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Grandson Castle is the home of the Swiss Institute of Arms and Armour

A MEMBER of the Swiss community in Britain is at the forefront of a most unusual battle.

Former hotelier Mrs Edith Grout, with fellow Swiss countrymen, has taken on an Arab sheik in a bid to preserve what she calls "an important part of Switzerland's heritage" for the Swiss.

The two, who have never met, are battling over Grandson Castle, which nestles by the shore of Lake Neuchâtel, Vaud.

The castle — once the home of the renowned Grandson family — is in danger of being sold to the sheik by the present owners, the Filipinetti family of Geneva.

And that to Mrs Grout is unthinkable.

"It's not that I have anything against Arabs, you understand", she said. "It is just that Grandson is part of the Swiss heritage and if it were sold to this sheik its doors would be closed to the public for ever".

So at the invitation of castle curator Eugene Heer she has helped to launch a £2.5 million

Edith Grout defends a Vaud castle against the 'invaders'



MRS Grout, a Vaudoise by birth, came to Britain 25 years ago after marrying Jack Grout, then manager of Browns Hotel, London.

She and her husband moved to Devon 10 years later to take over the Gipsy Hill Hotel, Pinhoe, near Exeter.

Then 10 years ago they retired to Aylesbeare, near Honiton.

The couple still make regular trips to Switzerland. Their next will be in September for her brother's 75th birthday.

Anyone wishing to know further details of the Grandson appeal can contact Mrs Grout on Ottery St Mary 2396.

appeal to set up a trust to buy the castle and keep it open for generations of Swiss to come.

They have until September to raise the money.

Mrs Grout became involved in the fight as a result of her interest in the Grandson family, owners of the castle until 1929.

Sir Othon de Grandson — a hero of Mrs Grout's from her childhood — spent most of his life at the English court where he befriended Prince Edward whose life he was to save in the eighth crusade by sucking poison from an arrow wound.

After the Prince was crowned Edward I, Sir Othon became his confidant and adviser.

The knight's nephew, John de Grandson (Anglicised to Grandisson) later became Bishop of Exeter. And that historical link with Devon is how Mrs Grout became caught up in the save Grandson campaign.

On moving to Devon nearly 20 years ago, Mrs Grout was both surprised and delighted to discover the local links with the Grandson family.

Her fascination led to two years research at the Exeter Cathedral library where she was dubbed the "Grandisson Lady".

She discovered that the Bishop was responsible for the completion of the Cathedral Church of St. Peter and the building of the Collegiate Church of Ottery St. Mary where

the tombs of his brother, Sir Othon, and his sister-in-law, Lady Beatrix de Grandisson, are still well preserved.

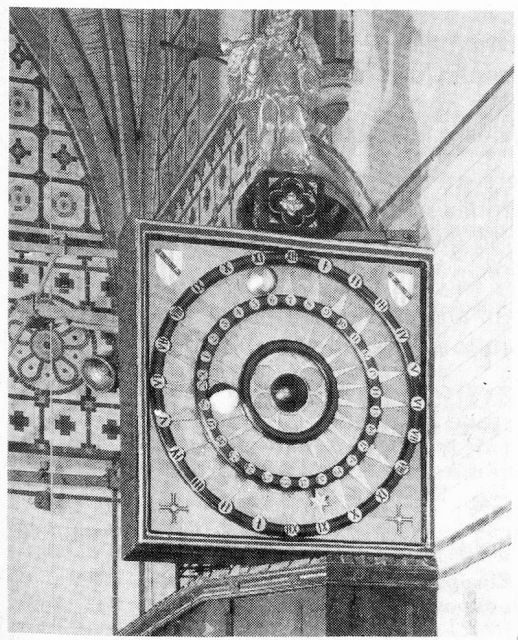
As a result of these researches she wrote an article entitled "Twinning 1330 Style" for the magazine Devon Life, an article which found its way into the hands of Eugene Heer.

He had been instrumental in forming the Fondation Château de Grandson to raise funds to save the castle from falling into Arab hands and, impressed by Mrs Grout's knowledge of the Grandson family, invited her to speak at the Press launch of the appeal fund.

This Mrs Grout duly did alongside Sir Othon de Grandson's mausoleum in Lausanne Cathedral, the fund being launched with her cheque.

Since then it has reached £63,000.

If you would like to make a contribution, it should be made payable to the Fondation Château de Grandson, and sent to Eugene Heer, Curator, Château de Grandson, Grandson, Vaud.



Grandisson's clock in the church of Ottery St. Mary, Devon