

## Enclosed well Auzouville-sur-Ry



The enclosed well, view of the crank handle with non-return pawl © Département de la Seine-Maritime

Near the church and town hall in the centre of the village is an enclosed and covered well of typical 19<sup>th</sup>-century design. When originally built it was in a field of a farm that once belonged to the lordly estate, now long since vanished, and the council acquired it in 2008.

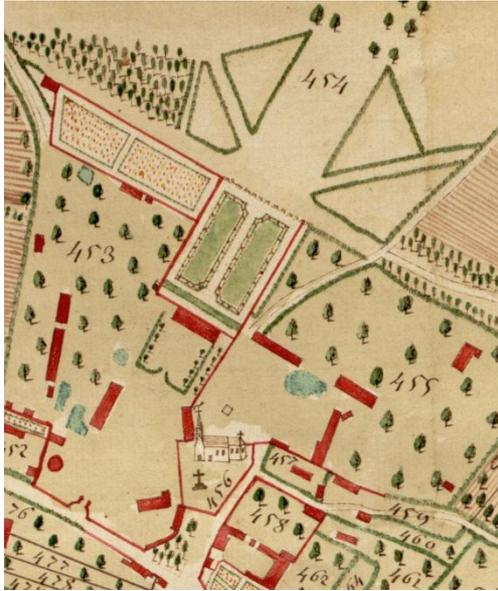
A survey plan drawn up in 1750 of the parish of Auzouville-sur-Ry shows signs of the well to the south of the church. The church and the presbytery themselves were on plots of land belonging to Sieur (Sir) Louis Léonor Pierre Lecarpentier, Lord of Auzouville and Rotoir, and Councillor to the Norman Parliament. The fiefdom of Auzouville-sur-Ry was a very old *demi-fief de haubert* - a half-fiefdom awarded to a knight rewarding his military service - and held under the barony and high justice of Périers-sur-Andelle.

The various survey plans and associated terriers preserved in the archives of le Département de la Seine-Maritime show residential farm buildings, barns, stables and a dovecote not far from the manor house and its formal gardens. The plans also show orchards, hedges and a pond.

The pond provided water for the people and animals until the 18th century when the well became the principal source for the farm and village by freely exploiting the underlying water table. No documents allow us to say when precisely the well in Auzouville was dug.

A Napoleonic-era land register from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century lists a building on the site of the well. What can we deduce from this? Could the well have been enclosed? Was it incorporated into the structure, or simply overlooked by the surveyor? No one can say for sure.

Nevertheless, the well reappears on the 1934 land register and according to local memory, the well was still in use until the installation of the mains water supply in the 1960s, which of course meant people now had to pay for their water.



Survey map of the parish of Auzouville-sur-Ry, in the barony of Périers-sur-Andelle, drawn up in 1750 by Sieur (Sir) Poulain, surveyor of the king's forests (ADSM terriers 128 and 12 Fi 78) © Département de la Seine-Maritime

The Auzouville well is enclosed and covered, water is drawn from a depth of around 60 metres and deposited outside. Both the mechanism and the architecture are typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The original well was probably of a more traditional type, possibly with a simple stone coping.

Having fallen into disuse after mains water supply arrived in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the well slowly fell into disrepair until the commune acquired it in 2007. Restoration work was carried out between 2009 and 2012 by volunteers, who cleared the brush, rebuilt the masonry, repointed the brickwork and put the well back into working order.



The well before its restoration © Municipalité d'Auzouville-sur-Ry

The building's structure was rebuilt as close as to the original as possible using materials found on-site or recycling materials from elsewhere. Old photographs helped in determining the proportions of the roof timbers.



Installation of the new roof timbers, 2012 © Municipalité d'Auzouville-sur-Ry



Roof structure viewed from the inside © Département de la Seine-Maritime

The well shaft was dug directly into the chalk and then lined to a height of 5 metres by flint masonry. The building itself is an octagonal brick construction with eight semi-circular arched openings, six of which are sky-lights, and two opposing wooden-lattice doors. The octagonal roof is slate on a gable roofing framework. On either side, a crank handle operates the mechanism, with a tap to collect the water drawn.

The drawing mechanism consists of the crank with a non-return pawl outside, which activates a gear system inside. This, in turn, is connected to a shaft and a pulley. Two buckets with metal handles hang on each side of the pulley from chains.



View of the inside and the mechanism's gear, pulley, bucket handle and reservoir © Département de la Seine-Maritime



Crank handle with non-return pawl © Département de la Seine-Maritime

Turning the crank raised one of the two buckets filled with water while the other, empty bucket descends into the well. Hooks caught the full bucket as it rose and emptied it into the 120-litre reservoir. The water then flowed out through a drain tap. At the same time, the empty bucket at the bottom rose by releasing the non-return pawl next to the crank handle, reversing the direction of rotation. With this system, a large volume of water can be drawn up very quickly.

Even though the mechanism is in working order, it is no longer in use because a metal grating now covers the well shaft.

The roof slates and timbers, the oak doors and the zinc reservoir were all made by local craftsmen.

There are other preserved wells in the area, but none of them possesses the same features. Some are enclosed by slatted wooden frames, or covered with a slate, thatch or tile roof. Their ways of drawing water are more straightforward, with the bucket hoisted by hand or with the aid of a horse. The Auzouville well is therefore quite unique!