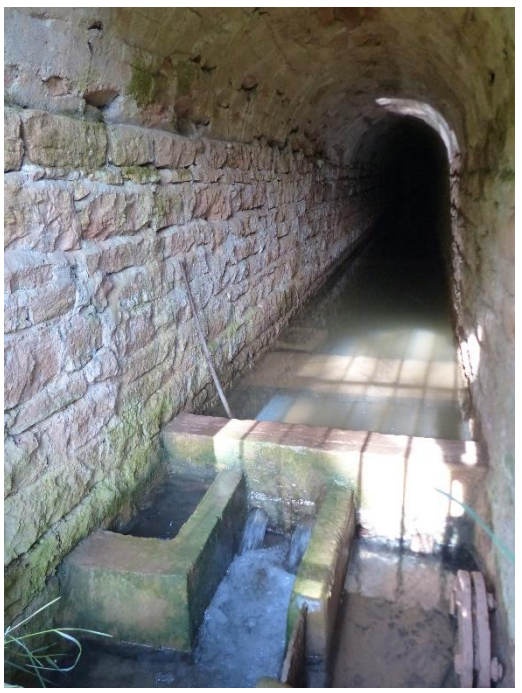
FONTJARDS : The trails

The water, the spring, the hamlets



Strolling through the Hills of Morancé

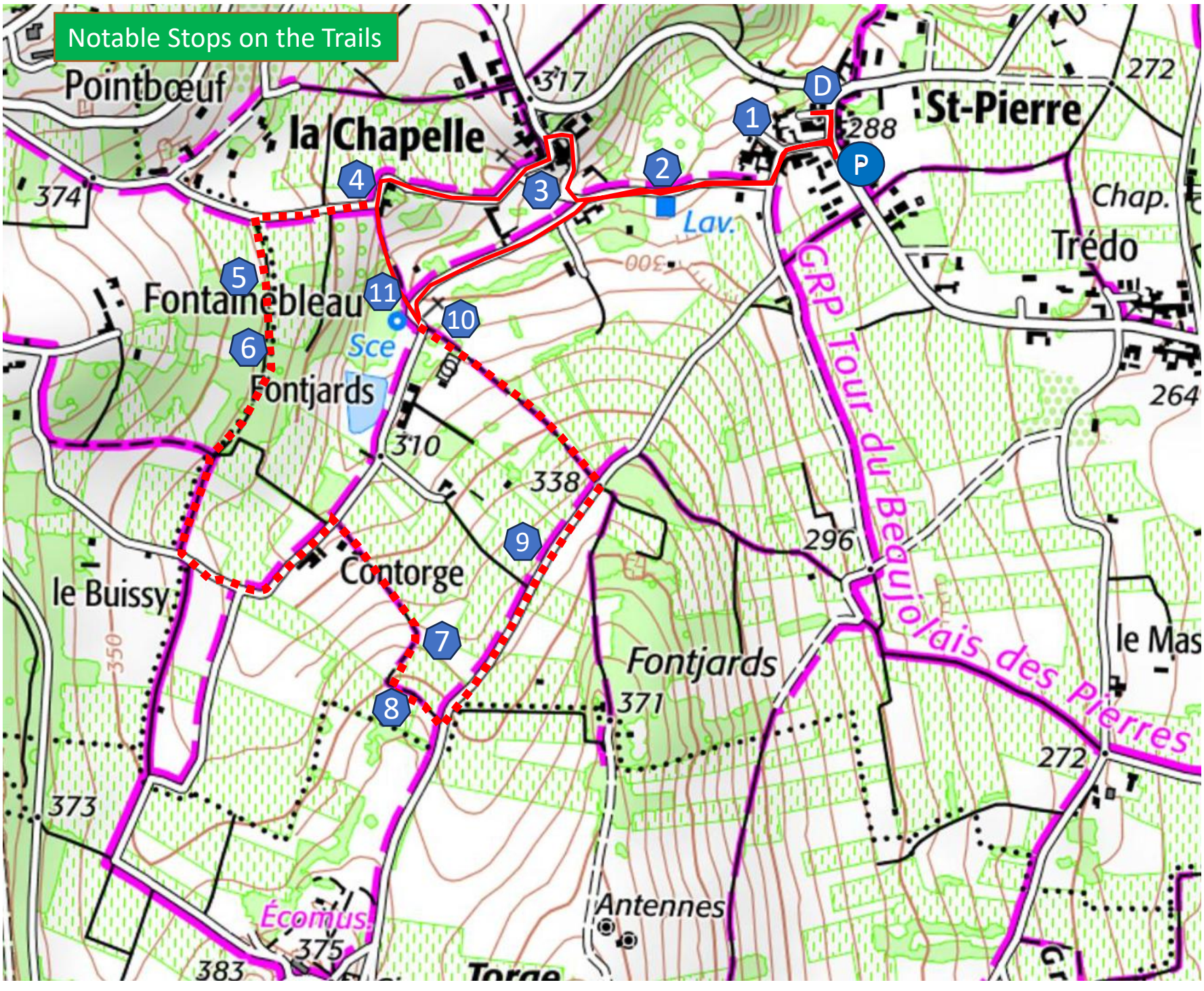
With these walking routes surrounding the Géosite of the Beaujolais Geopark known as *La Source de Fontjards*, we invite you to discover a whole heritage of traditional rural architecture typical of the *Beaujolais des Pierres Dorées*.

Traditional rural?
But what does that mean?
Well, it refers to small local heritage specific to a region or its people. Let's go and discover the hamlets, homes, stone walls, **chirats** (stack of stones), crosses, our washhouse, *cadoles* (dry stone shelters), fountains… all built by previous generations with the knowledge and wisdom that make our countryside a place worth preserving.
And of course, there is **La Source de Fontjards** (water spring) itself — its history, its uses, its geology and its importance — as well as the water cycle, a resource essential to people, nature, and biodiversity.

Located northwest of Lyon, **Morancé** belongs to the canton of Anse and the *Beaujolais des Pierres Dorées* region. This brochure is meant to share with you a small piece of the geological, human and natural history of our village. Its treasures were shaped by our ancestors, and it is our duty to protect them.

The walking trails begin in **Saint Pierre**. You can park your vehicle there and start a journey through heritage, history, and geology.

Morancé is rich in all these aspects — so let's travel a few centuries back and let yourself be carried away.



Short trip 2,2 kms

Longer Trip 4,3 kms

1 The Hamlet of Saint Pierre

The Hamlet of Saint-Pierre

The hamlet of Saint-Pierre gets its name from the Benedictine sisters linked to the Abbey of the Ladies of Saint-Pierre in Lyon. The hamlet was gifted to them in the year 864 by King Lothair.
The sisters also owned a priory attached to the church of Morancé, which remained there until the French Revolution.
At the *Pont de La Gottée*, above the *Fontjards Stream*, there used to be a washhouse built in 1862, supplied with water from the stream. There is still an old well near the *Pont de Saint-Pierre*.
In the early and mid-20th century, the hamlet was very lively. Saint-Pierre once had 2 cafés, 2 grocery stores, 1 bakery, 1 blacksmith, and even a *boules* court!
Today, the inn still remains.

White Stone and Golden Stone

The stones used for construction, up until the end of the 19th century, came from local quarries. *White stone* from Lucenay (Bathonian), also called oolitic limestone, and *Golden stone* (Aalenian), or crinoidal limestone, tell us that 175 million years ago — in the time of the dinosaurs — our region was about 50 meters under the sea!
In the commune, white stone is more common in the village and near the Azergues river, while golden stone gives color to the hamlets in the hills.

The Stone Slab:

This engraved slab is located above the entrance of one of the oldest houses in the hamlet of Saint-Pierre, at the beginning of the *Impasse de l'Auberge*.
Louis Bernoud, a winegrower in the hamlet, likely had this stone carved above his home to ask for divine protection after the hardships he endured — the loss of his first wife, followed by the death of his first daughter at just one year old — and to safeguard his new family.
He passed away in 1808 at the age of 77.
It is moving to rediscover the story of the man who had this beautiful stone engraved.
Nearby once stood the Romanesque chapel *Capella Sancti Petri*, known as *Old Saint Pierre*, built in the 13th century. It was sold as national property during the French Revolution and was completely destroyed in the early 20th century.

But let's continue our way and take the Fontjards path.

The Children of the Marsh

The people of Saint-Pierre remember well the filming in 1998 of a scene from the movie *The Children of the Marsh* in this unusual 19th-century bourgeois house in the hamlet of Saint-Pierre.
Unusual but remarkable, because it is very different from the other old houses in the hamlet. It has a central symmetry with three parts, each topped by a round window called an "œil de bœuf." The roof is made of slate, and white Lucenay stone is used everywhere, cut into rectangular blocks, sometimes carved, around each part, on the roof bands, and window frames. The walls are made of a mix of golden and white stones.
In front of the two entrances, there is a double staircase that serves as a terrace.

Statues in Saint Pierre:

The hamlet of Saint Pierre is named after the Benedictine nuns of Saint Pierre of Lyon, who owned a priory next to the church of Morancé until the Revolution.
There used to be three statues in three niches on two different houses. These statues were called the "Young Ladies of Saint Pierre."
Only one remains — the statue of the Virgin Mary, protected by an iron frame, on the front of a house at the start of the Fontjards path. It dates from the middle of the 18th century.
The other two, one of Saint Pierre and one of Saint Paul, placed in niches on a house on the Chazay road, disappeared at the beginning of the 20th century. The Saint Pierre statue stayed for a long time in a cupboard in that house but was unfortunately taken away by its former owner.
So, our hamlet probably lost forever the statue of its patron saint. No one knows what happened to the statue of Saint Paul.

Continuing along the Fontjards path, let's head toward the Marzé washhouse..

2 The public wash house of Marzé

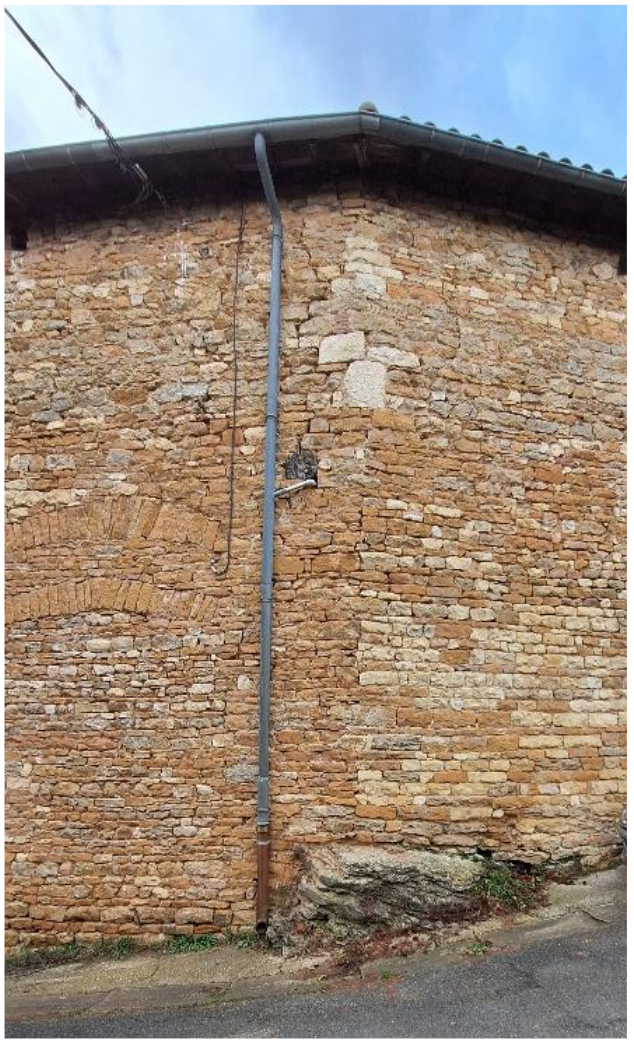
The wash house is fed by the Fontjards stream.
In the past, women arrived early in the morning with their carts to rinse their laundry soaked with soap. Indeed, the washhouse was not where they washed the clothes.
They came to rinse, wring the clothes with beaters, and dry them. It was a happy place – people sang, laughed, and talked...
This washhouse already appeared on the Fontjards spring map in 1784. A shelter was built by the Town Council on February 10, 1850, following complaints from the washerwomen. It was fully renovated in 2015.

There used to be two mills that belonged to the local lord. One was upstream of the Marzé wash house and the other downstream. These mills were destroyed during the Revolution. No trace of them remains.
The current Fontjards path was called “Morancé to Charnay” back then. It went from Saint-Pierre to Charnay, passing through the lower part of the hamlet La Chapelle and through La Limandière.
If you look carefully, you can also find the arrival of another small spring: the Lamure spring, above the Marzé wash house, on a Gallo-Roman site.
Let’s continue our journey and cross the charming hamlet of “La Chapelle.”

3 The Hamlet of La Chapelle and Its Mysteries

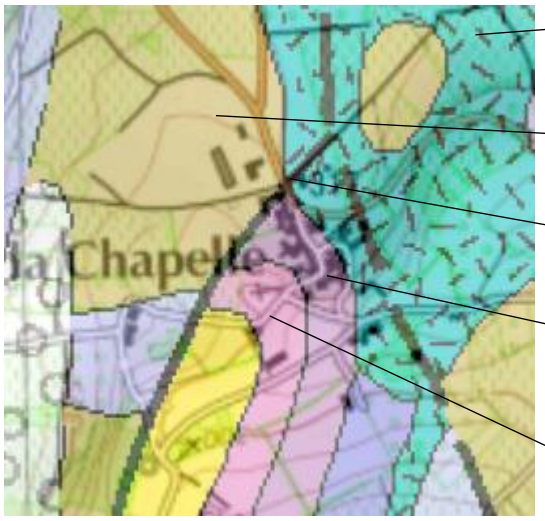
This is a very old place. It is named after an old chapel that disappeared a long time ago: the Chapel of Saint Mary.
It belonged to the Abbey of the Ladies of Saint-Pierre of Lyon, who owned a priory in Morancé.
Legend says that around the 16th or 17th century, there was a small convent for women here.
Some things seem to support this idea. Several houses in the hamlet were connected by underground tunnels. You can still see, it seems, the entrances that have been sealed. This suggests that these houses were once part of a single building built in several stages.
In one of the houses, there is a kind of gallery or walkway supported by stone columns that looks like a small cloister.

During some work, stones were found with engraved signs called “kabbalistic,” and there were traces of a statue of the Virgin Mary in the walls. Also, a small room of about 3 square meters was discovered. It was closed by a door, had three walls (one was half-circle shaped), and an opening that could have been used to pass a bowl.
People think it might have been a cell to lock up a penitent.
One part of a house looks like an old chapel (but this is not confirmed by history!). There are said to be traces of an underground tunnel going from La Chapelle to the Belmont Castle.



La Chapelle: A Hamlet Built on Rock... Near a Fault

In the hamlet, at the base of the mostly 1775 houses (about 250 years old!), you will see exposed rocks from the Sinemurian period (limestone with Gryphaea fossils) and even marls from the Hettangian period. These stones are about 195 million years old and the houses are built on them.
But just a few dozen meters to the north (toward the Charnay road), you can find rocks from the Bajocian period, about 170 million years old. As the geological map shows, a fault and 25 million years old split the village in two, near the Buis path!



A Fire in La Chapelle?

Look at this beautiful house in the center of the hamlet and notice the window frames.
Like many 18th-century houses, they are made from large blocks of golden stone (Aalenian). But the inner edges are dark red, almost brown, which is typical of exposure to intense heat! The iron oxides that give the golden stone its color tend to darken and brown when burned. Also, you can see signs of repair on the façade.
Could these be traces of an old fire?

The Cross of La Chapelle
This is a cross with a base, column, and its block made of golden stone. It is mentioned on the 1829 land registry and is located at the bottom of the La Chapelle path.
The block under the column has two dates: 1808 on the front and 1764 on the right side. This might mean the cross was first put up in 1764 and rebuilt in 1808 after the Revolution.
Above 1808 is a cross called a “potent cross” because it is made of four “Tau” shapes, the Greek letter T, shaped like a gallows. This is the shape of the cross that Christ carried, as shown by the Shroud of Turin. The four “Tau” represent the four cardinal directions.
On the edge of the table (the flat part) is this inscription:
Ô Crux Ave, Spes Unica
This can be translated as:
“Hail, O Cross, our Only Hope.”

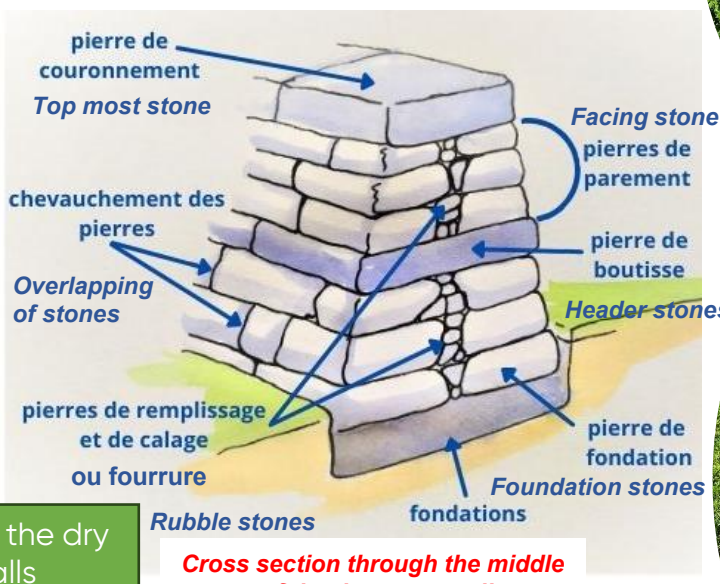
4 « La Limandière »

The name of this place might come from the Gaulish word **"limo"** meaning **"elm"**, and could mean an **elm grove**. The suffix **"ière"** would then mean land completely covered with elm trees.
Along the Limandière path, admire the house with a glossy Burgundian-style roof and a majestic gate, all made of golden stone, facing Charnay.
While walking on the Limandière path, you will find the remains of an old cross placed on an old wall at the corner of the path that goes down to the Fontjards spring. It is a large flat stone with a carved front, on which sits a square stone with a round hole in it. This is very likely the base (called the “table”) of a very old cross and the block (“dé”) that held the column: the Cross of Rameau, also called the “Old Cross,” mentioned in 1660 in the Michel land registry.

The small stone walls: « Murets «

During your walk, you will see small stone walls, some in better condition than others. These walls are important to protect because they are part of our heritage and provide homes for wildlife.
Usually, these walls were built with dry stones, using rocks taken from fields when clearing stones.
These walls had several jobs: marking property boundaries, protecting from the wind, supporting paths, and keeping animals in the pasture.
There are three types of tops for these walls: rounded stones, flat stones laid flat, and flat stones placed vertically or at an angle.

Crown of horizontal slabs.



Cross section through the middle of the dry stone wall

Crown of Slabs (Inclined or Vertical)

Rounded crown.

The stones of the dry stone walls

Lucenay stone rubble and blocks.

Dry stone wall
And setting with weak mortar

Flat stones and slabs in golden stone.

Stone walls and biodiversity The "wall-dwelling" ecosystem.

With its holes, gaps, thickness, thermal inertia, and different exposure on each side, the stone wall is a real refuge for biodiversity – even better than an insect hotel! Lizards, reptiles, solitary bees, beetles, insects and spiders, snails and small amphibians, mice, voles, shrews, hedgehogs, as well as grasses, rock-loving plants, lichens, ferns, brambles, ivy, and also small birds like sparrows, wagtails, and bullfinches – a whole ecosystem to protect!

The « Cadoles » (dry stone shelters):

The word *cadole* comes from an old Greek word meaning “cabin on a boat” and from the Lyon dialect. Cadoles are small stone huts built in the middle of vineyards. They were used as shelters by winegrowers and day workers. They offered warmth in winter, cool air in summer, and protection from bad weather. They were also used to store tools. Some had small comforts like a bench, a niche, or a door with a lock. Cadoles were made with the best flat stones found when clearing the land before planting vines.
Most of them were built in the 19th century, and construction continued until around 1920. Cadoles are fragile and must be maintained to preserve them.

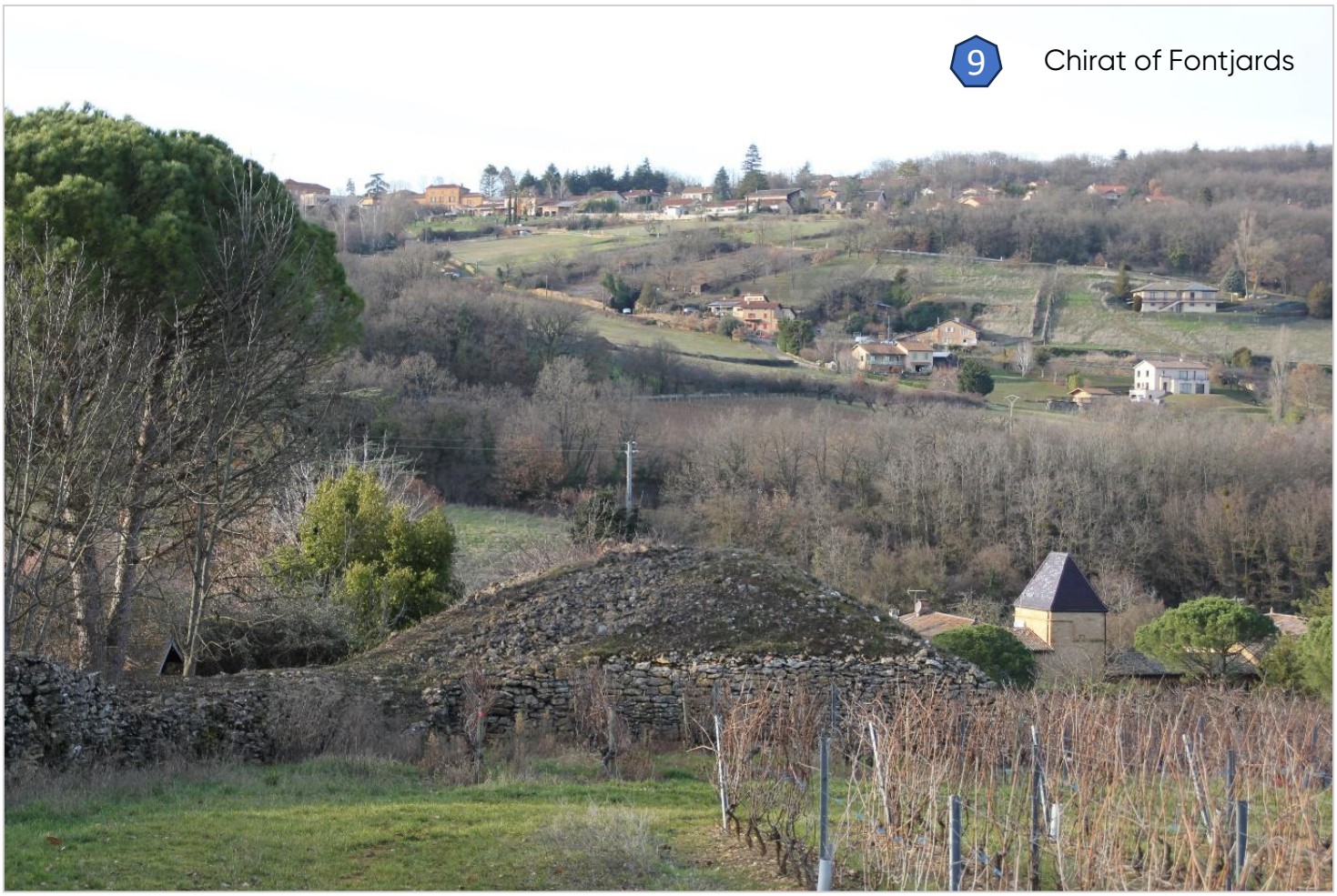
5 Cadole of Fontainebleau (in the village of Charnay)

7 Cadole of Contorge

The « Chirats »:

6 Chirat of Fontainebleau (in the village of Charnay)

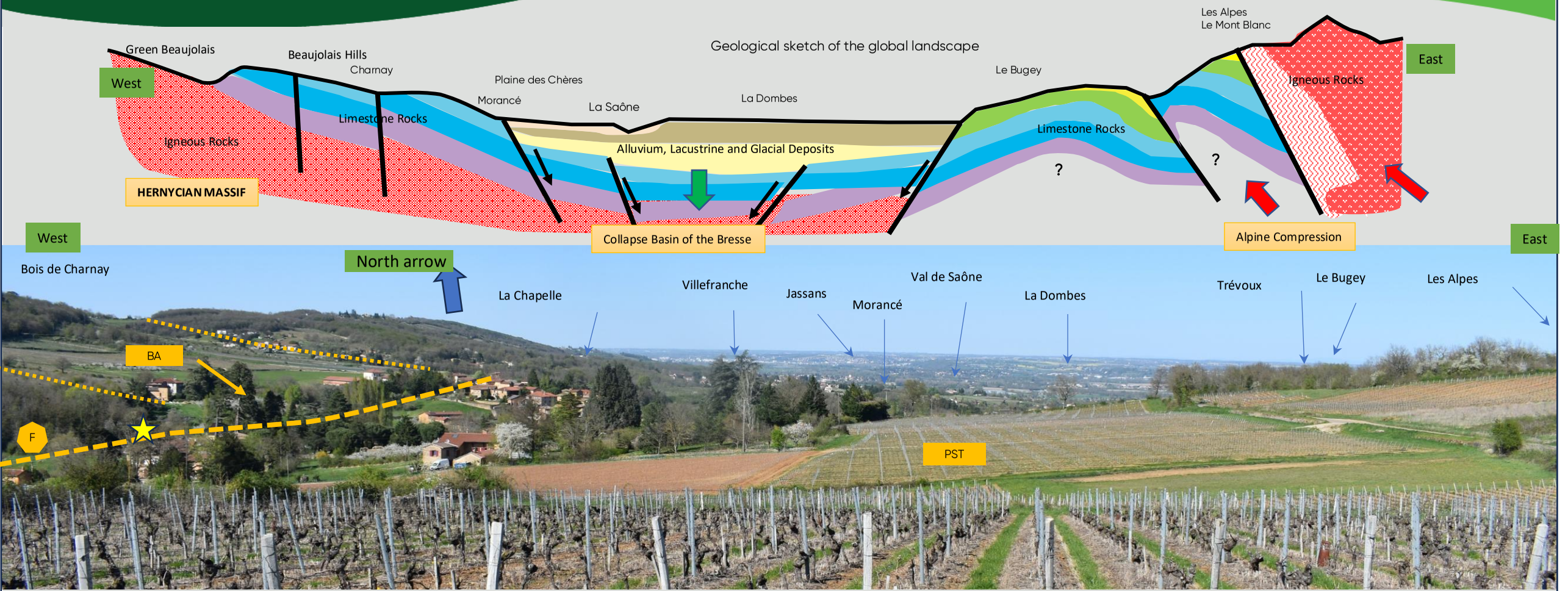
Stone Piles in the Vineyards of Beaujolais
Sometimes, Chirats mean large piles of stacked stones, often found in vineyard plots in the Beaujolais region. Many can be seen in the village of Morancé. The stones come from the vineyard itself. Over the years, the winegrower collected and piled them up during the clearing of the land (called “minage”) to prepare it for planting and to make vineyard work easier.
It is said that in the early 19th century, former mercenaries from the Napoleonic wars worked clearing the vineyards. Using the biggest stones, they are believed to have built the “Swiss Quarter” in the center of Morancé.



FONTJARDS :

The water, the spring, the hamlets

Landscape interpretation



Faults

F Main fault (SW–NE direction)

The Spring

General dip of geological layers (toward the East–Southeast)

BA Middle Jurassic (~180 Ma) – Karstic limestones

PST Triassic and Lower Jurassic (~250 Ma) – Marls and impermeable limestones

La faille principale met en contact les terrains karstiques calcaires et faillés du Jurassique moyen avec des terrains plus anciens et imperméables conduisant à l'émergence de l'eau au niveau de la source de Fontjards

The main fault connects the fractured limestone karst rocks from the Middle Jurassic with older, impermeable layers. This contact causes water to emerge at the Fontjards Spring.

10 The Cross of Presles

The Cross of Presles

This very beautiful cross may date back to the 17th century. It is located near the Fontjards spring, in a small half-circle enclosure surrounded by a golden stone wall, in the curve at the bottom of the Fontjards path hill.

It was likely built by the well-known Presle family, who gave it their name and lived in Morancé for many years.

The cross is special because of two medallions placed where the two arms meet.

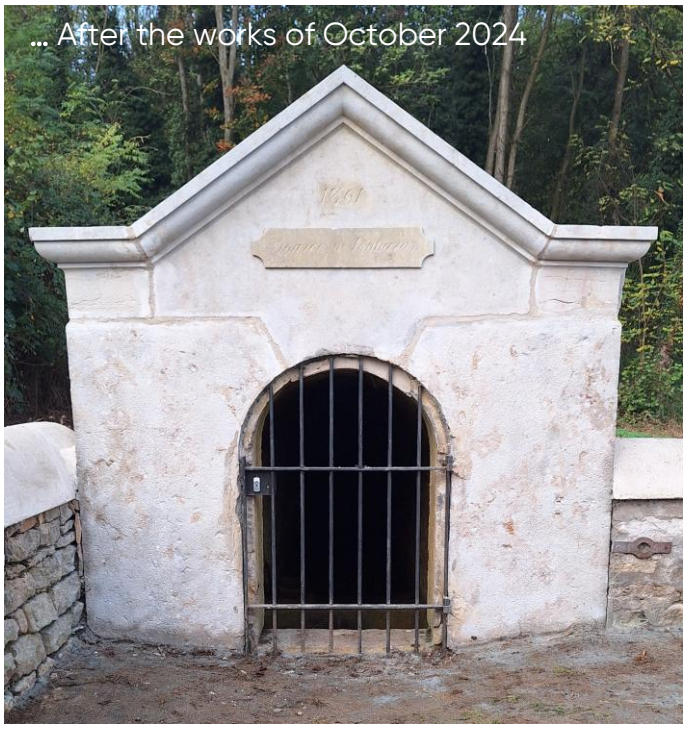
One, on the east-facing side, shows the rising sun. It symbolizes the coming of Christ, the savior of the world.

The other, on the west-facing side, shows a disk with three engraved concentric arcs, each one longer than the last. This is a symbol of the moon at different stages of its cycle. The moon appears as the sun sets. It represents life, death, and rebirth. It also takes over from the sun to light up the earth during the night.

11 Source of Fontjards

For over a thousand years, Morancé has been fortunate to have an abundant water source.
This spring provided drinking water to the village until 1946. It also powered local mills and played an important role in community life — supplying water to wash houses, irrigating meadows and crops, and symbolizing the shared use of a vital resource.

The nearby villages of Saint-Jean des Vignes and Charnay got their water from this spring until the early 20th century.
In the 18th century, the spring belonged to the lord Chaponnay, who also owned the Château de Beaulieu. In 1839, a system was set up with the village to share the water usage rights. In 1861, the spring's intake, tunnel, and stone front were built by the MARTAUD company on the town's order.
The spring's average flow is 10 liters per second, or 36 cubic meters per hour. (A device installed by the LAFARGE quarry helps monitor the flow changes throughout the seasons.)
The 22-meter-long intake tunnel, made mainly of golden Aalénien stone, lets limestone sediment settle out of the water. Inside, behind the front wall built in 1861 from Sinemurian limestone with fossil shells, a smart system divided the water flow:
2/5 for drinking water, sent through cast-iron pipes to two 150 m^3 reservoirs supplying 14 hand-pump fountains,
2/5 to the Fontjards stream, with two mills, irrigation channels, and wash houses,
and 1/5 to the Château de Beaulieu.
On your walk, you will cross over the old cast-iron pipes several times. These still supply water to the Beaulieu ponds and the old fountains.



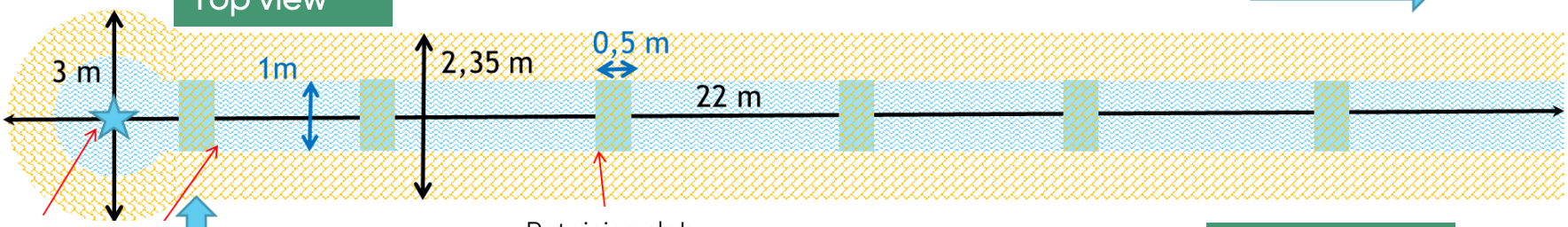
THE FONTJARDS SPRING

The Fontjards spring has always supplied drinking water to the people of Morancé and nearby villages, as well as water for irrigation and livestock. Until the French Revolution, it powered two mills owned by the lord of Beaulieu. Until the mid-20th century, it supplied water to the village's eight wash houses and fourteen fountains.

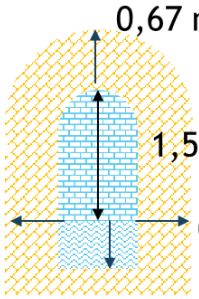
Spring Water Capture Diagram – Fontjards Sources

East 100°

Top view



Cross-section



Height above water

Wall thickness

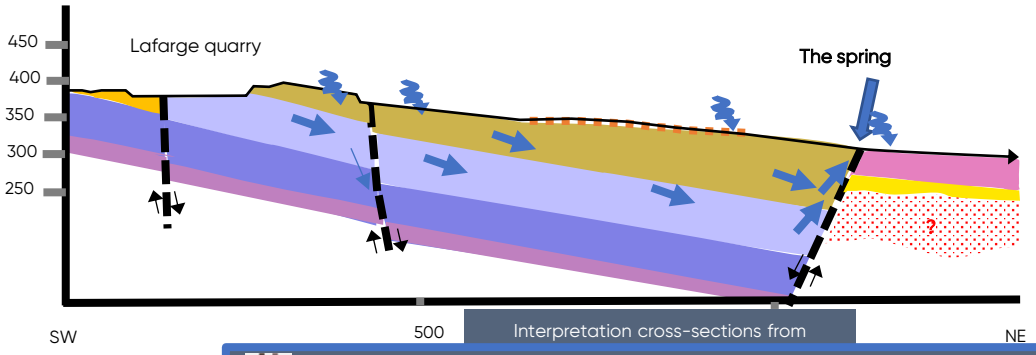
0,6 m Water level the 15/12/2020

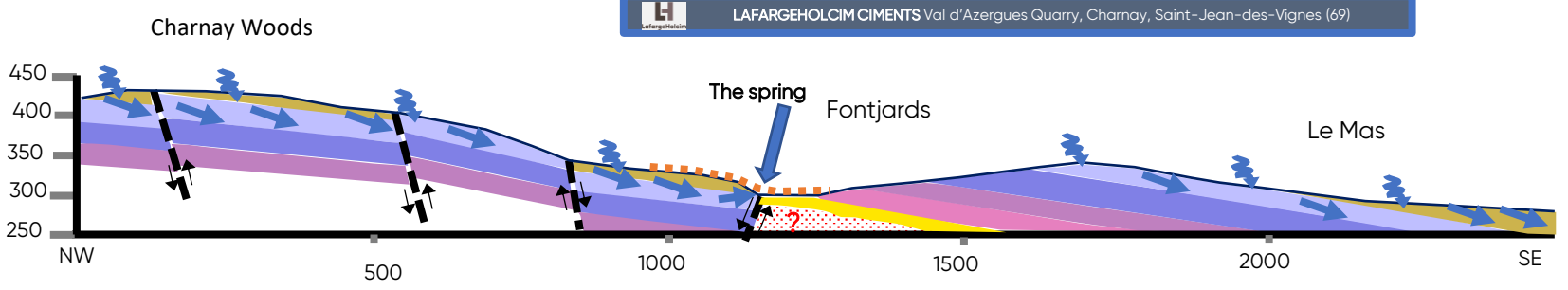
Distribution system / Spring inlet

Dating from 1861 and built by the mason MARTAUD, the current stone structure of the spring is made entirely of golden stone. It allows the collection of the spring water, controls the flow, and lets the water settle before being divided for three main uses: the Fontjards stream, supplying the ponds of the Château de Beaulieu, and until the mid-20th century, providing drinking water to the village fountains.

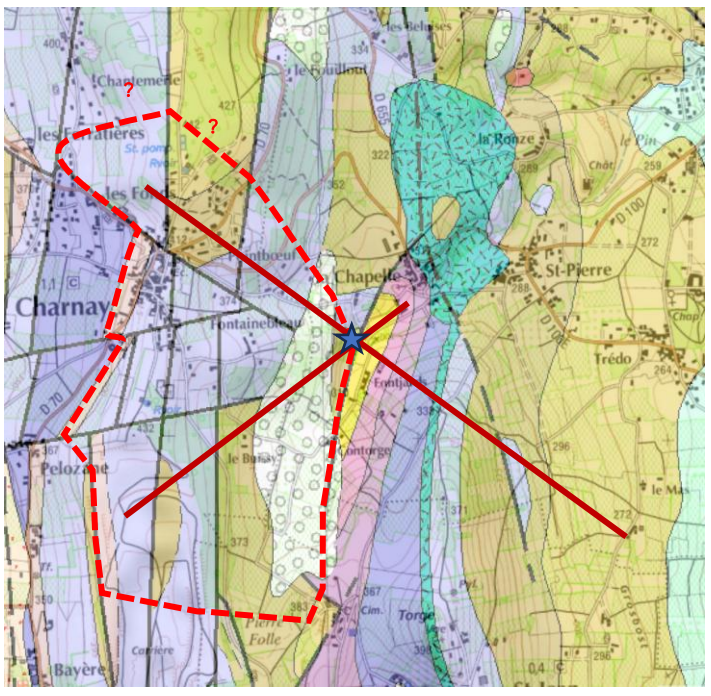
The source of FONTJARDS
A karst spring

Geological interpretation cross-sections





Geological map



LEGEND

Hydrogeological interpretation — Rainwater infiltration — Direction of water flow — Faults

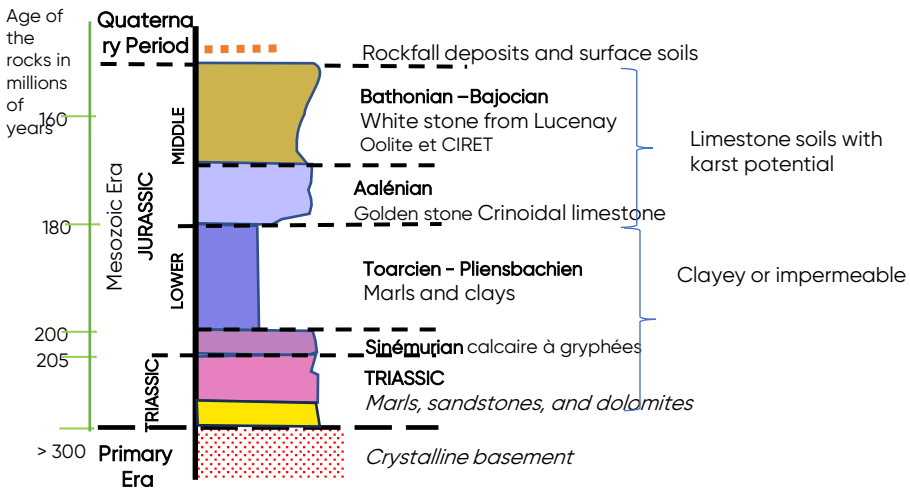
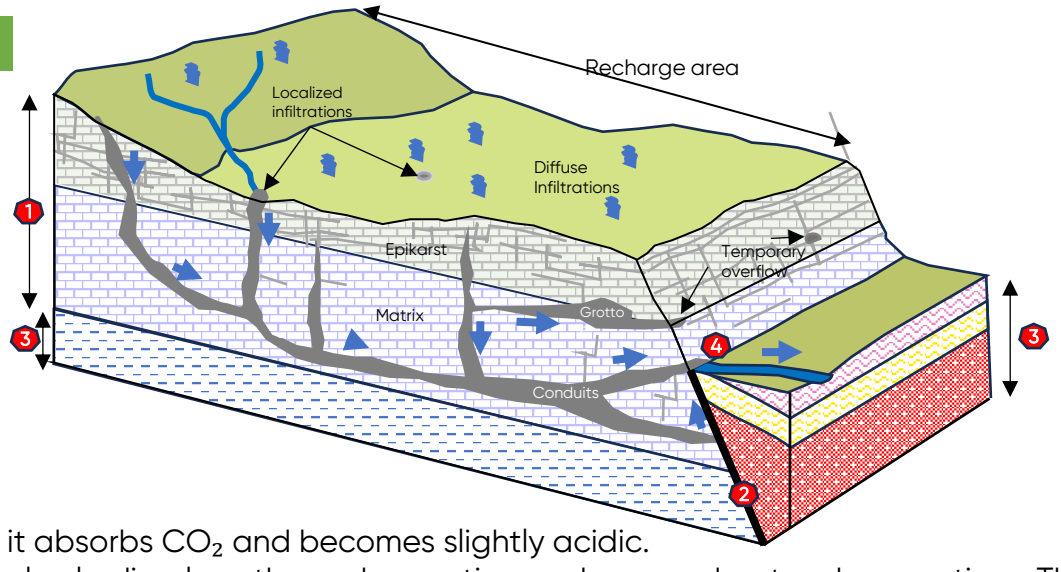


Diagram of karst functioning

1. Limestone terrains with karst potential Bajocian-Bathonian-Aalénian
2. Contact fault
3. Clayey or impermeable terrains Pliensbachian-Sinémurian-Triassic
4. The spring



KARSTS:

When rainwater comes into contact with air, it absorbs CO_2 and becomes slightly acidic.

As it seeps into limestone, this acidic water slowly dissolves the rock, creating underground networks over time. These networks allow water to flow and form tunnels, caves, and channels, this is called a *karst system*.

When this underground system reaches a fault line or impermeable layers (like marl or hard sandstone), the water comes back to the surface as a spring, called a *karst spring.*

These springs are very sensitive to rainfall – and to pollution

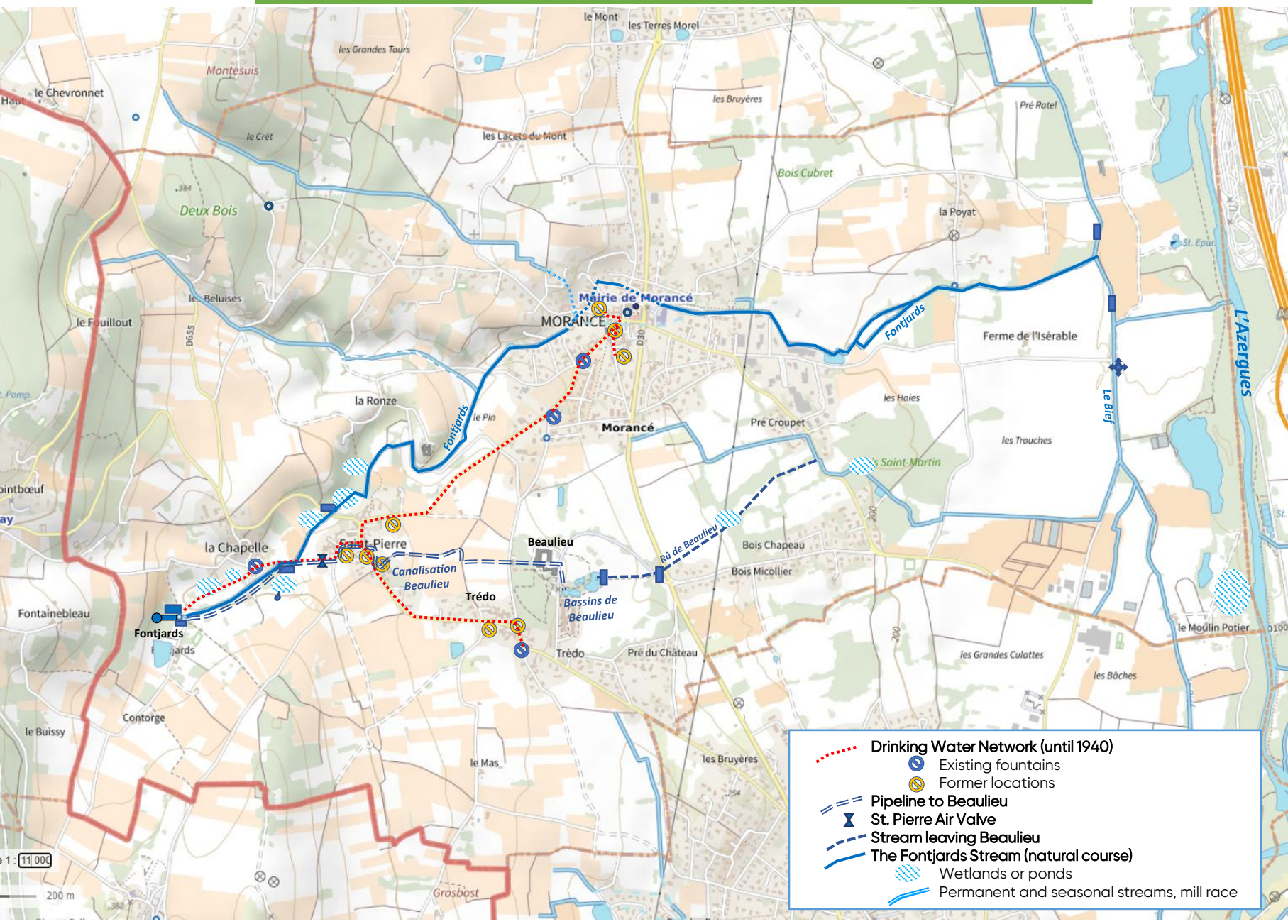
The Karst Area :

Here the limestone hills of Charnay have been hollowed out by water, forming a karst network.

This network emerges at the Fontjards fault, where it meets impermeable ground.

After heavy rain, the water from the Fontjards spring turns orange-red – just like the local golden stone.

Fontjards Spring
The Three Uses of Water



The St. Pierre Air Valve on the Beaulieu Pipeline

A Bayard Fountain

Beaulieu Ponds

Confluence of Fontjards Stream and Le Bief *(Millrace)*

Fontjards Wetland Area