

Centenary of the Ecausseville Airship Hangar Manche (Normandy)



Symposium Sainte-Mère-Eglise 8th and 9th October 2020

Call for papers



A centenary hangar, a symposium

The Ecausseville airship hangar located in the Manche (Normandy), is one of the national heritage's most unusual buildings and the only survivor of the hangars built by the Navy to house its airships used against German U-boats during the Great War. It was the first hangar entirely built in reinforced concrete (structural work and envelope), is a survivor of the bombing of Normandy in 1944 and was classified as an Historic Monument in 2003. Today, in a preserved site in the Normandy countryside, it has great potential for tourism and other activities.

The "Association des Amis du Hangar à Dirigeables d'Ecausseville (AAHDE), (the Ecausseville Airship Hangar Friends Association), saved the hangar from abandon and has worked since 2003 for its preservation and use. To this end, the association has decided to commemorate the hangar's centenary in 2020. This anniversary is a great opportunity to expose the public, local officials, the architectural community, building and public works companies, building materials manufacturers, tourism organisations and sponsors to the problems of the restoration and the opportunities for the hangar's future once it is restored.

Among the proposed events for the centenary celebrations and with the support of the Community of Agglomeration of the Cotentin (CAC), owner of the building, the AAHDE is organizing a symposium to be held on 8 and 9 October at the Conference Centre of the Airborne Museum of Sainte-Mère-Eglise (Normandy).

The symposium will follow a day of study devoted to the restoration of reinforced concrete buildings that the Association of Heritage Architects plans to organize in Paris (exact date and location to be announced).

The aim of the symposium will be to contrast the views of historians and architects, promote exchange between architects, restoration specialists and other heritage stakeholders and to encourage tourism stakeholders, perhaps together with representatives of business, to engage in the fascinating task of sketching, for everybody and especially for sponsors, an ambitious future for the Ecausseville site.

Call for papers

Papers are sought that will explore in depth four themes in view to sharing knowledge and expertise to feed debates and roundtables.

The papers will be collected and published together. The four themes are:

The History of the Ecausseville site

During the First World War, two large hangars were built on the site, the first in wood (now destroyed), the second in reinforced concrete.

The papers will deal with the history of the whole site, its installations, whether preserved or not, and with the materials and armaments as well as on the men who served there through the years. The papers may consider the whole period from the original choice of the site from the various alternatives until today. The highlights of the two world wars will be revisited, as well as the interwar years, the times of disuse or abandon, especially after the military decommissioning of the site. The content could be extended to Naval Ballooning or to comparable sites.

The Architecture of the Ecausseville hangar

The hangar frame has a structure in the form of an inverted catenary nearly 30 metres high and articulated at three points and consists of reinforced concrete posts and beams cast in situ. This structure supports large reinforced interlocking concrete tiles, manufactured on site, that were placed in position and then locked together. The large metal sliding doors, now missing, represented a significant technical achievement.

The papers should allow the building to be placed in the architectural context of its period, and, in a wider sense, in the general evolution of methods of construction, particularly with respect to alternative techniques (for example the concrete shell of the Boulingrin hall in Reims), as well as to understand its technical,

functional or financial justification. The study of the participants (companies, engineering firms, engineers, architects, public and private decision-makers) is strongly encouraged. A presentation on the architect Lossier and the Fourré & Rhodes Company would seem essential. We can also compare the Ecausseville hangar with other structures built using the same technique (the hangar of Augusta in Sicily for example). It will also be interesting to document techniques similar to those of the Ecausseville hangar (the Degaine process used by Henry Bernard at the University of Caen or the concrete tile process patented by François Lecœur and used in several post offices and schools in Paris...). Finally, we will open the question of the architectural posterity of the Ecausseville techniques, particularly for airport buildings.

The Restoration of the Ecausseville hangar

The 20th century saw the triumph of the employment of reinforced concrete in the construction of residential buildings, halls, airports, churches, bridges, etc. Today, these buildings, both in Normandy and in the rest of France, have been or will be the subject of concrete restoration and often of a change of use.

The symposium to be held in Sainte-Mère-Eglise will focus on the nature of the decay caused to the airship hangar of Ecausseville by time and successive occupants, as well as the possible solutions for restoration suggested by the experience of significant restoration projects, such as those likely to be presented and compared during the study day in Paris. In addition to the question of the restoration of the structure itself, we will question the preservation of the hall space and its environment (heating, acoustics, etc.). To this end, examples and feedback are expected on how to invent new uses that respect the qualities of large indoor spaces (eg FRAC Dunkerque, Tate Modern ...). The examples will be taken mainly from industrial and / or military buildings, but others are possible, such as the reconversion of churches where similar questions arise.

Beyond the architecture, the landscape dimension of the hangar and its site also appears to confer an atmosphere of "out of place and out of time" as fascinating as it is impressive. The evocation of " the scale of the landscape " is probably one of the essential keys to understanding the future of the Ecausseville airship hangar, and can be an integral part of the enquiry.

Future

In line with the previous theme, the presentations should be part of the current questioning about the future of the site, from a material, heritage, financial, tourism and use point of view. Exposures of similar reconversion experiences should be approached as broadly as possible: tourism, events, theme park, business incubator ... We will give priority to any examples related to the original use of the Ecausseville site: lighter-than-air transport and mobility involving new hydrogen technologies.

Scientific committee

Dominique BARJOT, professor of contemporary history at Paris-Sorbonne University, chairman of the scientific committee; Bruno CHANETZ, doctor in physical sciences, ONERA, president of the high scientific council of the Association Aeronautics and Astronautics of France; Magali DUCHESNE LACHEVRE, Archivist, Curator of Heritage, Historic Defence Service / Cherbourg Division; Jean-Jacques ERNAULT, architect, CAUE Manche; Elise GUILLERM, doctor of art history, research engineer, ENSA Normandy; Patrice GOURBIN, Doctor in History of Architecture, Senior Lecturer, ENSA Normandy; Yannick LECHERBONNIER, chief curator of heritage, at the Culture and Heritage Department of the Normandy Region ; Jean-Luc LELEU, doctor of contemporary history, CNRS research engineer, MRSH University of Caen.

Steering committee

Philippe BELIN, engineer, founder and honorary president of the AAHDE; Jean-Max GABET, engineer, vice-president of the COBATY- Manche Association, member of the AAHDE; Guilhem LABEEUW, architect and engineer, National Service of Airport Engineering, DGAC; Philippe PÂRIS, engineer, senior consultant, administrator of the AAHDE, coordinator of the Centenary project.

With the support of Grégoire MARTIN, project manager for attractiveness and heritage installations, Tourist & Nautical Activities Directorate, Communauté d'Agglomération du Cotentin (CAC).

Organizers

Association des Amis du Hangar à dirigeables d'Ecausseville (AAHDE)

<http://www.aerobase.fr/>

Communauté d'Agglomération du Cotentin (CAC)

<http://www.lecotentin.fr>

Proposals for papers

Proposals for papers (20 to 25 minutes), in French or English, should include a summary of the paper (1000 words maximum), as well as a short bio - bibliography of the author (name, first name, contact details, training and diplomas activity and organization, main interventions, publications or achievements).

Reference documents on the hangar and the symposium will be available to candidates in a dedicated area of the AAHDE website: <http://www.aerobase.fr/centenaire/accueil.html> .

Proposals should be sent electronically to: centenaire.hangarecausseville@gmail.com .

Calendar

- Deadline for submission of proposals for papers: March 3, 2020 ;
- Notification of acceptance of papers: March 25, 2020;
- Symposium in Sainte-Mère-Eglise: Thursday 8th and Friday 9th October 2020.

Supports

Avec le soutien
du ministère de la Culture
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