

THE VAUBAN ASSOCIATION

The defensive works and fortifications built in the past have shaped the coast, seascapes and landscapes of France along successive borders. Bearing silent witness to battles past and strategic positions held, they deserve protection, conservation and restoration. The Vauban Association plays a key role in this work, adding value by the study of the historical environment and by its contribution to defining and preserving the priorities of our heritage.

Mission and Purpose - what we strive to do

- Raise the profile of the works of Vauban and of his predecessors (Errard-de-Bar-le-Duc...) from the first appearance of bastioned fortification, and their successors (Haxo, Séré-de-Rivières, Maginot) from the 16th century right through to today.
- Work to ensure that we do not forget the values, social, economic, financial and humanistic of a true visionary - a man ahead of his time.
- Learn more about our fortified patrimony since the 16th century and how to conserve and restore it.
- Assist, help and encourage all initiatives, national and local, in this important sphere of activity.
- Support the Musée des Plans-Reliefs (Museum of three-dimensional maps), a unique collection of scale models of the fortifications created by Louis 14th and enriched by his successors.



Le Plan-Relief de Neuf-Brisach (1703), Haut-Rhin



Le siège de Besançon, mai 1674

The Membership of the Association - Who we are ?

The Association is a mix of informed and knowledgeable amateurs, professionals from all walks of life, academics, historians, engineers, architects, military experts and conservationists. What unites this diverse group is their shared interest in this particular architectural heritage, so important for both history and geography. Alongside these actual members of the Association, there are various other organisations, towns, and societies, in France and abroad, dedicated to the preservation and restoration of our fortified heritage.



Porte des Campani (1685), Saint-Martin-de-Ré



La tour de Camaret 1694



Regular Activities

- Every year since 1988, over the long weekend of Whitsun, the Association has organised a congress in a region of France where there are fortifications, either bastionnet or more recent. Over four days, the congress, covers:
 - .. Visits to the fortifications, situated in French territories or sometimes those in neighbouring countries.
 - .. A half-day seminar devoted to the history and fortifications of the region.
 - .. The annual general meeting of the Association.
- In an effort to widen the awareness of its membership and its partners, since 1996, the Association has organised an annual study trip to another European country (Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Portugal and Poland for example).
- Also, every year at the end of March, in front of its cenotaph under the dome of Les Invalides, the Association commemorates the death (on 30th March 1707) of Maréchal Vauban. This ceremony takes place in the presence of his descendants and senior military authorities. The salute is given by the students of the National School of Military Engineers in the Infrastructure and Defence of Angers.



Le fort Saint Elme (1580), Collioure, Pyrénées-Orientales



La citadelle de Lille (1670), Nord

Other Activities

- The Association, co-funder of the Réseau des Sites Majeurs de Vauban (the Network of the Major sites of Vauban) known as the RSMV has actively contributed to the preparation of the submission, succeeding in 2008, to achieve classification of 12 French Vauban Fortifications as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. As the only Association which is a member of the Board of the RSMV, the Association brings to bear its collective knowledge and expertise in support of towns, both in France and elsewhere, who are striving to achieve Unesco classification for their projects to restore and renovate their fortifications.
- To give value to the historical and patrimonial aspects of land or construction projects either within or in the immediate vicinity of fortifications, the Association offers its services and expertise to developers. Recent examples of such work: the Fort of Issy les Moulineaux, the Fort of Aubervilliers, the Fort de l'Est, east of Paris, the sub-marine base Martha in Marseille, the Château Trompette in Bordeaux. The Association works with real estate developers and promoters, creating documents that describe the heritage and history of any specific area, along with its iconography. These documents are provided for the owners of the development in the format that they choose. The aim is to help buyers and tenants of the properties to have a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, the unusual and significant sites where they will be living and working.
- From a more scientific perspective, the Association organises periodic seminars and workshops, either alone or with its partners, focussing particularly on the great military engineers (Vauban, Haxo, Séré de Rivières, etc.). It also supports the publication of scientific books and journals on these topics.
- The Vauban Association Prize is regularly awarded to both associations and individuals who have, by their work or their publications, added value either to the fortifications themselves or to those working in the area.
- The Association also works closely with the Service Militaire Volontaire (SMV) to encourage and support the active involvement of young people in the access to, and restoration of the fortified buildings.
- The Society for the Preservation of the Coastline has frequently solicited the help of the Vauban Association in developing the use and development of the fortifications which fall within its ownership.



Fort de Tournoux (1846-1865), Ubaye, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence



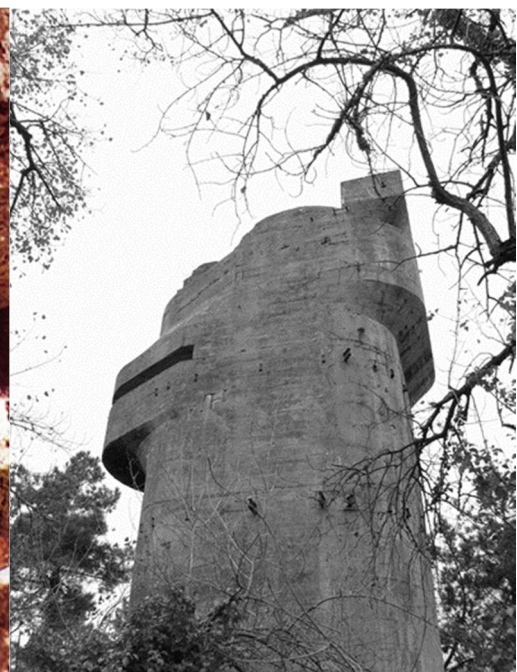
Le fort Séré-de-Rivières d'Uxegney (1880-1912), Vosges

Key Dates

- 1981 February: Creation of the Vauban Association
- 1983: Seminar entitled “Vauban Réformateur”, 1988 First regional conference, 1996 First international study trip
- 2007: Celebration of the tri-centenary of the death of Vauban. During that tri-centennial year the Association instigated, organised or helped to organise over 1500 events in France and elsewhere. Of those, 20 were conferences, national or international, and many included exhibitions and audio-visual presentations.
- 2008: Classification of 12 of the most beautiful French Vauban Fortifications as Unesco World Heritage sites.
- 2011: For its 30th anniversary the Association organised a conference and exhibition at Les Invalides on the subject of the fortifications of France and the World. This exhibition premiered the first showing of Pascal Cuissot’s docu-fiction, *Vauban: la sueur épargne le sang* (literally translated as ‘sweat spares blood’)
- 2017 February: The Association held a special conference at Les Invalides to mark the publication of a book by Professor Michèle Virol, a member of the committee, entitled “Louis XIV et Vauban: Correspondances et Agendas” (published by Champ Vallon).



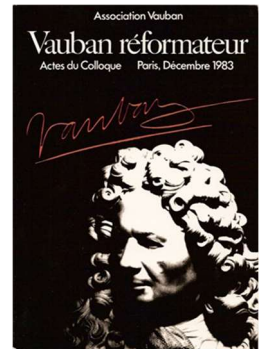
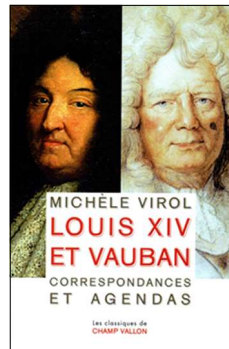
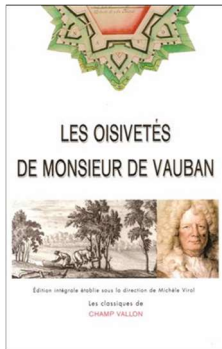
Ouvrage Maginot de Sainte-Agnès (1937-1939), Alpes-Maritimes



Poste de direction de tir de Karola (1942) Île-de-Ré, Charente-Maritime

Publications

- Twice yearly the Association edits a publication called “la lettre des Oisivetés”, which, in addition to covering the activities of the Association, also deals with a range of more in-depth subjects, both technical and historical, on the subject of fortifications.
- Since its inception, the Association has also published documents for our meetings and conferences, as well as publishing detailed reports of the study trips abroad and the conference papers themselves.
- Some Association members participate in radio and television programmes and even get involved in acting as technical advisors to drama programmes involving Vauban.
- The Association has provided financial backing for the publication of books on Vauban, including the two mentioned above, “Les Oisivetés” in 2007 and Louis XIV et Vauban: “Correspondances et Agendas in 2017”.



Our organisation

The Association has a network of regional delegates, in charge of the applying its objectives at local level. It has associates and partners in many different countries across the world. It is a member of the International Fortress Council which facilitates links between similar organisations across Europe, including DGF in Germany, ASMEM in Switzerland, Stichting Menno van Coehoorn, MvC in the Netherlands and others.

Le Maréchal de Vauban

Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban was born the son of a country Squire in the Morvan country of France on May 1st of 1633. He died on 30th March 1707. He devoted over half a century to service in the armies of King Louis XIV.

Patented engineer of the King at the age of 22, in 1678 he became Commissioner General of Fortifications and, ten years later, he was appointed to the rank of Lieutenant General. He was awarded the Grand-Croix of the military order of St Louis; and, in 1703, he achieved the supreme honour of Maréchal of France and received the Order of the Holy Spirit.

His achievements were formidable. He led over 50 victorious sieges and created, from scratch, nine new emplacements and created and extended 160 fortified sites. Thus, he was personally responsible for encircling the maritime and land-based frontiers with a “belt of steel” which included the famous “pré carré” designed to block the traditional access routes for invasion from the North and North East. This saved France from invasion from the North for over 100 years. His activity as an internationally renowned military engineer was tireless. His treatise on the attack of military sites has been translated into 15 languages. His work led him to cover between 3,000 and 8,000 kilometres every year; and this made him invaluable to the King as an observer of the state of the nation.

As well as his outstanding ability in the art of siege warfare, he was also a talented urbanist, geographer and an expert of hydraulics and forestry. He put his mathematical and statistical skills to the service of visionary economic thinking, taking into account a broad range of factors, both social and economic- see his memoirs of 1689 and 1692 on the recall of the Huguenots (Reminder of the Huguenots) and his work on the Royal Tithe published in 1707.

He displayed a rare breadth of vision and independence of thought which was a precursor to the philosophy of enlightenment. He is indisputably one of the less disputed figures in the history of France.



Vauban, chateau de Versailles, 1837

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