



# A-Z of the Communes in the Deux-Sèvres

## Romans

by Sue Burgess

**R**omans is part of the *Arc en Sèvre communauté de communes*. The inhabitants of the commune of Romans are known as *les Romanais* and *les Romanaises*. The 718 inhabitants of the village live on a total surface area of 11km<sup>2</sup> and the population density is 65 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. Between 1999 and today, the population has increased from 523 to 718.

The neighbouring communes are Prailles, Sainte-Néomaye, Souvigné, Saint-Martin-de-Saint-Maixent and Aignonay. Niort is 19km to the west. In 1099 the village was called Rumancio. This became Romanz in local language.

### A VOIR / MUST SEE

#### St Symphorien Church

In 1099 the Bishop of Poitiers, Pierre II, gave the church of Romans to the abbey at Saint Maixent. This donation was confirmed by Pope Pascal II in 1110. The church became a priory of the abbey and remained so until the revolution. The priest was nominated by the abbot. The church is dedicated to St Symphorien, a 3<sup>rd</sup> century martyr.

The original romanesque church was sold by the state in 1798 for 4600 francs, as they considered it to be public property. It is today used for storage but the doorway and some of the sculptures on the cornice can still be seen.

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was decided to build a parish church. Because there was not enough money, the project for the transept was abandoned and the tower was only finished in 1873. Having been badly built, the church was repaired and rebuilt in 1881. It has 12 blue and gold painted crosses on the north and south walls dating from its consecration. There are six statues in the church. The *way of the cross* was donated to the parish in 1863, and consists of lithographies that have been coloured by hand.

## La Ronde



In a by-law issued from the prefecture, the communes of La Ronde, Montigny and Saint-Marsault were associated with the commune of La Forêt-sur-Sèvre in 1973. Today the commune is part of the *agglomération du Bocage Bressuirais*. The commune of La Ronde was awarded *two flowers* in 2017 by the national council of flower decorated towns and villages.

Augustin de Hargues d'Estivau was born sometime between 1762 and 1770. He was the son of the farmer of la Jobtière, a noble house on the commune of La Ronde. Well educated and well off he joined the Vendéen armies in the summer of 1792 and took part in the rebellion of Bressuire. After the failure of this rebellion, he took refuge with relatives in the Anjou region, the Cesbron

family. He was arrested and then freed by the rebels in 1793. When he returned to La Châtaigneraie in August 1793 he took over command. He was captured during a battle and taken to Rennes where he was guillotined in December 1793.

## Rorthais

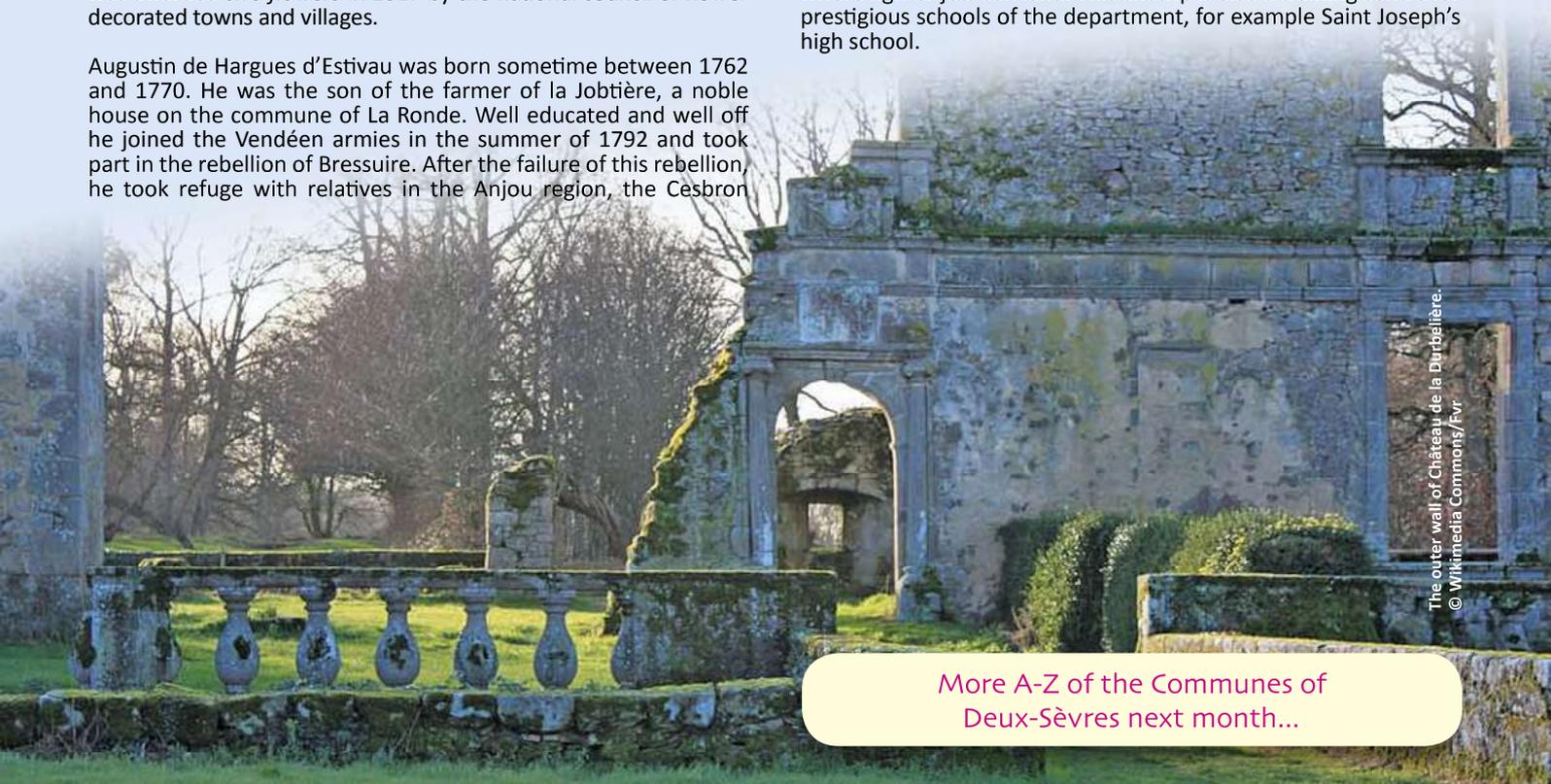
Situated in the North-West of the Deux-Sèvres, near the departments of Maine-et-Loire and Vendée, Rorthais is an ancient commune associated with the commune of Mauléon.

A noble family bears the name of the commune. The lords of Rorthais were the guardians of the town. The Rorthais family (who had their title bestowed on them under Saint Louis) had the Château de la Durbelière built on the site of an older building, at Saint-Aubin-de-Baubigné (a commune now associated with Mauléon), between 1440 and 1460. The tower and the outer wall with its corner turrets still stand. The château was altered and changed at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The moat was added and the entrance porch built. The date 1631, and the coat of arms of Renée de Rorthais and her husband, Pierre de Meulles, are still visible. The former servants' quarters which is 80m long and closed the courtyard, has now become farm buildings.

The Château de la Durbelière was given, through marriage, to the Vergier de la Rochejaquelein family in 1769. Henri de la Rochejaquelein was born there in August 1772. It was in the courtyard of the castle that the young man who had become general of the royal catholic army (after the death of the Marquis of Lescure), pronounced his famous words on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1793 "*Si j'avance, suivez-moi, si je recule, tuez-moi, si je meurs, vengez-moi*" (If I go ahead, follow me, if I retreat kill me, if I die, avenge me).

During the fighting between 1793 and 1794, the Château de la Durbelière was set on fire five times by the republican troops of General Westermann. The ruins of la Durbelière, surrounded by ponds and trees, still belong to the descendants of La Rochejaquelein.

The commune of Rorthais developed in the domains of industry and aeronautics. Its industrial zone attracted highly skilled businesses like *Heuliez Bus*, *Go Plast* and *Unibat*. There is an airstrip where fighter jets can land. This airstrip is also a training centre for prestigious schools of the department, for example Saint Joseph's high school.



The outer wall of Château de la Durbelière. © Wikimedia Commons/Fur

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