

THE ARES NEWS

WRITTEN BY STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS

The History of Charleroi

Charleroi is a Walloon town located in the province of Hainaut. The city has about 200,000 inhabitants. In Charleroi we speak French but also Walloon, which is the local dialect. Charleroi is an industrial center: steelmaking, glassworks, chemicals, electrical constructions, mechanical constructions. The city is at the center of a vast coal basin, now totally abandoned, formerly called “le Pays Noir” (the Black Country). the inhabitants of Charleroi are called the Carolorégiens.

The Birth of the City

350 years ago, on September 3, 1666, the construction work for a fortress was inaugurated in the village of Charnoy, located on the left bank of the old bed of the Sambre, it was part of the County of Namur. The right bank, territory of the current “Ville Basse”, was part of Marcinelle which depends on the Principality of Liège.

Under the Spanish Empire

With the Pyrenees Treaty of 1659, the border between France and the Spanish Netherlands was changed. Several castles became French, leaving a wide defenseless corridor in the direction of Brussels, between Mons and Namur.

Under the orders of the Marquis Francisco de Castel Rodrigo, governor of the Netherlands in 1664, military reinforcements had to be put in place to ensure the protection of their territory from a possible French attack. The small village of Charnoy was one of the most strategic places to build a fortress. The king of Spain Charles II bought the territory from the local lord and the city was named Charleroy in his honor. the French king Luis XIV was informed of the construction of the forteress and decided to take the city of Charleroy. Under such threat, Castel Rodrigo planned to abandon and demolish it.



The Marquis de Castel Rodrigo is the founder of Charleroi.

Under the Reign of Louis XIV

With the peace treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, Charleroi was given to France and Louis XIV granted privileges to the inhabitants in order to develop the town.



Citadel of Charleroi

The Sun King instructed Vauban to rebuild the fortress and improve its defenses. The military architect proceeded with a star-shaped city fortification in order to be more effective in the event of attacks.



Napoleon's Last Campaign

It was in Charleroi that Napoleon made the first efforts of his last campaign of 1815 weigh in. Charleroi, a city strategically located for Napoleon who, crossing the Sambre, wanted to separate the English army and the Prussian army. Charleroi was important because there were bridges to cross the Sambre. On June 18, 1815 the French lost the battle of Waterloo and returned to Paris. Charleroi was therefore given to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Vauban

From Hand to Hand

Charleroi experienced several periods of instability. after the French capture: it was taken over by the Spaniards with the Treaty of Ryswick (1697), returned to France, was occupied by the United Provinces then returned to the Holy Roman Empire by the Treaty of Baden (1714). It was taken over by the Prince de Conti in 1745. Finally, it was returned to the Holy Roman Empire in 1748, on condition that the fortresses were dismantled. The city then knew 45 years of prosperity, under Joseph II.



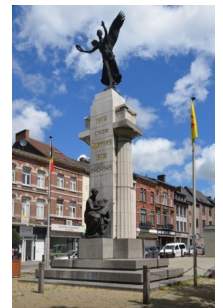
Napoleon and his Staff in Charleroi, June 13, 1815.



Joseph II

WWI

"The Battle of Charleroi" was a famous battle during WWI . The German invasion of Belgium began on 4 August 1914. Belgian cities fell one after the other. The Germans entered Charleroi on 21



WWI Memorial

August and a border battle ensued between the French army - led by General Charles Lanrezac- and the German army. The human losses were important, many civilians were massacred. The town was in ruins. This brutal frontal battle went bad for the French. On 24th August, General Charles Lanrezac was forced to order a retreat.

WWII

During the Second World War Belgium barely resisted 18 days against the German offensives. It was therefore militarily occupied for 5 years.

There were therefore two currents in Belgium: Collaboration with the enemy and the Resistance. In Wallonia, communism will be driven out (Collaboration) On the Resistance side, acts of sabotage were carried out (explosives, etc.) and assassinations were carried out to harm the enemy.



German tank.



The Old prison

in Charleroi there are also the Caporal Trésignies Barracks on Boulevard Général Michel. Today the barracks have been transformed into a museum (Musée des Chasseurs à pied). In the courtyard are exhibited an American personnel carrier and a German tank destroyer. The old Charleroi's prison in which several hundred Carolo resistance fighters were imprisoned and tortured by Nazi soldiers is where the TEC offices are today.



Corporal Barracks Trazegnies in 1925



Corporal Barracks Trazegnies today.

In the 21st Century

Charleroi has experienced a number of economic crises in recent years due to the transition from coal to oil. This has led to a massive closure of factories and mines that made the wealth of the region. Today we can see what remains of these factories (Carsid, Caterpillar,...)

Now you know almost everything about the history of our city. We hope you enjoyed it and that one day you will come and visit our city.



B.K. & B.N.

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