

SAINT MICHEL CHAPEL





In the heart of the Aude plain, between the Black Mountains in the North and the Corbières Massif in the South, Homps has always been a stopping-off place for travellers. As far back as the third century BC it was a well-used staging-post on the tin trail. In Gallo-Roman times an important Roman road passed closet o AL HULMUS (later known as Homps), linking Carcassonne to Narbonne and Béziers.

The building is built on the place of the St Etienne's Chapel, first martyred Christian, stoned to death in Jerusalem. Credibly destroyed during the invasions of Visigoths Vth or VIth century, then of Arabs in the VIIIth century. Its construction is dated around the XIth century.

It was given up by the Archbishop of Narbonne to the Brothers of St Jean of Jerusalem installed in Homps. It is dedicated to St Etienne and the Archangel Michel then indicated under the word of this last who has to give the signal of the Last Judgment.



CHAPELLE SAINT MICHEL

The worship was celebrated there until 1883, date on which the current Church was dedicated.

Although the Church is Romanic, the door is ogivale so Gothic. The keystone is sculptured. It represents a padlocked blazon divided by a cross into 4 districts. On the top, side by side, marguerites or stars in 8 branches were not formally identified. Théodore Galinier Beteille recognizes “two very characteristic thumb wheels of spur” of the Knights of the order of Saint Jean of Jerusalem.



P.A. Clément notices that the subject of marguerites is on other buildings belonging to Saint Jean's order of Jerusalem. It is in any case a subject unknown in Languedoc and it is possible, as proposed by Roger Hyvert and Forner, that Hospital workers appealed to Provençal craftsmen.



In the low part, side by side, two roses of 5 petals which always call back, according to this author, the roses of the “faith of Jerusalem”.

The fact that the blazon is padlocked could be translated as “the perpetual self-abnegation of the monks knights who would have worked in the construction of this Church”.

The capital of the South pillar opposite is occupied by a monster with clawed feet, surmounted by a snake. Historians cannot agree whether this represents the dragon of the Archangel Michael or the Devil and his snake, the tempter.

The capitals of the columns which support the arches are carved. The one on the North pillar represents a standing figure, legs akimbo, hands on hips. It supports a pair of wings and wears a long robe with a flared, cone shaped, pleated skirt. Above this figure can be seen two animals with very long bodies. Some historians, including J Forner and M Th Beteille, see an angel, surmounted by a donkey and a bull, while others, J Baltmigere, for example, suggest the Archangel Michael.

The choir is semicircular with a diameter of four meters. It has semi-spherical vaulted roof constructed of small stones. This is known as a half cupola. The acoustics are amazing.

The capitals of the columns on the right of the choir and which support the second arch are decorated with sculpted leaves.

The floor is of yellowish clay tiles.



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