The Cabouillet Bridge

The bridge was constructed at the beginning of the 16th century (probably around 1500) at the request of Antoine de Villiers, Lord of L'Isle Adam. The name comes from the old French word "cabouiller" meaning "stir" which refers to the technique of swirling the silt in the river to attract the fish to ensure a good catch.

The bridge is 34.97 metres long and 10.10 metres wide and its three stone arches join the Cohue Island to the town of L'Isle Adam. Up until 1866 all vessels transporting goods passed under the bridge. These vessels were pulled by horses as combustion engines were yet to be invented.

Navigating the passage under the bridge was not easy due to the bend in the river. It was the task of the "Compagnons de L'Arche" (Companions of the Arch), under the command of the "Maître du Pont" (Master of the Bridge), to help the vessels pass under the bridge using guide ropes and thus avoid hitting the stone pillars. The companions looked to St Nicholas to protect them.

The Cabouillet Bridge is the only bridge in L'Isle Adam that remains largely intact, apart from a few marks on the archways from wear from tow ropes. In 1663 it underwent a major restoration as the first arch on the L'Isle Adam side had collapsed - a consequence of damage during periods of war and a lack of maintenance.

It was also necessary to reinforce the abutments, the pillars and the ledges. On 14th July 1663 following a decision from the Council of State, François Le Vau, engineer and architect for King Louis XIV, was given the task of repairing the bridges in L'Isle-Adam. He wrote to the government minister Colbert and settled on a detailed quote from a contractor called Urbain Nion. The deal was reached on 28th July 1663 for the sum of 21,690 livres for the repair of all three bridges in L'Isle-Adam. The work was due to be finished before the winter of that year, however was only finally completed in January 1666!

Up until the end of the 18th century the Moulin, Cabouillet and Croix bridges were maintained by the Town Hall in Paris.

In September 1944 the Cabouillet Bridge narrowly escaped being damaged by American engineers. They had attached the cables of a powerful crane to the bridge in order to provisionally lift the deck of the Grand Bridge which had been bombed by the Germans just before their retreat.

On Saturday 27th September 2003 the Deputy Mayor, Axel Poniatowski, in the presence of François Scellier (President of the Conseil Général) and Roland Guichard (Mayor of Parmain) inaugurated the three newly restored bridges which join L'Isle Adam to the neighbouring town of Parmain. The work had taken nine months to complete. The pavements had been widened and candelabra-style lighting put in place to highlight the bridges at night fall. For the Cabouillet Bridge, which was classed as an historical monument on 20th November 1936, subtle inset lighting was chosen.