

# FOCUS

# CALAIS CITY HALL

# AND BELFRY



VILLES  
& PAYS  
D'ART &  
D'HISTOIRE

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**In 1885, the City Hall and its belfry symbolised the union of two towns: Calais, a medieval, fortified, military port town, and Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais, a rural, market-gardening town which developed, urbanised and industrialised at great speed during the 1850s with the lacemaking mono-industry, following the arrival of tulle machines from England in 1816, to which the punch-card Jacquard system would be adapted to create patterns and backgrounds at the same time.**

**This unification allowed Saint-Pierre to gain a new administrative scope, while the medieval city expanded beyond its walls and benefitted from a flourishing industry. Following this union, the new city of Calais became the department's largest urban area. Before the merger, however, each municipality had its own town hall – that of Calais adjoined a medieval belfry, which has since disappeared, while Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais had a neo-classical 19<sup>th</sup>-century building, today home to the courthouse.**

**The merger decree established the launch of a national architectural competition for the construction of a new city hall to symbolise the new unified city. Its chosen location was an unoccupied space at the junction of the two municipalities.**

***Today, Calais, an old fortified city, the birthplace of Leavers mechanical lace, a martyr city and the leading European passenger port, is an important town within the Hauts-de-France region.***

# THE ORIGINS OF CALAIS

## **IN THE BEGINNING, A TOWN CALLED «KALEIS»**

Before the Count's first interventions, this city-in-the-making consisted of a small dry harbour, adjoined by a handful of houses. Its first inhabitants lived on livestock farming and fishing in particular. To the south, another hamlet – whose earliest occupation may date back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century – gradually formed under the name of Pétresse, upon the site of the future suburb of Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais. In the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Mathieu, Count of Boulogne, established a first village under the Celtic toponym of Kaleis, a name which became Calais over the years. This town's first administration is evidenced by the creation of a municipal charter.

## **THE MUNICIPAL CHARTER AND THE SEAL**

At this time, the town had already established itself as a port dedicated to trade and herring fishing, as well as a privileged point of passage to England. Its true foundation would be materialised by the charter of customs, also known as the municipal charter, granted in 1881 by Mathieu's son-in-law, Gérard de Gueldre. This provided for the election of and allocation of powers to aldermen, appointed from among the bourgeois and the mayor. In the Middle Ages, power was organised around the principles of the feudal system. Lords granted domains to their vassals, in exchange for services. Cities, however, developed outside of this pyramid structure and enjoyed a certain autonomy. As a result, these towns formalised their independence and were granted administrative, judicial and commercial privileges,

set out in a charter. This official document, bearing a seal, therefore guaranteed the rights of the bourgeois.

## **THE CROWN JEWEL**

For 211 years, Calais was the jewel in England's crown. The city was conquered by Edward III, becoming the Pale of Calais, a veritable continental pied-à-terre spanning around 20 kilometres around the city, offering England privileged military access to the continent and a naval base from which to control the strait. The city was also a major trading port. In 1558, Calais became French again – with a brief period of Spanish control between 1596 and 1598.

## **19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: THE MARITIME CITY**

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century marked both the end of commercial raiding and the development of new maritime activities, such as passenger transport and the port industry. In 1815, the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte's (1769–1821) imperial regime led to a gradual warming of Franco-British relations. The growth of passenger transport between Calais and Dover began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This traffic brought about the construction of two ferry terminals to accommodate these ever-more-numerous ships. The port then underwent two successive expansion campaigns during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, accompanied by an industrial site. This also saw the rise of the seaside resort, with facilities such as the casino erected on the beach.



### **THE OLD TOWN HALL AND BELFRY OF CALAIS NORD**

The former town hall was built on the Place d'Armes during the English period, with a belfry modified in 1609. During this English period, the belfry was used by the merchants of the wool staple, who held their meetings there. The town hall served as a courthouse, a court and even a chamber of commerce. The whole ensemble was rebuilt in 1840 over four levels, including a three-floor octagonal belfry – with the latter playing *La Gentille Annette*, by French composer Boieldieu, every hour. Three years after the two towns' merger, in February 1892, the decision was made to transform the building, unused since 1885, into a museum. A canopy was then constructed on its roof. Sadly, however, in the aftermath of World War II, the bombed building lay in ruins, resulting in its destruction.

### **19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: THE INDUSTRIAL CITY**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the continental blockade imposed on the British Isles by Napoleon I marked the economic, social and cultural life of the new city of Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais thanks to the unprecedented development of the English tulle industry on French soil. The Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais tulle industry experienced a significant boom, at the expense of Calais – which prohibited the work of noisy trades at night within the city walls.

Technical progress followed, with the addition of Jean Marie Jacquard's (1772–1834) creation: the Leavers machines.

### **THE FORMER SAINT-PIERRE-LÈS-CALAIS TOWN HALL**

As the first public building erected on Place Crève-cœur, the current courthouse was originally home to the Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais town hall. Its construction was entrusted to Amédée Stensmaght, who opted for a rigorous neo-classical style, which was very popular at the time. Works commenced in 1858 and were completed in 1861, resulting in a massive building whose pilasters punctuating the main facade give the building an appearance reminiscent of an ancient temple. After the 1885 merger, it became the provisional town hall of the unified Grand Calais, before being transformed into a courthouse in 1929. At this time, its internal layout was redesigned: the ground-floor offices were modified, with the Great Hall on the first floor divided to create the two courtrooms and the court's entrance vestibule.

**1. View of the watchtower and the old Calais belfry and town hall on Place d'Armes**

© City of Calais

**2. View of the old Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais town hall on Place Crève-cœur**

© City of Calais

# FROM THE PLAINE DU SAHARA TO THE PLACE DU SOLDAT INCONNU

## THE PLAINE DU SAHARA

The location chosen for the construction of the new city hall would be the Plaine du Sahara, a 23,000 m<sup>2</sup> central plot between Calais and Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais. This unoccupied space owes its name, referring to the Sahara Desert, to its sandy soil. Its official name was Place Centrale, later becoming Place de l'Hôtel de Ville from 1919. In 1929, it was rebaptised Place du Soldat Inconnu, its current name.



## A MULTI-FUNCTIONAL SQUARE



The first photo (1) shows a hospice in the bottom left, the monument of French Remembrance in the centre, inaugurated in 1904, and, on the square itself, a horse auction.

In 1902, the Barnum Circus was installed there (2), as the only space large enough to accommodate the huge three-track marquee. This circus arrived by train (the Buffalo-Bill circus would later be established in 1905). The picture is taken from one of the windows of the hospice.

Under the magistracy of Émile Salembier, an international fair was organised in Place Centrale. High wooden palisades surround the plain, behind which various stands were set up.

As a result of a lack of funding for the city hall's construction, the city rented part of the Plaine du Sahara in 1895 for the construction of a velodrome. This cement track measured 333.33 metres. Ultimately, the velodrome was destroyed in 1907. The aerial photo (3) dates from 1921. The city hall was not yet completed at this time, with the Place du Soldat Inconnu still a construction site. On the second photo (4), taken by the Compagnie Aérienne Française in 1930, the city hall is completed surrounded by grass beds that can still be seen today. In the inter-war period, the square remained a sandy, largely undeveloped space. After the war, it was laid out with flowerbeds to draw a large, semi-elliptical forecourt before the main facade. On the rear and sides, squares planted with trees were created.



**1. View of the Plaine du Sahara, current Place du Soldat Unknown**

© City of Calais

**2. View of the Plaine du Sahara from the Barnum Circus**

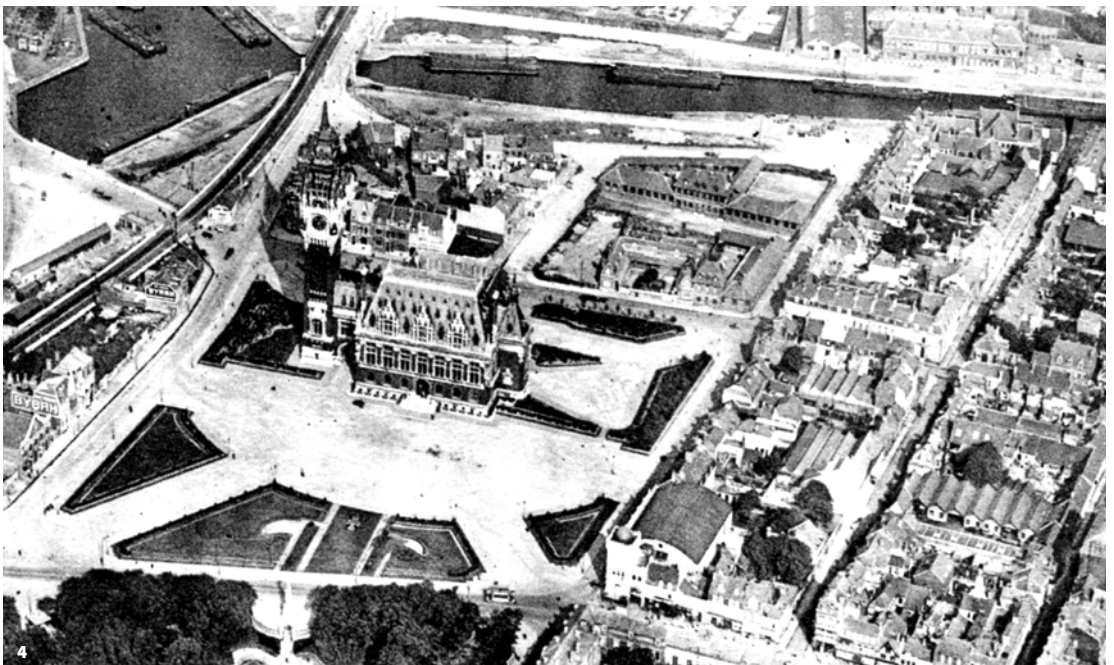
© City of Calais

**3. View of Calais City Hall and its square in 1921**

© Compagnie Aérienne Française

**4. View of Calais City Hall and its square in 1930**

© Compagnie Aérienne Française



# BUILDING THE NEW CITY HALL



## THE NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION

The national architectural competition was launched in 1887. This programme, established by the city of Calais, was fully aligned with the public architecture of the Third Republic – like the neo-Renaissance city halls of Neuilly-sur-Seine or Limoges, made up of two lateral wings framing a central pavilion and topped by bell towers of varying heights.

## 95 PROJECTS

The architectural competition was launched for the new city hall's design and construction, with specifications making reference to the city halls of Limoges and Neuilly-sur-Seine. The municipality received 95 projects, including plans from such renowned architects as Anatole de Baudot, Hector Guimard and Louis Cordonnier.

First prize was awarded to Paul Wallon, second to Paul Héneux, third to Jean Bréasson and fourth to the firm of Émile Decroix and Louis Douillet. These projects were mostly in the neo-Renaissance style, which was very popular at the time.

## TWISTS AND TURNS

A problem arose upon the selection of the competition's winner. The initial budget of 800,000 francs provided by the city hall had not been respected. The city hall's construction was therefore left hanging. In 1901, the municipality decided to entrust the project to the architects É. Decroix and L. Douillet, even though they had placed fourth in the competition. Paul Wallon

expressed his disapproval, to no avail.

In 1906, the Decroix project was modified to better meet the needs of a city of this scale. However, no unanimous decision was reached, with suggestions such as the addition of a belfry like that of the city hall of Dunkirk proposed by the architect Louis Cordonnier.

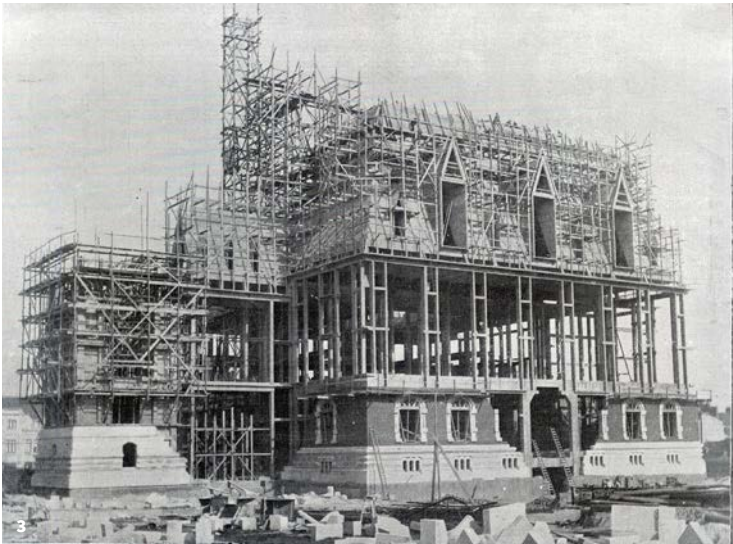
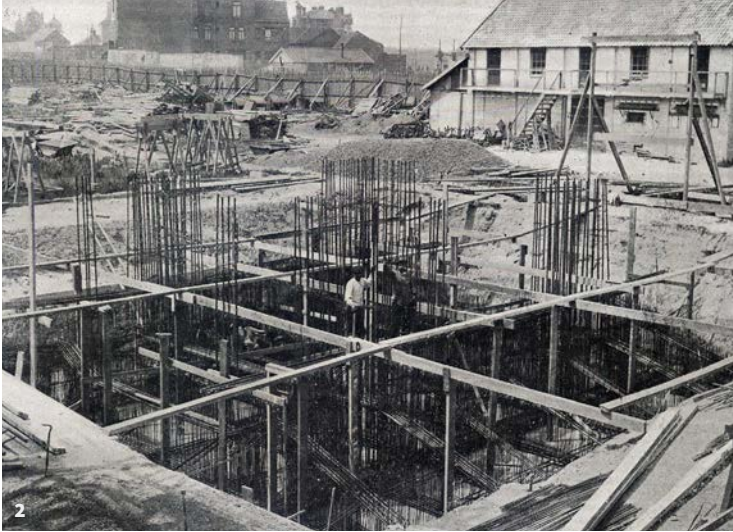
## LOUIS DEBROUWER

In 1908, Louis Debrouwer, an architect at the Decroix firm and friend of the new mayor of Calais Émile Salembier, was charged with carrying out the new plans. Works began in 1911, but they would very quickly be forced to a halt by the outbreak of World War I. Apart from some minor damage to the facade, the building's structure remained largely unharmed by the bombs, with construction resuming after the war.

## REINFORCED CONCRETE

A material until then almost exclusively reserved for the industrial sector, Louis Debrouwer became one of the front-runners in the use of reinforced concrete, selecting this material for a civil building with an extremely slender post-and-beam structure. The savings offered by this material and the technical possibilities of this construction process – in particular the reduction in wall width and lightening of the structure – made it possible to attach a 75-metre-high belfry. Concrete clashed with contemporary tastes and habits. However, the framework is hidden behind a cladding considered more noble – such as limestone – while the posts were integrated into the walls.





**1. Decroix city-hall project section plan, 1888**

© City of Calais

**2. View of the City Hall's foundations**

© City of Calais

**3. View of the City Hall's construction**

© City of Calais

# THE ARCHITECT, LOUIS DEBROUWER (1879-1967)



## **LOUIS DEBROUWER (1879-1967)**

Louis Léon Eugène Debrouwer, originally from Dunkirk, studied at the Paris School of Fine Arts and graduated in 1908. He was one of few architects of the time to obtain the title of D.P.L.G. Architect (government-certified). That same year, just round the corner from the Calais train station upon return from England, the architect crossed paths with the former mayor of Calais, Émile Salembier. While the city hall's construction was interrupted due to technical projects with the Decroix-Douillet project, Calais was on the hunt for a new architect. It was then that Debrouwer's career was launched. His eclectic works combine and draw inspirations from various architectural styles: Art Deco, neo-Flemish and neo-Renaissance.

For him, Calais was a starting point, with the construction of the new city hall, commenced in 1911. Among other constructions, he designed the Touquet-Paris-Plage Town Hall, the now lost Royal Picardy Hotel in Touquet and the Dervaux Hotel in Boulogne-sur-Mer.



**1. Architect Louis Debrouwer**

© Wikipedia

**2. City Hall model**

© City of Calais

**3. View of the City Hall**

© City of Calais

**FLEMISH NEO-RENAISSANCE STYLE**

The building's construction ran from 1911 to 1924, before finally being inaugurated in 1925. This monumental building has a square layout, organised around a central courtyard. Its structure, in reinforced concrete from the foundations to the frame, is fully clad in red brick and cut white stone in the Flemish neo-Renaissance style, with some Tudor details, recalling Calais' historic English presence. As a symbol of the unification of two historic towns, this monument is topped by two large chimneys, each featuring the intertwined initials of Calais and Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais. The upper corners of the first-floor windows are decorated with a series of marmousets – picturesque stone sculptures representing Medieval trades. The vast, open pavilion with huge mullioned bays and crossbars is topped by a steep roof, adorned with three large gabled dormers and a multitude of small wooden dormers on various levels. The lavishly decorated belfry rises on the left, and is connected by an arched building.



# THE FIRST WORLD WAR

## A GARRISON BASE

Just as the city hall's construction rapidly progressed, the First World War broke out and all works were suspended. They would not resume until eight years later.

From the start of the First World War, Calais became a garrison base for Allied armies. In order to distribute armies across the city and create a supply base, the various French, English and Belgian staffs held a conference. While the British occupied the east of the city, the Belgians took the west, including the Place du Soldat Inconnu, building various barracks. In 1916, the Belgian army offered its soldiers a convivial resting place by inaugurating the Belgian Soldier's Circle opposite the town hall, allowing all fighters to enjoy a meal, rest, write home, relax or play football or tennis outside.

## THE BOMBING OF CALAIS

The city was bombed on the night of 3–4 September 1917. The alarm sirens would ring out for 6 hours, as a hundred bombs were dropped. 3,000 cannon shots were fired by the defensive forces against enemy aircraft. The next day, the people of Calais – alongside the occupying armies – noticed a breach visible by the clock on the new belfry, still under construction. This was the only time the new city hall would be hit by an enemy projectile.

## RELOCATION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Since 1870, the local council had occupied the Saint-Pierre town hall on Place Crève-cœur. With the many bombings on this neighbourhood, a decision was made to move the municipal services and elected officials to the new town hall, still under construction since 1911. Though the exterior was not just finished, the interiors had already been fitted out, and so, the city's administration took over the premises in April 1918.



# INAUGURATION ON 12 APRIL 1925

## **1918: FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING IN THE NEW CITY HALL**

On 14 April 1918, the city council held its first meeting on this site and ordered a plaque featuring the names of all councillors to be affixed thereto, marking the day's importance. The first marriage was celebrated on 30 April 1918.

Nine months after the armistice, on 31 August 1919, the city of Calais was awarded the Croix de Guerre in response to the courage it had displayed during the Great War.

## **SPEECH BY HANS APENESS, MAYOR OF CALAIS, ON 12 APRIL 1925 AT THE PLACE DE L'HÔTEL DE VILLE**

The City Hall was inaugurated on 12 April 1925, at the same time as the Franco-Belgian friendship celebrations.

For the occasion, the City Council planned to invite French President Gaston Doumergue (1863–1937), who entrusted the mission to War Minister General Nollet (1865–1941), who in turn delegated to General Alvin (1872–1950).

« If the people of Calais had only listened to their hearts, they would have erected their new city hall here 40 years ago, at this central point between our two towns – Old Calais and the great village of Saint-Pierre.

But, would they then have created the vast and splendid monument at which we are gathered? It is very doubtful, and so, should we not thank fate for not having allowed us to materialise our wishes until much later?

The union of our two towns, sealed since 1885, carries so much vigour and strength within it, that it is fitting that it, as a symbol, precisely takes on the majestic dimensions of this monument that tourists admire and that you all honour today with your presence. [...] From all the ardour of my soul, I hope, on behalf of the Municipal Administration and our hardworking and valiant population, that our City Hall, inaugurated under such auspices, will have a favourable destiny and that its proud, sculpted tower – a true symbol of our still-intact freedoms – will be, for the inhabitants of the city of Eustache de Saint-Pierre, today and tomorrow, the powerful lighthouse whose light rallies men for the sole missions of loyalty, honesty and patriotism ! »

Speech delivered by Hans Apeness, Mayor of Calais, on April 12, for the inauguration of the new City Hall, coinciding with the Belgian-recognition event.

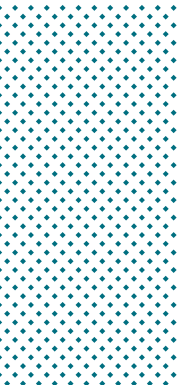
**1. The Belgian Soldier's Circle installed on the City Hall square during the First World War.**

© City of Calais

**2. Breach in the Calais belfry during the First World War.**

© City of Calais

# THE SCULPTOR, JULES DESBOIS (1851-1935)



« DESBOIS, ONE OF THE  
GREATEST SCULPTORS OF THE  
TIME ».

Auguste Rodin, 1903, letter to the Fine Arts administration  
in support of a sculpture commission

## JULES DESBOIS (1851-1935)

The sculptor Jules Desbois (1851–1935), a former friend and colleague of Auguste Rodin, was awarded first prize and commissioned to create the sculptures that now feature on the City Hall's facade. He followed a similar trajectory to that of sculptor Auguste Rodin, entering the Angers School of Fine Arts, followed by that of Paris. A man of his time, he formed part of contemporary artistic movements with three recurring themes: the female body, realism and movement.

## MEETING AUGUST RODIN

In 1878, Jules Desbois met Auguste Rodin, who would go on to adopt him as a colleague in handling his many commissions. This meeting contributed to his art's development, as Rodin taught him to free himself from the shackles of his classical training in order to adopt a more personal aesthetic.

Desbois then went on to gain notoriety and received a great many commissions, including from the state.

## THE ALLEGORIES OF FISHING AND LACE

Thanks to the savings achieved thanks to the use of reinforced concrete, the architect was able to offer the City Hall more substantial decoration. In 1911, two calls for tender were launched to adorn the facade. One for the external ornamentation, and another to create two sculptures representing the trades of the former municipalities – fishing for Calais and lace for Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais.

**1. Photo of sculptor Jules Desbois**

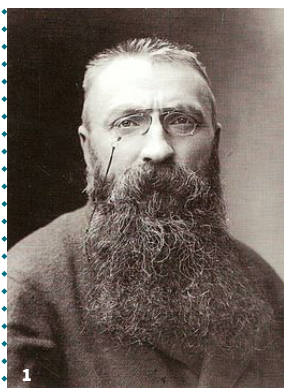
© City of Calais

**2. The statues of fishing on the left and lace on the right, on the facade of the Calais City Hall**

© City of Calais



# THE SCULPTOR, AUGUSTE RODIN (1840-1917)



« A LIVING ART DOES NOT  
REPRODUCE THE PAST; IT  
CONTINUES IT ».

Auguste Rodin

## AUGUSTE RODIN (1840-1917)

The artist Auguste Rodin is considered one of the pioneers of modern sculpture. He made around 7,000 sculptures, 10,000 drawings and 10,000 photographs over the course of his life. His main theme was the human body, seeking to make bodies expressive and realistic, and worked on various materials, such as clay, plaster or bronze. He sculpted life-size pieces, up until the scandal of his famous work: The Age of Bronze. This sculpture was, in fact, so realistic that Rodin was accused of having moulded it directly onto the body. Following this controversy, the sculptor preferred to enlarge or reduce his figures.

## THE BURGHERS OF CALAIS

In 1347, King Edward III proclaimed, « Gauthier, you will go to Calais and tell the captain that the greatest grace they can find is towards me and that six of the most notable burghers must leave the city, barefoot and rope around their necks, with the keys to the city and the castle in their hands, and with them I will do my will ». Gauthier went to the foot of the rampart where Jean de Viennes

was waiting and told him of his master's wishes. « I beg you kindly sire to intercede with the King of England for them so that they are not put to death ».

« I swear to you », said Gauthier, « I will do everything in my power to save them ». And so they went to the English camp.

## *Chronicles of Jean Froissart*

Standing in the heart of the town hall's gardens, the famous sculpture of The Burgers of Calais is a bronze statuary group, moulded from a plaster model sculpted by Auguste Rodin in 1889 and presented in Calais since 1895. It refers to a famous myth of the city's medieval history: that of the English siege of 1346 and the surrender of Calais, whose tragic outcome was materialised by the sacrifice of six notables (Jacques and Pierre de Wissant, Eustache de Saint Pierre, Jean de Fiennes, Andrieu d'Andres and Jean d'Aire), appointed to hand over the keys of the city to King Edward III (1312-1377) in exchange for the people of Calais' salvation.



# LES BOURGEOIS DE CALAIS



## GENESIS OF THE PROJECT: 1885

This monument was commissioned in 1884, a year before the merger, by the mayor of the city of Calais in order to illustrate this legendary episode: clearly seeking to evoke Calais' age and prestige in comparison to its neighbour.

## BRAVERY AND DESPAIR

Rather than evoking only the courage of the sacrificed Burghers, Rodin represents the six characters' different emotions, including: despair, fear and resignation, with particular attention given to the hands, postures in general and facial expressions. The statuary group was initially presented on a pedestal before Richelieu Park, before being moved in 1919 to the Place d'Armes,

as originally intended by Rodin. Saved from destruction during the Second World War, the Burghers of Calais found their final location before the town hall from 1945 onwards.

## 12 ORIGINALS DISTRIBUTED AROUND THE WORLD

Rodin's monument is the first in a series of twelve originals. The others are located in Copenhagen, London, Paris, Washington, Pasadena, Philadelphia, Mariemont, Tokyo, New York and Seoul.

**1. Auguste Rodin**

© Wikipedia

**2. The Burghers of Calais, Rodin**

© City of Calais

**3. Close up of the Burghers of Calais, Rodin**

© City of Calais

# THE BELFRY

## **A 75-METRE-HIGH SENTINEL**

This 75-metre-high tower celebrates the birth of the newly unified city and is topped with a multitude of slate-covered bell towers, overlooking four yellow clock dials, each oriented towards a cardinal point. These dials rest on consoles carved into the shape of a lion's head, each surmounted by a golden knight.

## **A LISTED HISTORICAL MONUMENT AND WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

Its architectural and symbolic qualities have now been recognised, with its facades, roofs and part of the interiors registered as Historic Monuments. The Calais belfry has also been recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO (the United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), as part of the Belfries of Belgium and France heritage series, which includes 33 Belgian works and 23 buildings in the north of France and spans a very long period from the 11th to the 20th century.

## **THE BELLS PLAY THE TUNE OF THE OLD NORTH CALAIS BELFRY**

The Calais belfry is equipped with electronic carillon bells that play the tune of La Gentille Annette de Boieldieu, once played in the old 15th-century belfry. This belfry lost its bells in 1961.

## **RESTORATION AND PUBLIC OPENING IN 2011**

The belfry was restored, at a cost of 3.5 million euros, in 2011. Now, an elevator and new oak and steel stairs offer visitors access to the walkway.

« High towers built in the heart of urban areas, often dominating the principal square, the belfries are essential elements in the organisation and representation of the towns to which they belong. A symbolic element in the landscape in ancient Netherlands and the north of France, the belfry represents, in the heart of urban areas, the birth of municipal power in the Middle Ages. A practical building housing the communal bells, conserving charters and treasures, where city council meetings were held, serving as a watch tower and a prison, the belfry has, over the centuries, become the symbol of power and prosperity of the communes ».

*World Heritage Committee (decision 37, COM 8E, 17 May 2013)*





**1. Calais belfry**  
© City of Calais

# A PANORAMIC VIEW, 55 METRES HIGH



## **CALAIS, GATEWAY TO THE STRAIT OF DOVER**

Taking a boat to the port, or via the tunnel under the English Channel, Calais is located 40 kilometres as the crow flies from the English coast. The city is located on the strait of Dover, which marks the boundary between the English Channel and the North Sea. This strait is one of the busiest and most active in the world, with up to 800 ships per day.

### **THE TOUR DU GUET**

The Tour du Guet, standing 35 metres high, has ensured its function as a watchtower from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It replaced an older building and later served as a support for an optical telegraph and, later, a lighthouse. The tower has been listed as a Historic Monument since 1931.

### **THE NOTRE-DAME CHURCH**

This church was built between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with works alternately launched by the French and English (1347–1558). The building, mostly designed in the English perpendicular style, hosted the wedding of Charles de Gaulle and Yvonne Vendroux, a Calais native, in 1921. It has been listed as a Historic Monument since 1913.

### **THE LIGHTHOUSE**

The lighthouse is located in the Courgain maritime district, where the Courguinois lived (sailors, fishermen and tanners). It was built in 1848, and still performs its function today. The lighthouse has been listed as Historic Monument since 2010.



## LEADING EUROPEAN PASSENGER PORT

Calais is the leading French and European passenger port, with millions of passengers crossing the Channel each year. The Port 2015 project, with a budget of 863 million euros, includes the creation of 3-kilometre dike and a port basin of around 90 hectares to accommodate next-generation ferries.

## THE HOUSES

Many houses are inspired by the Flemish neo-Renaissance and Art Deco styles. Opposite the city hall, the houses – mostly built in the same period – present geometric decorations such as bow windows of various shapes (triangular, rectangular or rounded), red-brick and white-stone or glazed-brick cladding, sculptures and wrought-iron, among others.

## CONTEMPORARY AMENITIES

A steel and concrete gym has received several architectural awards. The long, red-brick building, meanwhile, houses the municipal administrative centre, replacing the Alsacienne biscuit factory which opened in 1959 and has been closed since 2003.

### 1. Panoramic view to the north

© City of Calais

### 2. Panoramic view to the east

© City of Calais



### **THE CITÉ DE LA DENTELLE ET DE LA MODE**

The Cité de la Dentelle et de la Mode is located in one of Calais' last remaining typical collective lace factories of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This contemporary construction evokes lace with its undulating silk-screened glass facade, representing the Jacquard cards of the Leavers machine, and is associated with the old factory.

### **PLACE CRÈVECŒUR**

Place Crèvecœur is dominated by three buildings, symbols of the three powers: public, trade union and religious.

- The Courthouse (former Saint-Pierre town hall, completed in 1861 by the architect Amédée Stensmaght).
- The Bourse du Travail Art Deco building by architect Roger Poyé, listed as a Historic Monument in 2000,

with frescoes by Max and Paule Ingrand and a bas-relief by sculptor Robert Coin.

- The neo-Gothic Saint-Pierre church by Eugène Boeswillwald, student of Viollet Le Duc.

### **THE THEATRE**

The theatre was inaugurated in 1905. Designed by architect Malgras-Delmas, its Louis XIV style facade is adorned with monumental allegories. The hall, built in a horseshoe layout according to an architectural process honouring its time of construction, is embellished with allegorical paintings and offers 930 seats, divided into four galleries. The ballroom, meanwhile, has been restored to the tune of 500,000 euros to welcome future cultural events.



### THE MONUMENT OF FRENCH REMEMBRANCE

The Monument of French Remembrance, by Edouard Maugendre Villers, was inaugurated in 1904. It pays tribute to the soldiers who died in combat during the colonial wars.

### THE BURGHERS OF CALAIS MONUMENT

The Burgers of Calais monument, work of sculptor Auguste Rodin (see pages 14 and 15).

### THE CENTRAL STATION

The modern central station replaces that destroyed during the Second World War, and constitutes a significant network serving the major Boulogne-Calais-Dunkirk route, as well as Paris. It is also the terminus of the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (VSOE).

- 1. Panoramic view to the south  
© City of Calais
- 2. Panoramic view to the west  
© City of Calais
- 3. Former Calais railway station  
© City of Calais



# THE BUSTS

## **CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU, ARMAND JEAN DU PLESSIS (1585-1642)**

As a prelate and French statesman, Cardinal Richelieu went to Calais in 1632 with King Louis XIII of France, following suspicions of a plot to sell Calais to the English.

He then planned to create a maritime arsenal with a large port. However, Calais would subsequently lose its importance to Gravelines. An arsenal was finally built under the supervision of the Marquis de Saint-Chamond.

This bust was made in bronze in 1633, and its sculptor remains unknown. It was initially placed on a column in the arsenal courtyard. In 1793, a commander of the military engineers requisitioned the bust to be melted down. It was placed in a warehouse within the citadel where it remained for 25 years, before being installed on Place d'Armes until 1940. Today, it stands on the ground floor of the Calais City Hall.

## **DUKE OF GUISE, HENRI DE LORRAINE (1550-1588)**

Mayor Jacques Bénard (1816-1821) asked the administration to create a second bust to match that of Richelieu, installed on the Place d'Armes. The bust of the Duke of Guise was made between 1817 and 1818, by a sculptor who remains

unknown to this date. Though Duke of Guise was named liberator of the city (1347-1558), the bust is of his son, Henri de Lorraine (1550-1588), and not François de Lorraine (1519-1563). The two were both nicknamed « the scarred », but only Henri de Lorraine was awarded the Order of the Holy Spirit, created in 1578. Today, the bust stands on the ground floor alongside that of Richelieu.

## **BUST OF MARIANNE (1550-1588), THE REPUBLIC, 1889, JEAN-ANTOINE INJALBERT**

The bust of Marianne, next to the Grand Staircase, was created in 1891 by artist Jean-Antoine Injalbert. Though there is no official model of Marianne, this bust appears in many city halls and administrations. This presence is not required, but it represents the Republic – just like the tricolour flag, which has remained the national emblem as favoured by the 1958 constitution. This is a CNAP (National Centre for the Plastic Arts) loan.

Marianne is an allegorical figure, whose features have been interpreted in various ways throughout history. Several artists have taken different models for her representation. For several years, these have been French actresses.





1



2

## **SYMBOLS OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC AT CALAIS CITY HALL**

### **Marianne :**

This was one of the most popular names in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. She is the personification of the French Republic. Her bust can be found in city halls, as well as on stamps and coins.

### **The blue, white and red flag:**

The French tricolour flag was born in 1794, during the French Republic. The white represents royalty, from 1638 to 1790, while the blue and red represent the city of Paris, where the revolutionary groups were born. Today, the flag is hoisted in public buildings and during official ceremonies.

### **The fasces:**

A fasces consists of a bundle of branches, bound around an axe by straps. In ancient Rome, these were carried by lictors – officers in service of the Magistrates, executing their sentences.

### **The French motto:**

This is a sentence that affirms the country's values. That of the French Republic is « Liberty, Equality, Fraternity ». This motto is often inscribed on the pediment of public buildings. Here, however, it is not found on the city hall's facade, but inside, alongside the fasces in the entrance, as well as on the first floor in the Council Chamber and in the Wedding Hall.

**1. The busts of Henri de Lorraine and Richelieu on either side of the main entrance within the Calais City hall.**

© City of Calais

**2. The bust of Marianne at the foot of the Calais City Hall Grand Staircase.**

© City of Calais

# THE GRAND STAIRCASE AND THE GALLERY OF HONOUR

## THE GRAND STAIRCASE

The Grand Staircase is unusual in that it has been relegated to the right of the building, though it is no less impressive. The floor is made of white Carrara marble, a heavy material contrasting against the finely crafted wrought-iron balustrade. Above, we find a domed ceiling with stucco decoration, painted in an exotic style and enhanced by a wrought-iron chandelier.

## THE BEAUTIFUL STONE THAT IS NOT

The walls and ceilings of the Grand Staircase and rooms on the first floor are made from stucco, a material which imitates cut stone and is normally composed of slaked lime, fine plaster, glue and marble or chalk dust. It is widely used in decoration and decorative sculpture due to its low cost and the many decorative possibilities it offers. Here, the decorations were created by the company Auberlet et Laurent, in existence since 1873.



1

## THE GALLERY OF HONOUR

The Gallery of Honour extends along the entire length of the building's main body. It offers access to the various ceremonial rooms and is richly decorated. It ends with the arch leading to the Ceremonial Office, located in the belfry. This access was not initially planned by the architect. On either side of the arch, on the ceiling, stand four statues inspired by the Medieval period.

## THE MONOGRAM « CSP »

This monogram refers to the initials of Calais and Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais, symbolising the merger of the two towns.



2

**1. Stucco ornamentation in Calais City Hall**

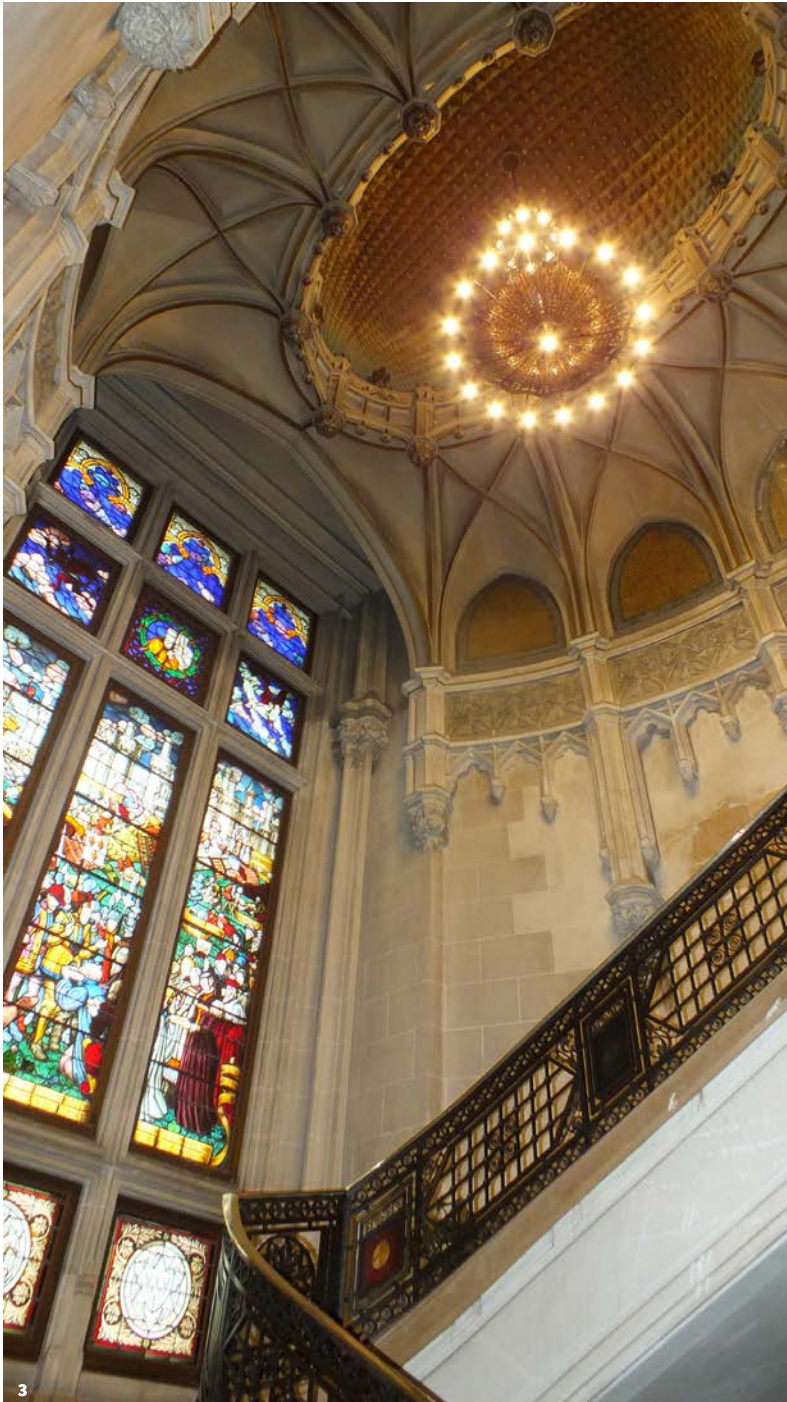
© City of Calais

**2. « CSP » monogram in Calais City Hall**

© City of Calais

**3. View of the Grand Staircase and ceiling on the first floor of Calais City Hall**

© City of Calais



# THE IRONWORKER, ADALBERT SZABO (1877 -1961)

« A HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE IS A SHOWCASE OF THE KNOW-HOW OF THE COUNTRY'S CRAFTSMEN ».

Adalbert Szabo

## ADALBERT SZABO (1877 -1961)

Adalbert Szabo was a French-naturalised Hungarian artist. Named Georges, he arrived in Paris in 1890. In 1896, he founded an ironworking course and set up his own business in 1905.

« Of all that is ironwork, nothing is foreign to me anymore; but I always work in this perpetual search for a single goal: art, and at each stage of the work, the face of this art changes, it is transformed, offering unknown resources, new possibilities and unexpected horizons. And perhaps this permanent hope, this constantly renewed enthusiasm that gives a life of labour all its meaning ».

A. Szabo

### 1. Detail of the Normandie transatlantic liner made by A. Szabo

© Paris Museum of Decorative Arts

### 2. Wrought-iron chandelier in the Calais City Hall Grand Staircase

© City of Calais

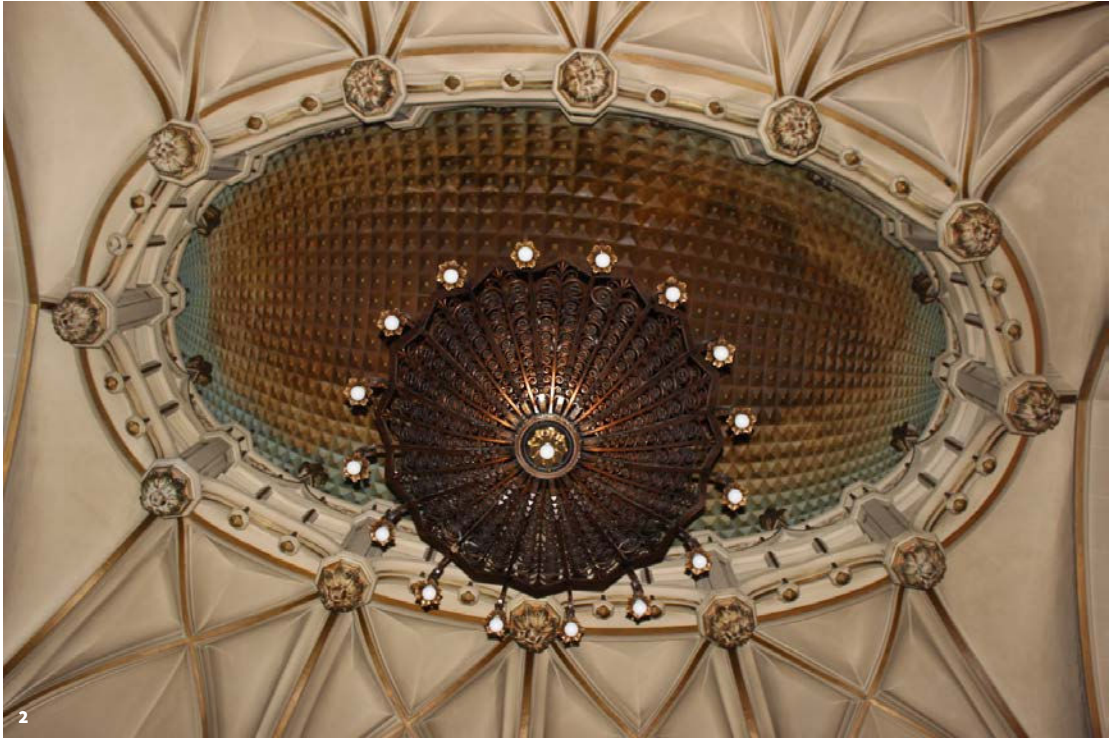
### 3. View of one of the doors of the Calais City Hall

© City of Calais

## HIS WORKS

Szabo crafted the ironwork of the Calais City Hall, Le Touquet and the grilles of the « Normandie » liner's dining room. A large Hungarian workforce arrived in France at this time, as Hungary had been ravaged by successive wars. These Hungarian artists contributed to developing the decorative arts and the golden age of ironwork that took place during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.





2



3

# THE GLASSMAKER, GUSTAVE PIERRE DAGRANT (1839-1915)

« IN THE LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, THE COMPANY WAS AT ITS PEAK AND EMPLOYED SOME 50 WORKERS. IT HAD A CONSIDERABLE PRODUCTION: ABOUT 3,000 RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS IN FRANCE AND ABROAD »

Jean-Jacques Michaud, Bordeaux, *le vitrail civil : 1840-1940, 2011*

## THE DAGRANT WORKSHOPS

As a graduate of the Bayonne School of Fine Arts, he went on to found a painted stained-glass factory. He was entrusted with many works during church restorations in the great south-west of France, as well as Latin America. In 1875, he moved his workshops to Bordeaux.

## THE STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS OF CALAIS CITY HALL

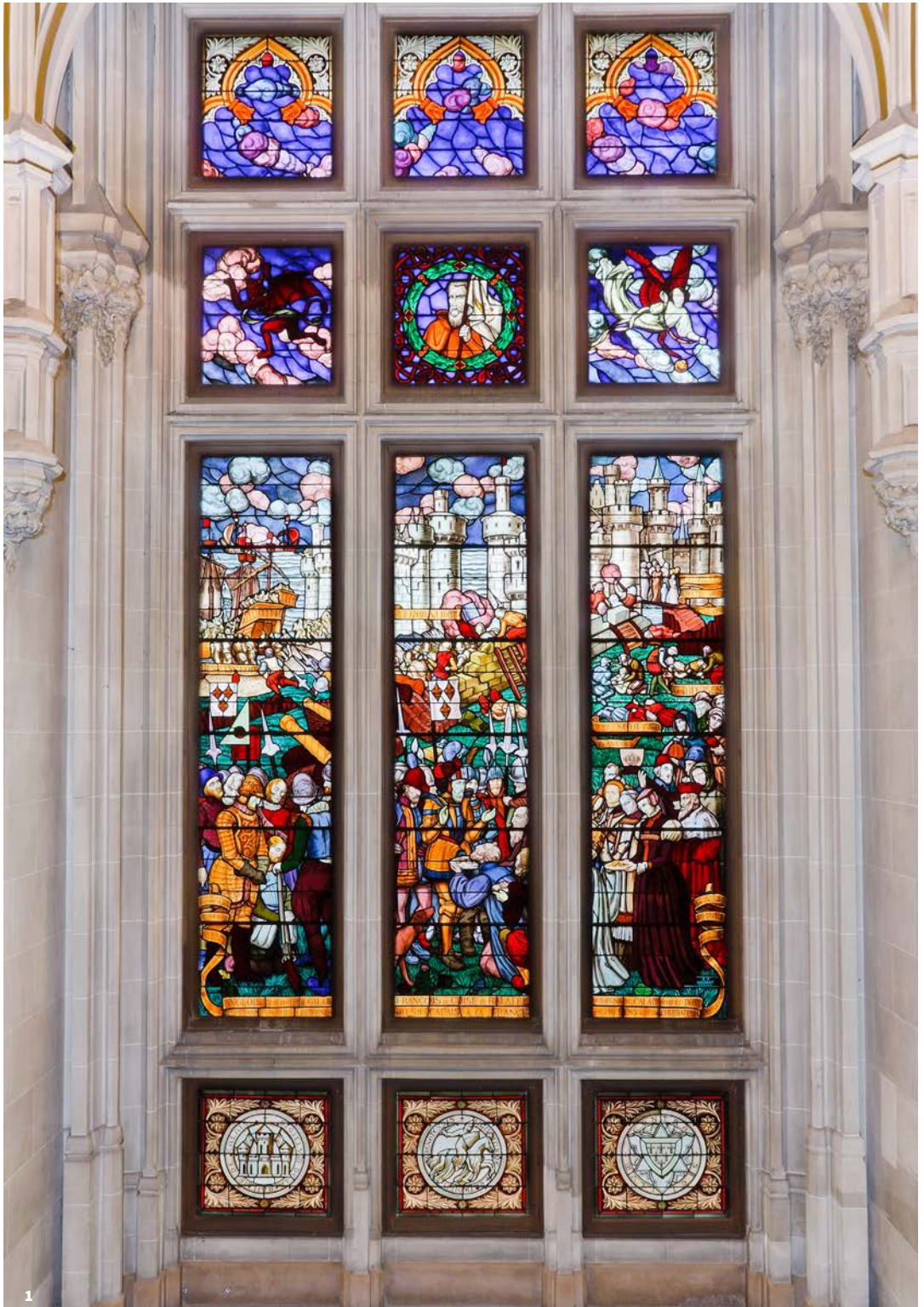
The stained-glass windows of the City Hall were made by the Dagrant workshops. The set in the staircase represents the retaking of Calais in 1558, by the Duke of Guise. The first span represents the departure of the English, following Calais' recapture in 1558. The banners read : « Englishmen retreating from Paris, despairing of ever returning, the French in Calais will come to lay siege when iron and lead like cork. ».

After an unrelenting fight, the French army forced the English to abandon the castle and take refuge in the city. The Duke of Guise sent his conditions, which were accepted without a word. After 211 years of English presence (1347-1558), Calais became French again. The middle span represents François de Lorraine, Duke of Guise. A man of war, born on 17 February 1519, his military services were truly brilliant.

The windows were restored in 1947.

**1. The stained-glass windows of the Calais City Hall Grand Staircase**

© City of Calais



# THE WEDDING HALL



## THE WEDDING HALL

This room hosts wedding ceremonies. The whole set is richly decorated with a Renaissance-inspired stucco ceiling. The furniture splits the space into two, accommodating each of the future spouses' families. A large, romantic fresco decorates the room.

## THE « SPRING, YOUTH OF THE YEAR, YOUTH, SPRING OF LIFE » FRESCO BY ADRIENNE BALL-DEMONT

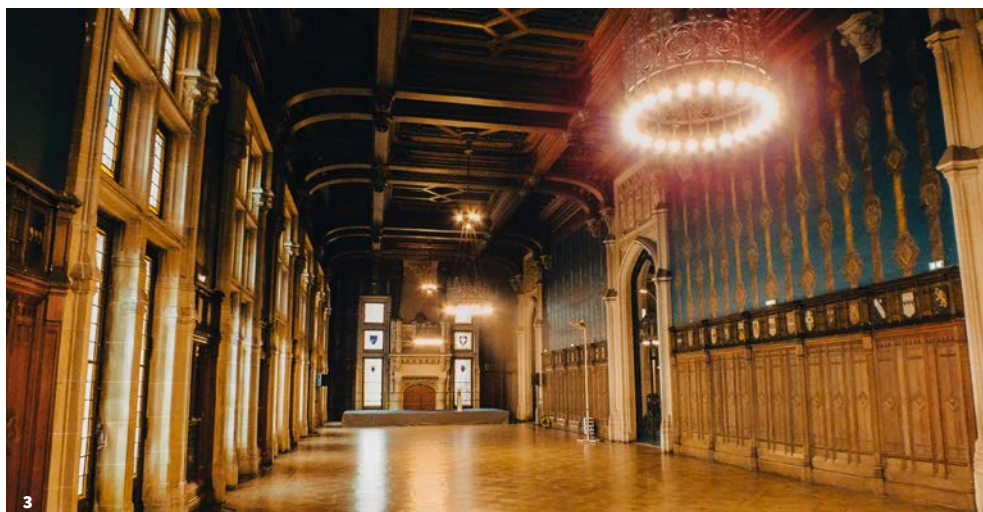
French painter and sculptor Adrienne Ball-Demont specialises in portraiture and nudes. She is best known for the fresco created to decorate the Calais City Hall. The characters in this fresco are her family members, from the oldest generation with two elderly people sheltered under a tree, to the youngest with children in a circle around the newlyweds :



« The nature that surrounds us seems to slumber under the warm caress of a more-than-springtime sun: the alleys that zigzag between two rows of bushes and trees with gnarled trunks could very well lead to the castle, whose mistress has been immersed in a restful torpor for a hundred years ».



# LE GRAND SALON

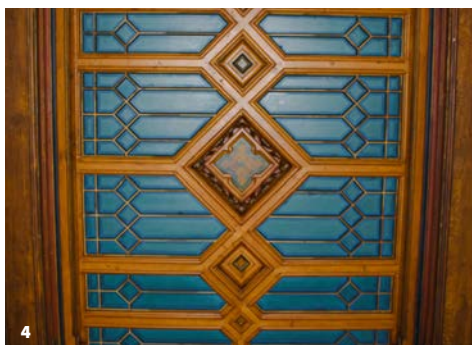


## THE GREAT HALL

The Great Hall is the largest room in the city hall. It is 15 metres wide, extending behind the 40-metre-long facade. The two chimneys, facing each other, have been designed in the Renaissance style and bear the coats of arms of the two former towns: Calais and Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais.

On the windows and walls appear the coats of arms of the 18 parishes recaptured at the same time as Calais in 1558 (Guînes, Peuplingues, Sangatte, etc.) and the arms of the 72 Calais notables (governors, captains, etc.).

The Versailles parquet flooring is original. This type of parquet flooring consists of pre-assembled square wooden panels, featuring a pattern of interlaced diagonals.



### 1. The Calais City Hall Wedding Hall.

© City of Calais

### 2. « Spring, youth of the year, youth, spring of life » fresco by Adrienne Ball-Demont

© City of Calais

### 3. The Calais City Hall Great Hall

© City of Calais

### 4. Detail of the Calais City Hall Great Hall's painted stucco ceiling

© City of Calais

# THE CITY-COUNCIL CHAMBER



## A FLEMISH STYLE

The Council Chamber is arranged in the image of old Flemish courts. It also recalls the English Parliament of Westminster, in the perpendicular Gothic Revival style, built between 1840 and 1847 by the architect Charles Barry. Its tall, vertical woodwork is interspersed with wall painting and stained glass. The stucco ceilings are decorated with false woodwork and hanging wrought-iron chandeliers, while the impressive furnishings contribute to the room's ceremonial atmosphere and prestige. The room welcomes 49 councillors. The chairs of the mayor and their deputies stand on the stained-glass side.

## JEANNE THIL

Jeanne Thil, who was born in Calais on 18 December 1887 and died on 16 March 1968 in Le Vésinet, was a French painter. Her best-known work is, without a doubt, the « The Devotion of the Burghers of Calais » fresco, made for the Calais

City Hall Council Chamber in 1925. The episode depicted is the surrender of Calais, following an 11-month-long siege. Edward III agreed to spare the lives of the population, but demanded that bourgeois notables (or 'burghers') hand themselves over to him, dressed in their simplest finery, along with the keys to the city. Philippine de Hainaut, a Frenchwoman married to the King of England, begged for mercy from the King, who agreed to spare these men's lives.



1. The Calais City Hall Council Chamber

© City of Calais

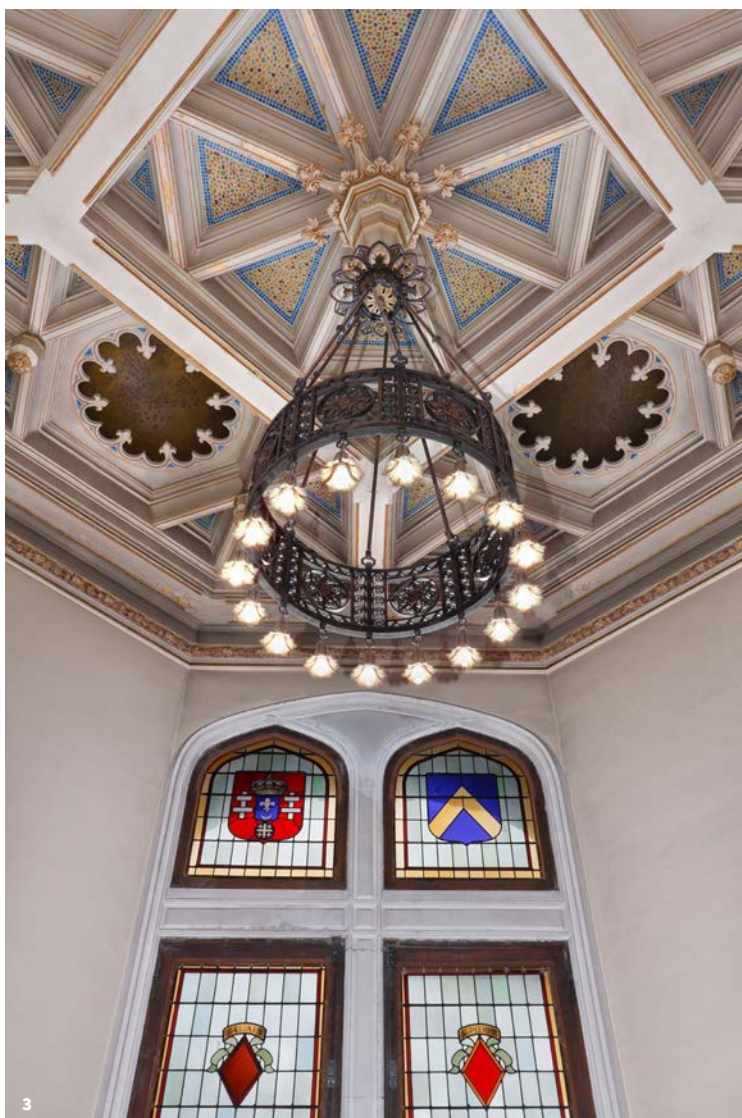
2. Fresco: « The Devotion of the Burghers of Calais », Jeanne Thil

© City of Calais

3. The Calais City Hall Ceremonial Office

© City of Calais

# THE CEREMONIAL OFFICE



At the rear of the Gallery of Honour, passing by the arch and its caryatids, is the Ceremonial Office, restored in 2022. This is the only room located within the belfry. Octagonal in shape, it was originally the mayor's lounge. Official ceremonies

and receptions were held place in this office. On the windows, the coats of arms of Calais and Saint-Pierre-Lès-Calais are featured. This room also presents the city's twinning charters.

« I CHOSE THE GOTHIC SIMPLICITY OF OLD FRENCH CASTLES, WITH A FEW TUDOR DETAILS, MEMORIES OF THE ENGLISH OCCUPATION. »

Louis Debrouwer, architect of the Calais City Hall, press review, 1958, Nord Littoral

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**Calais City of Art and History Centre**

9 rue Paul Bert 62100 Calais  
vahc@mairie-calais.fr

**The architecture and heritage department** organises various actions allowing young people and schoolchildren to discover the city and region's architectural and heritage riches.

**Nearby**

Greater Amiens, Beauvais, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Cambrai, Chantilly, Laon, Lens Liévin urban community, Lille, Noyon, Pays de Senlis à Ermenonville, Roubaix, Pays de Saint-Omer, Saint-Quentin, Soissons, Tourcoing and Santerre Haute Somme, benefitting from the City and Land of Art and History label.

**Information**

Calais XXL Tourist Office  
The Tourist Office invites you to discover Calais with a range of themed guided tours.

12 Boulevard Clémenceau 62100 Calais  
Tél : 03.21.96.62.40



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