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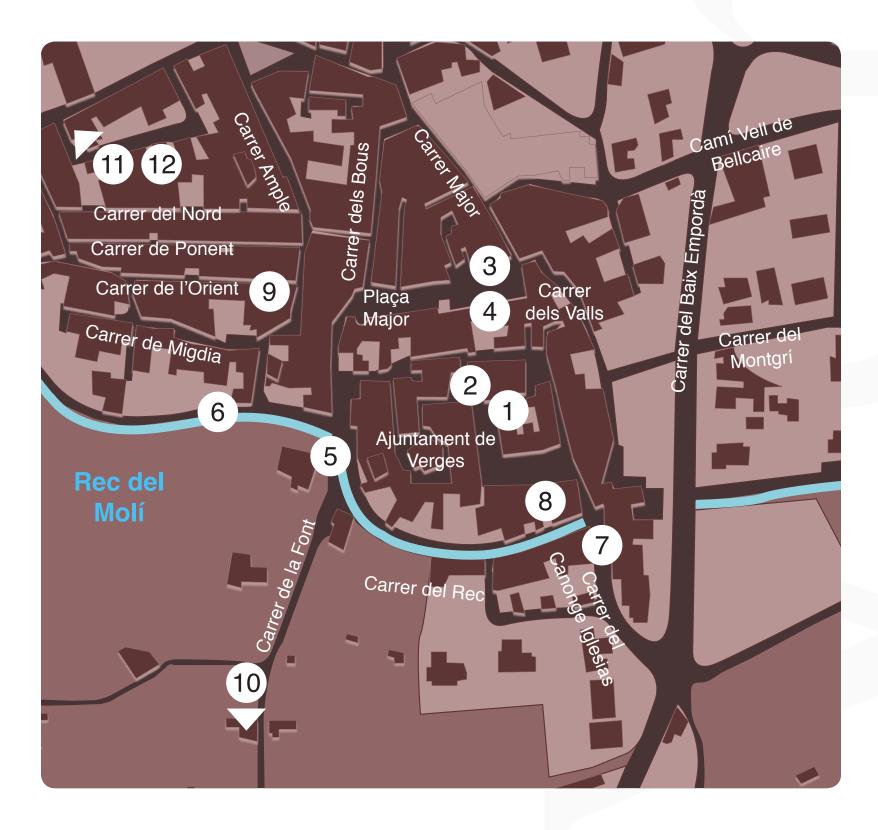
Verge's Council



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Aerial view of the possible perimeter of medieval Verges' Castle. Council of Verges' collection.

Castle Multipurpose fortifications

The medieval castle of Verges has been declared a Protected Heritage Asset or BCIN (in Catalan, Bé d'Interès Nacional). It is first recorded in a purchase document dated back to 1098. It has also been documented in other records as *castello Virginium* (Verges' castle) amongst other properties the Count of Roselló had in the county of Empúries in the 12th century. The fortress was restored in 1607 and the conditions and requirements of the work appear in a 17th century document called taba. It was demolished in the 19th century to construct a square and the school buildings which, today, are the Town Council.

From the original castle, only one wall has survived. It is situated to the north, in front of the church's apse; it is 10 metres long and has two different height levels: 5 m and 4 m respectively. It is a metre and a half thick and was built with undressed stones and pebbles; it presents four small arrow-slits and the remains of a tiled roof. An access opening that leads to the rear courtyard was opened when the building was integrated into the Town Council.



Jenn qui vulla ho entena en der quadrajar y ferrar Tom aquella pulla neufaria y la obra lu dona ab alna tuba annu get del put callel de verget, co et qui y manes quadragara y dara quiquena biga, qui pe manes ferrera le palm dels cayrus que p manes dara la dorzona delle cabiront y llatet y qui y manes dara la cana de la dulla prima o grafa compoma fera meneller tot dela llegaria y graficiur les fera dada. Digaz qui dir y voldra que qui y manes o fara les venerablet superdiost ho lliurean prometent en rebre y pagar la faena aura fera de quinze en giunze lieb : pagal le qui ennondra din passa al corrador A le yel not for since y

Archaeological excavations undertaken between 2012 and 2013 allowed, for the first time, to obtain information about the baronial castle of Verges, its defensive system and its different phases of use. In the same area, they found 44 pits which were excavated into the bedrock and the moat that encircled the bailey of the castle which extended, as far as it has been recorded, to the west and to the north.

Above, partial view of the archaeological excavations in front of the northwest facing wall of the old medieval castle (October 2012). Council of Verges' collection.

Below, Verges' notary, 46 (single document). Taba or document stating the conditions and requirements for the restoration of the fortress in 1607 (Girona's Historical Archive).



Parish church of Saints Julian and Basilissa

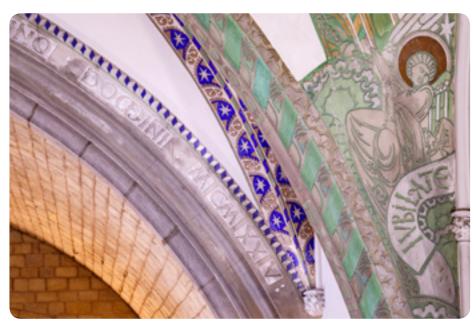
An amalgamation of styles

The parish church, dedicated to Saints Julian and Basilissa, is situated in the middle of the old quarter of the village. Unfortunately, the consecration document, known as dotalia, has not been preserved. The front of the building dates back to 1760 as indicated by the lintel stone over the main entrance.

The bell tower, paid by Dr. Ramon Marquès i Matas from Verges, was built in 1893 and later remodelled by Isidre Bosch i Bataller, the architect of the diocese. It has a squared base and an octagonal body with pointed arched apertures and tented roof top. To the west, the semicircular apse of Romanesque style is preserved, dating back to the 12th-13th century.

Inside, a barrel vaulted Romanesque style apse can be observed at the top of the building. The rest of the nave is partially covered by a pointed arched vault and partially by a ribbed vault. The lateral chapels are also covered by a ribbed vault; they are,







Above, plan shot of one multi occupational burial cut situated in carrer de l'Església (church street). Council of Verges' collection.

In the centre, painted and sgraffito decorations at one of the nerve vaults (Rafael Masó). Council of Verges' collection.

Below, the Holy Trinity stained glass window. Council of Verges' collection.

together with the sacristy, a result of the 16th to 18th century remodelling. Between 1924 and 1925, the architect Rafael Masó directed restoration works on the inside of the temple, amongst which the stained glass from the rose window and the sgraffito are the most notable ones.

Archaeological excavations conducted between 2012 and 2013 in the old quarter of the village uncovered part of the old sacred circuit and parish graveyard.



General view of the Main Square, with samples of the curtain wall and the two well preserved towers: the squared one (13th-14th century) and the round one (15th-16th century). Photograph by: Josep Thomas I Bigas. Josep Casabó collection.

Fortified enclosure Verges, a village full of history

The village of Verges is located on top of a small hillock surrounded by trees and agricultural fields on the left bank of the river Ter. The first record of it dates back to the year 959 after Christ. The document was found in the confirmation of some possessions that Count Gausfred I, Count of Empúries, gave to Riculf, a local dignitary, in *villa Virgines*, which might have been a big manor house, similar to a rural Roman one.

Like most of the villages with medieval origin in Old Catalonia, the village of Verges follows, from the 11th century, a model of settlement based on a church and a castle that attracted the rural population with the rise of feudalism.

The strong voice of stones

The fortified enclosure, classified as Bé Cultural d'Interès Nacional (BCIN) or Protected Heritage Asset, encircles and closes the oldest part of the village. At the end of the 11th century, when Viscount Ramon Guillem sold the village of Verges to the Count of Empúries, the curtain wall and its towers were under construction. From that moment on, during the medieval period, the construction of the primitive part of the settlement began. It borders plaça Major (Main Square) on the north, carrer del Rec (Rec Street) on the south, carrer de les Valls (Valls Street) on the east and carrer dels Bous (Bous Street) on the west. The enclosure was closed by a curtain wall with arrow slits and crenelations dotted with towers built out of stone and mortar.

Time and war have substantially modified the original layout; in spite of that, some magnificent remains of the curtain wall are still preserved, especially in the Main Square, where we are now. From here, the northern gate to the medieval enclosure, known as portal de la Mare de Déu (Mother of God's gate) and two towers,



Above, copy (dated on January 27th, 1347) of the first record of Verges village: *villa Virgines*. Municipal Archive of Castelló d'Empúries, ADM collection, reg.1.



VERGES. Entrada a la Plassa; un dels mes típics recóns histórics.

Mother of God's gate, in the north of the fortified enclosure, which today leads to the Main Square; it used to be one of the main access points to the medieval village. It is named after an image of the Mother of God that is situated in an alcove on top of the gate. Photography by: Josep Thomas i Bigas. Source: Josep Casabó collection.

a squared one (13th-14th century) and a circular one (15th-16th century), extremely well preserved, can be seen, allowing the visitor to follow the perimeter of the original old enclosure.

The parochial church, some remains of the old castle (11th century) and streets such as Ribossà or de l'Església, which lead to the western gate of the curtain wall, are situated within the curtain wall and constitute prime survivors of the medieval village.

In 2009, an archaeological observation in the Main Square, alongside the excavations that took place in 2012 and 2013 within the historic quarter of the village, revealed more information about the fortified enclosure.

The widening of the village that occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries was caused by the relatively calm situation of the area, especially during the first half of the 18th century. It allowed for a demographic expansion that was followed by an enlargement of the village towards its outskirts, which is the case of Ample and Defora streets, or even forcing the population to build within the curtain wall, as carrer dels Valls (Valls Street) attests.

Verges' expansion to the north, tramontana facing, contradicts the patterns of expansion seen in the rest of the villages in L'Empordà. The proximity of the Ter river, with its continuous and unexpected flooding episodes, made the expansion to the south impossible.



The Dance of Death jumping on the stage during the performance of the Passion. Photograph by: Sergi Costa.

Verges' parade A whole village experience

Verge's procession is the annual manifestation of a tradition that has its roots in the origins of Catalan theatre, in the medieval era, with the performance of sacred dramas. It has two parts: the performance of the Misteri de la Passió (the Passion Mystery), which takes place in the unique scenery of the medieval walls and towers since it was grouped there by Carles Perpinyà in 1955, and the procession that follows the streets culminating in the Crucifixion.

At the centre of the Main Square, every Maundy Thursday, the last three years of Jesus' public life are represented, with special emphasis on his last days. Immediately after that, the procession starts in the streets.

The Dance of Death

The Dance of Death is the most special element of Verge's procession. The dances of Death, or dances of the death, reminiscent of ancient rituals, were extremely popular in Western artistic expressions between the 14th and 17th centuries, due to several epidemic events, and soon expanded to other parts of the world.

These kinds of dances took root in our land and were incorporated into Holy Week processions. They have all disappeared with the exception of the one of Verges.

Verges' Dance of Death, with a clear baroque influence, is composed by ten characters in perfect harmony: five dynamic skeletons and five static ones (five are adults and five are children). All of them are named after the instrument they play.

Five of the performers dance jumping from side to side forming a cross to the rhythm of a drum. The head-dancer is the Scythe (Dalla), an adult with a scythe that sentences *Nemini Parco*



Above, the standard bearers carrying the image of the Nazarene to the parochial church, with women on one side of the procession and men on the other (Maundy Thursday afternoon, 1922). Photograph by: Valentí Fargnoli. Source: Municipal Archive of Verges. Verges' Council collection.



The Dance of Death marching through the streets during the Procession. Photograph by: Sergi Costa.

('no one is forgiven'), being the only one that jumps backwards (Death takes lives at random). The Flag (Bandera), another adult, bears a black flag with a skull and the same inscription in Latin together with one in Catalan: Lo temps és breu ('time is short'). On both sides, the Cymbals (Platets), two children skeletons, show a plate with ash (symbol of what we will become once we die) and, behind, the Clock (Rellotge), another child skeleton, keeps pointing random times on a handless clock, indicating how unforeseeable our final moment can be.

The Drum (Tabal) is an adult that walks behind the Clock, leading the static group and setting the rhythm of the dancers; behind him, the Torches (or Lights, Torxes or Llums), two children and two adults, light up the group with their torches.

Verge's Dance of Death is a true treasure of popular culture that remains nowadays. The first documented evidence of Verge's procession -back then a simple religious parade- dates back to 1666 and qualifies the "Maundy Thursday procession" as a tradition.



Foreground, the through; background, the font Vella ('Old Fountain'). Photograph by: Josep Thomas i Bigas. Josep Casabó collection.

Trough and historic moat of the medieval walls

A mirror to another time

The old drinking trough, which was 15 cm deep and had a slight inclination that allowed it to be fed into the mill leat, is situated at the western part of the fortified enclosure. Its exact chronology is unknown, but it has been established that it is dated prior to the 18th century due to the founding of an old subterranean sewer channel in 2008 which was still in use in the first decades of the 19th century. Up until the beginning of the 20th century, there was a small spot where cattle could access the water in the mill leat. The toponymy of the place could not be clearer: the street carrer dels Bous (meaning Oxen's street) ends at the trough.

It is accompanied by a 10 m tall squared based tower which guarded the access to the medieval enclosure known as portal de les Eres, portal del Ribossà, portal Nou or portal de l'Abeurador ('Threshing floor gate', 'Ribossà gate', 'New gate' or 'Trough gate') depending on the time. According to an 18th century witness, the gate had a coat of arms and a date, 1590, carved on it.

From the trough, following the ancient moat where the mill leat runs, a section of wall can be seen and, within the 10 metres near the tower of the wall, four crenels.

At the end of this stretch, to the south-east of the fortified enclosure, Verges' mill, from where we can see a squared tower integrated into the main front of the wall, can be found.

The old fountain, a fountain that trickles no more

Traditionally referred to as font ('fountain') or font de l'Abeurador ('Trough fountain') because of its location, it is actually an old hexagonal well that, since many years ago, has fallen in disuse due to water contamination.

It was built at the end of the 19th century after a severe Cholera epidemic devastating Catalonia in 1885. The local authorities then promoted sanitation works and the construction of public fountains with the aim of controlling the salubriousness of the water and thus put an end to the virulent epidemic. With the establishment of new fountains within the village, it took the name of font Vella ('Old fountain'). It is the starting point of the suggestive camí de la mota ('hillock or motte path').



Above, part of the stretch of the mill leat. Council of Verges' collection.

Private washing basins, a curious way to do the laundry

These particular basins are placed at ground level, at the food of the old wall. Women did the laundry inside the leat from within the sink. When the leat flow was low, there was a ledge that granted access to it.



About to serve the "Soup" at the Main Square. Photograph by: Valentí Fargnoli. Source: Municipal Archive of Verges. Verges' Council collection.

Verges' Soup A communal meal

Verges' Soup is a communal meal, in the manner of a mess, similar to those prepared in other Catalan populations, that takes place on Shrove Tuesday.

In the past, these types of communal meals, understood as a charitable act towards the less fortunate, were referred to as sopa dels pobres ('paupers' soup'). In Verges, there are two theories about the origins of this tradition: one postulates its origins in the medieval era, when feudal lords would organise a meal for their serfs as payment for their work. A second one defends that the tradition comes from the necessity to empty the cellars of old products to then fill them up with new ones in the springtime. Nowadays, Verges' Soup is a popular celebration that closes the Carnival celebration cycle.

One of the oldest records that links the communal meal with a town celebration dates from between 1348 and 1403, from a drawing in a manual by notary Miquel Corsaví, of Castelló d'Empúries, owner of Verges' Notary. In the drawing, there is a character that is serving food from a pot to another character who receives it.

Festivities start off with la passada, a parade and collection of food by the Giants of Verges, named Perol ('pot') and Sopa ('soup'), on the Sunday prior to the main event.

The cooking process takes up to seven hours and, since 2014, it is done in the Main Square and not in the public washing place. It starts at seven a.m. when the cooks, all men, light the fires and,



Above, drawing of Miquel Corsaví's notary in Castelló d'Empúries (dated between 1348 and 1402). Historical Archive of Girona (notary collection, Castelló d'Empúries, no. 556).



Public washing place, with women doing the laundry at the Mill Leat. Photograph by: Josep Thomas i Bigas. Josep Casabó collection.

very early in the morning, inhabitants and visitors alike set their tables. At noon, the servants, all female and dressed specially for the occasion, serve soup from more than twenty pots.

Until the mid-20th century, in the morning, in the Main Square, the Ball de deu or de les deu ('ten o'clock dance') was celebrated. It was a courtship dance that started with a parade of couples engaged throughout the year.

Public washing place

From a female public washing place to a male cooking place

In this place there used to be a public washing place where, until the mid-20th century, women would gather to do the washing. Until 2013, every Shrove Tuesday the traditional communal meal known as Verges' Soup was prepared there.



Old brick layered arch structure on top of the pool. Photograph by: Josep Esquirol. Source: The Anchovy and the Salt Museum, L'Escala (MASLE).

Mill Leat Prosperity carried by water

The Mill leat or Setmenat channel begins at Colomer's lock and flows into l'Escala. It has been documented since the 13th century, together with its mill, Later on, with the construction of l'Estany leat, these elements would become essential in the economic development of the village. As it flows via Verges, it functioned as reinforcement for the walls and was also used to water crops, as drinking point for animals, to wash clothes and to power the quern stones for the flour and rice mill.

At present, at the Mill leat, there are the mills of La Salvetat (Jafre), Verges, Bellcaire and Saint Vicent (l'Escala). This leat articulates an irrigation system that supplies water to allotments, rice and cereal fields and orchards. Its present course follows a similar course that existed in the past but ceased to exist when the Counts of Empúries diverted it during a dispute against the Count of Barcelona in 1301.

The mill leaves the village and runs parallel to the Vell de Bellcaire path, a low level flat plain that is perfect for hiking and nature lovers who can follow it around its course through the Baix Ter ('low Ter').

Mill

The driving force of an era

Verges' mill, located at the south-western corner of the walls, is a 13th century building that has been remodelled in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries (it still has a 1779 date at the door of the main façade).



Above, drawing of the section of the mill building. Llinàs i Pol, Joan: "Evolució històrica i arquitectònica del molí de Verges (Verges, Baix Empordà)", Novenes Jornades d'Arqueologia de les Comarques de Girona, Archaeological Museum of Catalonia, L'Escala-Empúries (2008), p. 521-524.



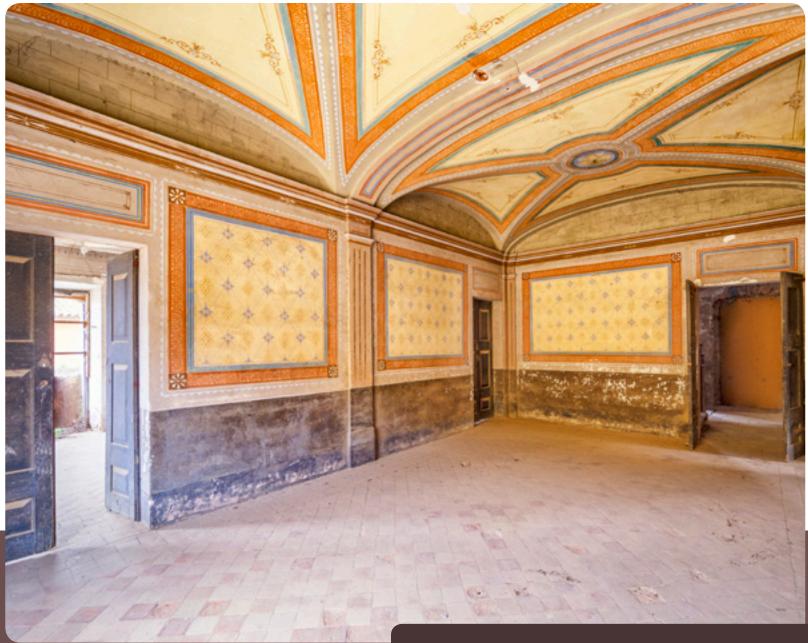
The mill leat following the curtain wall with one of the characteristic bridges to access the houses.
Photograph by: Valenti Fargnoli.
Source: Municipal Archive of Verges.
Verges' Council collection.

It used to be the flour mill of the barons of Verges in the 15th century. It is here where the portal del Molí ('Mill's gate') was located, which gave access to the south of the walls.

The Marimon, Albert, Sentmenat or Ciutadilla families owed their fortunes to the exploitation of the mill leat and mill.

At the beginning of the 20th century and up until its end, it worked as a hydroelectric power station.

Nowadays, it regulates, with a lock-gate, the entering and levels of water into the channel. To observe the rest of the mill leat, on the other side of the mill and the remains of the wall, we must head towards the C-252 road, where it can be seen leaving Verges towards Bellcaire d'Empordà. If we continue to carrer dels Valls (Valls' Street), we will find the western part of the curtain wall and a 12 m tall, squared tower.



Hallway on the noble floor, where the Pompeian style decorations can be appreciated. Verges' Council collection.

Can Punton The tallest civil monument in Verges

This manor belonged to an important family of rural landowners, the Alberts, thus it was also known as Ca l'Albert (Albert's Manor). The politician and lawyer Lluís Albert Paradeda was born there. He was an essential figure in the 1869 federal revolt in the Empordà and father of Caterina Albert, from l'Escala, who used a male pseudonym, *Victor Català*, in order to publish her works.

The curious name of Can Punton, according to the grammar expert Josep Miracle, might come from a phonetic deformation of the names of one of its owners, Josep Anton (father of Lluís Albert), from which in its hypocoristic use becomes Pep and this, in turn, Pep Anton, which becomes further deformed by popular use to P'Anton and thus Punton.

Built in 1808, according to an inscription in a stone in the main façade, neoclassic, it is a four story building with a basement and a small rectangular tower on top. Its noble floor is decorated in the Pompeian Style. It was constructed on top of other buildings





Above, one of the main bedrooms on the noble floor. Verges' Council collection.

Below, studio portrait of a young Víctor Català (towards the end of the 19th century). Photograph by: Napoleón. Source: Historical Archive of L'Escala.

that leaned onto the 16th century walls and also on top of a 17th century building, some remains of which are still preserved to the north of the main building. The southern wing contains the courtyard, portico and bridge over the Mill leat, constituting its most picturesque part. The present building was consolidated in 1868.

It is situated near one of the former access gates to the village, the so-called portal del Molí ('the Mill Gate').

In 1985, the Albert family relinquished the old manor to the Council. At present, it is used to promote the historical, cultural and social heritage of Verges.



Cargols Street The tradition of light

If there is a street that holds special meaning for the people of Verges, it is carrer de l'Orient (Orient Street), commonly known as carrer dels Cargols (Cargols Street, meaning Snails' Street) due to a peculiar tradition revolving around illuminating part of the procession route before electric street lights were installed.

The tradition consists of gluing empty snail shells onto the front of the houses of the street in a zigzag pattern with a mixture of ash and water. Once stuck they are filled with wicks and oil, the latter, according to tradition, from the leftovers of frying brunyols (Catalan doughnuts).

These peculiar oil lamps used to come from a snail based communal meal, purposely organised to put aside the shells that would illuminate the procession on Maundy Thursday. Nowadays,

each household puts aside thoroughly cleaned snail shells and ash, which they sieve in order to eliminate impurities that could compromise the resulting paste.

The preparation for the curious illumination of the street, which, for a day, displays a plaque with its popular name, is undertaken on Maundy Thursday morning by extremely excited neighbours who strive to meticulously follow the peculiar tradition.



Above, a section of Migdia Street (the '70s). Maria Gifre collection.



Verges' motte Villagers' preferred pathway

The motte, in the outskirts of the village, is a flood defence, built in the 17th century, to prevent flooding events in the village and in the fields and allotment that are situated between the former and the river.

Until the constructions of the Sau, Susqueda and Pasteral reservoirs, flooding events were frequent. The flooding of 1932 broke the motte in Verges, prompting the erection of a new one. Other memorable flooding events took place in 1940, 1982 and 2020.

Due to its outstanding beauty and extraordinary biodiversity, the place has become a popular pathway in Verges, where youngsters and old people alike go daily, either by walking or cycling, gathering there to talk while enjoying the view offered by the elevated ground. It is also part of the Ruta del Ter route, following the rich natural heritage of the river.

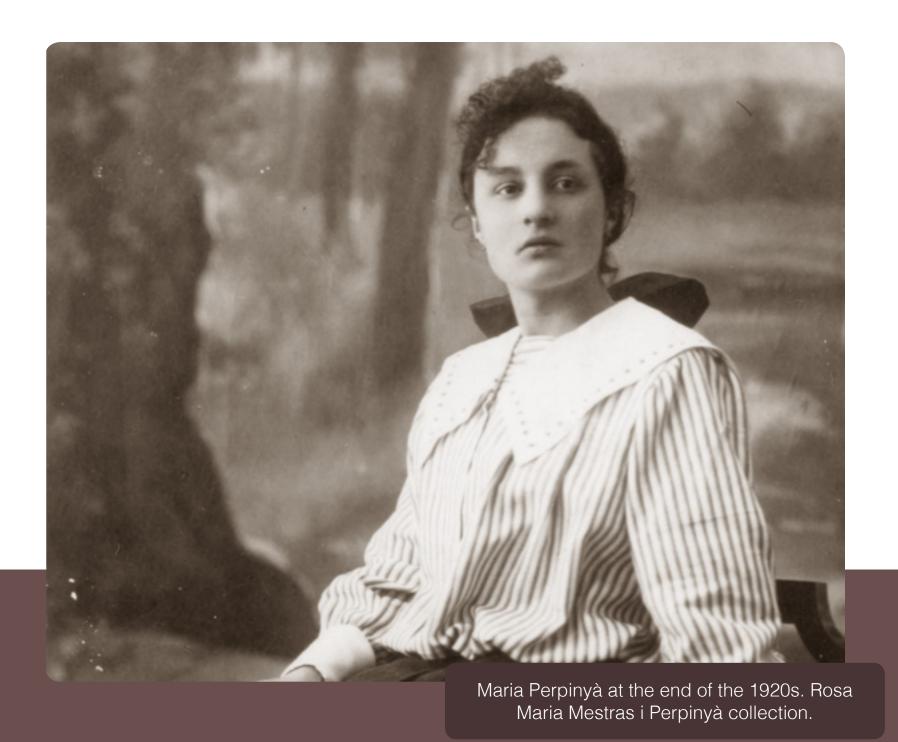


By the riverside, there is an old park with picnic facilities and access to the water that recovered its use in 2007.



Above, detail of the layout of the motte in *Verges and Canet de Verges. Verges. Mapa Topográfico Nacional* 1:50.000(1934). General Directorate of the Geographic, Cadastral and Statistics Institute of Spain.

Below, aerial view of Verges' motte following the river Ter, where the beauty of the landscape can be appreciated. Verges' Council collection.



Maria Perpinyà Square

Where poems are scattered by the wind

We are in Maria Perpinyà Square, the first location in Verges named after a woman, inaugurated on March the 8th 2012, the International Women's Day, in honour of the journalist and poetess Maria Perpinyà i Sais (1901-1994), a woman ahead of her time.

In her youth, Maria Perpinyà moved to Barcelona to work in various publication companies, including one with a section dedicated to women. She translates from French into Catalan, corrects Catalan and writes short tales, novels and, most of all, poetry, of post-symbolist style, mostly centred on two different topics: the land as heritage and country, and the wind.

Cultural and political activist, feminist and republican, she signed the 1930 *Manifest of Catalan women* pro amnesty of political and social prisoners, is part of Carme Karr's Feminine Action Board, that in 1931 demanded the vote for women to president Macià, is also part of The Association for the Preservation of Teaching Catalan (with Pompeu Fabra), and presides over the Feminine Section of Democratic Union of Catalonia. She maintains correspondence and friendship with the writer Caterina Albert, from l'Escala.

The Spanish Civil War truncates her career when she refuses to collaborate with a regime that forbids writing and speaking in Catalan.



Above, Maria Perpinyà in the seventies. Eulàlia Jordà i Perpinyà collection.

El cor en dansa Aguest cor meu que tot el meravella (lluissor d'estel, rosa que d'esbadella, de papellé volant sobre el bardis) aquest cor meu nodrit d'encisament i sap el dol d'un plany que no ha estat dit pero que al fons d'un ulls és reflectit. Obria el cor ses ales volanderes just al bell punt de fer les més lleugeres inquiet desig. Ves que no hi sia foll amos en nig. Massa que hi és amor agosarat, que el cor porue rabent se m'ha emportat. Desig i amor! - Si pobre cor mesquí que ara et veus pres d'un futil torbelli, pel teu neguit jo vull cercar metgia.

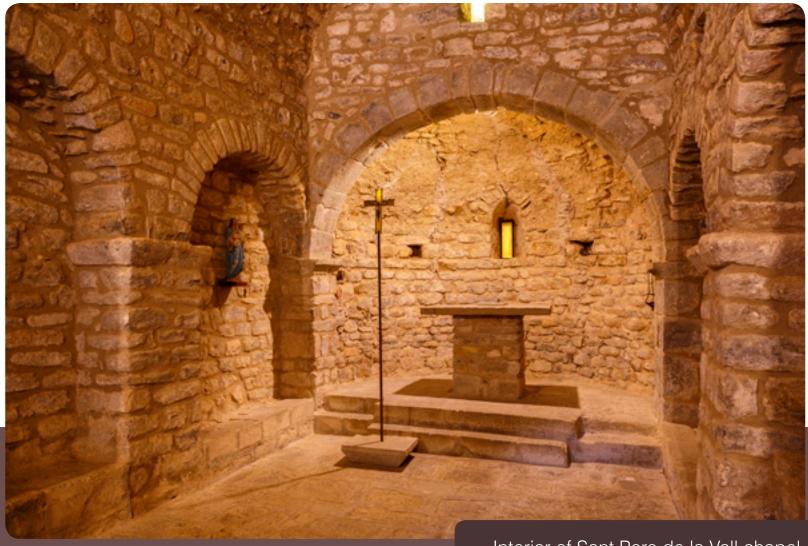
No en cerquis pas, car jo no la voldria, que és goig molt fi dansa amb desig i amor, Fire en tant, la mort, que sotja àvidament, Serò en lant, la mont, que en glaiador et va amanint amb riure en glaiador repós ingrat a l'ombra del dolor Maria Perpinya.

Novembre de 1.927

Handwritten poem *El cor en dansa* (November 1927). Rosa Maria Mestras i Perpinyà collection. She moves back to Verges permanently and, in 1955, revises and updates the texts of the procession, restructured by her brother, Carles Perpinyà. Away from the intellectual circles, she keeps writing and organising her works of poetry.

Maria Perpinyà's love for her village is patent in many of her poems, as this fragment of the poem named Vila, la meva vila ('Village, my village') attests:

Vila, la meva vila,
la dels gorgs de claror,
la dels conreus de joia
entre vinya i rostoll.
[...]
Ai, fada i missenyora,
de tots mos anys l'amor!



Interior of Sant Pere de la Vall chapel. Council of Verges' collection.

Sant Pere de la Vall Chapel Simplicity made art

The Romanesque chapel of Sant Pere (Saint Peter, 10-11th century) is located in the small heart of the Valley, formed by the fortified manor houses of cal Rei, can Massaller, cal Bessó manor and the mid-18th century old flour mill. The chapel, dependent on the parish church of Saint Julian and Saint Basilissa belonged to the barony of Verges, as recorded in the will of Count Peter the 3rd of Empúries of 1399.

A voussoir gate of later chronology is used as the main entrance to the building. Inside, it is worth mentioning three files of blinded arches that reinforce the lateral walls and support the barrel vault. These structures, together with the exterior buttresses, affected the primitive structure of the building and the main access gate to the north, at present halfway covered.

If we walk to the northern exterior wall, we can admire the oldest wall of the chapel, built using fluvial stones and crude stonework combined in regular ranks of long and narrow stones. In the semi-





circular apse there is a rank of dressed stones in the superior part of the wall, and, below the roof, the slabs of the primitive cornice can be seen. Traditionally, on June 29th, Saint Peter's Day, a mass and a dancing gathering used to be celebrated.



Above, baptismal sink with sculpted decorations, entrance to the right. Council of Verges' collection.

In the centre, painted remains at the apse and at the spandrel of the triumphal arch in the interior of the chapel; dated back to the 19th century, they were still visible until the end of the 20th century. Photograph by: Joan Badia i Homs. Joan Badia i Homs collection.

Below, aerial view of the old flour mill with the Montgrí mountain in the background. Council of Verges' collection.



Historical Route and points of interest

Verge's Council

