



L'Isle-Adam

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The De la Croix or Grand Bridge

This bridge links the Priory Island, where the Château Conti is located, to the Cohue Island. It was probably under the rule of Antoine de Villiers of L'Isle-Adam that this stone bridge was constructed. It comprises one single arch of 18.20 metres. Like the Moulin Bridge it was restored in 1663. Important repairs were needed especially on the part across from the Priory Island. The work was only completed in January 1666. Five years later, the Princess Martinozzi, widow of Armand de Bourbon Conti, explained to the government minister Colbert the need to maintain the bridges in L'Isle-Adam. During the harsh winters, particularly in 1709, the bridge had suffered damage from floods and blocks of ice flowing down the river. In the summer of 1717, following a request from Louis-Armand de Bourbon Conti to his Parliament, the bridge was rebuilt. The project was carried out by Jacques Gabriel, who later became architect for King Louis XV.

Prince François-Louis de Bourbon Conti had a stone cross placed in the middle of the bridge underneath which was his coat of arms, hence the name Pont de la Croix - Bridge of the Cross. It was also known as the Cohue Bridge due to the name of the neighbouring island. In 1793 the town council decided to remove the Conti coat of arms which was a symbol of royalty and the domination of the Princes.

In 1866 a second stone arch measuring 18m was added to the bridge to counteract the widening of the river which could have threatened the Cohue Island. Under this arch a 4m towpath was constructed. The shape of the Cohue Island was excavated to facilitate the passage of boats and the small island located upriver was removed. The bridge was extended from 18.20 metres to 40.95 metres. These changes meant that the features which gave the bridge its name, no longer existed.

On 14th September 1870 as the German army approached, French troops bombed one of the bridge's arches (the oldest one, next to the Priory Island). It was against this demolished arch that the francs-tireurs constructed their barricade to confront the Prussians. In 1871 a provisional bridge was built using private funds so a toll was introduced in order to recover the money.

It was only in 1872 that the old bridge was demolished and a new bridge with a metal bridge deck and one single arch was constructed between the two islands. The bridge rested on the old fortified abutments. During testing of the bridge on 26th June 1872, cracks appeared in the masonry of the abutments on the left bank and the bridge deck disintegrated and came to rest on the old pillar, which was luckily still standing. The abutments were subsequently strengthened and the bridge deck put back into place around 1874. The bridge was 41.36 metres long and 8.9 metres wide and was named "Grand Pont" - Large Bridge - due to the river having been widened to facilitate the passage of barges. The foundations of the old central stone pillar were only removed in June 1900 at which time the foundations of the abutments were also rebuilt.

On 3rd September 1914 and again on 10th June 1940, French troops bombed the bridge. A provisional footbridge was installed in 1941 whilst a new bridge was constructed. The Germans destroyed the bridge on Wednesday 30th August 1944 (day of the liberation of the town) around 11.25am before they retreated. The final bridge with its current dimensions - 41 metres long and 9.5 metres wide - was constructed in 1948.

In September 1992 the bridge, also known as the "arche marinière" - named after French sailor suits - was re-waterproofed.

Until the end of the 18th century, the upkeep of the Moulin, Cabouillet and De la Croix bridges was the responsibility of the Paris city council.

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.

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