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## Histoire de la Reconstruction

Promenade dans la ville d'Aunay-sur-Odon

PAYS DE VIRE



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Soyez les bienvenus à Aunay-sur-Odon, chef-lieu de la commune nouvelle Les Monts d'Aunay. Cette commune nouvelle, créée le 1er janvier 2017, accueille 4837 habitants et regroupe les communes suivantes : Aunay-sur-Odon, Bauquay, Campandré-Valcongrain, Danvou-la-Ferrière, Le Plessis-Grimoult, Ondefontaine et Roucamps. Pendant plusieurs siècles, l'économie du village fut largement dominée par l'élevage et le négoce, deux activités économiques possibles par la création de multiples voies de communication et l'apparition du chemin de fer, au XIXe siècle. Les halles d'Aunay-sur-Odon furent le lieu de rendez-vous des producteurs, négociants et acheteurs. Détruite par les bombardements alliés, Aunay-sur-Odon fut la première commune reconstruite de France au début des années 1950.

Pour toute information relative aux lieux de visites, loisirs, marchés, hébergements et lieux de restauration dans le Pays de Vire | Collines de Normandie, rendez-vous à l'Office de Tourisme de Villers-Bocage, (horaires d'ouverture à consulter sur notre site internet).

Welcome to Aunay-sur-Odon, capital of the new commune of Les Monts d'Aunay. This new commune, created on 1 January 2017, is home to 4837 inhabitants and includes the following communes: Aunay-sur-Odon, Bauquay, Campandré-Valcongrain, Danvou-la-Ferrière, Le Plessis-Grimoult, Ondefontaine and Roucamps.

For several centuries, the village's economy was largely dominated by livestock farming and trade, two economic activities made possible by the creation of multiple communication routes and the appearance of the railway in the 19th century. Aunay-sur-Odon market halls were the meeting place for producers, traders and buyers. Destroyed by the Allied bombing, Aunay-sur-Odon was the first town to be rebuilt in France in the early 1950s.

For any information about places to visit, leisure, markets, accommodation and restaurants in the Pays de Vire | Normandy Hills, please visit Villers-Bocage's Tourist Office, (Opening hours to be consulted on our website).

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Les Monts d'Aunay



PATRIMOINE DE LA  
RECONSTRUCTION  
EN NORMANDIE

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### Circuits de petite randonnée / Small hiking circuits

- Sous les Monts d'Aunay - n°123 : 8 km / 2h
- Petite boucle vers l'abbaye : 2,4 km / 30 min

Téléchargez gratuitement les fiches des randonnées qui sillonnent Les Monts d'Aunay sur [www.paysdevire-normandie-tourisme.fr](http://www.paysdevire-normandie-tourisme.fr)  
Download the free hiking maps of the Monts d'Aunay at [www.paysdevire-normandie-tourisme.fr](http://www.paysdevire-normandie-tourisme.fr)

- n° 17 - Les Hauts de Roucamps - 9,1 km / Facile
- n° 18 - Petit tour à Beauquay - 4,9 km / Facile
- n° 19 - Sous le Mont d'Ancre - 13,2 km / Difficile
- n° 33 - Le Mont Pinçon - 9,2 km / Moyen



L'Abbaye  
d'Aunay-sur-Odon

### The history of Aunay-sur-Odon

The Monts d'Aunay area has been inhabited since Gallo-Roman times. Mont Pinçon, on the heights of Plessis-Grimoult, was occupied by a Roman camp. A Roman road ran nearby, connecting Bayeux to Jublains. A motte-and-bailey castle was built in the 11th century, 2 km from the current village. Occupied by several bands of mercenaries in the service of the English during the Hundred Years' War, it was destroyed on the orders of Bertrand du Guesclin, Constable of France, at the end of the 14th century. In 1131, Jourdain, lord of the manor, and his wife Lucie founded Notre-Dame Abbey, south-west of Aunay-sur-Odon. The abbey, which owned a large amount of land, enjoyed a prosperous existence. It was closed during the Revolution and partially demolished. It was subsequently occupied by a cotton mill in the 19th century, then by a cheese dairy in the 20th century. For several centuries, Aunay-sur-Odon was a commercial and agricultural village. The commune had its weekly market, fairs and market halls. The village was cut in two at the end of the 18th century with the construction of the Villers-Bocage road. This new transport link opened up the village by connecting it to the road to Brittany.

**1/ War and Reconstruction** - Following the military operations of 6 June 1944, the Allies bombed several strategic towns in the region. Aunay-sur-Odon was one of them. The town was bombed four times, killing 165 inhabitants and destroying 97% of the town. In the autumn of 1944, the mayor, Mr Lacaine, and his deputies, Mr Paul Legrand and Mr Marcel Jeanne, went to the Ministry of Reconstruction and Urban Planning (MRU) to release war damage funds and start the reconstruction project in Aunay-sur-Odon. A temporary housing estate was quickly built to rehouse the victims, a chief architect, Pierre Dureil, was appointed, and the clearing of the town began. The first stone was laid on 23 November 1947. The reconstruction of the town was very rapid, and in just three years Aunay-sur-Odon was reborn. Two weeks of joyful celebrations were organised between 2 and 16 September 1950 to mark the move of the families of Aunay-sur-Odon into their new homes. The town hall was inaugurated in December 1950, making Aunay-sur-Odon the first town to be rebuilt in France.

### 2/ The town hall square

**Architect: Henri Mouillard**

**Year of construction: January to December 1950**

Located approximately on the same site as the old town hall, the new town hall is an imposing, sober, balanced and perfectly symmetrical building inspired by classical architecture. The building follows the codes of traditional post-war reconstruction architecture with its dormer window, balcony and wrought iron door, as well as its materials: limestone and slate. Two pavilions flank the central building in a similar architectural style. They were originally dedicated to the treasury and the PTT (post office). The landscaping was carefully designed, with groves and a fountain marking the importance of this administrative centre.

### 3/ The Cinema Paradiso

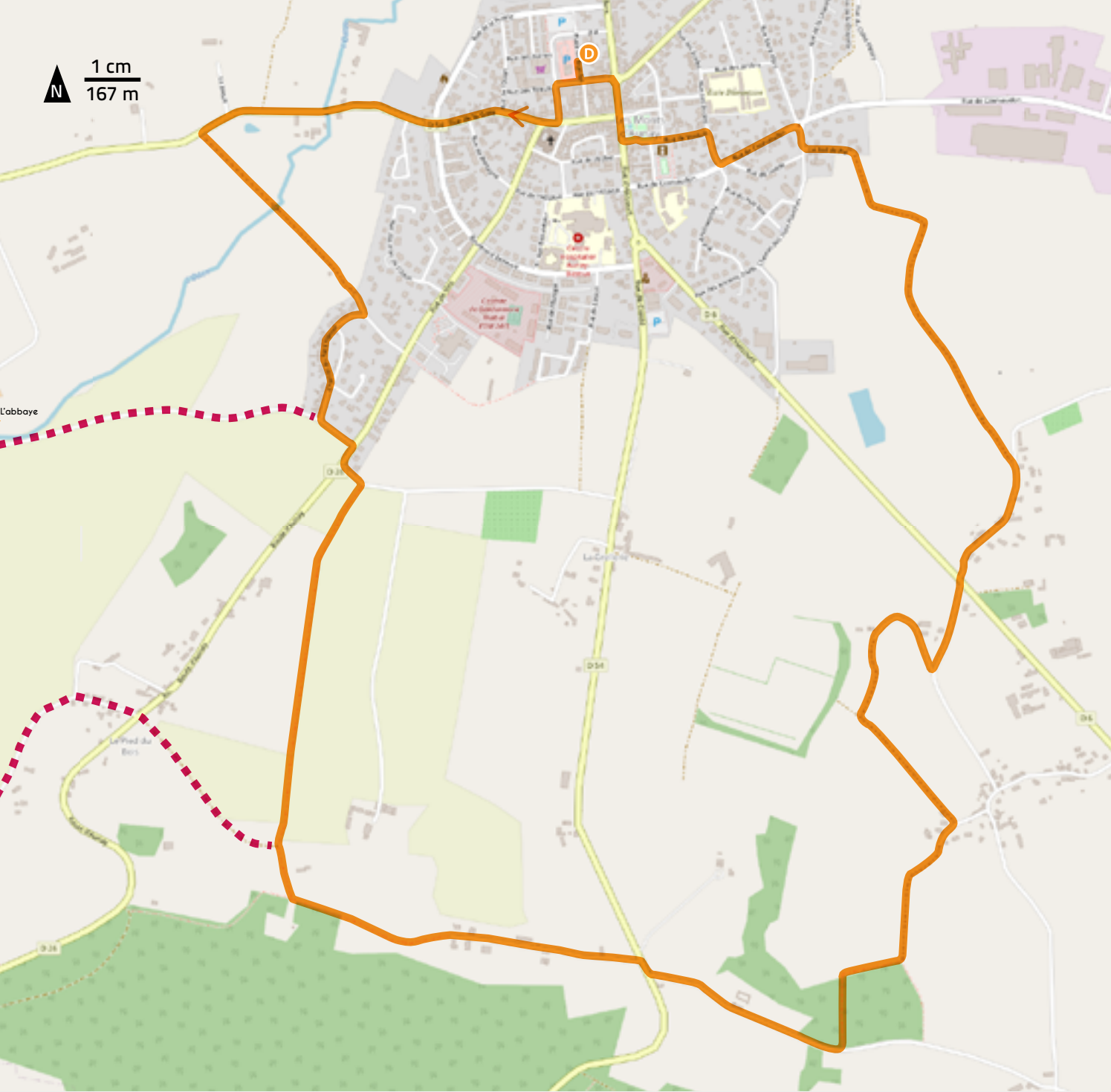
**Architects: Claude Berson and Henri Mouillard**

**Year of construction: 1954**

Before the city was bombed, the town hall's village hall was sometimes used as a projection room. During the Reconstruction, the addition of leisure and sports facilities was inevitable. A cinema and a small park were built. The cinema was built according to the codes of the Reconstruction period, traditional in its volume and modern in the materials used, such as concrete.

### 4/ The old market square

Before the war, the weekly market was held on the square in front of the town hall on Rue du 12 Juin, as it is today. Urban planner Alexandre Courtois added a large, slightly off-centre open space to his urban plan to accommodate a covered market. The building was only used for a few years before being demolished in 1971 to make way for the post office. In the centre of this triangular square stood the Tree of Liberty, planted during the French Revolution. In front of this tree, the Great War memorial was erected in 1922. This meeting place for children and adults alike disappeared under Allied bombs. The Hôtel de la Place is the oldest establishment in Aunay-sur-Odon, dating back to the late 19th century. It was the first building to be rebuilt after the



war, as evidenced by the stone in the corner, dated 23 November 1947. If you look up, you can see a statue of a cook, donated to the town by citizens who wanted the establishment to remain a hotel. Once a year, this square hosted the foal fair, an unmissable event in Aunay-sur-Odon. During the reconstruction, the fair was held in the temporary town. It is also possible to see iron rings in some of the backyards of buildings, which were used to tie up the horses.

### 5/ The church of Saint Samson

**Architect: Pierre Chiole**

**Construction: from 1949 to 1952**

The church was inspired by Romanesque churches with a Latin cross plan. The structure is made of reinforced concrete lined with limestone. The main façade features Romanesque elements, with fishbone-patterned stonework, semi-circular arches and simple bas-reliefs by Lucien Fénaux. To the right of this façade, a cloister is a distinctive feature of this post-war church, referencing that of the Cistercian abbey founded in the 12th century and destroyed during the Revolution. To supplement the funding provided by the MRU, the bell tower was built thanks to a generous donation from Mrs. Blanche Hallez.

### 6/ The stained glass windows

The stained glass windows of the church were made between 1950 and 1952. The iconographic programme was directed by Jacques Le Chevalier and represents the protectors of Normandy in a coherent manner.

- **The heart**, designed by Jacques Bony, is organised into eleven lancets devoted to the Eucharistic theme and the creation of the world.

- **The transept** consists of a rose window and four lancets on either side. There are two subjects, the incarnation in homage to Mary and the redemption in reference to the glory of Christ. This ensemble was created by Jacques le Chevallier.

- **The nave** consists of twenty lancets representing saints venerated or born in Normandy. It was made by three different artists. The part on the cloister side is signed Maurice Rocher and the other part is made by Paul Bony and his wife Adeline Herbert Stevens (master glassmaker of several famous artists such as Matisse, Chagall or Braques).

### 7/ The sculptures

Lucien Fénaux is a sculptor who won the Grand Prix de Rome in 1943. He also stayed at the Villa Velasquez between 1949 and 1950 before starting his work on the church of Saint-Samson. He is the author of all the sculptures in the church: the capitals of the colonnade are a representation of Holy Week, on the altar we find the Tetramorph and in the transept we find two chapels, one with the effigy of Mary and the second is a representation of the Sacred Heart.

### 8/ The open blocks of the Reconstruction

In 1945, Alexandre Courtois, an urban planner, composed the city in 24 islets organised in a spiral pattern. In this street, we pass behind an open block. This type of island is a novelty in the Reconstruction. Indeed, a counter-aisle distributes the accesses to the buildings by the interior courtyards as well as the technical accesses of the shops. It is a bit like the other side of the coin. Each plot is delimited by prefabricated concrete fences forming patterns. These fences are emblematic elements of this period.

### 9/ The main axes and Rue de Caen

The city's urban planner, Alexandre Courtois, kept the main roads but modernised their lines. They were made wider to allow for two lanes of traffic and parking. Let us not forget that at that time the city of tomorrow was designed for the car. This is the intersection of two major roads: rue du 12 juin 1944 and rue de Villers. This intersection creates the straight perspectives typical of the Reconstruction. From this point of view one can see the different materials used for the traditional reconstruction: bavent tiles, slate, red or blue granite, limestone, which give a colourful palette to

the city. In the rue du 12 juin 1944 you will find at n°10 the first stone of Aunay-sur-Odon. In Rue de Caen, you can see the individual houses of the Reconstruction. They are imposing, made of stone or concrete, and consist of two or three levels. They contain many innovations for the time: large volumes, a bathroom with a bathtub, central heating, large openings allowing a lot of natural light... These houses were owned by the great families of Aunay-sur-Odon.

### 10/ The primary school

**Architect: Henri Mouillard**

**Construction: 1949 and 1951**

The primary school of Aunay-sur-Odon is the largest in the department in terms of volume. It consists of two perfectly identical buildings, one for boys and one for girls. The structure is made of concrete covered with Caen stone in order to create an architectural coherence with the whole of the commune. The building at the back of the courtyard is a hybrid reconstruction as there is a mixture of traditional and modern reconstruction.

### 11/ Swedish houses

**Architect: Sven Ivar Lind**

**Year of construction: 1946**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Swedish journalist Victor Vinde was deeply moved by his visit to the region and launched a press campaign. His articles reached many Swedes, including Prince Bertil of Sweden, who made a plea to the King of Sweden to help our county. The Swedish government donated 200 twin houses to the Calvados disaster victims, delivered in kit form by ship to the port of Caen. Aunay-sur-Odon receives 20 of them. The architect Sven Ivar Lind was responsible for drawing up the plans. These twin houses are made of wood and stone rubble (ruins of the old Aunay-sur-Odon), with slate roofs with four slopes that extend well over a garden. Designed for temporary use, they have been occupied since 1948 and bear witness to the technical innovations in housing at that time: electricity, running water, telephone, bathroom...

### To go further : The mobile gendarmerie

The temporary housing estate was built in 1945 on the site of the mobile gendarmerie. In this housing estate, life gradually returned to «normal». There were shops, a church, an administrative centre, a craft area and a school. All the families of Aunay-sur-Odon are rehoused there. There are three types of barracks: Swedish, American and French. The barracks were equipped with water, electricity, a stove and complete sanitary facilities. From August 1950 onwards, the inhabitants gradually left this housing estate to move to the third Aunay-sur-Odon. Once the reconstruction was completed, the temporary housing estate was used as barracks for the Carpiquet military until the modern HLMs were built in 1958.

### Scènes de Vie - août 1950



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