

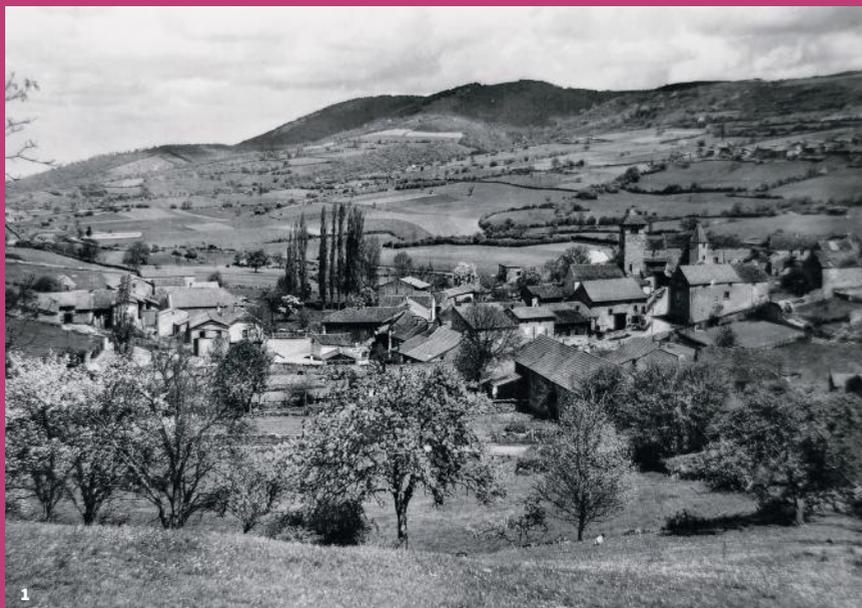
# ITINERARY

# BLANOT

## PAYS D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE ENTRE CLUNY ET TOURNUS



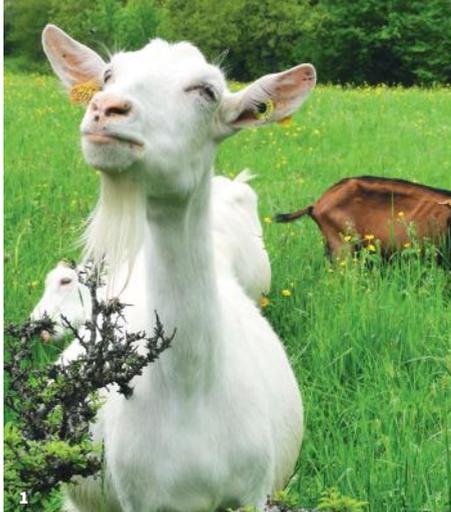
VILLES  
& PAYS  
D'ART &  
D'HISTOIRE



**1. Old postcard of the Blanot countryside and Mont Saint-Romain** © coll. M. Pichard

**2. View of the Blanot countryside today** © PAH

# THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE



Between the Saône and Grosne valleys, the Mâconnais stretch out in narrow reliefs orientated roughly north-south. Their bedrock is made up of two types of rock. The oldest dates from the primary era and form a heavily wooded ridge peaking at 579 meters at Mont Saint-Romain. Jurassic sedimentary beds form plateaus that slope regularly towards the east. North of Cluny, this arrangement is interrupted by the Blanot valley. Its limestone flanks, sensitive to karst erosion, are marked here and there with large cavities such as the Cailleverdière caves.

## LANDSCAPES AND ACTIVITIES

In Blanot, stone is omnipresent. The village and the hamlets of Vivier, Fognières and Nouville lie on limestone subsoil. To the east, from Mont Épinet to Mont Saint-Romain, the ridges dominating the valley are made of granite and sandstone favourable to the development of substantial forest cover: the Goulaine forest and the Grison national forest. To the west, the ridges made of limestone are covered, in the Bois de la Roche, with a beech wood which extends onto the underlying slopes. At the bottom of the valley, a partitioned "bocage" landscape is made up of hedges, meadows, fodder and cereal crops.

This land is home to cattle rearing and, more traditionally, goat rearing renowned for the production of goat's cheese. Halfway up the slope, vineyards, planted with Chardonnay and Pinot-Noir grapes, benefit from a terroir well-suited to the production of "Mâcon-Villages" and "Burgundy" appellation wines.

## ANCIENT PLOTS

Dotting the Blanot valley, many springs (including that of the Grison à Vivier) have favoured the settlement of humans since Antiquity. The plots of land, outlined by dry stone walls, reflect this evolution, which increased in medieval times. Descending from the tracks along the ridges, old paths converge towards the village and connect the different hamlets whose limestone architecture is typical of a rural habitat. The farm buildings are interwoven in a group of winegrowers' houses with a "Mâconnaise gallery".

# THROUGH THE CENTURIES



## THE FIRST OCCUPATIONS OF THE SITE

The human presence is attested, since prehistoric times, on the territory of the current commune of Blanot by frequent discoveries of cut flint, more rarely of polished axes... A significant necropolis, attributed to the Bronze Age (between 2200 and 800 B.C.), borders the crest of the Bois de la Roche where more than 260 *tumuli* (graves covered with earth and stone), have been inventoried.

The summit of Mont Saint-Romain, surrounded by the remains of an ancient rampart, is said to have hosted an *oppidum* (fortified place) during the Iron Age (between 800 and 52 B.C.). The discovery of a monolithic sandstone sarcophagus seems to attest to the presence of a Celtic place of worship transformed into a sanctuary in Roman times. On the north-west side, at the place called "La Tour du Châtelet", the base of two concentric walls and the discovery of some Gallo-Roman coins bear witness to an old place of worship, probably reused in medieval times. From the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the site was christianized, and dedicated to Saint Romain.

Other evidence of Gallo-Roman occupation, including silver coins, debris of tiles, marble,

fragments of pottery, as well as two bronze statuettes, currently stored at the Saint-Germain-en-Laye museum, attest to the establishment of Gallo-Roman villas near the village and the hamlet of Fognières.

## BLANOT IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

A Merovingian necropolis **1** was discovered near the church, during work in 1958. Dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, this set of burials includes around thirty slightly trapezoidal coffins, made of rough limestone slabs. Orientated east-west, they contained bones, jewelry, weapons and various everyday objects accompanying the deceased.

The continuous development of human activity reinforced the geographical interest of Blanot during the Early Middle Ages. In 927, the Lord of Brancion, Liébaud and his wife Dode, donated the Saint-Martin church in Blanot, the Vivier and Fognières farms and the Mont Saint-Romain church to Odon, abbot of Cluny from 926 to 942. This gift was confirmed in 930 by the king of the Franks, Raoul I (who reigned from 923 to 936).

**1** These numbers refer to the discovery trail shown on the map on page 17 of this leaflet.



### AT THE TIME OF THE PREVÔTÉ

At the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the monks of Cluny organized a network linking their different properties and estates around the abbey. Blanot becomes a privileged place there. The Mont Saint-Romain site offers a strategic view of the land of the seigneurie of Brancion, which was sometimes belligerent, and allowed logging. Its heights, conducive to calm and seclusion, were even chosen by Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny from 1122 to 1156, as a place of retreat.

This period coincides with a series of major works to strengthen the organization of the community. A parish church was built in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, succeeding an older construction. Blanot became a "prevôté" (provost court) of the Cluniac abbey estate. Even though few documents survive to explain its role in the functioning of the abbey, it is certain that Blanot's agricultural and wine productions were sent to the castle of Lourdon in Lournand, another dependency of the monastery, located a few kilometers north of Cluny. Via ridges that made it easier to cross from one valley to another, Blanot was a link between the Cluniac wine-growing area of Cruzille and the abbey.

The prevôté of Blanot was administered by a provost, a lay person generally from the lower nobility. He exercised justice over the territory, managed the agricultural estate for the monks of Cluny and took care of supplying the abbey. He lived in the building now known as the "priors", next to the church and built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Although Blanot tradition calls it a "priors", (a building for monks with a place of prayer), it is only a simple manor, which in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries was partially fortified in order to protect it from various threats.

The prevôté of Blanot ended with the Revolution. The village, the church and the buildings of the "priors" do not appear to have suffered any damage. The "priors", divided into lots, as well as the lands and buildings of Mont Saint-Romain, were sold as "national property".

**1. A "Saanen" goat, bred for milk production**  
© T. Chevalier

**2. Old postcard of the Merovingian tombs**  
© coll. M. Pichard

**3. View of the church tower and the village**  
© B. Peithmann

**4. Interior of the church, view of the choir**  
© R. Hoberg



### DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the commune carried out development projects to improve the daily life of the residents (called "Blanotins"). The old network of tracks gradually gave way to more passable roads. New spaces were opened around the axis of circulation crossing right through the commune, shaping public life. In Blanot itself, along the main road (the current D 146), a square was opened. As early as 1829, the town built a covered washhouse, an imposing fountain and a stone watering trough, all supplied by a nearby spring, compensating for the insufficient water supply. The architect, in charge of the plans and specifications, also managed the work on a building at the corner of the square acquired by the town in 1827. Initially a rectory, in 1908 it housed the post office. Opposite, a public weigh-bridge was also installed for the weighing of livestock and agricultural products.

At the north end of the village, the town hall and school 5 opened up a new space. Previously, the school was held in a dilapidated and poorly equipped town house. In 1884, the

municipality decided on the construction of a building, bringing together the town hall and a mixed school house, designed by the architect and senator François-Etienne Dulac (1834-1901). Known for his eclectic style (the use of local stone and symmetry of the facade), he created 35 schoolhouses and other public buildings in Saône-et-Loire. The edifice comprises a single elongated building, pierced by a large number of windows, with, in the center, the town hall framed by the classrooms and, upstairs, apartments for school teachers.

In 1922, the old cemetery surrounding the church, which had become cramped, was moved out of the village to a plot bordering the D 146.

Throughout the commune, the sources from different springs supply water to four washhouses, fountains and pumps. As for the distribution of drinking water, it only developed gradually, from the 1940s.

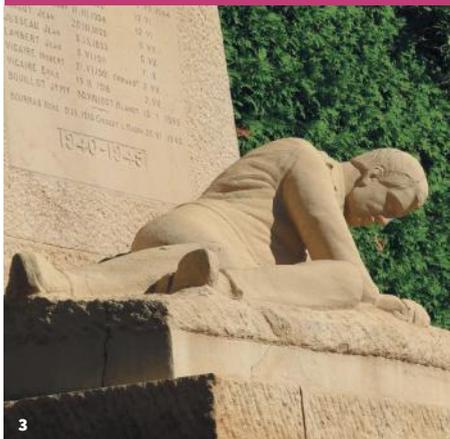


## BLANOT AT WAR

Blanot lost 21 men during the First World War, out of a population of 354 in 1911. When in 1939, the threat of a new conflict loomed, the municipality displayed its pacifism. The mayor, supported by his advisers, sent a letter to the President of the Council Edouard Daladier (mandate from 1938 to 1940) to demand peace. During the 1940 exodus, Blanot, located in the free zone, welcomed several refugee families.

In March 1943, the "maquis" (French Resistance) moved into a farm at the foot of Mont Épinet, at a place called "En Crue". The unoccupied buildings served as a refuge for refusnik workers from the Compulsory Labor Service who had gone underground. The maquis took in up to 90 men. For their part, the inhabitants of the village worked to supply it and also ensure the transport of equipment, the reception of parachuted supplies and the hiding of weapons.

The Maquis de Crue participated in sabotage and ambushes. In 1944, it provided armed support in the battle of Azé and for the liberation of Cluny and Mâcon.



## THE HERITAGE OF MEMORIALS

The village of Blanot is framed by two commemorative monuments. Next to the town-hall/school, the war memorial of 1914-1918 was built in 1924. In the shape of an obelisk, it is carved in limestone from the "monks' quarry" in Cluny.

On November 17, 1946, a monument **2** was inaugurated to honour the memory of the men who died for acts of resistance between 1940 and 1945.

Located in the heart of the village, it is the work of the Tournusian sculptor Désiré Mathivet (1887-1966), known for his rounded designs with massive and simple shapes. In the region, the artist notably produced the 1914-1918 war memorial in Tournus and the 1939-1945 commemorative monument in Cormatin. The ensemble, installed in a green enclosure, presents a stone stele. In the foreground, the statue of a reclining man represents a Resistance fighter, gun in hand. The enclosing wall is decorated with two crosses of Lorraine combined with the "V" of victory, symbols of the Resistance.



**1. Old postcard of the fountain and the washhouse, in Blanot itself** © coll. M. Pichard

**2. Main facade of the town-hall/school**  
© R. Hoberg

**3. Side view of the commemorative monument** © PAH

**4. Harvests in the vineyards at Nouville**  
© M. Labaune

**5. Pitcher signed "Blanot" by Mireille and Noël Dailier** © M. Dailier

## BLANOT: A WELL-PRESERVED VILLAGE

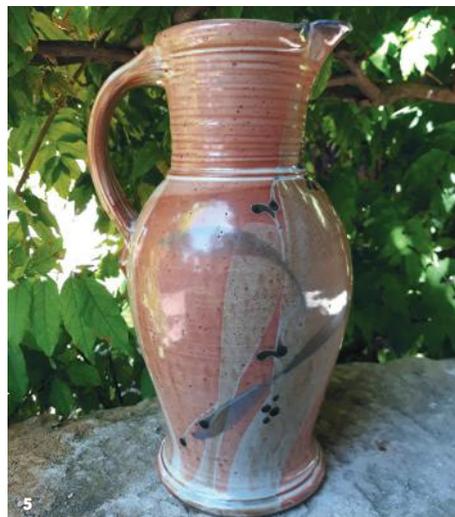
The rural exodus, which began in the 1830s (with 717 inhabitants in 1831), caused the population of Blanot to drop to around a hundred (139 inhabitants in 1975). Gradually, the population is recovering with 180 inhabitants in 2018.

The village now has new prospects, thanks to the development of green tourism. Hiking, horseback riding, cycling, mountain biking, paragliding, not to mention the famous caves and the remarkable panorama of Mont Saint-Romain, make Blanot a place of leisure and unmissable passage from the Mâconnais to southern Burgundy. Visitors can also extend their visit by staying a few nights in the village's guest rooms and lodges, and dining in the restaurants.

Blanot is an authentic living environment where traditional agricultural activities are maintained. The diversity of the farms endures: crops, vines and pastures. Lovers of local products come to appreciate the goat's cheese, beef, and wine produced by a few wineries under the "Mâcon-villages" appellation.

Blanot also welcomes artisans and crafts: instrument-, cutlery-, and cabinet-making, jewelry and textile creation, decorative painting, ceramics, artistic ironwork, wood sculpture, carpentry, plasterwork and painting...

Restored old buildings dominate, with little new construction. At the end of the 1990s, the village and its inhabitants began to restore their endangered built heritage: the "priors", the church, the washhouses and some rural dwellings that can all be appreciated today.





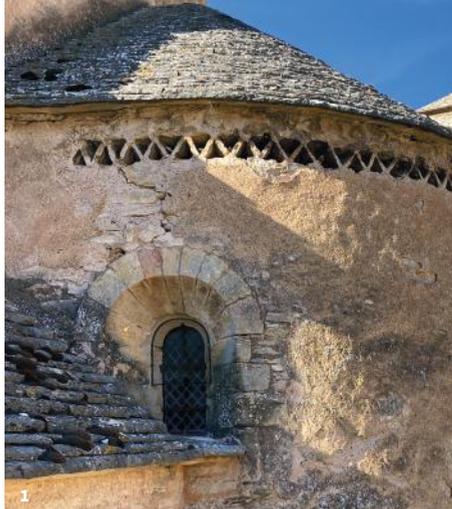
**6. Old postcard of the old village inn, "Auberge Jusseau"**

© coll. M. Pichard

**7. Baking in the bread oven for the villagers**

© M. Labaune

# FROM PLACE TO PLACE



## THE VILLAGE OF BLANOT

Located to the south of the valley, the Blanot village is spread around the ensemble formed by the church, the "priory" and an imposing 16<sup>th</sup> century residence.

The layout of the buildings depicted on the 17<sup>th</sup> century land plans, with the dwellings grouped along the lanes, is still preserved today. The typical buildings of Mâconnaise rural architecture, built in a single block, assemble the working parts on the ground floor, with the domestic accommodation upstairs, all equipped with a "Mâconnaise gallery" (a large stone balcony along the facade, accessed by a staircase and generally facing south).

In the center of the square is still preserved the old stone-tiled oven, completely restored in 1990. Today, it is used by the inhabitants of Blanot for baking bread and during village festivals. In the past, along the D 146, a building housed the village inn, "L'étape", formerly "Auberge Jusseau".

*Through the town, follow the bronze plaques on the ground to discover the trail of the bat!*

## 3 THE SAINT-MARTIN CHURCH

Listed as a historic monument in 1913 and 1929, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century church of Saint-Martin, built in limestone, is located on the hillside.

Its rectangular plan includes a single nave 25 meters long (shortened by 6 meters to the west following a collapse at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) terminated by a semicircular apse vaulted in a cul-de-four and decorated with a band of jagged stone.

The church is entirely covered in stone "laves" (limestone slabs used for the roofs), completely replaced in 2005, and topped with an imposing square-shaped bell tower, 22 meters high, decorated with false facings and a succession of small arches in relief. The pyramidal roof of the steeple in stone rests on a cornice of sculpted modillions.

The south facade was modified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A sacristy was added, an entrance door was created, and its bays, of Romanesque origin, were enlarged. The choir consists of two parts: one surmounted by a dome, supporting the bell tower and the other lit by two bays housing an 18<sup>th</sup> century high altar.



The rest of the furniture in the church consists of two wooden altars with statues of the Virgin and Saint Martin, a confessional and a pulpit for preaching. At the back of the church is a tombstone called the "Companion's Stone" on which the stonemason's tools are engraved.

A restoration in 1981 revealed the wooden framework of the roof of the nave.

#### **4 THE PRIORY**

Next to the church, the "priory" of Blanot dominates the village.

The oldest part is a 12<sup>th</sup> century square tower, a keep equipped with arrow slits. The central main body is built on 12<sup>th</sup> century foundations (visible in the cellars) probably equipped with "a bedroom and a study for the master" (D. Méhu). During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a round tower and high defensive walls, closing the courtyard, were built. Later in the Renaissance, a hexagonal staircase tower and mullioned windows were added and the keep was connected to the main building with a stone vault. The ensemble was listed as a historic monument in 1925.

From 1957 to 2018, major restoration work was carried out to restore the ensemble to its original appearance before it was divided into lots during the Revolution. Fragments of Gothic painting, graffiti in the attic and traces of a fire in the wooden structure were discovered.

### **THE HAMLETS**

#### **6 FOUIGNIÈRES**

To the north of the village, on the hillside, is Fougnières, which takes its name from "fenil" (a hay barn). Among the galleried houses, a washhouse and a fountain were built in 1839, supplied by a reservoir bringing water to a hamlet without a spring. The ensemble also includes a huge drinking trough. Around the square are the old oven and a curious house dating from before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which has been renovated several times, with a corbelled watchtower (a small cylindrical room hanging from the corner of the building).

#### **7 THE BLANOT CAVES**

At the foot of Mont Saint-Romain, on the edge of the Mangette valley, are caves first discovered in 1739 by Benoît Dumolin, a doctor in Cluny. Rediscovered in the 1940s, distinguished as a "listed natural site" in



1935, the Caillevèrdière cave is a "chasm cave", extended in length and very deep. Formed by the erosion of the limestone rock, the cavity descends for nearly 80 meters, with alternating small rooms and narrow corridors dotted with stalagmites and stalactites. Protected as a "Natura 2000 site", the caves are home to a large population of bats. The valley has rock shelters such as the "Fox Cave" in which, during excavations between 1951 and 1962, bison bones, cave bears and chipped flint shards were found.

The caves have been communal property since the 1950s and are open to visits and caving outings during the summer months.

### 8 MONT SAINT-ROMAIN

The highest point in the Mâconnais, at 579 meters above sea level, Mont Saint-Romain, a "listed natural site" since 1936, is located on the edge of the Grison national forest, on the main road. At its summit, an orientation table was installed in 1948, allowing you to appreciate, on both sides, the valleys of the Saône and Grosne as far as the Charolais mountains. On a clear day, Mont-Blanc can sometimes be seen.



From the Middle Ages to the Revolution, the site had a set of farm buildings and dwellings as well as a chapel. Mentioned in ancient writings, it accommodated 1 to 3 monks from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This site is also an ancient place of pilgrimage, linked to the worship of water. Gushing out on the northeast flank, the "source of Plaster" attracted for several centuries, from Antiquity to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pilgrims who came at night to slip coins into the masonry. Reputed to come out of the body of Saint Romain, the water was said to cure fevers and eye diseases.

### 9 NOUVILLE

Located on either side of the main road, the hamlet of Nouville ("new town") spreads along the Grison: on one side, the gallery houses built on the side of the slope, separated by long dry stone walls and on the other, 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century mansions, which belonged to a family of local notables, owners of former agricultural and wine estates. Nouville is still a well-suited place for the cultivation of vines, as evidenced by the presence of the last winegrowers in the commune.

At the bottom of the valley, a wash house and a covered fountain, built in 1862, are supplied



5

by the overflow of a mill reach. Graffiti -"the temple of the talkative"- inscribed on the interior wall of the wash house illustrates what was the era of large-scale laundry.

Probably of medieval origin, the Nouville mill was used to grind wheat and crush hemp. Called the "midi mill", it was the second mill on the run of the Grison and located between the Fradin mill or "morning mill" upstream and the Mornay mill or "evening mill" downstream. These two buildings have disappeared; only that of Nouville remains, transformed into a dwelling at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 10 VIVIER

Vivier takes its name from a pond hosting the fish reserve for the monks and the local population. It is in this hamlet that the source of the Grison, a tributary of the Grosne, is found, gushing out of the rock during heavy rains. This intermittent source provides a flow that is not conducive to the production of constant motive power throughout the year. Built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a hand-pump fountain and a wash house were partly fed by the stream. Located in the valley between the village and Nouville, Vivier also has many

limestone dwellings typical of the Mâconnais. Formerly planted with vines, the hamlet became, after the phylloxera crisis at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the preferred land for cattle raising. On the other hand, the lands located between Vivier and Blanot are dedicated to cereal and fodder crops.



6

**1. Decorative detail from the apse of St. Martin's Church** © R. Hoberg

**2. Interior view of the Blanot cave**  
© M. Bouchot, Club photo, M.J.C. Héritan, Mâcon

**3. "Ursus thibetanus cuvier" skull, Grottes d'Azé collections**  
© A. Argant

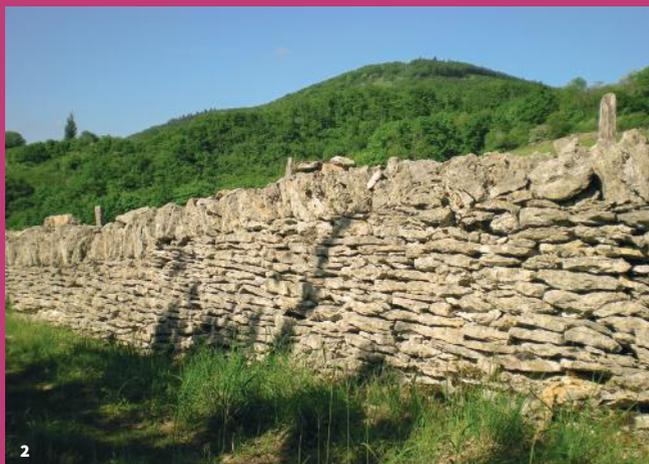
**4. Nouville washhouse and fountain**  
© M. Labaune

**5. View of the valley from Vivier** © P. Hantzpergue

**6. The beginning of the Grison** © R. Hoberg



1



2

## FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER

(*BLANOT DISCOVERY  
TRAIL*)

Duration : 3h - 11km

## BLANOT, THE VILLAGE

(THE BAT TRAIL)

- D** Departure-Parking
- 1** Merovingian tombs
- 2** Commemorative monument
- 3** Saint-Martin Church
- 4** "Priory"
- 5** Town-hall/school

## BLANOT, THE HAMLETS

- 6** Fognières
- 7** Caves of Blanot
- 8** Mont Saint-Romain
- 9** Nouville
- 10** Vivier

**1. View of fields and Mont Saint-Romain through a bat marker** © PAH

**2. A dry stone wall along a field** © P. Hantzpergue



« IN FACT, FROM THE ORIGIN OF THINGS DOWN TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA, INCLUSIVE, ARCHITECTURE IS THE GREAT BOOK OF HUMANITY, THE PRINCIPAL EXPRESSION OF MAN IN HIS DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT, EITHER AS A FORCE OR AS AN INTELLIGENCE. »

Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, 1831.

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The **architectural and heritage animation service**, led by the architecture and heritage facilitator, organizes several activities to allow the discovery of the riches of architectural and heritage sites by its inhabitants, young and old, and by its visitors with the help of professional tour guides.

### Information, reservations Pays d’Art et d’Histoire Entre Cluny et Tournus

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### In partnership with the municipality of Blanot

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