

THE FLASH LOCK OF AUGY (LE PERTUIS)

This support beam (Passerelle) was part of an ancient flash lock or "Pertuis" which formed a section of the weir at Augy. The flash lock was removed during modernization of the weir in 1991

HISTORY OF THE FLASH LOCK

Nobody knows with certainty, who first used or invented the flash lock in France, it is thought that the Gauls used this system. There are references to Guy de Melo the Bishop of Auxerre being condemned in 1269 to reconstruct the flash lock of Auxerre back to its original dimensions (as it had been made narrower to provide more water for the Bishops mills but this interfered with navigation of the river).

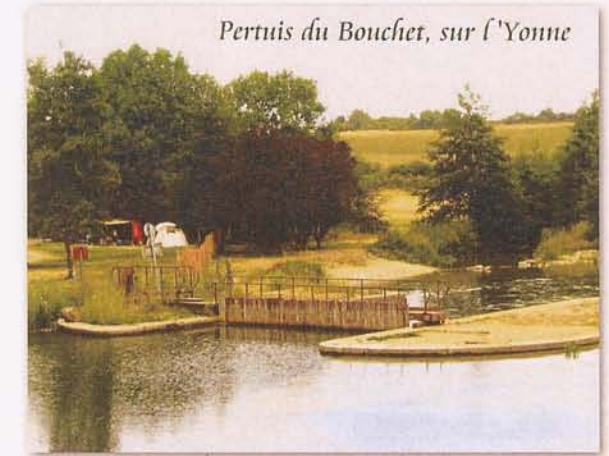
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF A WEIR AND A FLASH LOCK

A WEIR: - blocks the flow of a river and increases its depth to allow navigation by boats or to turn mill wheels, an overflow or spillway is built into a weir to allow excess water to flow to the next section of river downstream when the water reaches the desired depth... The section of river between two weirs is called a pound (bief in French.)

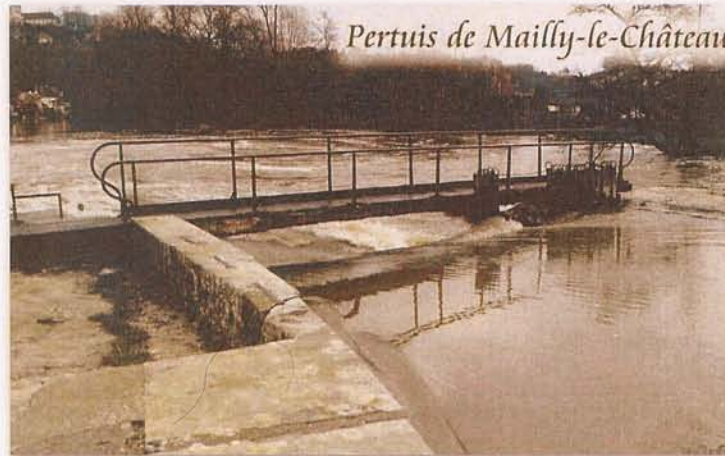
A FLASH LOCK: - was a removable section of a weir which enabled boats or floating rafts of wood to pass through the weir from one pound to another.

THE RIVER YONNE AND ITS FLASH LOCKS

There were approximately 20 weirs with flash locks in between Armes (on the river above Clamecy) and Auxerre. These flash locks enabled the passage of rafts of fire wood between the forests of the Morvan area and Paris during several centuries.



Pertuis du Bouchet, sur l'Yonne



Pertuis de Mailly-le-Château

THE FLASH LOCK, ITS CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION.

The flash lock consisted of two stone built pillars (of solid construction) in the weir on each side of an opening about 10 meters wide. The support beam you see here was placed across these 2 stone pillars. Square wooden poles (aiguilles) of approximately 2 meters long could then be placed side by side in the rectangle formed by the pillars, the support beam and bottom of the river. The poles were held in place against the support beam at the top and a stone ledge (heurtoir) on the river bed, by the force of the passing water. With the poles in place the water level would rise in the pound above the weir. To open the flash lock the wooden poles would be pulled out one at a time and placed in the cradle (berceau) on the support beam. The weight of the poles would act as a counter balance so the beam could be swung out of the way on its pivot to let the boats or rafts of wood pass through.

The opening and closing of a flash lock was carried out as rapidly as possible so as not to let too much water escape from the pound.

The passing of a flash lock was dangerous and required a lot of skill from the crew of the rafts of wood or boats.

To pass downstream you went with the current but to pass upstream boats had to be pulled through with powerful winches fixed on the shore.

In Clamecy the association "la Confrerie saint Nicolas" has a museum you can visit which explains the history of floating the wooden rafts down the rivers to Paris.

This display of the flash lock was made possible by the association "DES AMIS DU CANAL DU NIVERNAIS" and there financial sponsors.

