

Site 1

Morges Gate (Main gate)

A high tower rose above this spot which, when the old town was enclosed in a protective wall, was one of the two main gates into it. Outside the gate a bridge spanned a moat – hence the name of the square, Place du Pont. Each evening the gate was locked to ensure the safety of the inhabitants during the night. The tower was demolished in 1792. If you look at the stone pillar up against the wall you will see all that remains of the gate – two metal hinges on which the old heavy gate pivoted.

Site 2

L.-L. Rochat building

It was in this house that the pastor Louis-Lucien Rochat lived. During his ministry, he had to deal with the ravages and social dramas associated with alcohol abuse. As a result, in 1877 he founded the Croix-Bleue (Blue Cross) and dedicated the rest of his life to looking after sufferers from alcohol dependence. The square in front of the building was baptized “Place L.-L. Rochat” on the centenary of the Croix-Bleue in 1977.

Site 3

Ruelle Punaise

This narrow lane which was once completely enclosed within the back walls of houses has been used for many purposes - including that of an open sewer! Every morning, the inhabitants would empty their chamber pots and similar receptacles into it. It was only during rainy periods when the rainwater was collected on the roofs that the sewer was flushed through. The inevitable result was that all sorts of illnesses such as leprosy, plague and cholera repeatedly ravaged the population. In addition, rats, cockroaches and various kinds of bug (*punaises* in French) inhabited the place. Hence the name of the lane!

Site 4

Cerf building

This building dates from the end of the 17th century and at that time housed the Town Hall, some living quarters and an inn called the “Lion d’Or” (Golden Lion). Around 1850 it was renamed “Le Cerf” (The Stag) and a hipped roof and open arcades at street level were added. If you look at the façade facing the church you will see a fine door with attractive masonry work dating from 1666 and eight mullioned double windows with cornices and lower projecting mouldings. Today the ground floor houses a restaurant of international repute.

Site 5

Town Hall

On his return from India in 1821, a certain Jean-Baptiste Délessert bequeathed 500 pounds sterling to the town “for the construction of a school or hospital”. Building began in 1826 but

progress was abysmally slow. A conflict between the architect and the site workers poisoned relations and the workers went on strike. A new architect took over the project and work was finally completed in 1830. The building was initially used as a school, but as early as 1835 it was transformed into the Town Hall and Court House. Today it houses the town library and the assembly room for communal council meetings.

Site 6

Banneret building

Originally this was the seat of the local overlord (*Seigneur du fief*). The first building was constructed in the sixteenth century and then, in 1654, was enlarged by the addition of narrow north and south “wings” which are still visible today. At the same time, the three arcades were reinforced with sturdy buttresses using yellow stone from the Jura. Since 1970 this building, which had fallen into a state of advanced disrepair, has been completely restored and is now classed as an historical monument.

Site 7

Swiss Reformed Church of St-Peter and St-Paul

Archaeological excavations carried out between 1971 and 1973 revealed the remains of five churches built one on top of the other. The earliest building dates from the 8th century Carolingian period. This was enlarged, firstly in the year 1000 to include 3 apses, and yet again at the end of the 11th century. During the 13th century the church was almost entirely rebuilt on the old foundations with the chancel being extended towards the east. The church was partially destroyed by fire in 1398. The subsequent reconstruction, including the bell tower in the north-east corner, is the building we see today.

Site 8

Château

The original château buildings (house, barn, stables) were bought in 1693 by a certain J.-J. Délessert whose descendants constructed the existing complex between 1775 and 1792. The château was then described as “a large mansion with two sizeable living areas, servants’ quarters and all the outbuildings associated with such a grand country seat”. The original Mansard roof disappeared in 1855 when the building was increased in height, though the outbuildings have retained their original roofs. You can see some of the primitive elements of the building on the north façade, opposite the manse, including a stone cross-window and ogee mouldings. Some of the windows have been cemented up.

Site 9

Manse (Pastor's residence)

The original manse was completely destroyed by fire during the night of 3-4 November 1755. A request for funding to rebuild it was duly sent to “Their Excellencies of Berne” and the present building, constructed on the same foundations by the architect Gabriel Delagrange,

was completed in 1759. Rectangular in plan, the building's two stories are capped by a half-hipped roof with a panelled barrel-vault inside. The toothed cornerstones of the building form an attractive pattern. A large wall-enclosed garden adjoins the manse.

Site 10

Priory

This small priory was founded by Humbert 1st of Cossy at the end of the 11th century and was dependent on a Benedictine monastery in Lutry. When the Bernese arrived in 1536 they removed the monks and installed their representatives in the building. At that time Cossy was administratively responsible to the bailliage of Morges. The building was subsequently turned into the district prison and used as such until around 1790. After numerous modifications, the building assumed its present dimensions some forty years later. Today it houses apartments.

Site 11

Petit Collège

Reconstructed around 1550 by a certain Pierre Charrière, this building remained within his family until 1792 when it was converted into a hospital. In 1832 it became the property of the commune and was used as a school. When the north gate of the old town was demolished in 1835, the clock dating from 1785 and the small pinnacle turret which crowned the gate were saved and installed on a structure built specially for them on the roof of the school. The building is still referred to as the "Petit college" (Little School) although no pupils have walked its corridors for many years.

Site 12

La Placette covered fountain

This is the only remaining covered fountain of four which were once used in the old town. It is made of cement and was supplied by a contractor by the name of Colomb from Lausanne in 1879. It cost 12 centimes per litre of volume and replaced a smaller fountain which was sold to Louis Martin of Allens for 8 francs! Covered fountains were exclusively used for washing clothes and the commune received income from this, though it had to supply the washboards! Woe betide anyone who dared to clean vegetables in the fountain – the local bobby was never far away!!

Site 13

Café des Bains

From the middle of the 17th century this building, with its fine double ogee windows, was used among other things as a barn for the château. The building eventually became a café and in 1878 the then café manager Alexandre Charlet built a public baths facility where today's terrace and car park are situated. Hence the name Café des Bains. To operate the baths Charlet was given a special concession to take his water supply from the fountain higher up the street. The baths were demolished just after 1970.

Coat of arms

In antique times Cossonay must have been the property of a Gallo-Roman called Cossinus or Cossonus. At that period, property was named by combining an adjective derived from the name of the first owner with the Celtic suffix *acum* meaning “belonging to”. Cosssinacum or Cossonacum eventually became Cossonay. Its coat of arms consists of a shield divided vertically silver and blue (*Per pale Azure and Argent*). It is first mentioned in 1560 on the occasion of a public celebration when a large tent bore the said coat of arms.

BRIEF HISTORY

The origin of Cossonay is lost in the mists of time. The hill on which the town is built stands 130m above the valley of the Venoge River and was probably inhabited in Roman times. The first known document mentioning the town dates from 1096 when a certain Baron Ulric bequeathed all his property to the monastery in Romainmôtier. The family of the Barons of Cossonay, one of the most important in the Vaud region, disappeared in 1405 with the death of Dame Jeanne. Cossonay then passed to the House of Savoy. In 1536, when the Bernese conquered the canton of Vaud, Cossonay came under the administration of Morges before itself becoming administrative centre in 1803. Recently Morges once more took over the role of regional centre following a cantonal reorganization!

WELCOME TO COSSONAY

Using this brochure you can easily find the main places of interest in the old town of Cossonay. Either follow the itinerary suggested in the brochure or just wander about amongst the old buildings at your heart's content. Whatever you choose, we wish you an enjoyable visit!

Cossonay Municipality

GUIDED VISITS (Approx. 1 h 30)

Guided visits can be organized for groups, clubs, etc. by prior arrangement. For more information, please telephone the municipal office at 021 863 22 00 during working hours.