

INTRODUCTION (10 E)

Welcome to Freÿr.

Our association thanks heartily Mr Graham Keen, from Brussels, for his contribution in the composition of the text on this room and those of the other rooms.

For your information, you find in every room a stand with a folder describing the room. It is available in French, Dutch, English and German. After reading the folder, please put it back in the original shelf.

You are at the central point of the estate, which comprises the following main features:

- A mix of Latin and Germanic cultures

After the partition of Lotharingia (870), the boarder between France and the Holy Roman Empire followed the Meuse, Saône and Rhône rivers. As the region around Dinant narrowly avoided being annexed by Louis XIV, this mix of influences was maintained up to the French Revolution. So Freÿr is a Germanic name: Freÿr is the Apollo of Teutonic Scandinavian mythology; the gardens were inspired by French classicism: no flowers and structured along various symmetrical axes, while the Frederic's Hall, the pavilion overlooking the gardens, is a mixture of the classical French Louis XVI facade and the Rococo dome from beyond the Rhine.

- Soberness

The local Renaissance style is typical of this region, which extended from Fumay (France) to Roermond (the Netherlands). The closer one came to Liège – the political and economic center of the region – the more ornate were the facades, and vice-versa. So the soberness found at Freÿr, which is typical in the south of the region, is also to be found in the north, as for example at the Commandery of Alten Biesen (Flemish Limburg) or at the Castle of Hoensbroeck (Dutch Limburg).

- Provincialism

It is linked to the Ardennes, which is a dead-end, and hence to the slowness with which new styles penetrated the region. As an example, the local Renaissance style was used over two centuries (from 1571 to 1776) to build the three facades of the house; and the initial gardens were laid after 1637 in a style that was popular at the end of the Burgundian period (late 15th century).

- Feminine Charm

This feature is related to the history of the Beaufort family. They appeared in 1006 as solicitors from the city of Huy on the Meuse and gave birth to various branches including those of Spontin (at Freÿr) and Vêves. They played an important role during the feudal period, sometimes with sad memories as during the War of the Cow (late 13th century).

After the unification of the Netherlands under the Dukes of Burgundy (early 15th century), they remained on their land rather than going up to the court, and hence they slowly declined.

At the end of the 16th century, the Freÿr branch woke up and changed its strategy: "Making love, not war", they adopted this Hapsburg motto (like in the 1960's), but with an important detail: "making love with well titled heiresses!."

In five generations this branch changed from being simply "Esquire of Freÿr" to receiving the title of " Duke of Beaufort-Spontin." During this period Freÿr was built gradually under the influence of those wives, who gave the place a family-like and discreet charm.

- Families

Freÿr has been from the start a family home, recognized as such by the Count of Namur to the Rochefort-Orjos (1378). It changed by marriage to the Beaufort-Spontin family (1410), then to the Laubespins (1852), and finally to the Bonaerts (1966), who made it into the non-profit association, *Le Domaine de Freÿr* (1989).

Today the descendants of this family, volunteers and members of the Friends of Freÿr devote themselves to maintaining the estate and making it accessible.