve property by purchasing two more plots of land from the lawyer Gaspard Forestier and part of Lady Whalley's estate, including the house that later became the Hotel du Bois Lamartine.



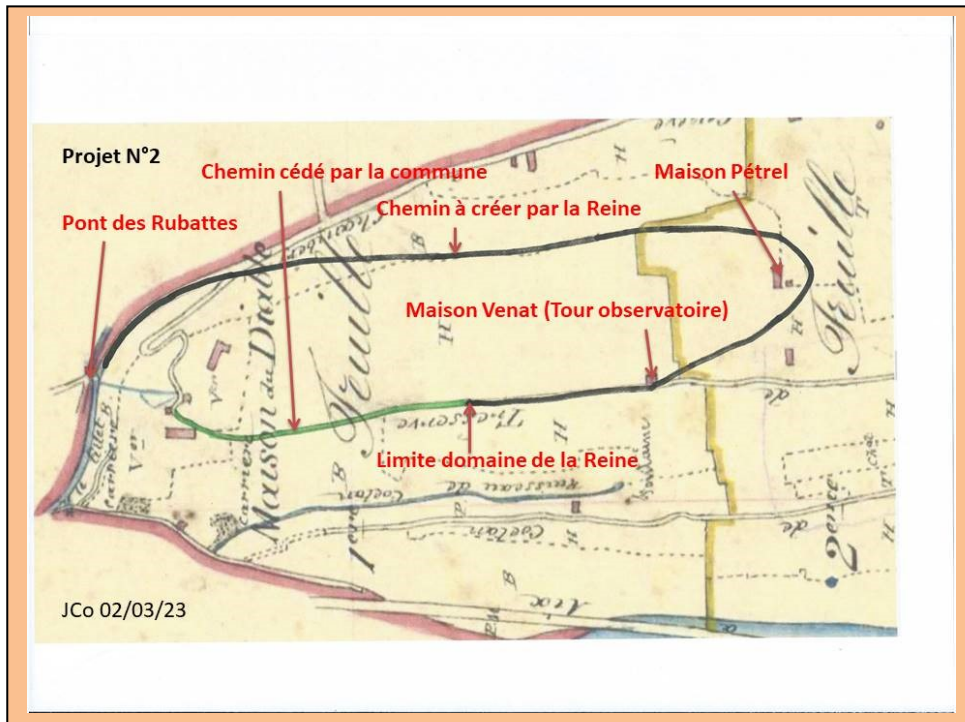
Difficulties began to appear in 1887: on 15 June, the municipal council deliberated on a request from the Aix entrepreneur Alphonse Mottet to rectify the vicinal road No. 1 between the “Maison du Diable” and the southern limit of the Queen's estate, to facilitate the transport of materials for the constructions. The road is so steep that it is almost impossible to drive on it. This modification, with slopes of 10%, would be an improvement on the current road. A public utility enquiry was held on 26/06/1887 and did not lead to any comments from the population.

The Queen's future buildings were to occupy part of the vicinal road. At the meeting of 31/07/1887, the Council decided to grant the Queen ownership of the portion of the road that she wished to modify. In return, and within a period of 3 years, she would have to build a new path at her own expense, with a much lower gradient (6 to 7%), starting from the Rubattes bridge. Two options are envisaged:

- Option No. 1, known as M. Burdin's option: the new route, entirely on the Queen's land, includes several twists and turns with a significant slope.



- Option No. 2: with a much lower slope, makes a large turn beyond the Petrel house and joins the byroad at the Venat house (Observatory Tower)



A significant part of the road will not be on the Queen's land and the Commune is asking her to buy the necessary plots.

In both cases the work would be paid for by the Queen.

The Commune then decided to abandon the idea of modifying the northern access as requested by Alphonse Mottet and to consider the two options of creating a new path to the south. These will be the subject of a technical and financial study at the Queen's expense. The interests of the Tresserviens and the tranquility of the future residence must be preserved. On 13 November, the council finally adopted project No. 2 in preference to No. 1 for fear that project No. 1 would cause landslides and therefore incur expenses for the commune. It also undertook to help the Queen with the necessary land purchases.

Then there is silence: what happened? The project was quickly abandoned. Were there any difficulties in purchasing the land or did the Queen change her mind?

As early as 1888 Arnold William White sold Lady Whalley some meadows and woods, a piece of land where an ice house had existed and another where the dairy had previously existed. On 3 August 1895, he sold all the remaining land.

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Association pour la Sauvegarde du patrimoine de Tresserve.**