

Réservoirs du Huchon

The four water towers in Roubaix, built along the Boulevard Lacordaire, are also known as the “Réservoirs du Huchon”. They are located on the highest point of Roubaix, near the former “Hospice de Barbieux” (now the “Centre Hospitalier de Roubaix – Centre Barbieux Administration”).

The first water tower was built in 1886 by Mr. Auguste Binet, director of engineering of the “Service Municipal des Eaux de Roubaix et de Tourcoing”. He then built two more water towers, one on either side of the first tower. These two towers consisted of a funnel-shaped metal reservoir, supported by brick walls; their silhouettes were quite similar to those of modern mushroom-shaped water towers.

In 1893, one of the mushroom-shaped towers collapsed when it was being filled with water. As a result of this, the construction site of the “Hospice de Barbieux” was flooded, much to the surprise of the contractors, who never expected any flooding to occur on the highest point of Roubaix.

In 1895, a new water tower was built by Mr. Binet to replace the one that had collapsed. The new tower was identical to the water tower that had been built in 1886. The second mushroom-shaped water tower remained in use, although the reservoir would never be filled to its maximum capacity.

In 1930, the remaining mushroom-shaped water tower was demolished by Mr. Nourtier, the new director of engineering. He subsequently built two new water towers and thus created the row of four water towers that can still be seen today, with the two old water towers in the middle and one new water tower at each end.

The reservoirs of the two new water towers were constructed of reinforced concrete. Each reservoir is covered, has a capacity of 1.700 m³ and is supported by concrete columns and beams. The entire supporting structure is hidden behind brick walls.

Between 1990 and 1993, an elaborate renovation of the “Réservoirs du Huchon” was undertaken. In August 1998, the four water towers were inscribed in the “Inventaire Supplémentaire des Monuments Historiques” (Supplementary Inventory of Historic Monuments), because of their great architectural interest.

/Wilco Krul

Sources:

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