

## Grainval Chapel Saint-Léonard



© Ballandrone

Grainval Valley leads down to the sea, and its tranquillity and view over Fécamp lend it a real charm. Several villas have sprung up in the hamlet since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This small resort was home to prominent local society figures, including Alexandre Joly, a shipowner from Fécamp.

Alexandre Joly built a villa in Grainval so he could spend his Sundays there during the summer months, yet be only a short carriage ride from town.

He was a religious man, deeply thankful to Notre-Dame de Lourdes for a miraculous cure in 1895 which relieved him of chronic rheumatism. In gratitude of this, he built a family oratory in the villa's garden. It was a replica of the Massabielle grotto in Lourdes, and itself became a place of pilgrimage.

When the villa was sold after the First World War it was feared that now the chapel had become inaccessible to pilgrims, it would become disused or destroyed.

The parish priest Father Aubert had previously proposed building a more spacious chapel for ceremonies that could accommodate a larger number of pilgrims. Alexandre Joly had supported the idea, but their dream was only fulfilled after Joly's death and thanks to the financial support of his widow and children.

The first stone was laid in 1922, and the chapel consecrated in 1923 in the presence of 3000 worshippers.



Grainval, place of pilgrimage, postcard, n.d. © private collection



View of the chapel, photograph, 22nd August 1937, ADSM 11 Fi 1134 © Département de la Seine-Maritime



Interior view of the high altar and the window dedicated to Our Lady of Salvation, photograph 22nd August 1937, ADSM 11 Fi 1138 © Département de la Seine-Maritime

The church's brick-and-flint construction is typical of the region. The entrance is through the narrow bell tower-porch. The church is formed of a single nave with a gabled apse, finished with a sacristy and with eight pointed-arch windows providing light.

The old abandoned church at Bondeville had been put up for sale between the wars. Father Aubert managed to acquire the bell, a Louis XV stall and a pulpit, which is no longer in the church. Several Saint-Sulpician statues completed the ensemble. Three are still intact, representing Our Lady of Lourdes, Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and a Pietà.

Although its architecture and furnishings are modest, the chapel boasts a series of eight stained-glass windows produced by the Devisme workshops. The windows' images commemorate the Duhamel and Joly families while also referring to the social and economic history of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Fécamp.

On the south wall, successively, there is the representation of Saint Louis holding the crown of thorns, Saint James of Compostela, Saint Alexander and Saint Bernadette at the Massabielle cave. On the north wall, Saint Joan of Arc, Saint Peter, Saint Andrew and Our Lady of Salvation.

This commemorative collection reflects the history of the Duhamel-Joly family. It evokes the premature loss of four of Alexandre Joly's grandsons, who died either of illness or in battle.

Only two windows bear the medallion portrait of the figure concerned: that of Alexandre Joly as head of the family and the young Louis Savalle, a war hero. The other deceased family members are symbolically represented by the image of their patron saint (Saint Peter, Saint James and Saint Andrew) depicted at the foot along with their attributes.



View of the eighth window, dedicated to Saint Louis, and detail of the medallion depicting Louis Savalle © Service Inventaire et Patrimoine, Région Normandie

The other windows reflect the popular devotion of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Saint Joan of Arc) and evoke the donor family's faith (Saint Bernadette).

Similarly, the window of Our Lady of Salvation reveals the Marian devotion of the Joly family, sailors and fishermen. In the foreground, four sailors in boats in the mouth of Fécamps harbour pray to the Virgin, with Cap Fagnet cliff in the background. Overlooking this scene is a Virgin and Child radiating light from within a cloud.

Additionally, the window is a depiction of maritime history: in the background are several ships, representing Joly's fleet. A three-masted schooner's white flag bears the initials AJ of its owner and a steamer with a black chimney and a herring boat are also featured. The window bears witness to Joly's success as a shipowner, the development of the port in Fécamp and technological advances, such as the arrival of the first steamers.



View of the first window, dedicated to Our Lady of Salvation and detail of the ships of Joly's fleet © Service Inventaire et Patrimoine, Région Normandie

The Diocese of Le Havre ceded the chapel to the municipality in 1998. Restoration work was carried out between 2011 and 2015 in partnership with the *Fondation du patrimoine*,

including drainage work and on renovating the exterior. This place of worship has now become a cultural venue. It is run by an active non-profit organisation, *Les Amis de la Chapelle de Grainval*, made up of volunteers who participated in the restoration work.



Volunteers in action © Département de la Seine-Maritime