



ASMPQ SUMMER OUTING 30 JULY 2022 CARLUCET ET À COUZOU



In the morning, at Carlucet, despite the heat, about thirty members of the ASMPQ and Maisons Paysannes de France attended presentations by two local craftsmen, Jean-François Serres, mason, and Damien Dardennes, carpenter & roofer, who are as fascinating as they are passionate about their work. First off, they demonstrated their restoration of the Fontbotte, a cistern built to provide fresh water to this particularly dry village - the saying was that *A Carlucet las crabas crebant de set* ("At

Carlucet even the goats die of thirst"). Their working practice is based on two principles: a firm determination to understand the building to avoid mistakes and using traditional materials locally sourced in their work. And there could not be more eloquent apostles for the return to the use of putty lime (fat lime).

This small building dates from 1843. It reached its final form in the 1880s with its adjoining troughs for watering and washing (laundry). Subsequently it was poorly maintained and then totally neglected after the arrival of tap water in the 1970s.

The restoration was a real voyage of discovery for our two craftsmen both during opening up and during the work. Two fine details epitomise their work. The centre-piece of the façade was a lion's mask overflow. This was regilded and a new outlet was made on the side to feed the troughs directly - here, no lion's head but a huge brass frog-shaped gargoyle! The results duly resplendent in a coat of new limewash are a shining advertisement for Jean-François and the use of putty lime.

In the village, Jean-François used a portable forge to explain how lime was produced and extolled the properties of using putty limes and local unwashed sands for self-coloured renders. The demonstration took place in a yard belonging to Mme Michelle Vincent of the Association de Defence du Patrimoine de Carlucet. Her house opposite was a solid advertisement for his work, which she enthusiastically endorsed here and in the village. Mme Vincent sent us a leaflet about the Fontbotte restoration, see in separate pdf.



After lunch Francis presented the circa 1500 wall paintings in the church.

In the afternoon, a dozen further participants joined the group on the *couderc* of Couzou, where Mathieu Larribe, director of the CAUE du Lot, was waiting to take us on a tour of the place.

A monumental traditional barn, whose agricultural use has been maintained to this day, extends into the southern end of the *couderc*. The owner, Mme Odette Peyronnenc, kindly opened it for us and explained its history. It was built by her grandfather using locally sourced labour & materials.

Mathieu Larribe then spoke about the *couderc*. *Coudercs* were 'collective' grassy spaces & they have become communal areas whose form has evolved over time with development and roads. They are enclosed by walls and have 'lacs' that serve for watering animals. They were used for grazing animals and various events (fairs, *etc.*). Mathieu underlined the importance of maintaining these as green spaces; indeed the reduction of hard surfaces is increasingly being recommended in towns & villages. Our journey took us down the village street and across to the church where our host explained the importance of managing water before mains water arrived in the '70s and explained also the typology of the buildings, the storeyed farmhouses with little steadings and single-storey cottages for workmen (*brassiers*).

At the hamlet of Pélaprat, we were welcomed on its small *couderc* by M & Mme Bazalgues - local, learned and very informative, particularly on the study of place names. Mme Bazalgues showed us inside a pair of single-cell, labourers' cottages. They are built directly on the rock which is currently exposed as much of their cobbled surfaces have been lost; each is equipped with an impressive *évier* (sink & food preparation area) inserted at a late stage in their evolution. One retains a particularly rare survival of painted decoration thought to be as early as the C16. As Mathieu Larribe pointed out, all these elements are of great archaeological interest; but they raise as many questions as answers about their occupants, their status & their way of life as well as the changing uses of the buildings ... One thing is certain: the presence of so many points of interest with so many question-marks tends to emphasise the need for wider research as well as the study of the buildings themselves before undertaking repairs to ensure that their significance is understood and protected.



The outing ended convivially in the shade of a (?oak) tree growing out of the former well of one of the houses.

A constant theme of the day was the ownership of the manors of Carlucet and Couzou by the Cistercian Abbey of Aubazine in the Corrèze and their repopulation with revised leases after the 100 Years War.

Mathieu has published highly informative leaflets in the CAUE du Lot's *in situ* series. That on Carlucet is essential reading for understanding the background for the use of lime and unwashed sands in maintain and repairing historic buildings. The leaflet of Couzou covers all that we saw there in greater, illustrated, detail.

Carlucet: [file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/In%20situ%20Carlucet-%20sept2020%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/In%20situ%20Carlucet-%20sept2020%20(2).pdf) .

Couzou: [file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/Caue46%20Web%20-%20InSitu%20-%20Couzou-Nlle%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/Caue46%20Web%20-%20InSitu%20-%20Couzou-Nlle%20(1).pdf) .