

« A succession of layers (...) unique in the Pyrenees and maybe the world » Louis Méroc, 1961

Editorial

It will soon be three years since we started working on the quarry dossier... Our determination to preserve the heritage of Montmaurin is steadfast. Reason alone must prevail on such an important subject – it concerns and involves us all with regard to future generations.

The year 2010 was the year of biodiversity. Each one of us is now aware that it is more important to conserve our way of life than to promote the interests of certain private investors who give nothing back to the inhabitants.

During the year 2010 the association *Entre Save et Seygouade* organised resistance against the establishment of a proposed quarry and took the case to the administrative tribunal (underway since June 2009)

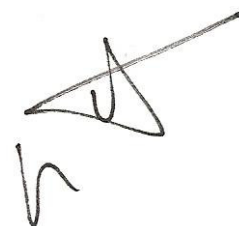
The association has worked hard to inform the public and has organised three important scientific conferences which has allowed the wider public to better understand the riches already discovered and yet to be discovered in the heart of this limestone mass, as well as the exceptional character of the forest of Montmaurin / Lespugue / Blajan.

Along with the association *Entre Save et Seygouade* several scientist, principally M.Marcel DELPOUX and Mme Isaure GRATACOS have alerted all the different scientific communities that the municipality of Montmaurin, by voting for this proposed quarry and industrial site for crushing and sifting has committed to a process of destruction that is irreversible and unacceptable.

We have witnessed throughout the year 2010 some very lively objections and negative reactions towards the project, not just from the scientific authorities but also the authorities of the Conseil Général and the Conseil Régional which have been widely reported in the local and regional press.

The scientific and administrative information communicated to the public are well argued, verifiable, and sincere. This does not please the municipality which contents itself with denials.

Sylvia BELAIR
Présidente de l'Association



The « quarry »

A bit of history... to jog your memory !

We discovered the dossier of the quarry project in March 2008 just a few days before the last municipal election which the list GASPIN had very simply decide to pass in silence.

The project began to be worked out in 2006 by the GIULIANI Enterprise in collaboration with the Mairie of Montmaurin and ONF which is affiliated to other services of the state (in particular the DRAC Midi-Pyrénées.)

The Association *Entre Save et Seygouade* in June 2009 decided to lodge a petition for the cancellation of the decree by the prefect of the Midi-Pyrénées region dated 10 April 2009 authorising the company DRAGAGES GARONNAIS to exploit a limestone quarry and an installation for crushing and sifting on the territory of the commune of Montmaurin. This petition was lodged with the Presidents and Councillors of the administrative Tribunal of Toulouse. The dossier is currently being examined.



State of the site « Coume day Hourquat Garriga et Gausère » after ground clearing over 2 hectares.

Start of the occupation of the site by the inhabitants of Montmaurin.

The association lodged with the DRAC Midi-Pyrénées an appeal for an out-of-court settlement to stop the felling of trees on the site and received the assurances of the INRAP that the trees would not be touched. **Under the pretext of clearing the site of the trees so that the archaeologist could do their work the municipality would have prepared the ground to be exploited by the enterprise GIULIANI.**

A quote from the association Nature Comminges in its memorandum on its intervention of March 2010 to the Administrative Tribunal.

The exploitation would destroy the calcite cover on which we note the presence of interesting orchids such as the monkey orchid (*Orchis simia*) military orchid (*Orchis militaris*) and the spider orchid (*Ophrys aranifera*).



2010 the actions of the Association Entre Save et Seyzouade

- We maintained a **daily presence** lasting more than 4 months on the site and at the entry to the communal forest (March to July).

We reaffirmed **the inalienable rights** to this natural space and its archaeological riches for **all the inhabitants** of Montmaurin.

- The **exceptional mobilisation** of association members and expressions of support from the population of Montmaurin, from visitors and from all its surrounding villages inabled us to be reminded of the reality of this right (*cf. photo. le soutien de groupe de visiteurs*).



- Opposition to the felling of trees on the site despite the prefectural decree. This we mad known to M. Bernard BAHUT, deputy prefect, on 26 March 2010 when he made a visit to the site in the course of which we recalled clearly our rights as citizens of Montmaurin. **Our renewed activity allowed us to save the communal forest in its entirety.**

- We staged a **permanent presence** during the archaeological diagnosis of the INRAP, of which the contents are still unknown.

However, we already know that they uncovered a baronial residence dating from the 11 century as well as many other factors equivalent to those at the Coupe-Gorge. (*cf. photo ci-dessous*).

Altogether these discoveries only reinforce the discoveries already found by the historians and pre-historians.

We regret that these preventive archaeological mesures were unsuited to the terrain because the joints and cavities present in the thickness of the rock could not be explored because of the lack of resources at the disposal of the archaeological team.



We will not let them do it.

We won't let them do it any more.

The conferences :

At ever conference more than 120 participants

- **February 2010 Marcel DELPOUX**, honorary professor of vegetal ecology - Univ. de Paul Sabatier de Toulouse

After having carried out a study of the terrain, he developed his analysis and arguments to protect this geological, geomorphological, floral, faunal, phytogeographical, and archaeological sanctuary of the interfluves Save - Seygouade. (cf. Figure page ci-contre et photo du chêne sessile).

- **May 2010 Isaure GRATACOS**, Professor – doctor of Anthropology

Isaure GRATACOS presented the geomorphologic characteristics of the limestone mass of the interfluves Save-Segouade. In effect, “the gorges of the Save and Seygouade at Montmaurin - Lespugue are a group unique amongst the other prehistoric archaeological sites, presenting exceptional characteristics : the presence of a complete stratagraphical series from the pre-Neanderthal to the present day in a fossilized karst thanks to particular geomorphological conditions which have resisted the habitual washing out of the limestone areas of the Piémont.”.



- **November 2010 Bruno DAVID**, Pharmacist, phyto-chemist, member of the national academy of Pharmacists.

Thanks to his abilities and his professional experience research Bruno DAVID has illustrated the importance of biodiversity for the future generations (health, food, to knowledge and discoveries about the complex workings of all the natural environments) and our duty to preserve this richness by conserving the quality of our natural sites.



- **September 2010 exhibition by the Association aux Journées Européennes du Patrimoine at Montmaurin** (European heritage days).

« A century of archaeology at MONTMAURIN »

Our display on notice boards at Notre-Dame de la Hillère allowed many visitors to visualise the progression of the archaeological research during the last century, with some important dates (*photo : détail de la mosaïque de la Hillère*).

The publication of a paper on the grotte de Montmaurin by Marcellin Boule in 1902 ; The discovery of the Venus de Lespugue in 1922 ; The digs of Louis Méroc from 1947 to 1955 ; The digs of Georges Fouet from 1947 to 1960.

“Culture for all” our events are open to the public and are free.

Yes ! Culture, heritage, these are not a discovery for us, they are a passion which we want to transmit and share with Montmaurin and its neighbours.

When the elected councillors are absent its up to the citizens to “Guard the temple” look at the result !

What high level cultural events have been organized in such a little village by an association which receives no grants!

Various events and actions

- Participation at the Journées du Boulonnais (sept. 2010)
Presentation stand for visitors showing our actions to defend the heritage of Montmaurin.
- Receptions and presentations of the heritage of Montmaurin throughout the year in the presence of Scientists and local and regional councillors.
- Creation of a BLOG dedicated to our fight but also providing information on our cultural events (from March 2010) : where you can be regularly updated as well as sign our on line petition.

<http://entresaveetseygouade.blogspot.com/>

- We will keep you informed on all our future events with the association *Entre Save et Seygouade*.



WE WHONT LET THEM DO JUST ANYTHING

Stay alert !

Monsieur Gaspin declared to the **municipal council** the **28 nov. 2010** "stop deceiving the people by making them believe that we can live just on tourism, it's a utopia".

At the same time the **The Montmaurin cultural and heritage association (A.C.P.M)** discovered the electoral virtues of culture and declared itself ready to "raise the profile of the tourist, gastronomic and heritage attractions"... (**jan 2010**).

It's true that the municipal council contradicts itself too often !!
This ad hoc association cannot hide its connivance with the municipality if we examine its composition. Only two members of the bureau are not municipal councilors.

The persistent lamentations of the municipality concerning the resources of the commune don't fool the citizens of Montmaurin or the Comminges.

If M Gaspin pretends that tourism has never brought any money into the commune, what has he to say about the exploitation by the quarries.

With the exception of the creation of inaccessible wastelands, in the last 50 years we have not observed that the commune has profited. The Montmaurinois have paid the same amount of local taxes as the rest of our neighbours in the canton, if not more.

Do not forget that for the last 60 years a percentage of the entrance fees from the Villa Gallo-Romaine has been paid to the commune. An income provided by culture which is immediately lost in the municipal budget, there is no trace of the utilisation of this money in the budget.!

With the fabulous opportunity of the site of the Villa we should have been fixing on one simple objective, to increase the number of visitors to the site which would have long since augmented the immediate income, if only the municipality had had the will.

The equation is simple, **more visitors = more profits for the municipality.**

In whose interest is it to abandon the sites of Montmaurin ? Who benefits from this neglect ?

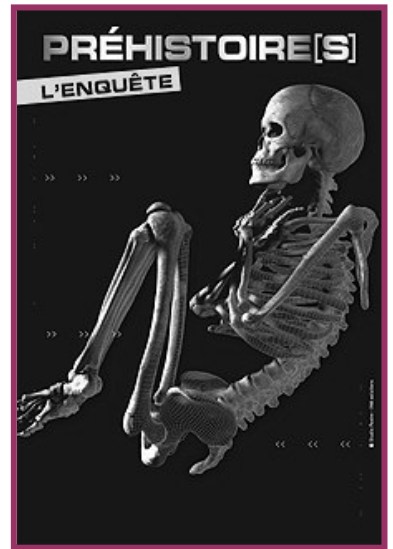
Since 4 October 2010, the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Toulouse has been displaying as part of its exhibition « Préhisteo[re]s] – l'enquête » the Vénus de Lespugue, the jawbone of the man of Montmaurin and the cave lion, as well as many other treasures of the Comminges, and it boasts of already receiving 40.000 visitors because of the statue (reported in Paris 24 Jan. 2011 even though the exposition continues until June 30).

The impoverishment of the communal heritage compels and will always compel the municipality to look elsewhere for short term revenues to cover the daily expenses.

We have to change the system and the logic : without a doubt the ill-founded arguments of the municipality cannot justify the irretrievable destruction of an exceptional heritage admired by many.

The Association *Entre Save et Seyssouade* has instigated the « municipalo-vigilance » around the patrimony of Montmaurin. We will intervene whenever it is necessary. Nous interviendrons chaque fois que nécessaire.

Our heritage is an open book on the history of humanity – which all visitors enjoy...



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