

FOCUS

WAR MEMORIALS OF CHARENTE LIMOUSINE - REMEMBRANCE OF THE GREAT WAR TYPES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE



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A retired history and geography high school teacher, he has conducted extensive research in Charente Limousine, concerning both the Third Republic and the Second World War. His extensive work on the war memorials of Charente Limousine has given rise to other academic publications and conferences.

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On the left : an archetype - the *poilu* or WW1 infantryman on his plinth in Saint-Cloud.

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On the right : in Chirac, a sober stele of the civic type.

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EDITORIAL

After devoting two brochures to the destiny of young people attached to the resistance movements in the Limousin region of Charente, the community now highlights the war memorials.

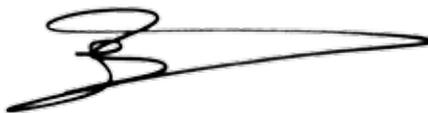
These monuments are indeed emblematic of the national will, at the end of the First World War, to pay tribute to the soldiers who died in combat. They are thus places of memory with a powerful symbolic charge.

Historian Joël Giraud, author of this brochure, has extensively studied war memorials in general, and the monuments of Charente Limousine in particular. He has devoted several books and conferences to them, both as a history and geography teacher at the Emile Roux high school in Confolens and as a historian. The brochure, which gives an overview of his research, sheds light on the context of the creation of these monuments and analyzes those built in Charente Limousine.

Present in all the communes of France, with a few exceptions, they keep alive the memory, the commemoration of the conflict and its consequences. Despite their important symbolic charge, they are nevertheless losing their meaning for the younger generations who did not experience the events. We are therefore at a turning point in their existence and in the importance that we must continue to give them.

It is with this in mind that the Charente Limousine Community of communes is working on a project to enhance the recognition of the war memorials of the region initiated in the year 2020 by the President Philippe Bouty. Based on the inventory of the memorial heritage and additional field research, the Community of communes wishes to install heritage signage in front of each war memorial in Charente Limousine. To ensure the mediation of the history of these monuments, to continue the duty of memory and, quite simply, not to forget.

Benoit SAVY
President of the Charente Limousine Community of communes





Ci-contre

A sober dedication « To us the memory, to them the immortality » with a discreet patriotism reinforced by the flags and the *croix de guerre* medal given to those who died for France.
© Joël Giraud.

CLASSIFICATION OF WAR MEMORIALS

Here we are using the classification of the historian Antoine Prost, author of a masterful thesis (1975) on *Les anciens combattants et la société française entre 1914 et 1939 (Veterans and French society between 1914 and 1939)*.

It is necessary to distinguish the chosen location : at the « *civic location* » (town hall, school), at the « *religious location* » (church, cemetery), at a « *neutral location* » (central square or other). It is also necessary to describe the features (iconography, inscriptions) chosen by the town councils and their symbolic meanings.

This enables the monuments to be classified into four major types (with transitional types) : the civic type with, for example, « *The commune X to its children* » ; the patriotic type, which emphasizes glory and sacrifice ; the funerary type, which emphasizes the depth of mourning - the rare communal pacifist monuments are included in this category ; the funerary-patriotic type, which is very widespread in the Confolentais. The example of Saint-Claud can be identified as civic - patriotic in a neutral location (central square).

Monuments also exist in churches (for example in Saint-Claud and Ansac-sur-Vienne) ; the names of the dead present some differences compared to the communal monuments and the memory of the war is often tinged with religious aspects. In Saint-Claud, Joan of Arc near a helmet of a *poilu* (WW1 infantryman) placed next to a cross and a sword, connotes a funerary and patriotic meaning. In Ansac-sur-Vienne, the *poilu* dies in the folds of the flag, at the foot of the cross, in the

presence of his widow and the Virgin Mary.

These monuments in the churches are sometimes replaced by real artistic works, such as the paintings of the regional painter Jean-Cyprien Teilliet (1870-1931) in the churches of Esse and Saint-Germain-de-Confolens.

CIVIC MONUMENTS WITH OBELISKS AND STELES

CHIRAC

With a sober stele, this monument is a good representative of the civic type through its double refusal of the funerary and the patriotic. The inscription reads « *To The dead of the Great War the grateful commune of Chirac* ». The names of the 42 dead are inscribed below.

The location is neutral, at a crossroads near the church and the town hall. On the rear of the stele, there is a discreet plaque with the names of the town councilors at the time of construction.

ROUMAZIÈRES (BOURG)

The old civic monument was a stele near the schools, bearing a laconic inscription « *To our dead* » with a very simple decoration (sword, laurels, funeral urn). Note also the inscription « 1914-1939 » which shows the very frequent reuse of monuments of the First World War for the dead of the Second. In Roumazières, there is also a more recent monument (a simple stele in front of the town hall) which recapitulates the dead of the former communes of Roumazières, Loubert and Chantrezac and which bears the inscription « *The commune of Roumazières-Loubert*



1. Roumazières-Loubert : very sober stele near the schools with the rare inscription « 1914-1939 » which mixes the two world wars.
© Joël Giraud.

2. Champagne-Mouton : an original inscription by the veterans, under the palm and the *croix de guerre* of a very sober obelisk.
© Joël Giraud.

to its children *who died for their country* ».

ALLOUE

Civic monument in front of the town hall and the schools. An obelisk decorated with a palm with a patriotic nuance in the inscription : « *To the glorious memory of the children of the commune of Alloue who died for France* ».

CHAMPAGNE-MOUTON

A severe and imposing pyramid. The plaque is sober : « *To our dead* » ; the decor is minimal with *croix de guerre* and palm. The originality of this civic monument lies in its plaque offered by the veterans of Champagne-Mouton at its inauguration in 1922.

The very frequent presence of the *croix de guerre* on the monuments is explained by the fact that it was always automatically awarded to those who died for France.

MAZIÈRES

Near the town hall, this civic monument has a neutral « *To its children who died for France* ». The palm is accompanied by the *croix de guerre* and the military medal.

The helmeted *poilu* in the lower part of the bas-relief is an original touch ; it is inspired by René Bertrand-Boutée's medallion entitled « *Le gaulois de Verdun* ».

ROUSSINES

This monument, installed near the town hall-school, is also of civic type. The sculpted *poilu* is in Chazelles stone, represented at ease holding his rifle.

The inscription is sober : « *To its dead of the Great War 1914-1918 the grateful commune of Roussines* », with no mention of country or France.

CHABRAC

The civic type monument stands on the main road. The inscription is sober, without patriotic pompousness.

The *poilu* in cast iron is accompanied by a palm. One can notice the fence decorated with *croix de guerre*.

LE LINDOIS ET PRESSIGNAC

These two communes have a civic-type war memorial, bearing a *poilu*, located on a square near the town hall.

The *poilu* in Pressignac looks like the one in Saint-Clair while the one in Le Lindois looks like the soldier in Roussines.

SAUVAGNAC

A small, moving monument of a civic and funerary type of a small, poor commune. In Sauvagnac, to honor the seven dead of the commune, it was necessary to wait until 1951 with the construction near a crossroads of this simple stele which recalls the tombstone of the cemetery.



3. Chabrac : *poilu* in cast iron, palm and fence decorated with *croix de guerre*.

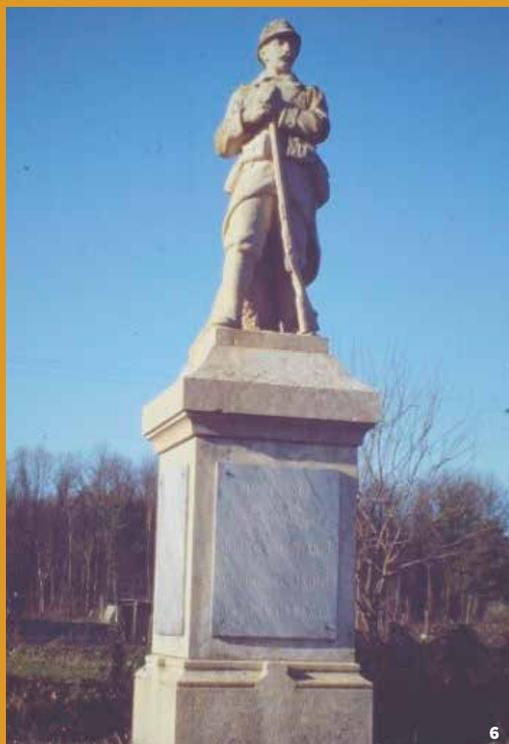
© Joël Giraud.

4. Mazières (detail) : the helmeted *poilu* in bas-relief is an original touch ; inspired by René Bertrand-Boutée's medallion entitled « Le gaulois de Verdun ».

© Joël Giraud.

5 et 6. Roussines : the *poilu* at ease in Chazelles stone (5) looks very much like one in Le Lindois (6).

© Joël Giraud.





1 et 2. Saint-Coutant (1) : the monument is placed in the cemetery which reinforces the funerary aspect. The one in Le Bouchage (2) looks similar but has the inscription « To our heroes » above the palm.

© Joël Giraud.

3. Ansac-sur-Vienne : bust of a *poilu* in a sober style.

© Joël Giraud.

4. Lessac : in the cemetery, a private monument from 1926 restored in 1993. Note the Christian cross at the top.

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VIEUX-CÉRIER, TURGON, SAINT-COUTANT, LE BOUCHAGE

Monuments that are similar in the neighbouring communes of Vieux-Cérier and Turgon. They are of the discreet patriotic type with the words « *To our heroes* » above a large palm.

In Saint-Coutant, this monument of patriotic type is placed in the cemetery, which gives it a funerary touch. In Le Bouchage, it is identical but placed near the town hall for a more civic touch. A study of the council debates shows that the choice of the location of the monuments provoked almost as much debate as the choice of the design and decoration. The financing was often provided by subscriptions open to members of the public, who did not hesitate to express themselves, for example by means of wishes or petitions.

AMBERNAC, ANSAC-SUR-VIENNE

In Ambernac, the monument placed in front of the church is neutral, without patriotic emphasis. It is similar to the previous cases.

In the civic genre, Ansac-sur-Vienne has chosen sobriety. Near the town hall, a simple obelisk with a palm and a bust of a *poilu* looking towards the sky. It has a neutral inscription : « *Ansac to its dead* ».

MONUMENTS THAT ARE CLEARLY PATRIOTIC

The indisputably patriotic monuments of the Confolentais are not restricted to cockerels and flags. The subtypes are rich and varied, sometimes original.

LESSAC

The helmeted and winged « *Victory* » of Lessac, avatar of the ancient Greek Niké, extends her laurel wreaths to the victorious dead heroes. Inaugurated in 1928, this monument was originally intended to be installed in the cemetery. The location was contested and reconsidered, ending up on the main square near the church¹.

As a result of these contestations, in the cemetery at Lessac, a private monument was found under the brambles during an extension and was restored in 1993 at the initiative of the mayor of the time, Paul Lévy, also a university historian. It is a realization financed in 1926-1927 by François Le Camus (father of a second lieutenant who died in the war), disappointed to see the communal monument of Lessac installed in a public place. The iconography is original : an angel holds a dead soldier ; the scene is dominated by a cross, the inscription is patriotic and religious : « *To our glorious dead fro the Country, relative, friend, passer-by, revere and pray* ».

BRIGUEUIL

Patriotic monument with the inscription « *To those who died for the Country* », it is surmounted by a cockerel with the head of a *poilu* in bas-relief.



Inaugurated on 11 November 1923, it was designed by the architect Honorat from Limoges. New plaques were added in 2016.

SAINT-LAURENT-DE-CÉRIS

It is similar to Brigueuil with its cockerel and its bust of a *poilu* in bas-relief. The inscription is sober : « *To our dead* ». The names of the great battles can be found in the four corners of the base (Verdun, Flanders, Yser, etc.) of this patriotic monument dedicated to the 59 dead of the commune.

THE ASTONISHING CASE OF CHERVES - CHÂTELARS

This triumphal arch embedded in the wall of the town hall of Cherves-Châtelars is very original. It is decorated with friezes and bas-reliefs in the antique style. The bust of the *poilu* (framed by palms) is dedicated to the 59 « *glorious children* » of the commune. It surmounts a coat of arms with the names of four great battles : The Marne, Yser, Verdun, Orient.

A lower band appears under the stylized arch and represents an attack scene on metal bas-relief. It is quite realistic : bayonet charge, grenades thrown, no man's land devastated, wounded etc. It is an original type of patriotic monument aimed at perpetuating the documented memory of the conflict.

SAINT-AURICE-DES-LIONS

On a square near the cemetery, the « stoic » *poilu* of Saint-Maurice advances, scarf in the wind, fists clenched towards the Northeast. This sculpture

named « *In the storm* » by the Parisian artist Charles Pourquet is in bronzed cast iron. The inscriptions reinforce the patriotic aspect : « *Pro Patria* » on the base and the mention of the « *glorious memory* » of the children of the commune.

The number of dead (87) in Saint-Maurice is one of the highest in Charente compared to the prewar population. This monument was inaugurated in November 1924, at a cost of 22,207 francs, financed mainly by subscription and municipal credits².

BRILLAC

The arms and flag connote the patriotic type for Brillac. The funerary aspect is created by the funeral wreath and the dedication to the « *children who died for France* » and the sobriety that recalls a cemetery stele. It was inaugurated on 11 November 1923 in an atmosphere of reflection that excluded the speeches of parliamentarians and the usual banquet.

CHASSENEUIL-SUR-BONNIEURE

This helmeted woman leaning on her sword surely evokes a Republic in « *secular Joan of Arc* ». Some see her as an Alsatian who has returned to her homeland. The sobriety of the inscription « *To our dead* » and the proximity of the town hall reinforce the patriotic civic aspect. The work of the Charentais sculptor Peyronnet, this statue is a victorious counterpart of the seated and defeated figure of the patrie (a woman symbolising the homeland) of the Angoulême monument (behind the town hall) dedicated to the *Garde*

1. Lessac : Victory and her laurels in the church square.

© Joël Giraud.

2. Brigueuil (detail) : the Gallic cockerel at the top of the monument.

© CCCL.

3. Saint-Laurent-de-Céris : an original monument, surmounted by a cockerel, with the names of the victories on the lower sides and a *poilu* in bas-relief.

© Joël Giraud.

4. Cherves-Châtelars : a triumphal arch embedded in the wall of the town hall.

© Joël Giraud.

5. Cherves-Châtelars (detail) : an unexpected and realistic attack scene on a war memorial.

© Joël Giraud.



6. The « stoic » *poilu* of Saint-Maurice-des-Lions advances towards the East with clenched fists. The inscription « *Pro Patria* » on the base reinforces a patriotic aspect.

© Joël Giraud.

7. Chasseneuil-sur-Bonneure : the helmeted *patrie* by the sculptor Peyronnet, a secular, fierce and warlike « *Joan of Arc* ».

© Joël Giraud.

8. Verneuil (detail) : a patriotic and loquacious monument with this Latin quotation « *If you want peace, prepare for war* ».

© Joël Giraud.





mobile of 1870. The work of Raoul Verlet, the contemplative figure of *la patrie* in Angoulême is sitting and weary ; the war of 1870-1871 was a disaster. In 1918, the victorious and helmeted *patrie* in Chasseneuil-sur-Bonnieure is standing, fierce and warlike.

The inauguration in May 1923 caused a bitter controversy in the press, as the mayor Pascaud (elected radical) had not invited the clergy to bless the monument.

VERNEUIL : A PATRIOTIC AND LOQUACIOUS MONUMENT

This monument, a simple obelisk with a palm, is not very original, except for the presence of a Latin cross at the top and especially for the inscriptions that appear on its base and sides. These inscriptions (in capital letters) deliver a veritable lesson of patriotic morality ; the choice of the elected officials of the time, it reflects the ideology of the *National Bloc* and its post-war governments including that of Raymond Poincaré (right). « *PASSER-BY, REMEMBER THAT WE DIED SO THAT FRANCE COULD LIVE* », « *SI VIS PACEM PARA BELLUM* » (If you want peace, prepare for war). « *GOD AND COUNTRY* » : a rare inscription on a communal monument.

HIESSE : CANNONS IN A CEMETERY

The monument located in the cemetery is of a banal construction (obelisk with a war cross at the top) with the inscription « *To The glorious memory of the children of the commune of Hiesse who died for France* » which connotes patriotism. The originality lies the four cannons

that surrounded the monument. Two are clearly visible on an old postcard ; they were removed in 1940.

ÉPENÈDE : TWO CANNONS NEAR A MISSION CROSS

At a crossroads near a mission cross installed previously, the monument in Epenède is framed by two cannon shafts on either side. Is this an imitation of the neighbouring commune of Hiesse ? The choice so close to the cross can be interpreted as a disguised Christianization of an a priori secular monument.

This monument is a simple obelisk with palm and *croix de guerre* bearing a sober inscription : « *To its children who died for the Country* ».

SAINT-CHRISTOPHE

In the church square, a patriotic monument with a *poilu* standing, holding a rifle and flag, in front of an obelisk decorated with a palm. Inaugurated in 1923, this monument is the work of the Poitevin sculptor Pelletier and the cooperative company « *La Fraternelle* » of Poitiers. It is very similar to the one in Pressac (Vienne) by the same artist.

SAINT-GERMAIN-DE-CONFOLENS

A simple stele evoking a tombstone, decorated with a *croix de guerre* ; the broken column evokes the lives of young soldiers which ended prematurely. A monument of the patriotic funerary type installed in a small square near the main street. Of note is a curiosity : the *croix de guerre* on the monument is carved in



1



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inverted bas-relief.

LESTERPS

A monument of patriotic funerary type which is similar to that in Hiesse with obelisk and *croix de guerre*.

The originality lies in the decorative elements attached to the bottom of the railings : helmet, sword and crown, « *gift of the town council* ». The date of construction (1922) appears on the back of the monument but it was not inaugurated until July 1923.

ORADOUR-FANAIS

An imposing monument inaugurated in 1921 « *To the glorious memory of its children who died for France* ». The originality of this patriotic funerary monument (crown and swords) located in a former cemetery lay in the panel installed next to it and bearing the names and portraits of 14 of the 41 dead of the commune (now removed for conservation reasons).

MONTROLLET

Close to the town hall, this simple monument (granite obelisk) of a small commune shows 41 dead for 1914-1918. There are palms, laurels and *croix de guerre*, but above all a dedication « *To the glorious memory of the children of the commune who died for France* ». The reuse for the 1939-1945 war is very common but the short list of 4 dead of this war was lengthened by the addition of a deportee in 2017. Other communes also add the dead of the current external theatres of war.

GENOUILLAC

A curiosity with this double monument is that it does not reuse the 1914-1918 monument for the dead of 1939-1945. Until 1990, in the same enclosure near the town hall, stood the monument of 1914-1918 on the left (*poilu* in front of the stèle) and the one of 1939-1945 on the right (of the cemetery stèle type).

MONTEMBŒUF

A monument of the patriotic funerary type located near the church ; it was inaugurated in July 1923. The draped funerary urn is placed on a column that bears the fasces surmounted by a helmet. The sword, flag and laurels are intertwined. The inscription is sober : « *To our dead of the Great War 1914-1918 the grateful commune of Montembœuf* ».

MASSIGNAC

A clearly patriotic funerary type located near the town hall : the *poilu* expiring in the folds of the flag at the feet of a Republic (in the form of a woman wearing the Phrygian cap) holding out a crown. She holds a palm and an oak branch in her left hand. Palm and *croix de guerre* at the bottom. The inscription « *To our glorious dead* » reinforces the language of the group sculpted in relief ; it is the work of Chartier, a sculptor from Blois.

1. Hiesse : old postcard showing the two cannons installed around the monument which were removed in 1940.

© Joël Giraud.

2. Epenède : a disturbing and ambiguous proximity of the monument to a mission cross.

© Joël Giraud.

3. Saint-Christophe : a patriotic *poilu*, work of the Poitevin cooperative workshop « La Fraternelle ».

© Joël Giraud.

4. Oradour-Fanais : a panel installed near the monument bore the names and portraits of 14 of the 41 dead of the commune.

© Joël Giraud.



CHABANAIS

The monument of patriotic funerary type stands in front of the church of Saint Sebastian. A partially veiled Republic mourns over a soldier's grave symbolized by the helmet and the palm. The « *glorious dead* » (72 for Chabonais) are mourned in a vegetable exuberance of dubious quality.

This sculpture was created in 1922 at a cost of 12,177 francs and is the work of the renowned sculptor Georges Delpérier of Tours, who created nearly 20 monuments including those in Sancerre, Rochechouart and Loches. The detail shows the partially veiled head of Marianne, which reinforces the funerary aspect and is perhaps a discreet religious sign.

ESSE : AN EXTRAORDINARY MONUMENT DESIGNED BY LOCAL ARTIST JEAN TEILLIET

Under an old lime tree (called Sully, like many old trees), the recumbent *poilu* is lying on the bench of the dead, where the coffin used to be placed before being brought into the church. The granite « menhir » or standing stone is actually a piece of the dolmen of Périssat - or Périssac - 4 km from Esse. The inscription on the right of the monument explains the symbolism of the monument and shows an infatuation for a megalithism associated with « *our first ancestors* » : « *Under this secular tree of peace planted by Sully, on this bench of the dead where passed all those who are no more, is deposited the image of our dear children who died for France. In order to honour their memory and not to forget their sublime sacrifice, their names are deeply*

engraved on a granite menhir dominating the cromlech of rustic blocks, sacred enclosure of our first ancestors. ».

The monument was inaugurated in September 1923³. The artist Jean Teilliet enjoyed a certain reputation in our region as well as in Paris. He was born in Saint-Junien in 1870 and died in Lessac (Sainte-Radegonde) in 1931. Specialists of his painting readily classify him as a post-impressionist and rightly insist on his attachment to the traditions of the Limousin and the landscapes of his region. An artist of varied achievements, he was also the founder of the folklore groups of Saint-Germain-de-Confolens and Saint-Junien, attached to the Félibrige to collect Limousin songs and texts. The churches of Esse and Saint-Germain have preserved two of his large paintings in memory of the dead of the First World War.

PURELY FUNERARY MONUMENTS

Pure funerary type monuments are quite rare in our area. Their interpretation is sometimes reinforced by their location.

NIEUIL

In the cemetery, a column topped by a draped urn. No patriotic ornaments and a sober inscription : « *Nieuil to its children* ». 58 deaths for this small commune.

The war memorial in Esse

1. The most original monument of Charente Limousine, designed by the artist Jean Teilliet with fragments of megaliths recovered locally.

© CCCL.

2. The stone recumbent on the bench of the dead is the work of the Parisian sculptor José Martin.

© CCCL.

3. An emphatic inscription emphasizes the patriotic and historically rooted symbolism of the monument.

© CCCL.





The war memorial in Confolens

1. Monument inaugurated in 1928, of funerary type tending towards pacifism with its sculpted group.

© Joël Giraud.

2. « The Confolentaise and the child », the magnificent group sculpted in marble by the Limousin artist Henri Coutheillas. Note the Limousine mourning cloak of the widow.

© Joël Giraud.

3. The resemblance with the widow of the monument of Châlus (Haute-Vienne), also by Henri Coutheillas, is striking but with the cape raised.

© Joël Giraud.





LES PINS

In the cemetery, another draped urn at the top ; below, the palm of the martyrs and the *croix de guerre*. The inscription mentions « *la Patrie* » but the location in the cemetery reinforces the funerary aspect.

CONFOLENS

The location chosen is that of a park at the confluence of the Vienne and Goire rivers. This site was that of a former cemetery but also of the former abattoir, which led to a petition against this location in 1924⁴. The monument cost 61,000 francs and was inaugurated late, on 24 June 1928. The pyramid, designed by the architect Bertheau, bears a sober inscription highlighting the words « *MORTS* » and « *FRANCE* ». 114 names are inscribed on the sides arranged by year of conflict⁵. Below is the group sculpted in marble by the Henri Coutheillas : « *The Confolentaise and the child* ».

The choice of the widow and the child mourning at the grave of the dead soldier gives the monument a distinctly funerary tone. The traditional costume of the widow (headdress and mourning cape folded over the shoulders), her bouquet of flowers, the orphan who holds his hat in his hand reinforce the emotion that shines through the characters. The cross at the feet of the group, the helmet and the palm symbolize the grave of the soldier. Henri Coutheillas (1867-1927) was a recognized and award-winning Limousin artist, creator of other war memorials in the Limousin (Châlus, Bellac, Guéret, etc.) whose sculpted groups resemble the one at Confolens⁶.

SOME FIGURES TO ASSESS THE HUMAN COST IN THE CONFOLENTAIS

The names on the war memorials give a good idea of the human losses (by commune) during the Great War. Other sources, such as the « *Mémoires des Hommes* » website of the Ministry of the Armed Forces, make it possible to modify, on the side, the communal figures by adding, for example, those who are not declared « *Dead for France* ».

Let us also recall the law of 25 October 1919 « *relative to the commemoration and glorification of those who died for France* » of each commune. Communal « *golden books* » were sent late (in 1929) to the mayors for verification and requests for modifications⁷ when the war memorials were already often built. In theory, the « *Dead for France* » mentioned, both in the golden book and on the monuments, are the persons who were born or who resided in the commune at the time of the mobilization. But ambiguities remained on the interpretation of this principle of residence, which explains the differences between the names in the golden books and those inscribed on the monuments. Of course, one must compare these deaths with the data of the last census before the war (1911). The comparison with the number of mobilized men would be even more frightening (about 18%). Do not forget also that 3 seriously injured were counted for one death in the national toll.

Here is the data for our region : Canton of Chabanais : 493 deaths or 3,78 % of the 1911 population ; Canton of Champagne-Mouton : 286

1. Genouillac : two separate monuments for 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. The 1914-1918 monument (on the left) was replaced in 1990 by a simple stele.

© Joël Giraud.

2. Montembœuf (detail) : the draped funerary urn is placed on a column that bears the fasces, a flag and a sword surmounted by a helmet.

© Joël Giraud.

3. Massignac : the *poilu* expiring in the folds of the flag at the feet of the Republic (in the form of a woman) ; work of the sculptor Chartier.

© Joël Giraud.



2



3

deaths or 4,77 % of the 1911 population ; Cantons of Confolens (North and South) : 900 deaths or 4,3 % of the 1911 population ; Canton of Montembœuf : 398 morts or 3,97 % of the 1911 population ; Canton de Saint-Claud : 591 deaths or 4,13 % of the 1911 population ; In total for the district of Confolens : 2 668 morts or 4,16 % of the 1911 population (64 024 inhabitants). The boundaries of the cantons and the district are those of 1914 and not those of today.

FUNDING AND COST OF WAR MEMORIALS

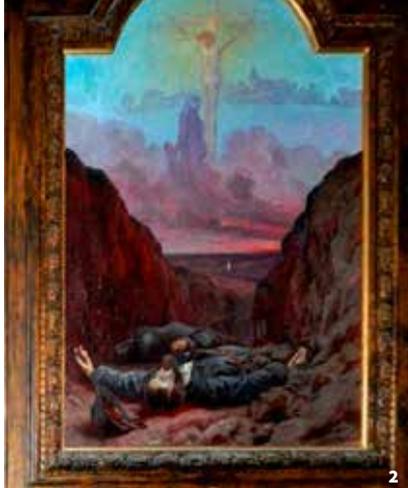
How much does a war memorial cost ? Who funded it and how ? The documentation kept by the town halls sometimes makes it possible to answer these simple questions, but the archives are often lacking, apart from the more succinct communal deliberations on the subject.

Firstly, the funding : it was mainly the responsibility of the communes and their inhabitants. We have the example of Saint-Maurice-des-Lions where the initial project was set at 6,000 francs⁸, the commune planned for an extraordinary taxation (via additional centimes) of 1,500 francs and a voluntary subscription of 1,500 francs. But a council deliberation of 19 November 1922 set the total expenditure at 22,207 francs, an upward drift that can be explained by the post-war inflation and by the choice of a rather expensive sculpture.

Many cases reveal that the sums collected by the subscriptions were disappointing or mediocre, as in Confolens. The most populated communes organized numerous cultural or sporting events⁹ whose profits and collections were to add to the

subscription ; in Chabanaais, an evening organized on 23 May 1920 brought in 2,200 francs¹⁰ which made it possible to reach the tidy sum of 6,377 francs for a monument costing 15,177 francs. Generous notables and patrons, as well as veterans' committees, also put their hands in their wallets. Levies on communal budgets, or even the disposal of property (sale of trees or communal land) were sometimes used.

The share of state subsidies remained modest : The law of 25 October 1919, supplemented by the finance law of 1 July 1920, provided for a double distribution grid. An initial amount was granted in proportion to the percentage of dead (born or residents) in the commune in relation to the population of 1911 (the last census before the war) and varied from 4 to 15% of the cost of the monument project. For our communes, where the percentage of dead was often between 4 and 4.5% of the population, the subsidy was therefore 8%. An additional subsidy was foreseen, varying according to the wealth of the communes, measured by the additional centimes per inhabitant ; from 11% for the poorest communes to 1% for the richest. For the often poor communes of the Confolentais, this share often amounted to 7 or 8% of the project. In total, for our communes of Charente Limousine, the two parts of the subsidy reached, most often, 15 or 16% of the price, more rarely 19 or 20% and sometimes less than 10% for the most well-to-do communes. We can thus see that the State, overwhelmed by expenses and burdens after the war, did little to help the communes to create



their monuments.

As the State, even if impecunious, emained determined to control the realizations of the communes, a departmental commission of artistic evaluation gave its opinion on the projects. Created by the circular of 10 May 1920, this commission was prone to being finicky, demanding modifications or clarifications, quibbling over details, sometimes refusing the project. It must be recognized, however, that these commissions also tried to dissuade the communes from buying industrial productions of dubious quality and questionable taste.¹¹ The communes could override this and some went so far as not to request the modest state subsidy.

This commission also had the task of ensuring the respect of the law of separation of 1905 concerning religious symbols on public monuments¹². However, we know of cases of Christian crosses on communal monuments in our sector : in Verneuil (where the commune was of nationalist tendency)¹³ and in Chassiecq (for a monument in front of the cemetery). Note also that on the back of the Verneuil monument are the names of the town councillors and of the mayor Henri Delavergnas ; the same case of the names of the councillors is found in Chirac ; each one gleaning, as he can, his little piece of immortality.

6,000 francs, the budget devoted to monuments generally remains modest. For some communes, the monuments cost more : Confolens (61,050 francs), Saint-Maurice-des-Lions (22,207 francs), Chabrac (16,950 francs), Chabanais (15,177 francs), Massignac and Pressignac (10,000 francs). The high inflation that followed the war must also be taken into account, the costs which soar with the later monuments such as in Confolens. Some budgets are incomplete because they sometimes overlook the prices of the additional fittings (railings, cement bases, additional plates, etc.) that had to be added.

For about twenty monuments, we know the costs which range from 3,000 francs to 61,050 francs. With an average of 9,878 francs and a median of



3



4



5

1. Chabonais (detail) : a grieving République mourns over the soldiers' graves ; work of a famous sculptor Georges Delpérié from Tours.

© Joël Giraud.

2. Esse : painting by the artist Jean Teilliet in the church of Saint-Étienne.

© Joël Giraud.

3. Saint-Germain : painting by the artist Jean Teilliet in the church of Saint-Vincent.

© Joël Giraud.

4. Palm and *croix de guerre* for a sober plaque in memory of the students of the Confolens college (entrance hall of the present day Émile Roux high school). This patriotic funeral plaque was inaugurated on 1 July 1923 by the school inspector.

© Joël Giraud.

5. An example of a catalogue intended for the communes, that of the foundries of Val d'Osne (Haute-Marne).

© Joël Giraud.



1



2

1. Alloue : civic obelisk decorated with a palm in front of the town hall-school.

© Joël Giraud.

2 and 3. Two examples of religious monuments in churches : the soldier expiring at the foot of the cross in Anzac-sur-Vienne with the intercession of the Virgin (2) ; Joan of Arc near a helmet in Saint-Claud (3).

© Joël Giraud.

4. Roussines : a small and very simple stele made only in 1951.

© Joël Giraud.

COMMUNAL CHOICES FOR THE REALIZATION AND THE CREATORS OF THE WAR MEMORIALS

The first choice for the commune was the location of the monument. The historian Antoine Prost insists on the significance of this choice and distinguishes three main cases : the secular location (town hall, school, etc.) often preferred by councils of radical socialist and left-wing tendencies ; the religious location (cemetery, proximity of the parish church) often preferred by councils of right-wing or traditionalist tendencies ; the indeterminate location or of little significance (public square close to the church and the town hall, crossroads) or the search for equidistance could indicate a desire of nonchoice, or even a moderate tendency, or the simple search for the convenience of an already communal space.

Of the 64 communal monuments studied in Charente Limousine, 19 are at the secular location, sometimes incorporated into the wall of the town hall as in Cherves-Châtelars or on its pediment like the first monument of Exideuil¹⁴; 31 are at the religious location, sometimes directly in the cemetery as in Hiesse, Saint-Adjutory, Les Pins, Saint-Coutant, Nieuil or on an old cemetery (Oradour-Fanais), sometimes just in front of the cemetery (Saulgond, Chassiecq) ; 14 are at an undetermined location or equidistant from the church and the town hall. Note the curious case of Epenède, where the monument, located at a crossroads close to the town hall, stands next to

a mission cross, installed previously, which gives the observers placed in front of the monument the impression that the arms of Christ embrace the quadrangular column of the war memorial.

The second important choice is the type of monument, which obviously determines the cost and also the dedication that will accompany it : the mention of France and the Country, the « glorious children » or the « glorious dead », the « heroes » connote, of course, a patriotic vision, for example « *The commune of Abzac to its glorious dead for the Country* » or in Turgon « *To the children of Turgon dead for France. To our heroes* ». Other communes prefer a sober dedication, « *Anzac to its dead* », or to Pressignac « *To our dead* » ; more curious and rare the association of veterans : « *To the children of Chabrac who died for France and to the veterans* »¹⁵. Other details may also be significant : In what order should the names of the dead be listed ? In alphabetical order ? By year of death ? Should ranks be mentioned ? In his study of the war memorials of the Haute-Vienne, the historian Vincent Brousse read a political orientation into them : « On the one hand, the right-wing town halls, which build quickly, ask for trophies, most often choose the proximity of the church, inscribe the ranks, even hierarchically classify the dead, have inscriptions such as « *Dead for France* » or « *Dead for the Country* », favour the cross, the soldier or On the other hand, the socialist town halls, which delayed or refused the construction of the



monument, always refused trophies, very rarely invited the prefect, preferring a sober inauguration, never inscribing ranks, choosing a neutral, funerary inscription, preferring bare steles without any decoration »¹⁶. He even names communist communes in the Haute-Vienne that waited until well after 1945 to erect a monument (Domsps and Saint-Anne-Saint-Priest).

We have not found such bipolarization in our area and a few examples show that the reality of Charente is much more nuanced : the commune of Verneuil, which erected a monument with verbose and patriotic inscriptions, classifies its dead in alphabetical order without mentioning ranks, others who later prefer a more funerary monument, mention these ranks as in Confolens, a council of radical-socialist tendency.

The choice of themes shows that the *poilus* are in the minority : out of the 64 communal monuments studied, 10 show *poilus* standing or lying (Esse, Massignac) ; they were often ordered from the catalogues that flooded the post-war town halls. Some examples : the « victorious soldier » of Chabrac by the sculptor Leyritz of Paris ; the unarmed *poilu*, scarf in the wind, of Saint-Maurice-des-Lions, work of the sculptor Pourquet of Paris named « In the storm » in the catalogue of the art foundries of Val d'Osne¹⁷ (Haute-Marne near Saint-Dizier) of which we know several dozen cases in France ; the *poilu* at rest with « fixed bayonet » in Pressignac, by the sculptor Camus of Toulouse and that of Saint-

Claud « sentinel » by the same Camus, creator of 679 monuments in France.

The *poilus* were sometimes produced locally or regionally. The one in Saint-Christophe is signed by the workshop La Fraternelle of Poitiers, like many monuments in the Vienne. The one in Le Lindois is the work of Borgioli, a sculptor in La Rochefoucauld. Among the rarities, let us mention the remarkable monument in Esse (of which the artist Jean Teilliet was the architect) and its stone recumbent signed by the Parisian sculptor José Martin¹⁸. The monument in Massignac, with its expiring *poilu*, is the work of the sculptor Albert Chartier from Blois¹⁹. Six monuments have busts (Ansac-sur-Vienne, Cherves-Châtelars and Abzac) or profiles of *poilus* (Lésignac-Durand Pleuville) or even a bas-relief (Mazières). This makes, with the *poilus* standing, not more than 16 monuments. The majority of the monuments in Charente Limousine are generally quadrangular obelisks where the *croix de guerre* (awarded to the dead) and the palm appear next to the names of the dead ; sometimes an urn at the top reinforces the funerary aspect as in Montembœuf, Parzac, Nieuil, Les Pins, Loubert. Some monuments present other themes than that of the *poilu*. The allegory of Victory in Lessac is a work by the prolific sculptor Pourquet ; there are a dozen copies of his « Victory with laurels » in France (in the catalogue of the Val d'Osne foundries). The weeping Republic of Chabanaais is the work of the sculptor Delpérier of Tours (who also created the monument in Rochechouart); the helmeted and armed Marianne in



1. The *poilu* of Saint-Maurice-des-Lions is from the project of the sculptor Pourquet called « In the storm » (*Journal L'art funéraire* of January 1922).
© Joël Giraud.

2. Lesterps (detail) : attached to the railings, helmet, sword and crown, « gift of the town council ».
© Joël Giraud.

3. Saint-Germain-de-Confolens (detail) : the *croix de guerre* is upside down above the broken column.
© Joël Giraud.

4. Les Pins : the veiled urn of a funerary monument in the cemetery.
© Joël Giraud.

Chasseneuil-sur-Bonnieure was made by the sculptor Émile Peyronnet (Parisian born in Charente) - creator of other Charente monuments of quality in Angoulême, Montmoreau, Sainte-Sévère and Saintes. The monument in Confolens is an original work by the Parisian sculptor Henri Coutheillas, a native of Limoges.

Finally, only two cockerels are listed among our monuments, at Brigueuil and at Saint-Laurent-de-Ceris, and their creators are unknown. Sometimes modest monuments were also ordered by catalogue : let us mention the Rombaud company from Jeumont (Nord) which delivered the monuments in Brillac and Oradour-Fanais.

These choices sometimes gave rise to controversy. A national (monthly) newspaper launched in 1919 and intended for town halls, « *Funerary and commemorative art* », sometimes echoes this²⁰. We can read in it in February 1920 a critical article on the allegories of Victory : « *It would be ridiculous to see rising on village squares some of these allegorical figures, which pretend to represent the Victory, and which resemble rather, perched at the top of a pretentious column, rope dancers or balancing acts of a fairground circus* ». Another article of this newspaper, in January 1922, « *The Simony of the cult of the dead* » attacks the « *economic monuments* » proposed by « *odious merchants* » of Italian companies of Liguria which sell « *charming comic opera poilus who swoon* » to penniless communes in France. We have not

found any such creations of Italian origin among our local monuments, subject to a further inventory.

INAUGURATIONS OF THE WAR MEMORIALS

We have been able to find 40 dates of inaugurations out of 64 communal monuments, by scanning the local weekly press (*Républicain confolentais* and *Journal de Confolens*), by probing the archives and council debates and on the website of the University of Lille (<https://monumentsmorts.univ-lille.fr/>).

The dates range from 1921 to 1928 with a peak expected in 1923 (13 inaugurations) and 1922 (8) - for the other dates : 7 in 1921, 5 in 1924, 4 in 1925, 1 in 1927, 2 in 1928.

As for the time of year, one generally waits for the fine season after the completion of the work, but there is no preferred date ; one would expect 11 November²¹ but this has proved to be true in only three cases : Brillac, Lessac, Suaux. 14 July is not a great draw (only one case in Lesterps). Note an incongruous date, 1 April in Massignac. The late dates can be explained by setbacks in construction or orders : the *poilu* in Chabrac in 1927, the « *winged victory* » in Lessac inaugurated in 1928, the monument in Confolens (delayed by the late realization of its sculpted group *La Confolentaise et l'enfant*) inaugurated on 24 June 1928. Note that the most remarkable of our monuments, the one in Esse was inaugurated, like so many others, in 1923 (on 2 September).



There does not seem to be any set conventional order for the ceremony. One finds, as expected, the official speeches (mayor, sub-prefect - the latter not always present, elected officials, deputies and general councillors), the presence of the inhabitants, who contributed to the construction of the monument through their subscription, a brass band, sometimes replaced by children's choirs and poems. The music plays the *Marseillaise*, which is preceded in Brigueuil and Confolens by Chopin's Funeral March or by the *Chant du départ* (Song of Departure) in Chasseneuil-sur-Bonnieure.

In many places, school children recite or sing famous poem « *Hymn* » by Victor Hugo²², from his 1835 collection « *Chants du crépuscule* » (Songs of Twilight) : « *Those who devoutly died for the country / Have the right to have the crowd come to their coffin and pray / Among the most beautiful names their name is the most beautiful / All glory near them passes and falls ephemeral / And, as a mother would do / The voice of a whole people cradles them in their tomb ! / Glory to our eternal France ! / Glory to those who died for her ! / To the martyrs ! To the valiant ! To the strong ! / To those who are inflamed by their example / Who want a place in the temple / And who will die as they died !* ».

More rarely, because it is no longer necessarily the time for the mystical exaltation of the Sacrifice of the combatants, the children recite or sing the verses of « *The hymns to the dead* »²³ by Charles Péguy, killed in the first battles of 1914 :

« *Blessed are those who died, for they have returned / To the first clay and the first earth / Blessed are those who died in a just war / Blessed are the ripe ears and the harvested wheat* » or « *Mother here are your sons and their immense army / May they not be judged on their misery alone / May God put with them a little of this earth / Which lost them so much and which they loved so much* ».

The *vin d'honneur* (reception) was very common but some communes did without it (sometimes voluntarily as in Brillac) and others organized meals as in Massignac on 1 April in the classrooms of the primary school.

What really posed a problem was the participation of the clergy and certain elected officials in a region which was willingly radical in terms of its votes and its personalities. Admittedly, our small region did not experience the violent incidents in the city of Limoges (reported in June 1926 by *L'Écho de Paris*) where fights occurred at meetings prior to a disputed inauguration of the monument of the present day Place Stalingrad inaugurated in 1931 for 4,000 dead; the anti-militarist left (veterans of the ARAC) denounced a warmongering monument (blaming the socialist mayor Léon Betoulle) and distributed leaflets recalling the famous sentence of Anatole France « *you think you are dying for your country, you die for the industrialists* ».

The thorny issue of clergy was often resolved without affecting the consensus around the dead : the blessing of the monument was carried out a few hours before the secular ceremony, in



1. Brillac : example of a monument ordered from a catalogue, here from the company Rombaud of Jeumont (Nord).
© CCCL.

2. Ambernac : placed in front of the church, the ornamentation of the monument is neutral.
© CCCL.

3. Abzac : a bust of a *poilu* sits at the top of the obelisk. Note that the company Rombaud produced the monument of the commune.
© CCCL.

Confolens, for example, at 10 a.m. with a mass attended by many local elected officials in a personal capacity. In Lesterps, the blessing took place at noon, with the communal procession scheduled for 2 p.m.

There were also cases of « unitary » inaugurations : in Esse, absolution was given to the stone recumbent of the monument after the official speeches which had been preceded by a mass in the nearby church of Saint-Etienne ; in Benest, the mass was heard before the names of the dead were called (a call made everywhere). In the latter cases, the speeches were ecumenical, magnifying the *poilu*, the peasant and « the beloved France of Saint-Louis and 89 ». Controversies sometimes followed these outpourings. After the inauguration of the Esse monument in September 1923, the radical newspaper the *Républicain confolentais* accused the right-wing deputy Poitou-Duplessis of having « praised the war », which he fiercely denied in the *Journal de Confolens*. Seeing this, the town councillors of Brillac decided not to invite members of parliament to their inauguration and held an austere ceremony on 11 November 1923, « solely devoted to remembrance, mourning and contemplation ».

Let us end with the case of Chasseneuil-sur-Bonnieure, where the radical mayor (and county councilor) Édouard Pascaud had not invited the clergy and the members of parliament to the inauguration of the monument (the Helmeted Patrie, a sort of secular Joan of Arc) on 6 May 1923. The newspapers *The Matin Charentais* and the *Journal de Confolens* protested : « the only

commune in the Charente whose monument has not been blessed ». The priest of Chasseneuil-sur-Bonnieure « had been invited as secretary of a gymnastics society ». The said newspapers conclude : « These incidents have painfully impressed the Christian families of the commune » despite « the very sacred union speech of a mayor who had voted a motion against the occupation of the Ruhr in the general council ». This example is an exception and the inaugurations of monuments were most often successful demonstrations of unanimity. This was the case in Confolens where even the radical newspaper, the *Républicain confolentais* congratulated « the eloquent sermon of Father Leclerc, president of the association of the disabled ex-servicemen of Charente ».

THE INAUGURATION OF THE WAR MEMORIAL IN CONFOLENS ON 24 JUNE 1928

(according to the *Républicain confolentais*, 24 June 1928 and 1 July 1928)

Instructions given by the proclamation of the mayor Jules Halgand (published in the *Républicain confolentais* on 24 June 1928) : « You will kindly group yourselves in rows of four from 11:45 a.m. on the route de Limoges, along the village hall and the college, the Ladies together, the Men following, at the precise places which will be indicated to you by commissioners. For the ceremony to have the character of contemplation, gravity and simplicity desired by the town council, it must take place in the most perfect order and in as absolute silence as



possible. You will deck your houses with bunting and you will bring flowers: each of you shall have one or two to place at the foot of the monument during the parade.

And so it is that, all united in a feeling of deep gratitude, we pay our dead the solemn homage that their supreme sacrifice deserves. »

The *Républicain confolentais* gives the exact composition of the procession of 3,000 people : « 2:30 p.m., the procession slowly sets off. At the head, a detachment of gendarmerie, the flags of the disabled and veterans, the wards of the Nation, the families of the dearly departed, the glorious disabled. Then the authorities with individual rank ; first Mr Maisonobe, prefect of Charente who wanted to bring the homage of the government of the Republic to the noble children of Confolens ; Mr Poilleux, sub-prefect of the district ; Mr. Halgand, mayor ; Girard and Petit, deputy mayors ; Mrs. Coutheillas, widow of the regretted artist ; the town council ; the architect Mr Élie Berteau, creator of the pyramid of the monument ; Messrs Babaud-Lacroze, Carnot, Daigueplats and Peyraud, county councillors ; Chardat, Desbordes, Feuillet, Morisset and Reix, district councillors and many mayors and town councillors of the surrounding areas. Then come : the veterans of 1870-1871 ; the veterans, ARAC and its flag ; civil servants ; schools : nursery school, Saint-Gauthier school, communal school for girls, Saint-Barthélemy school for boys, Lambert school, Saint-Maxime school for boys, the college ; the Mutual Aid Society of Confolens ; the Mutual Insurance Society of Confolens ; the shopkeepers' association ; the Red Cross ; the Patriotic League of

Frenchwomen, the Sports Society and the population ».

From the long speech of the mayor Halgand, delivered at the reception which followed the inauguration, let us quote some extracts : « Finally, I thank the artists and workers who designed and created the beautiful monument that we have just inaugurated. Placed at the confluence of the rivers Vienne and Goire, in the very heart of the town, where the first town hall once stood in the shadow of which the dead were buried, it will remind succeeding generations of the valour of men but also and above all the pain of mothers and children. Henri Coutheillas expressed this pain with an incomparable mastery in his group that is highlighted by the sober and harmonious pyramid of the architect Mr. Élie Berteau.

I would have liked to (...) express to Coutheillas the gratitude of the Confolentais and the admiration that we have for his talent, but alas ! A few years ago, he went to join in the grave those whom his stone chisel had so well glorified. He was a student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and distinguished himself at the 1899 Salon with « The Oak and the Reed ». His style then asserts itself and develops through a series of masterful works where the idealistic symbolic meaning is combined with naturalness and simplicity : « The End of the Cicada », « The Kiss at the Spring » which adorns the garden of the Elysée, « The Limousin Shepherd » and the whole series of War Memorials where he put all his art and all his heart. Purity of taste, simplicity which brings him closer to nature, artistic conscience pushed to the highest degree, such are the main



1. Inauguration of the war memorial in Confolens on 24 June 1928.

© Joël Giraud.

qualities of the creator of the group of « *The Confolentaise and the child* ». And so, Gentlemen, now that we have paid to our dead the homage they deserve, let us return to the life that calls us and solicits us, to the laborious life, so that we can finish repairing the ruins accumulated by the great storm (...) ».

CONCLUSION THE FUTURE OF THE MONUMENTS

The war memorials of our communes will soon reach their first century of existence. The generation that created them is gone, and the commemorations of 11 November and 8 May no longer have the popular fervour of past decades, when the combatants and their families were still there. It has become a memorial to the victims of wars and conflicts, where local elected officials and memorial associations (with their flags) must be present on a fixed date to deck them¹ with flowers. Even the roll call of the dead, which I had known as a child at the monument, is hardly done anymore.

Already in 1997, Antoine Prost, the historian specializing in war memorials, noted (volume 1 of *Lieux de mémoires*, P. Nora dir. Gallimard) the eminently republican character of these ceremonies at the monuments : « *We are committing a complete misunderstanding by attaching importance only to the presence of the flags* ». He even spoke of « *civic and civil religion* » more than of patriotic or military celebration : he showed that it was the sacrifice of citizens, their suffering and death that the Town honored in its

commemorations, « *because it is profoundly good to do one's civic duty, those who did it must never be forgotten* ». He concluded with bitterness « *A Republic that is neither taught nor celebrated is a dead Republic, that is to say, a Republic for which one no longer dies* ». Who today would dare to repeat, in front of a monument, the famous and ancient Greek quotation of the Spartan warriors at Thermopylae : « *Go tell to Sparta, thou who passest by, that here, obedient to her laws, we lie* » ? A sentence that Malraux quoted again when Jean Moulin was admitted to the Pantheon in 1964. The idea of death (even to save one's country) seems today the height of obscenity for a great majority of French and European people. These communal monuments are the chronological signature of the 20th century in our communal spaces, like the Romanesque churches for the Middle Ages, the town halls, schools and stations for the Third Republic at the end of the 19th century. As such, and as markers of an era and its representations, they deserve recognition and protection : the administration of historical monuments and heritage is not mistaken because the war memorials are beginning to be registered and classified, in short to be protected, especially since the centenary of 1914-1918. In New Aquitaine, the Landes, the Gironde and the Lot-et-Garonne are ahead of Charente and its neighbours. But this is beginning to change and the monument in Esse is the first war memorial to benefit from a well-deserved inscription (regional decree of 2 August 2021) in view of its quality. Others will follow,

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provided their town councils deign to concern themselves with them.

Let us end with a wish : that of safeguarding existing monuments. With more mergers between communes, the tendency will be to «rationalize» and regroup communal monuments in order to centralize commemorations ; already in certain new communes, in Charente and elsewhere, black funerary-type steles, of questionable aesthetics, are replacing the old monuments which are sometimes preserved but also, alas, sometimes destroyed, in a quasi-general indifference Even modest, these communal monuments are our memory of the war and deserve some respect ; the names they bear are sometimes also ours.

READING NOTES

1 - In 1920, the town council of Lessac decided to erect the war memorial in the cemetery ; this decision, taken with a small majority, was quickly contested. After five years of tergiversation, the council opted for the public church square in November 1925. The disappointed minority, led by Mr Le Camus (resident of Boisbuchet and father of a second lieutenant who died in the war) decided to build another monument in the cemetery. This case of disagreement on the location of a monument is not so rare ; even in Confolens the location was contested by a petition.

2 - Cf. the register of council deliberations of Saint-Maurice-des-Lions in November 1922.

3 - The weekly magazine « *L'illustration* » of Paris devoted an article (with photo) to the monument of Esse described as a «remarkable work » in its number 4202 dated 15 September 1923. It is the first war memorial in the Charente region to be listed as a historical monument, after a favourable opinion from the regional heritage commission in March 2021.

4 - On the twists and turns of the realization of the monument of Confolens, see GIRAUD Joël, *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Confolens*, n°34 (1990), « On the war memorial of Confolens, a petition against its location ».

5 - 114 and not 111 as the Confolentais inventory sheet indicates by mistake for the monument of Confolens. Such an error is all the more regrettable in that it was reproduced by thereference site of the University of Lille.



1. Saulgond : example of a monument installed near the religious location - facing the cemetery.

© CCCL.

2. Nieuil : located in the cemetery, the monument is topped by a draped urn.

© CCCL.

3 and 4. Vieux-Cérier : although it is now located near the religious centre (4), this was not the council's initial choice. Moved twice, it occupied a neutral location at a crossroads (3).

© Collection privée (3) ; CCCL (4).

The detail by year is as follows : 22 in 1914, 35 in 1915, 20 in 1916, 11 in 1917, 26 in 1918.

6 - See GIRAUD Joël, *Bulletin des amis du Vieux Confolens*, n°73 (2000), « The war memorials of Châlus and Confolens ».

7 - 120 volumes were to be printed in several copies, one of which would be deposited in the Pantheon, which budgetary constraints prevented. The communal *livres d'or* are accessible online (classed by department) on the site of the national archives linked to « Mémoires des Hommes » of the Ministry of the Army.

8 - One franc in the years 1920-1924 is comparable to one euro in purchasing power in 2020 (INSEE).

9 - Let us mention, in no particular order : theatrical sessions, evenings of entertainment or films, cavalcades with music, concerts, tombolas ; hunting banquets, football matches, sales of commemorative badges ; itinerant collections by ladies or by former poilus and even during parish masses, donations from associations and brotherhoods, etc. In spite of their festive character, which was not very compatible with the tribute to the dead, balls and weddings were not disdained as a source of financing.

10 - Cf. DÉLIAS J. (2019), *Chabanais, Histoire du Monument aux Morts*.

11 - These disputes have not left many traces in the local archives of Charente, but they did exist ; we know of a few documented cases for Corrèze with the study by JOUDIOU B., *Art et mémoire, les monuments aux morts de la Grande Guerre, AD Corrèze*, 2002.

12 - The Law of Separation of December 1905 does not prohibit religious symbols on buildings of worship, on funeral monuments and in cemeteries. A communal monument placed in the cemetery could therefore legally display a Christian cross next to the *croix de guerre* awarded to the dead soldiers. The historian A. Prost (see bibliography) cites cases where councils had crosses placed on monuments outside cemeteries in the consensual atmosphere of the early years of the *National Bloc*

13 - In Verneuil, the council was visibly rightwing, *National Bloc* and Poincarist, with revealing inscriptions on the monument, such as « *Si vis pacem para bellum* » (If you want peace, prepare for war) or « *Dieu et Patrie* » (God and Country).

14 - Cf. DÉLIAS J. (2014), 14-18, *Ceux de chez nous*, Comité des usagers du territoire de la Météorite. This plaque on the pediment (dating from 1920) was removed and replaced by a sober stele on a square near the river Vienne, made in 1943 and inaugurated on 1 November 1943 in the Vichy atmosphere of the time.

15 - In Champagne-Mouton, the inscription is made by the veterans : « *To our dead. The veterans of Champagne-Mouton* ».

16 - Article by Vincent Brousse, « The construction of 14-18 war memorials in Haute Vienne : commemoration, memory or remembrance ? », in *Memory and commemoration, a day of study on Saturday 28 January 1995*, Limoges.



17 - This company is known for its many cast iron creations, including the Wallace fountains in Paris, the art nouveau candelabras in the metro and the creation of 385 monuments in France.

18 - Very probably a friend or an acquaintance of Jean Teilliet ; according to the website of the University of Lille on the authors of war memorials, this artist was originally from the Jura : « He left for the United States in 1927, along with a sculptor friend, Raoul Josset. They both settled in Dallas around 1936 and carried out their professional activities in a prolific and recognized manner. »

19 - Albert-Louis Chartier (1898-1992), a wounded and gassed veteran, divided his time between Paris and Blois. He is also the creator of a monument to the memory of marshal Maunoury in Mer (Loir-et-Cher), created in 1926, and of numerous busts in our museums.

20 - This monthly magazine praised the achievements of the Parisian sculptor Pourquet and also proposed ready-to-use « speech models » for inaugurations. Cf. the website of the University of Lille in the author section « Pourquet ».

21 - Remember that it was the law of 24 October 1922 that made 11 November a national holiday. The law of 25 October 1919 relating to the commemoration and glorification of those who died for France during the Great preferred (in its article 6) an annual ceremony « *on 1 or 2 November, a ceremony will be dedicated in each commune to the memory and glorification of the heroes who died for the country* ». All Saints Day, or

Day of the Dead, almost replaced 11 November. It was the strong pressure of veterans' associations that imposed 11 November, which was also the date of the burial of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe, Place de l'Étoile, in 1920.

22 - This famous poem, initially written to celebrate the heroes of the July 1830 revolution, was set to music several times, including one by the musician Henri Rabaud in 1920 and another by Gustave Goublier in 1923.

23 - Charles Péguy's *Hymn to the dead* was set to music by the composer Henry Février in 1915 ; it was performed at the inauguration of the monument in Confolens in June 1928. Cf. the *Journal de Confolens* of 1 July 1928.

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1. Montrollet : the commune affixed a plaque to the monument to complete its list.
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Christine Bonneton, Clermont-Ferrand.

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USEFUL SOURCES AND WEBSITES

Archives :

In addition to the communal archives which have sometimes preserved copious files with plans and correspondence, as in Confolens, the researcher can also consult the series E-deposit of the Departmental Archives of the Charente, as well as in the series T (Cultural Affairs) the set of documents 9T 141 prov « commission for the examination of the War Memorials in Charente ». This set includes the files of the communes that had to present their projects to the « artistic evaluation commission », a departmental body that often asked for minor modifications before giving its approval, which gave access to the state subsidy provided for by the law of 25 October 1919.

Useful websites :

Full links are provided on the following page.

WAR MEMORIALS OF CHARENTE LIMOUSINE – REMEMBRANCE OF THE GREAT WAR TYPES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

USEFUL WEBSITES TO DISCOVER THE WAR MEMORIALS IN CHARENTE AND CHARENTE LIMOUSINE

- Inventory of the Poitou-Charentes heritage - three links :

1) 14-18 : War memorials made by the Poitevin sculptors Albert Désoulières and Delphin Pelletier (2008).

<https://inventaire.poitou-charentes.fr/operations/les-objets/157-decouvertes/1067-14-18-des-monuments-aux-morts-realises-par-les-sculpteurs-poitevin-s-albert-desoulieres-et-delphin-pelletier>.

2) The allegories of the République on the war memorials in Poitou-Charentes (2008).

<https://gertrude-diffusion.poitou-charentes.fr/dossier/les-allegories-de-la-republique-sur-les-monuments-aux-morts-en-poitou-charentes-presentation/84b60533-30ae-4793-b5f4-018f1d57e167>

3) War memorials of the Confolentais (2007).

This file has only listed the monuments of the communes of the former Communauté de communes du Confolentais and contains a few errors, one of which is regrettable concerning the number of dead on the monument in Confolens.

<https://gertrude-confolentais/a45d8a7d-bbd9-4adf-9f0c-eb0dff6c684a>

- The database « Monuments aux morts » of the University of Lille is a worldwide reference ; for the Charente, 386 monuments are listed and the biographical dictionary of the authors of the monuments is a real mine of information.

<https://monumentsmorts.univ-lille.fr>

- The web portal MémorialGenWeb lists those who died for France on monuments and proposes many old postcards ; the census of the dead gives the inscriptions on the monuments in a more systematic and precise way than the site of the University of Lille ; it also gives the lists of the communal golden books and the Ministry of pensions.

<https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr>

- The Geneanet site specializing in genealogy also lists Charente monuments.

<https://www.geneanet.org/monuments-aux-morts/geo/FRA/F16/france-charente>

- Alain Choubarde's site (2007) on the sculpted war memorials of the First World War in France is worth a visit, for its index of sculptors and architects.

https://www.monumentsauxmorts.fr/cariboost1/crbst_137.html

« MOTHER, BEHOLD YOUR SONS WHO FOUGHT SO HARD. LET THEM NOT BE JUDGED AS ONE JUDGES A SPIRIT. RATHER, LET THEM BE JUDGED AS ONE JUDGES AN OUTCAST WHO RETURNS HIDDEN ALONG FORGOTTEN PATHS. »

Charles PEGUY, extract from the poem « Eve », 1913.

Tales of the Confolentais, Land of art and history...

... in the company of guides approved by the Ministry of Culture. They know the area perfectly and give you the keys to understanding a building, a landscape, a town and a village from one district to another.

The Confolentais (in Charente Limousine) is a member of the national network of Towns and Lands of art and history

Inside the Ministry of Culture, the General Directorate of Heritage awards the label « Towns and Lands of art and history » to local authorities that promote their heritage. It guarantees the expertise of the guides, those involved in promoting architecture and heritage and the quality of their actions. From architecture to landscapes, the towns and lands show heritage in all its diversity. Today, a network of 202 towns and lands offers its expertise throughout France.

The Heritage service leads the « Land of art and history » agreement signed between the Charente Limousine Community of communes and the Ministry of Culture. It organizes various activities to discover and promote the territory's heritage to its inhabitants and visitors. It is at the disposal of the communes and local structures for any project

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