

Central Brittany

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Journal

February
2006

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ISSUE 20

Brittany's Birds:

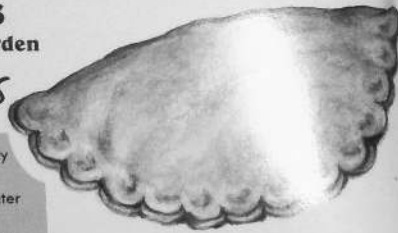
What can we do to help them?



Seasonal Recipes

Ways to use produce from the garden

Cornish Pasties



Pasties have been cooked in Cornwall for many hundreds of years. Cornish Pasties can have many fillings, and our recipe makes use of winter produce from the garden.

Recipe for eight small pasties or four large ones.

Ingredients:

Pastry:
 8 oz (225 g) plain bread flour (T80)
 ½ teaspoon salt
 4 oz (125 g) margarine
 cold water

Filling

1 medium swede
 4 medium potatoes
 2 medium onions
 salt and pepper
 ½ teaspoon dry mint
 1 egg beaten (to glaze, optional)

Method:

1. Sift the flour into a mixing bowl and add the salt. Rub in the margarine, until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs.
2. Stir in enough cold water to form a soft, supple dough. Knead once or twice, cover the bowl, and refrigerate until needed.
3. Peel and wash the potatoes and swede. Grate coarsely into a large bowl, or chop up very finely. Peel the onions, and chop finely. Add to bowl, and mix in seasoning and mint. Stir well to combine.
4. Divide the pastry into eight pieces. Make one of them into a ball and then, using a rolling pin, roll out to form a 7" (18 cm) circle. Place about two heaped tablespoons of the mixture on one half of the pastry, then fold the other half over, and press the edges together*. Flute the edge with the fingers, and brush with the beaten egg.
5. Repeat with the remaining pastry, and then place the pasties on two trays and bake in the oven at 220°C (425°F) Gas Mark 7 for about forty minutes, or until golden brown. Serve immediately.

*Alternatively, place the mixture in the centre of the circle and bring the two sides up to meet in the middle.

The Origin of the Cornish Pasty: Oggy page 12

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Contents

Brittany's Birds

What can we do to help them? page 13
 Bird Quiz page 6



Kind-Hearted Country Folk
 François Marie Luzel page 4



Business Focus:
 Verger du Belon page 5



Breton Story: Yves and Yvonne page 16

The Useless Tree page 26

Oggy page 12

Map of Breton Place Names page 24

Picture of the Month
 Sunset in Brittany page 33

Recipe: Cornish Pasty	2	What's On	21	Classified Advertising	34
Book review	6	Grax Warrior	22	Properties of the month	43
Editorial	7	Website Workshop	23	Spring in the Garden	48
News	8	Gardening:			
Letters	10	Peas & Parsnips	31		

Central Brittany Journal

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Advertising:
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Index of Adverts

Animals	34, 36	Houses to Rent	44
B&B	35, 37	Landscaping	38
Building Services	37, 39, 40, 41, 46, 47	Property	42, 43
Caravans	44	Services	39
Computers	37	Translation & French	39
Courses	37	Courses	40
For Sale	38	Travel	44
Health	38	Vehicles	41
		Wanted	44

Deadline for classified ads: 20th of the month.

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4 Kind-Hearted Country Folk

Brittany's Kind-Hearted Country Folk

François Marie Luzel was a famous scholar of Breton folklore and tradition. In this account, written at the beginning of the twentieth century, he challenges the commonly-held belief that peasant farmers were unfeeling towards animals and wildlife.

In the past, hares were not afraid to live in the yards that adjoined the houses, and in every field, when the corn was being weeded, partridge nests were uncovered, containing twelve or fifteen eggs, and they were always treated with the greatest respect. Magpies, blackbirds, thrushes, warblers, sparrows and all sorts of other little birds nested happily in the hedges and bushes that surrounded the farms without ever being disturbed, and they also nested in the trees whose branches often came down onto the very rooftops. In winter, robins and wrens came into the houses, where crumbs of bread were put down for them, and handfuls of grain were thrown onto the ice and snow, for the less courageous birds.

And then, with the first rays of spring sunshine, what melodious concerts burst out around the humblest cottages. What's more, these dear little creatures were not only harmless to the farmer, but actually performed him many services, for they rid him of the grubs and insects which spoil the corn, fruits, and other produce of the soil. It is all quite different today, and that is why the crops of cereals, fruits, potatoes and other produce have declined so dramatically, both in quality and abundance.

Translated from the original © 2006. 3J



Renoir's idyllic painting of a Breton home, painted during a holiday in Brittany in 1886, reflects the theme of harmony between man and nature. His wife is seated on the bench with their son beside her, and they are talking to a passer-by.

Brittany's Birds
page 3

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Business Focus: Verger du Belon 5

Business Focus Verger du Belon

Organic Apple and Pear Orchard. Organic apple juice producer.

Founded fifteen years ago by Lucien Gorvan and his wife, Chantal, the Verger du Belon is now a major supplier of apples to the markets and food co-ops of the region.

It has a total of 11,000 fruit trees spread over 10 hectares, and is situated not far from the town of Riec-sur-Belon (Rieg), between Quimperlé and Pont Aven. Lucien and Chantal have chosen to specialise in the production of apples suitable for eating and cooking; varieties grown include Cox, Granny Smith, Reine de Reinette and Belle de Boskop as well as traditional Breton varieties, and varieties from the United States, Germany and Switzerland.

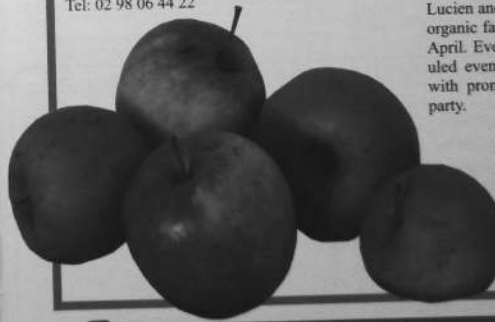
Verger du Belon is open to the public, and a small amount of delicious apples from the 2005 crop is still available for sale.

Open 10 am - 6 pm Closed Sun. & Tues.

Tel: 02 98 06 44 22



Before founding the Verger du Belon, Lucien worked on agricultural projects in West Africa for twenty years. He witnessed the encroachment of the desert onto previously-rich farmland in Senegal and Guinea Bissau, depriving millions of people of their livelihood. This experience made him determined to start a business that respected the natural ecology on his return to Brittany: "In Africa they have hit the wall, here we are rushing towards it." Lucien and Chantal are helping to organise the organic fair in Riec-s.-Belon on 29th and 30th April. Everyone is welcome to attend. Scheduled events include conferences and debates with prominent members of France's Green party.



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Book Review: Guide des chants d'oiseaux d'Europe occidentale



André Bossus, François Charron
 Birdlovers living in Brittany - or who visit Brittany regularly - will already be aware of the shortcomings of English-language guides to European Birdlife: however well researched they might be, they inevitably contain a bias towards Birds of the British Isles. This guide to the songs of the birds of Western Europe is therefore, doubly useful; not only does it contain two outstanding CDs which allow the reader/listener to identify the songs of 160 different species of birds, but it also provides a guide to the birds of Europe, in which Brittany is treated as a central, rather than as a peripheral, region.

The technical nature of the book means that some of the text will not be understood by English speakers without the aid of a dictionary, but the clear illustrations and beautiful photographs mean that even people with only a basic knowledge of French will find the book useful: each bird has a separate page which includes a map showing distribution, and whether the bird is a summer or winter visitor or whether it lives here all year round, together with an indication of the sort of habitat it prefers, and detailed diagrams relating to the bird songs. The accompanying CDs of bird songs on their own would justify buying this book.

ISBN: 2-603-01276-2 30€ including 2 CDs of birdsong. 240 pages Colour Available from www.amazon.fr for 28€ including p&p.

Bird Quiz: How good are you at recognising the French names of Brittany's birds? Underline the correct answers and check your score on page 38.

1. Héron	Heron	Seagull	13. Mésange à longue queue	Wagtail	Long-tailed Tit
2. Sittelle torchepot	Nuthatch	Thrush	14. Roitelet huppé	Goldcrest	Sparrow
3. Pie	Maggie	Pigeon	15. Mésange huppé	Wren	Crested Tit
4. Pigeon ramier	Woodpigeon	Dove	16. Troglydote mignon	Wren	Owl
5. Mésange charbonnier	Blue Tit	Coal Tit	17. Pinson des arbres	Blackbird	Chaffinch
6. Mésange bleue	Great Tit	Blue Tit	18. Alouette	Lark	Robin
7. Hirondelle	House Martin	Swallow	19. Grive	Swallow	Thrush
8. Rougegorge	Wren	Robin	20. Moineau	Sparrow	Lark
9. Merle noir	Blackbird	Starling	21. Chouette	Buzzard	Owl
10. Buse	Kite	Buzzard	22. Corneille	Crow	Tree creeper
11. Bouvreuil pivoine	Bullfinch	Goldfinch	23. Chardonneret élégant	Nuthatch	Goldfinch
12. Pic	Woodpecker	Maggie			

Score: 21-23 Exceptional, you are an expert; 16-20 Excellent, you know your birds; 12-15 A good score given it's a specialist subject; 0-11 Let's face it - worse than random guessing!

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Editorial

I have received an interesting response to last month's feature on integration. It is clearly an emotive issue, and whilst the majority of people support the idea of integration, there is clearly a minority who cling to the belief that there is something inherently superior about their own culture and this belief makes them reluctant to accept change.

It would be instructive if all the residents of Central Brittany could take a quick tour of the developed and the developing world; I suspect that we would not have to go far before we lost any illusions that we may have that the world will leave us to enjoy this quiet haven of tranquility in peace. If one wants to survive in the modern world, it seems that one has to succeed in the modern world.

The original idea for the advertising in the Journal was that it would give local businesses a chance to promote themselves directly to English-speaking residents but the pace with which the Journal has grown has meant that we have had very little time to canvass businesses for advertising. The result is that our current advertisers are people who have approached us, as opposed to people that we have selected.

When I was putting this issue of the Journal together I realised that this haphazard approach to collecting adverts has been more effective than anything I could have devised: the businesses now featured have effectively volunteered themselves as having an independent commitment to helping English-speaking residents to settle into the region.

The theme of this issue is Brittany's birdlife; it is a subject that I have become more interested in, the longer I have lived here. Brittany's seabirds already attract a lot of support and attention, but the inland birds of Central Brittany are equally diverse and equally in need of our help. I hope that the practical nature of the main article strikes a chord with readers, and that we can start to do something to restore the bird population to former levels.

As promised, the centre pages feature a revised map of Breton place names - this time focussing on places situated in the traditional Breton-speaking areas.

Finally, our book of Breton proverbs has had to be temporarily returned to the library and therefore - in the spirit of integration - this month the Journal features proverbs from around the world. GL

Better be lame than always sitting down.
 Russian Proverb

**Integration Made Easy:
'Clubs du Troisième Age'**

Most communes in Central Brittany have active clubs for retired people - usually called something along the lines of 'Club du Troisième Age', 'Club des Anciens', etc. These groups are usually very welcoming to newcomers to the area and this welcome is no way diminished if the newcomer is unable to speak French. In fact new members who can bring new skills and new ideas are often particularly appreciated.

Typical events organised by these associations include regular get-togethers, dinners, dances, and day trips to places of interest. These occasions can provide a perfect way of getting to know people in the local community, members of the clubs du Troisième Age, by definition, have seen more of life than most people and tend to be more broad-minded. French is the second language for many of the older members - Breton being their first language - and they therefore tend to be sympathetic towards people who speak the language imperfectly. Although intended for retired people these clubs tend not to set an age barrier and generally welcome anyone who wishes to participate. Over the years, people from the age of 40 upwards have consistently said that the Clubs du Troisième Age have been the most effective way possible of getting to know people in the local community. The simplest way to find out about your local group is to ask a neighbour for information.

Bicycle Repairs

Terry Manuel is now open for business as a bicycle sales and repairs specialist. He is based near Corlay and offers a mobile service for customers who cannot get their bikes to him. He has over 30 years experience in the trade and hopes the fact that he is able to source bikes and components at competitive prices will make his service attractive to cyclists in the area. Call: 02 96 29 48 40

Tack Shop

Nikki Phillips will soon be opening a tack and feed shop - The Rocking Horse - near Maël Carhaix. She is already open for business with a variety of different feeds. More info: 02 96 36 67 53

It is not by saying "honey,
honey,"
That sweetness will enter
your mouth.

Turkish Proverb

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Unicopa: Job Losses

Recent events at Unicopa, a prominent, locally-based food company, have been attracting a lot of attention in the local media over the past few weeks. Unicopa found itself in financial difficulties last year and was taken over by Entremont, which is part of a multinational group which already has a strong presence in Brittany, including a large dairy in Quimper. Entremont is now working through a process of rationalisation and has already announced that it is to shut down the cheese-making section of the Unicopa factory in Carhaix. Part of the reason for the level of concern that these changes have created is that they may mark the beginning of a process that could eventually see thousands of jobs in the food industry being moved from Brittany to Eastern Europe.

New Outlets

New outlets stocking the Journal this month include:
Intermarché, Guémené sur Scorff
Café de la Place, Callac

New Advertisers

- Care for Second Homes:** Les Bons Voisins page 44
- Satellite:** Sat Shop page 35
UK Satellite Systems page 45
- Insurance:** Ben Leyshon page 34
- Travel:** Condor Ferries page 44
France Connections page 8
- Garden Machinery:** Le Derrrien Motoculture page 5
- Tree Surgeon:** Haut des Arbres page 33
- Animal Care:** Kerroland Stables page 36
Animal Assistants page 36
- Electrician:** Glovers Electric page 46
- Games:** Esprimo page 35
- Mechanic:** Plant & Machinery Repairs page 35
- Builders:** Ludgates Renovation page 40
One Stop Shop page 41
GK Sandblasting page 46

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La vraie noblesse, est celle
du coeur.

True nobility, is the nobility of
the heart.

French Proverb

Letters

Integration
Thanks for the article on integration. I remember years ago talking to a Spaniard about ethnic minorities' efforts to keep their languages going. He was disapproving and said it was 'séparatist,' to which I replied that we are all entitled to our individual identity. I was quite young at the time and was amazed at an eloquence I hadn't realised I possessed (it has rarely surfaced since).

This set me thinking. I believe people need to be recognised as natives of this or that corner of the World in order that they should feel able to integrate. Once they are reassured that their individuality is not under threat they can feel free to integrate with other individuals. In a marriage where each partner accepts the other's quirks and foibles with love, amusement or at least tolerance, there is a very good chance of success. I think the requirements for racial harmony and integration are the same. That's all I have to add to your excellent article.

Robert Hilton. robert.hilton@wanadoo.fr

Spyware

Your correspondent on the above topic wrote a very good article but failed to point out that Microsoft have made available an excellent anti-spyware package, which is available as a free download to all Microsoft software users. This can be accessed on the msn.com web-site.
Regards, Don Smith

Driving Licences

Following on from your letters about changing from English to French driving licences.

We decided that because we were soon to face our 68th birthdays it would be prudent to change our licences to French ones as we have no address in England and do not want to inconvenience our relatives.

We live just outside Gourin and called in to the Mairie for the forms. They had no idea what we were talking about so we decided to call at the Mairie in Carhaix instead of travelling all the way to Pontivy or Vannes. The Mairie sent us to the Maison des affaires publiques in the main square. We went in the office on the ground floor and it couldn't have been easier. We just needed our driving licences, two passport photos each, our passports and a household bill. We filled in the forms, the lady was very helpful and gave us a copy of our old driving licences in case we were ever stopped, and said it would take three weeks. That was at the beginning of December. We have not received them yet, but of course, the Christmas holidays have been in between and we hopefully expect them any day now!

May we say how much we look forward to reading the CBJ every month. Thank you for a most interesting Journal.

Anne and Malcolm Watling

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Driving Licences

Going off in a slightly different direction regarding driving licences, a friend who has just changed to a French licence tells me he is not allowed to tow his caravan over the age of 60. Is this right or is this why there are less caravans and more campers here in France?

John Franklin
Corlay

Congratulations

Congratulations to the team of your excellent journal. We use it in the English courses at the 'université du temps libre' in Angers, where I have introduced it - being myself originally from Callac.

Best regards,
Nicole Kermin

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The Fascination of Brittany

"In days long ago the Britons of these isles fled from annoyance of their unwelcome Saxon visitors, and were received with open arms by their cousins in the Armorican peninsula across the channel. Now we, the Saxons, flee from our too numerous fellow-countrymen to the same peninsula, to find a little restful peace among the descendants of our ancient foes.

When we enter into the true Brittany we plunge into the midst of a silent, obstinate and reserved race, living within itself, possessing a profound belief in the things of antiquity and a lofty distrust in the things of today. Its home on an outlying peninsula has enabled it to remain faithful to its own memories and to its own customs. Local usage, local dress, religious beliefs, and superstitious rites all keep their hold; tradition is dearer than progress and mystery than proven fact."

No, not the writings of 2006 but the introduction to a little book call 'The Fascination of Brittany' by L. Edna Walter, published in 1911!

We do look forward to receiving the Journal each month, as do many of our friends. You have obviously met a need here!

Best wishes,
M. Gilbert

St. Valentine's Day Dinner

Our association is organising an evening's entertainment - a repas concert - on 11th February at Lanvénegan near Le Faouët, to celebrate St. Valentine's day.

The group Roxanne will play and the theme will be the 1970s - the musicians will play a selection of classic rock tunes from that period - guests are invited to dress in 1970s style to add to help create an authentic ambience.

The meal will include a salad, chilli con carne, cheese and fruit salad.

Entry 12€, 5€ for children up to 11 years old. 19 h 30 salle municipale Lanvénegan

Our association aims to explore different cultures in the world of music and the arts, and we organise regular events throughout the year. We would like to make contact with the British community and envisage that we could work together.

Jean Charles Lédan
President Feux Croisés
Info: ledanjc@aol.com (in French please)

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**The kings rule the earth,
But the wise rule the kings.**
Algerian Proverb

OGGY

When all the world was clean and bright and new,
The mountains, plains and forests all laid out,
Every beast knew exactly what to do,
Browse, graze, predate, instinct removing doubt.

Each woman in her kitchen stood bemused
At Earth's abundance, wondering where to start.
The Architect on seeing this devised
For each her basic culinary art.

Rice dishes for the Asiatic hordes.
For Scotsmen porridge, scones and certain kails.
For Scandinavians various smorgasbords,
And for the French tureens of frogs and snails.

So were created the World's basic dishes
All in a blink of the Creator's eye,
From vegetables, meats, from loaves and fishes,
'Til all was done. But then there came a cry,

"Old 'ard me luvver, all the rest may dine
"On these fine dishes, but they just won't do
"For my young fellow. Ec works down a mine.
"You can't go down a mine with plates of stew.

"He'll need to take it with him in the morning,
"Or else I'll have to drop it down the shaft,
"First calling out his name to give a warning.
"He'll catch it in a cloth with cunning craft."

The Architect sat at his desk to think
Of what requirements should be met here,
And dipping a new pen in magic ink
Wrote out the needs to make the problem clear.

*A meal for a miner underground,
A fisherman or worker on the land,
A meal substantial, wholesome and all round,
But able to be eaten from the hand.*

*Or carried in a pocket safely wrapped
Inside a woollen sock to keep it warm,
And so designed as to be safely dropped
Down a tin mine, and caught there without harm.*

And so this splendid meal came to be,
Neat, practical and nourishing and tasty,
To eat below, above, on land or sea;
Creation's paragon, the Cornish Pasty.

Robert Hilton.

W. Lewis

Oggy was kindly contributed by Robert Hilton, a reader of the Journal - partly inspired by seeing that Cornish Pasties are starting to become available in Brittany.

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Brittany's Birds

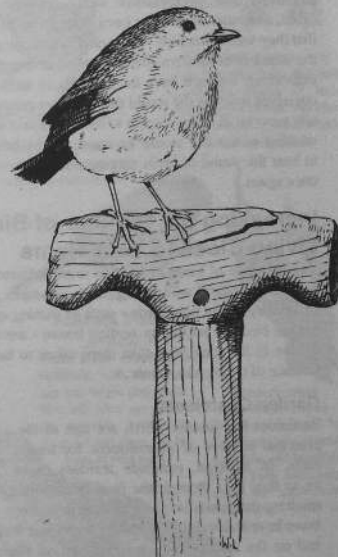
- what can we do to help them?

Up until a hundred years ago, Central Brittany was largely ignored by the scientific community; consequently, there are hardly any records of the bird life of the region which date back further than seventy or eighty years.

This lack of written information does not mean that there was a lack of respect for the bird life of Brittany on the part of the local inhabitants; in fact it is certain that the birds have suffered much more since they have been studied and documented than in the centuries before, when they were not.

However, the lack of reliable information about the bird population has proved to be a contributory factor to the slowness with which people have responded to the difficulties that Brittany's birds are facing. It is clear that there are fewer birds living here now than there were in the past, and that the variety of birds has also declined, but no one knows by how much or at what rate. It was only twenty or thirty years ago that it was widely acknowledged that the changes in the way that people are living is having a serious effect on the birds of the region.

Conservationists have highlighted the effects that modern farming techniques and hunting have had on bird life but, so far, there is no evidence to suggest that their efforts have helped to make life any easier for Brittany's bird life - on the contrary, the region is continuing to become less and less hospitable to birds as each year passes. This lack of success may be due to a failure to recognise who is really responsible for the decline in bird numbers.



The robin has always been the bird that seems to have the least fear of people, and is a familiar companion to gardeners in the winter months - often approaching close enough to be touched as they search for food in the area where you are working.

What Price Bird Song?

The traditional Breton countryside, as it existed for centuries or perhaps even millennia prior to the introduction of mechanised farming methods, consisted of small fields surrounded by high banks topped with trees. These fields were criss-crossed by sunken paths and interspersed with towns and villages. There were also extensive areas of marshy ground, areas that flooded during the winter months, woods, forests, and wild, uncultivated areas. All these different habitats combined to create a man-made countryside that supported a much larger and more varied bird life than would have existed if the area had been left in its natural state of oak forest.

Relatively few people alive today remember these times, and most of us have been brought up to believe that they were somehow 'backward' when compared to the wonders of modern life. However, as free-thinking individuals we each have the capacity to work out for ourselves whether the world that we have created is really superior in every respect to the world as it was, and whether or not life would be improved by being able to hear the sound of birds singing outside the window once again.

Modern Agriculture

Understandably, modern agricultural techniques have borne the brunt of the blame for the decline in Central Brittany's bird population. Between 1930 and 1980 farmers destroyed about half of Brittany's 200 000 miles of banks and hedges. This is serious in terms of the overall tree population - equivalent to the loss of 100 000 hectares of forest - but even worse for the bird population as it meant that the countryside upon which it had come to depend over the course of thousands of years, virtually disappeared in just two or three decades.

The introduction of bigger and bigger farm machinery means that the process of destroying banks is still continuing, though in a more covert way than before.

The practice of growing single crops over large areas of land is also very unhelpful to birds, as is the growing of non-native crops, such as maize. The use of agricultural chemicals, especially pesticides, is actively harmful to birdlife.

These factors have combined to transform Central Brittany from an area that was once extraordinarily hospitable to birds into one which is quite hostile to birdlife.

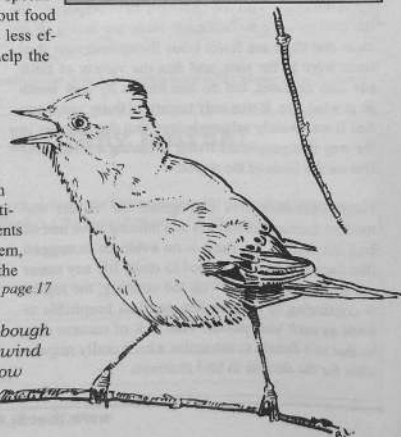
Increasing the Number of Birds Living Close to Your Home

The presence of birds in an area is an indicator of its overall ecological well being: thus, measures specifically designed to help birds - such as putting out food for the birds or setting-up nesting boxes - are less effective in the long term than steps taken to help the balance of nature as a whole.

Garden Chemicals

Pesticides kill insects which are one of the principal sources of nourishment for many birds. In addition, pesticide residues build up as they pass through the food chain, often reaching dangerous levels in birds of prey. Fertilisers have a destabilising effect on soil nutrients and on the micro-organisms that live on them, which in turn have a detrimental effect upon the

contd page 17



The happy whitethroat on the sweeing bough
Swayed by the impulse of the gadding wind
That ushers on the showers of April - now
Singeth right joyously.

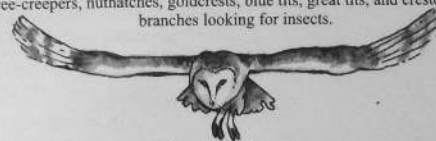
John Clare 'The Happy Bird'

Guide to Local Birds

All the birds below live in Brittany in winter. The best way to see most of them is to choose a sunny day when the birds seem particularly active, and sit on a bank close to some oak trees. At this time of year you are likely to see tree-creepers, nuthatches, goldcrests, blue tits, great tits, and crested tits running over the branches looking for insects.



Tawny Owl (*Syrinx aluco*)
The Tawny Owl makes the familiar to-whit-to-whoo heard at night.



Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)
You are more likely to hear this magnificent bird than see it. The barn owl gives a sharp shriek, which can sound very loud at the dead of night.



Nuthatch (*sitta europea*)
This beautiful little bird runs down the trunks of trees searching for insects, and often makes a tapping noise a little like a woodpecker.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)
The Goldcrest is the tiniest of all birds found in Europe, even smaller than the wren.

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)
A very common bird, no bigger than a mouse, easily recognised by its cocked tail.



Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*)
Fortunately a very common bird, which everyone is likely to see. Blue tits are always among the first birds to come to a bird table.



Crested Tit (*Parus cristatus*)
This bird can be seen with other tits in winter, searching the trees for food.



Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

There is no mistaking a bullfinch, with its black cap and bright pink chest. You will often see five or six together, eating the seeds of ash trees, or the buds of fruit trees.



Tree-creeper (*Certhia familiaris*)
Tree-creepers can be seen spiralling round the trunks and branches of old trees, burrowing under the moss with their curved beaks in search of insects.



Longtailed Tit (*Aegithalus caudatus*)
Longtailed tits are often seen in groups, and look very like balls of cotton wool with long black tails.



Greater Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*)
The loud tapping of the woodpecker commences in early spring as it drums on a hollow tree to attract a mate. Once heard, the sound can be easily traced, until you catch a glimpse of this fine bird.



Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

A very striking bird, which often flies in groups. They like seeds and can be seen in the boughs of conifers nibbling the seeds out of the cones.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)
An unmistakable bird with colourful plumage and a harsh squawk. It is partial to soft fruit as gardeners know to their cost, but its chief diet consists of acorns and other wild nuts.

Left: There is an almost perfect symbiosis between birds and the traditional buildings of Brittany. The nooks and crannies between the stones in the walls provide ideal nesting sites, and in return the birds gladden the hearts of the houses' inhabitants with their songs and merry antics.



B.L.

Below: Brittany is home to many birds of prey, including the magnificent buzzard (buteo buteo). It can be seen perched on a post beside the road or soaring in the air on its massive wings. It makes a squealing sound, rather like a cat mewing, which can be heard on the ground when the bird is high in the air.



worm population, another major source of food for birds. Herbicides are toxic not only to many plants that play an important role in the birds' food chain, but also to virtually all living things. Cutting out the use of all garden chemicals will have a greater effect on the number of birds in your garden than any other single factor.

Hedges

Hedges made up of indigenous trees and shrubs provide both food and shelter for a huge range of birds. From the birds' point of view it is preferable that a hedge should not be cut too often - certainly not more than once a year - so that the plants have a chance to produce flowers, berries and nuts: coppiced hedges that are cut only every five or six years are even better. If you are planting a hedge, a mixture of hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, wild rose, holly, elder, yew*, alder, willow, etc. is ideal.

Trees

The best things of all for birds are large, mature, native trees. If you are lucky enough to have oak trees, beech trees, ash trees, or yew trees in your garden, do everything that you can to preserve them. If you decide to plant trees it is advisable to take time to select a suitable site - make sure that you do not plant them too near buildings, overhead wires or a neighbour's land. You will be surprised by how short a time it is before the birds are attracted to young trees and start to build their nests in them.

Ivy

Brittany offers an almost perfect climate for ivy, and the ivy berries provide a rich source of food for birds late in the year when other food is becoming scarce. Even a dense covering of ivy does little harm to mature oak and yew trees, and should therefore be left wherever possible. When pruning is necessary, climb a ladder and cut off any excess at the top of the tree rather than severing the ivy near the ground.

Hunting

Contrary to modern belief, the shooting of birds is not a long-standing, local tradition. Prior to the revolution, only the aristocracy had the right to hunt, a fact that caused great resentment in some sections of society, and one of the first reforms enacted by the revolutionary government was to open up hunting to everyone. Hunting does not appear, however, to have been taken up to any great extent by country people, who could not afford to buy a gun or the required permit, and who, perhaps, had no wish to kill the birds that they encouraged to live in and around their villages.

By an unfortunate coincidence, the number of active hunters increased over the early part of the twentieth century, at around the same time as the landscape was being transformed by the introduction of modern farming methods, and this helped to put extraordinary pressure on birdlife.

Another problem is that the presence of hunters deters other people from visiting the countryside. This too is detrimental to birdlife, as in general the presence of human beings is good for bird life, and there were many more birds living here when there were a lot more people living in and visiting the countryside.

Illustrations, Brittany's Birds: Cover, Blackbird and Hawthorn; Heron Samuel Lewis Guide to local birds; Robin & spade; Buzzard; Pipit & chick Wendy Lewis Wren nesting in a stone wall; Whitethroat Bethan Lewis

'Lec'h a er bik, ar hi lost
Where goes the magpie,
there goes his tail.

*note: although Yew is harmful to grazing animals such as horses, its berries are a valuable source of food for wild birds.

Dead Wood

Hollow trees and decaying logs form an important part of the natural habitat which is indispensable to birds, for example, woodpeckers. These are still quite common in this area, but they do need a supply of dead wood infested with grubs to provide them with food. Hollow trees are the natural homes of many birds, including owls.

Cottage-Garden Plants

The fashion of the past few decades has been for people's gardens to be full of exotic plants from around the world. This is of little help to the local birds: traditional garden plants such as columbine, yarrow, foxgloves, sunflowers, mullein, St. John's Wort, Hollyhocks, and Fennel, etc., not only look perfect around a Breton house, but are also tailor-made for the birds.

Vegetables, Soft Fruit and Fruit Trees

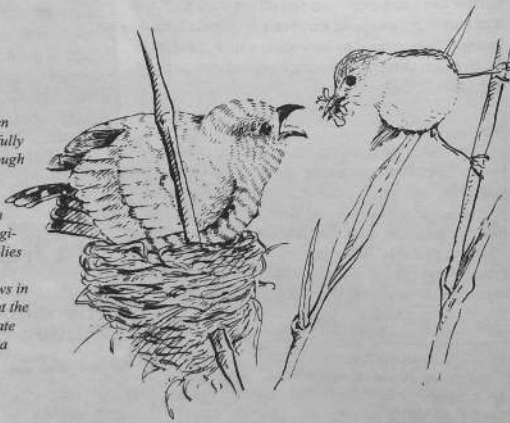
Organic gardeners are generally reconciled to losing a percentage of the crop to birds, and in return a healthy bird population is able to keep pest levels down to an acceptable level; the rich soil of a vegetable garden is also a good source of food for birds. These factors combine to make the vegetable and fruit areas some of the most attractive parts of the garden to birds, and the habit of growing vegetables close to the house contributed to making Breton villages so rich in bird life in the past.

Organic Mulch

Cover exposed areas of soil in the garden with grass cuttings, bracken, leaves, straw, compost etc. This replicates the conditions that exist on the forest floor, and helps to nurture a healthy community of worms, insects and other soil organisms. These provide a rich source of food for birds, particularly in the spring when they are raising their young.

The little pipit never seems to notice when its own egg has been displaced by the cuckoo: it dutifully feeds the cuckoo chick, even though it soon grows to be bigger than itself.

The pipit is now associated with moors and heathland but its original name of 'meadow pipit' implies that it would prefer to build its nests in the long grass that grows in water meadows - providing that the grass was not cut until mid to late August, when the pipit has had a chance to raise its young.



Wild Patches in the Garden

Away from the house, you can leave areas of a large garden to go wild - allowing bracken and brambles to grow up. Insects abound in such areas and a tangle of vegetation also provides suitable nesting sites. Wild areas can be cut back once a year, or once every two or three years, depending on what kind of plants you wish to encourage; alternatively, they can be left untouched and they eventually revert to woodland, which will provide food and shelter for a succession of different birds over the course of time - in the natural way.

Wild-Flower Meadows

In the old days meadows contained a much greater variety of plants and flowers than they do now, and they were cut later in the year, giving plants a chance to flower and set seed, and ground-nesting birds a chance to raise a clutch of eggs, before mowing began. You can replicate these conditions by leaving part of your lawn uncut until late August.

Wetland

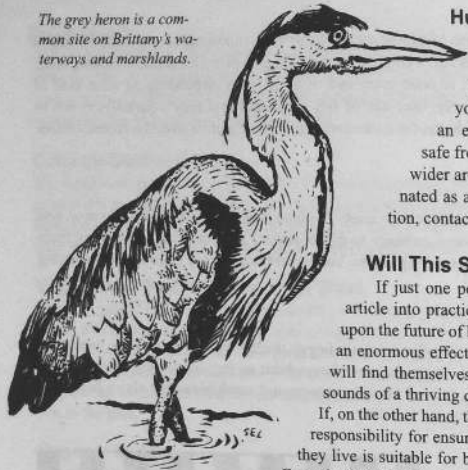
If you have springs on your land, or an area that becomes boggy during the winter months, you need not be in too much of a hurry to drain it. Wetlands have always been an important part of the Breton landscape, not only providing a breeding ground for many insects and amphibians but also a home for water-loving plants - all of which are attractive to birds.

Buying Land

There was a time when buying land and doing nothing with it would rightly have been considered as antisocial, but today it is something that should command respect: if you buy land you are saving the taxpayer money - because subsidies will not have to be paid on the land that you have bought; you reduce the production of unwanted food (food that is currently being dumped on the world market to the distress of poor farmers in Africa); you reduce the amount of agricultural chemicals entering the local eco-system; you allow a recovery process to begin in the soil; and you provide much-needed habitat for birds and wildlife. Land is still relatively inexpensive in Brittany: for the price of a new television you could buy two or three acres of agricultural land. Buying land around where you live and leaving it to go wild, is certainly a highly effective way of supporting nature and the environment in your locality.



The grey heron is a common site on Brittany's waterways and marshlands.



Hunting

Hunters do not hunt near houses; when you encourage birds to live in and around your home and garden, you are, therefore, providing them with an environment in which they are fairly safe from being shot. If you wish to protect a wider area, you can also have your land designated as a wildlife reserve. (For more information, contact LPO, see below)

Will This Save the Birds?

If just one person puts the ideas described in this article into practice, then it will have very little impact upon the future of bird-life in Brittany - but it would have an enormous effect upon the life of that one person, who will find themselves surrounded by the joyous sights and sounds of a thriving community of birds.

If, on the other hand, thousands of people were to start taking responsibility for ensuring that the countryside around where they live is suitable for birds, then it would not be long before Central Brittany was once again the haven for birds and wildlife that it was in the past. By this analysis it is neither fair nor honest to blame hunters or farmers for what is happening to the birds; ordinary people have it in their own power to set matters right, it is simply a question of whether or not we are prepared to do it.

Creating a Bird Refuge

LPO - Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux - created its first bird refuge in 1920 and there are now thousands across France.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Who can create a bird sanctuary? Almost anyone: householders, tenants, schools, businesses, associations, etc.

What sort of land is eligible? Any land is eligible, no matter whether it is in the town or in the country, whether large or small.

What is the procedure? Contact LPO, state the extent of the land that you are designating as a sanctuary, make a one-off payment of 29.50€, and agree to abide by the 'Refuge LPO charter'.

What is the charter? The LPO charter states that while the owner of the refuge retains all their rights to their property, they also agree to protect the birds that live there, to respect the flora and fauna and the balance of nature on the land, not to hunt on the land, and, where possible, not to let others hunt on the land - where hunting is allowed on the land LPO agrees to work with the owner to have it stopped as quickly as possible.

More info:

Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux, Corderie Royale BP 90263, 17305 Rochefort Cedex
www.lpo.fr E-mail: lpo@lpo.fr Tel: 05 46 82 12 34

What's On

Sundays in February 10 a.m. start

Every Sunday Book/Bric a Brac Sales at Fleur de Bretagne, Rostrenen campsite, will have the following demonstrations. Feb. 5th: Ladies' Hairstyle demo; Feb. 12th: Tarot card readings (booking vital); Feb. 19th & Feb. 26th: to be announced. Sunday lunches also available. Booking essential. For more information, Call Ray/Yvonne: 02 96 45 79 11

Wednesdays in February from 8pm

Every Wednesday in February - Au Rendez-Vous Des Celtes, Plussulien (22), Wine Tasting and Tapas-FREE!! 02 96 24 04 26

Thursdays in February 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

Fleur de Bretagne (Camping Rostrenen) Kerandouaran, (dir. Siffiac) - Thursday Feb 2nd Quiz night; Thursday Feb. 9th Pool Tournament; Thursday Feb. 16th Bingo night; Thursday 23rd Feb Darts night. Entry fee 5 € includes supper. More info: 02 96 29 16 45

Wednesday February 1st 7.30 p.m.

French classes at Rendezvous des Celtes restaurant, Plussulien recommence. Booking necessary. Tel: 02 96 36 59 00

Saturday February 4th & Sunday February 5th

Art and Crafts exhibition with the theme of "Great Britain" at Saint-Ilan Ecole d'horticulture et paysage at Languoux, St Brieuc (signposted from the centre of Languoux). A week long demonstration of art work from 25 artists and craftspeople; open to the public on the weekend. Free entry. Opening hours: 2 p.m. - 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. For more information: Linden@FrenchHomes.co.uk

Tuesday February 7th

AIKB-organised visit to learn about the recycling of household rubbish at the sorting depot and tip in Rostrenen, RV at the Centre de tri à la ZA de Gopéren (route Rostrenen à Carhaix) at 2.30pm. Non-members 5€. For further info call Liz: 02 96 24 87 90

Thursday February 9th 8pm

Quiz Night Salle Polyvalente, Gouarec. Entrance fee 1€50. AIKB (Association Integration Kreiz Breizh) are organising a Quiz Night with prizes for the best answers. Questions in English and French! Teams of four people to take part. A cold buffet and bar will be available. Form your team now. Bring along your friends. Open to all. Reservations only. For further info call Liz: 02 96 24 87 90

Saturday February 11th

St Valentine's buffet and dance at La Détente (5km from Callac on the D11, Callac/Lannion Road). 8.30 p.m. start. 8€ incl. buffet. Booking not necessary, but for more information, call Penny on 02 96 45 06 88.

Saturday February 11th

Chilli and magic evening at Le Fer à Cheval, Paule. Enjoy a free chilli con carne followed by some entertaining bar magic. More info: 02 96 29 89 66

For a free listing in the What's On column please send items to: cbj222956@aol.com

Fleur de Bretagne

Camping Rostrenen, Kerandouaron (dir. Siffiac)
Camping Rostrenen - Direction D31 Siffiac
EVENING MEALS & SUNDAY LUNCH
Example meal - Tomato and Mozzarella Salad, Entrecôte Steak & Chips & Salad, Hot Chocolate Breizhez & Vanille Ice Cream 15€ - Booking advisable - closed Wednesdays
Sundays - Come and enjoy a three course roast lunch 15€
Booking essential

THURSDAY EVENINGS - FUN NIGHTS
Come and join in with our fun nights - Quizzes, Pool, Bingo and Darts - you might even win a bottle of champagne. 5€ entry includes light supper (see dates in the WHAT'S ON section of the CBJ)
Ring 02 96 29 15 45 to book meals & fun nights

Craft Workshops Le Chat qui Lit

Leatherwork, Pewterwork, Woodcarving
Paper Embossing, Chair caning

30€ for 5 sessions + materials www.chatquilit.com
Pierrepoulet, 22110 Kergrist Moëlou, tel 0296 36 59 00
Come and learn, no experience needed

Sunday February 12th 10 a.m. - 1.30 p.m.
Indoor car boot sale. Tables free but booking essential. Carolann's, Carnoët. (On left as you enter village). Well marked. Hot food available incl. fish & chips. 02 96 21 54 62

February 1st - February 28th
Massive book sale at Le Chat qui Lit, Kergrist Moëlou throughout February. Room needed for new stock; thousands of books at 1€ each or less. Tel: 02 96 36 59 00 or see www.chatquilit.com for directions and opening times.

Tuesday February 14th
Au Rendezvous Des Celtes, Plussulien, Darts and Skittles evening (who said romance was dead!), booking advised, prizes, 7.30 pm. 5€ each for a good night out including full English breakfast 02 96 24 04 26

Tuesday February 21st
Wildwalks organise a monthly programme of guided walks. 2.30 p.m. Meet by the Wolf Museum at Cloître-St-Thegonnec. 2 1/2 hours, 3 €. Tel: 02 98 24 15 19

Sunday February 26th
10.30 am HOLY COMMUNION WITH HYMNS taken by the Revd Dr John Marvell, Bonen Church near Rostrenen. C of E. All welcome. Information from Robin & Laura Hillman 02 97 51 74 26

Tuesday February 28th
Au Rendezvous Des Celtes, Plussulien, Quiz Night, 8.00pm booking advised, prizes, 5 € each to include Annie's Steak Pie and chips. 02 96 24 04 26



Q.: "I live in France but have a UK bank and credit card. How can I sign up to eBay and PayPal without getting everything in French?"

A.: For those of you who don't know, eBay is an on-line auction company and PayPal is its banking arm. If you intend to buy and/or sell on eBay you really should have an account with PayPal. This can be used for making transactions with other account holders that may be nothing to do with eBay but they do charge for every transfer so check that this is your best option. However, this is not answering the question.

Many on-line organisations assume that, if you give them a French address, you want everything in French. This is just one example of the dangers in letting computers think for themselves. They really are that stupid. How are they supposed to know that you don't speak/read French? The fault, of course is with the people who created the websites and the systems behind them. They think that they've done the human race a favour, not realising that everyone in any particular country may not want to speak the language of that country all the time!

So, what can one do? In some situations; not a lot. Subscribers to AOL who insist on using English language software will not be able to use many of the functions that should be available. Like them, you may just have to grin and get on with it. Learn to do a Gallic shrug. With the particular matter in hand, there could be a solution.

The smarter reader will say "Go to their .co.uk website!" Well, you'll do that of course, but when you get to the paying part everything reverts to French! Naturellement! The only solution that I've been able to come up with is to provide a UK address!

Many of us who live in France still retain accounts with financial institutions in our country of origin. We may still have credit cards with them. Banks will often not allow foreign residents to have accounts with them so an address in the country is vital. When you subscribe to eBay or PayPal use the address that is relevant to your account and credit card. When it comes to receiving purchases that you've made it isn't too difficult to supply a delivery address that differs from the one that was given previously. Messy, but it does work.

Now, I'd like to wish you all a Happy and trouble free New Year.



Any questions?
graxwarrior@wanadoo.fr
 or leave a message with the CBJ:
 02 96 21 52 21

He who is diligent will not be hungry,
 He who is wise will not do wrong,
 He who is watchful will not fear,
 He who knows when to be silent and when to speak,
 Will never fall into quarrels.
Indian Proverb



Website Workshop

Last month we looked at Spyware and the problems it causes, this month we shall examine the practice of Phishing.

Q - So what exactly is Phishing?

A - Identity theft is a growing issue amongst most Internet users and Phishing is just one of the ways employed to get you to part with your personal and financial information.

Phishing is an online scam involving the use of email messages that appear to be sent by your bank or other trusted businesses. Instead, the emails are being sent by impostors trying to gain access to this information by obtaining your security details. Phishing emails typically ask you to click on a link to a false website which asks you to input or confirm your security details such as your account number, credit card numbers or passwords.

Q - Why is it spelt that way?

A - One possible answer is, it could be short for Password Harvest fishing - PHishing. Others believe it is a hacker's term based on the terminology used for telephone hacking in the 1970s - "Phone Phreaking".

Q - How can I spot a fraudulent email?

A - There are quite a few ways to avoid being caught:

- There is usually a sense of urgency in the tone of a fraudulent email; the message probably suggests that without a quick response, your account may be suspended or threatened in some way. Pay close attention to the content, it's quite likely that the message will have unusual wording and contain misspellings. Some may even use incorrect terms for product names or services.
- Fraudulent emails usually request personal and financial information such as:
 - o Account numbers
 - o Credit card and cheque card numbers
 - o PINs
 - o Usernames and passwords
 - o Date of birth
 - o Mother's maiden name
 - o Other confidential information - don't give it to them

• Be sure that you are on the actual site of the purported business and that it is a secure site. A secure site will have an address that begins with 'https' rather than 'http' and a padlock or gold key in the bottom right corner of your browser window. It's a good idea to verify the certificate of the site you are visiting by clicking on the locked padlock or gold key.

• Some company websites provide listings of all of the email communications that are sent, so customers can verify the validity of these messages. Opening the home page of a company by typing the web address in the web browser (NOT by clicking on a link in the email) is a good first step. If the email contained information that seems important then there is a good chance it should appear on the company's website.

• PayPal (www.paypal.com) will always send you an email that addresses you by name. A fraudulent email will use something like "Dear PayPal member".

• Banks NEVER ask for your account details.

• Regularly check your bank, credit and debit card statements to ensure that all transactions are legitimate.

• Ensure that your browser is up to date and security patches are applied.

More information can be found on the Anti-Phishing Working Group website at www.antiphishing.org.

Next month: Pharming

Malcolm Wearing

You can contact Malcolm at malcolm@practicalnet.com or on 02 96 26 04 83. Practical Net - Website Design, Hosting, Computer Repairs/Upgrades & Computer Coaching. www.PracticalNet.com



BURO+
express

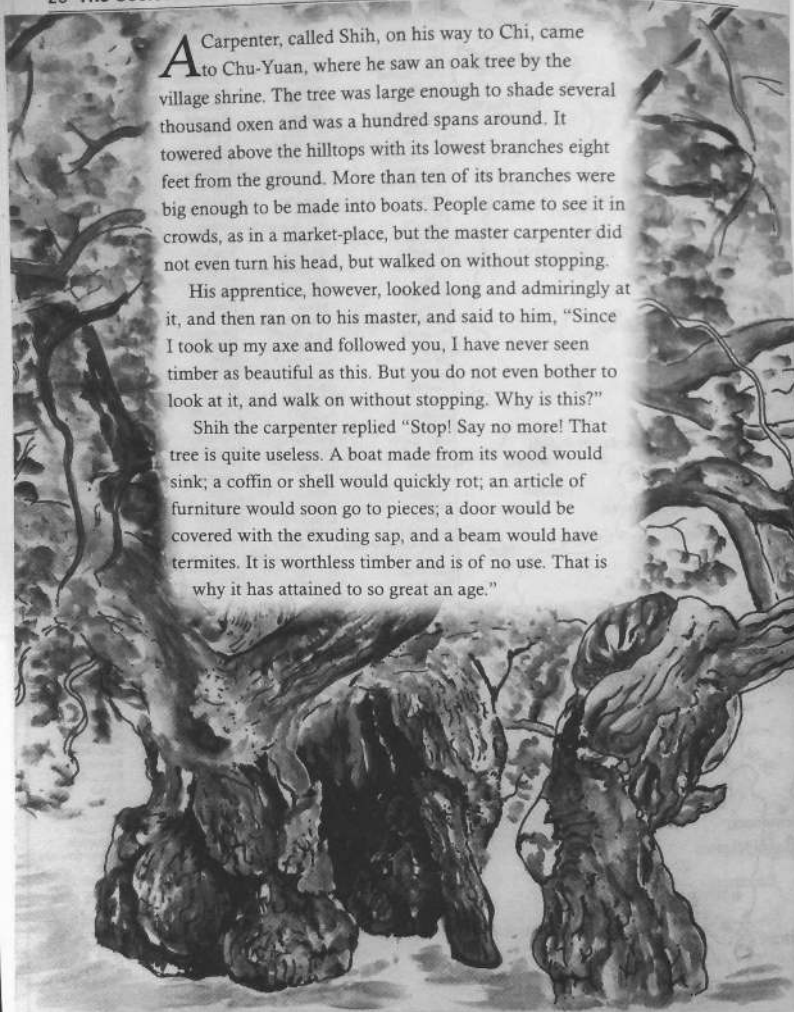
Office Supplies Stationery Printers
 Fax machines Photocopying
 ZAE du Poteur, Carhaix (near McDonald's)
 Tel: 02 98 93 04 10 Fax: 02 98 99 13 06

With time and patience,
 The mulberry leaf becomes silk.
Chinese Proverb

A Carpenter, called Shih, on his way to Chi, came to Chu-Yuan, where he saw an oak tree by the village shrine. The tree was large enough to shade several thousand oxen and was a hundred spans around. It towered above the hilltops with its lowest branches eight feet from the ground. More than ten of its branches were big enough to be made into boats. People came to see it in crowds, as in a market-place, but the master carpenter did not even turn his head, but walked on without stopping.

His apprentice, however, looked long and admiringly at it, and then ran on to his master, and said to him, "Since I took up my axe and followed you, I have never seen timber as beautiful as this. But you do not even bother to look at it, and walk on without stopping. Why is this?"

Shih the carpenter replied "Stop! Say no more! That tree is quite useless. A boat made from its wood would sink; a coffin or shell would quickly rot; an article of furniture would soon go to pieces; a door would be covered with the exuding sap, and a beam would have termites. It is worthless timber and is of no use. That is why it has attained to so great an age."



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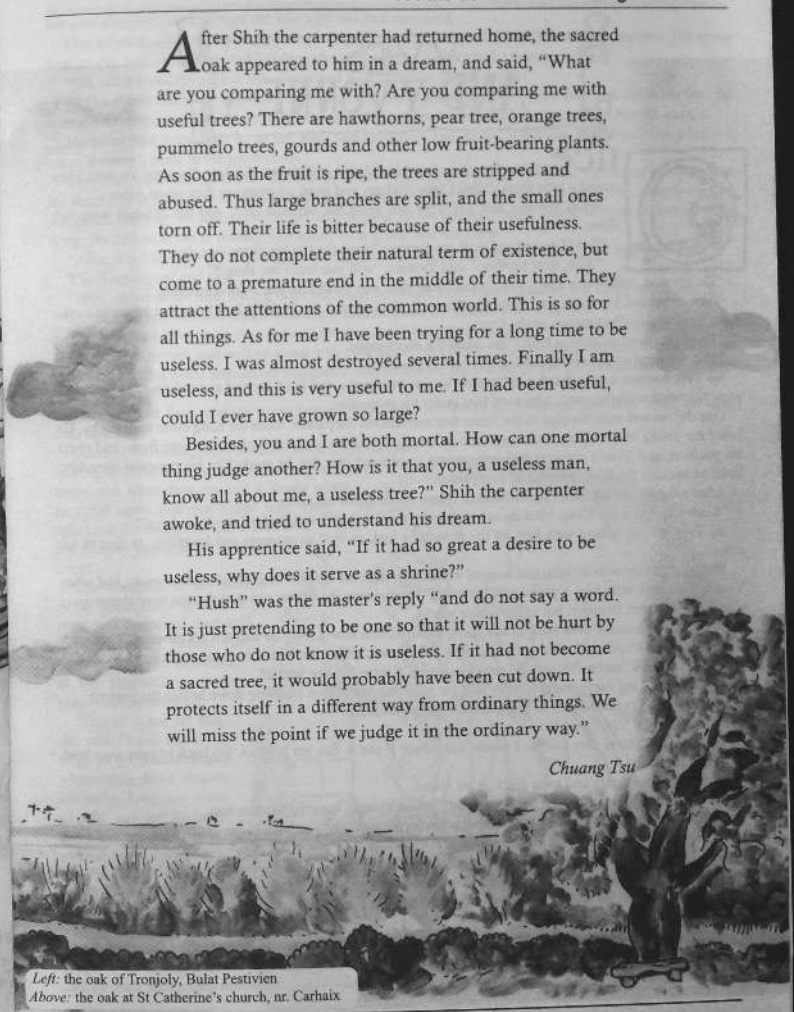
After Shih the carpenter had returned home, the sacred oak appeared to him in a dream, and said, "What are you comparing me with? Are you comparing me with useful trees? There are hawthorns, pear tree, orange trees, pummelo trees, gourds and other low fruit-bearing plants. As soon as the fruit is ripe, the trees are stripped and abused. Thus large branches are split, and the small ones torn off. Their life is bitter because of their usefulness. They do not complete their natural term of existence, but come to a premature end in the middle of their time. They attract the attentions of the common world. This is so for all things. As for me I have been trying for a long time to be useless. I was almost destroyed several times. Finally I am useless, and this is very useful to me. If I had been useful, could I ever have grown so large?"

Besides, you and I are both mortal. How can one mortal thing judge another? How is it that you, a useless man, know all about me, a useless tree?" Shih the carpenter awoke, and tried to understand his dream.

His apprentice said, "If it had so great a desire to be useless, why does it serve as a shrine?"

"Hush" was the master's reply "and do not say a word. It is just pretending to be one so that it will not be hurt by those who do not know it is useless. If it had not become a sacred tree, it would probably have been cut down. It protects itself in a different way from ordinary things. We will miss the point if we judge it in the ordinary way."

Chuang Tsu



Left: the oak of Tronjoly, Bulat Pestivien
Above: the oak at St Catherine's church, nr. Carhaix

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YVES AND YVONNE



Once upon a time there lived an old man and his two children, Yves and Yvonne. They owned a little farm, called Croix-Ruduno, and lived on whatever they could grow.

When the boy and girl were still young the old man died, and the children were left alone.

"I will go out and seek my fortune," said Yves to his sister, one day.

"Alas, dear brother," said Yvonne, "will you leave me alone?"

"Do not fear, little sister. I will soon come home rich, and I will find you a good husband."

Yves embraced his sister, and bade her farewell, then set out for Paris. When he arrived he went to the King's palace, and hammered on the door.

"Have you need of anyone here?" he asked the doorkeeper.

"Yes, we need a swineherd; our last one left us yesterday."

So Yves became a swineherd, and because he was handsome, and kind-hearted and obliging, he became a great favourite with the cook, who took him under his protection.

One day he was with his pigs in the forest that surrounded the palace, when the King came walking by. He heard the young man singing, and stopped to listen. He asked the swineherd where he came from, and about his position, and Yves's answers and appearance so pleased him that he made him his personal attendant. Soon he became the King's favourite companion.

After a time Yves asked for permission to return home to see his sister.

"Certainly," said the King. "But do not stay away more than a fortnight for I need you here."

So Yves set out, taking with him all the money he had, as well as presents and jewellery, to give to his sister.

She greeted him with delight, and begged him not to leave her again. The fortnight passed away, and when Yves left he took with him a portrait of his sister. Yvonne was the fairest girl that the sun ever shone upon – not only in lower Brittany, but in the whole world.

The King welcomed Yves back to the court, and told him how keenly he had felt his absence. With each day that passed, Yves's influence grew and grew. Whenever he had a moment he went to his room to look at his sister's portrait, and he kissed and spoke to it as if it were Yvonne herself.

One day the King came unexpectedly into the room, and saw Yves kneeling down before the portrait.

"Tell me, who is the maiden in this picture?" asked the King.

"It is my sister, Sire," said Yves.

"Your sister? She is very lovely. I would like to see if she is like her portrait. Go back to your own land and bring her to me."

Yves left immediately and soon reached his home.

"Dear brother, have you come back for good?" cried Yvonne, running to meet him.

"No, dear sister," said Yves. "I have come to fetch you, and take you back to the court."

"To the court? Why they will all laugh at me."

"The King himself has sent for you, little sister," said Yves. "And do not fear, no one will laugh at you."

So Yvonne and her nurse, and the nurse's daughter, set sail for Paris. The King had given Yves a glass chest, in which to put his sister during the voyage, so that her complexion would not be browned and chafed by the sun and the sea air.

Yves himself had been given a message to deliver to the Prince of Normandy, and while the others went by sea, he went by land. The captain of the vessel was charged to take good care of them, and Yvonne stayed all day in her glass chest. However, in the evenings, when the sun had set, she would take a little walk on the deck, and enjoy the cool air.

Now, the nurse had taken a dislike to Yvonne and she decided to do away with her, and replace her with

her own daughter, even though she was ugly and had-tempered.

One evening, after a very hot day, they were all three standing on the deck looking at the sea. The nurse was on one side of Yvonne, and her daughter on the other. Suddenly the nurse cried:

"Oh, what beautiful golden fish. Come and look at them – quick, quick!"

The two girls ran to the edge, and bent over. The nurse seized Yvonne by the feet, and threw her into the water. A mermaid rose up immediately and carried her down to her coral palace, far beneath the water.

No sailor had been close by to see what had happened, and no one knew that the nurse's daughter had taken Yvonne's place in the glass chest.

The boat came into port, and was met by Yves, who was waiting on the quay. The nurse told him that his sister had been blown overboard, and died during a storm. His grief was very great, but, even though he suspected foul play, he had no proof, and said nothing. At the court the nurse's daughter was presented to the King. He looked at her in dismay, and asked Yves if this was his sister.

"Alas, it is," said Yves. "She caught smallpox during the voyage, and that is why she is so changed."

The King sighed and said:

"How unfortunate! Still, a King must not break his word. I promised to marry her, and I will marry her."

So the wedding was celebrated with every festivity, and the couple were married.

The King and Yves were very sad and nothing could raise their spirits. The nurse and her daughter were full of pride, however, and walked along with their heads held high. They criticised and scolded the servants and courtiers, and made themselves unpopular with everyone, but the King was too downhearted to restrain them.

They disliked Yves, and the nurse began to plan with several of the courtiers how they could do away with him.

One day, two noblemen of the court invited Yves to come

hunting with them. He agreed, never suspecting any harm, and when they reached a lonely place,

they fell upon him and killed him. They

then took the body, and threw it into an

old ruined chapel, in the heart of the

forest.

The mermaid at the bottom

of the ocean knew immediately

what had happened, and told

Yvonne that her brother had

been slain by two noblemen,

at the instructions of the

nurse and her daughter.

"But all is not yet lost,"

she said. "I will allow you

to go to the ruined chapel

where they have thrown

his body. Take this water

of life, and for the next

three nights, go to him,

and rub it upon his body.

You must return when

I pull upon the chain

about your waist."

The mermaid gave

Yvonne a vial filled with

water from the spring

of life, and fastened a

golden chain about her



30 Breton Story: Yves and Yvonne

waist. She kept hold of one end, while Yvonne travelled to the ruined chapel. She arrived at midnight and fell, weeping upon her brother's lifeless body. She rubbed it with the water of life, and showered it with her tears, but he did not move. At daybreak the mermaid pulled upon the chain, and Yvonne had to leave.

"I will come back two more times, poor brother," she said, "and I will bring you back to life."

Meanwhile, the King had grown anxious about his friend and asked everyone where he was: he was told that no one knew, no doubt he had lost his way, while out hunting in the forest.

The next day a travelling knife grinder took shelter in the little chapel. He fell asleep on an old chest, and at midnight he was awoken by the sound of weeping and lamenting. Yvonne had arrived, and the light of her beauty filled the chapel. Once again she rubbed the body of her brother with the water of life and did all she could to warm it with her kisses and her tears. At last, it did indeed begin to stir a little. At daybreak, the mermaid pulled on the chain, and she once again had to return to the bottom of the ocean.

"Do not fear, poor brother," she said, "I will return tonight, for the last time."

The old knife grinder had heard and seen everything, and he went and knocked on the palace door.

"I want to speak to the King," he said.

"The King does not admit everyone who comes," said the doorkeeper.

"I have important news, which will please him."

"Tell me what it is."

"No, I want to speak to him in person."

The old man was so insistent that he was shown into the presence of the King.

"Sire, you believe that you have married the sister of your friend, Yves, do you not?", asked the knife grinder.

"Yes, is it not true?" cried the King.

"No, Sire. You have married the nurse's daughter; the true bride is held prisoner by a mermaid, at the bottom of the ocean."

"How can this be. Please tell me everything."

The old knife grinder told the King all that had happened, and explained how he had overheard the whole story while he was taking shelter in the ruined chapel.

"The maiden comes there every night to rub the body of her dead brother with the water of life," said the old man. "Her beauty is so bright that it fills the chapel like a lamp."

"And how can we rescue her from the mermaid?" said the King.

"Give me twelve soldiers, Sire, each armed with a stout axe, and we will hide ourselves tonight in the chapel. When Yvonne has come, and brought her brother back to life, and is preparing to return to the mermaid, I will give a sign and the soldiers will each leap forward and strike the golden chain, breaking it into twelve pieces. Then the maiden will be free, and I will bring her to you with her brother."

The King gave the old knife grinder the twelve soldiers, and they went and hid in the ruined chapel, armed with their stout axes.

At midnight Yvonne arrived. She finally brought her brother back to life, and he arose as well as ever. They embraced each other, and said the fondest farewells, for dawn was approaching. Suddenly, the mermaid pulled upon the chain, and Yvonne, said:

"Alas, dear brother, I must leave you now - perhaps for ever."

The knife grinder cried:

"Stand firm, comrades!"

And immediately the twelve axes fell, and broke the chain into twelve pieces. The mermaid gave a terrible cry and when she pulled upon the chain, and did not bring back her prisoner, she set the sea tossing and heaving.

The brother and sister returned with the knife grinder and the twelve soldiers to the palace, where the King met them with the greatest joy.

The nurse and her daughter, and the two noblemen who had slain Yves were duly punished, and the King finally married Yvonne. He made Yves the head of his armies, and set the old knife grinder to take care of his wine cellars.

The festivals and rejoicing were magnificent, and lasted a whole month.

Gardening 31

Peas, Parsnips & Summer Vegetables

People often ask about the best way to integrate with their local community, and the answer could be by growing vegetables. Country people find it difficult to understand why anyone should prefer to buy all their food at the supermarket when they could grow much of it themselves.

A well-stocked vegetable garden is one of the best ways of gaining the respect of local gardeners - and February is the time to start planning this year's crops.

Peas

There are two different sorts of peas: those which have smooth, round seeds and those which have wrinkly seeds. The round seeds can be planted earlier in the year than the wrinkly seeds - it is not clear why this should be the case, it may simply be because their smooth skins do not allow water to settle on them while they are sitting in the ground and they are therefore less likely to rot; in Central Brittany it is possible to make a sowing in late February.

The first major hurdle that the pea plants have to overcome is just after they germinate: if their growth is arrested by a spell of cold, wet weather there is a risk that they will die, particularly if they are sitting in water-logged soil, and it is not unusual for the whole crop to be lost. The solution is to ensure that the soil is well drained: dig a trench anything up to 18" deep; if you have any early grass-cuttings put them at the bottom of the trench, and then add compost and other organic material; finally, put 4-5" of soil back on top. Tap the surface down lightly, but do not walk on it. Plant the peas with a dibber 2-3" apart. The organic material in the trench serves a double function; it makes the soil very well-draining at the start of the year, and it provides a rich source of nourishment for the pea roots later in the year, helping the young plants to reach their maximum size before flowering begins.

The next threat to the pea crop is mice, small rodents, and birds. The simplest way to prevent these animals digging up and eating the seedlings is to place a 3-4" section of a plastic bottle around each seed that you plant. This may seem like an extraordinary amount of work, but it is a method that can result in an 80-90% success rate, meaning that you do not have to over-plant, re-plant, or fill in any gaps in the rows.



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32 Gardening

The seed packet will give an indication of the height to which the plants will grow: these days almost all the commonly-sold pea seeds are for dwarf varieties, which do not grow more than three or four feet high. You must provide an appropriate frame to support the plants: wire netting, bamboo canes, hazel sticks, and forked branches can all be used. It is a mistake to think that the plants will be able to support themselves: they will fall over just as the crop is ripening and the pods resting on the ground will rot if there is a hint of wet weather.

Peas are a labour-intensive crop. Nevertheless you will see them in almost every Breton vegetable garden. This is because they are well-suited to local conditions, high-yielding if grown properly, and one of the most delicious vegetables that the garden produces.

Further sowings can be made in March; sowings of wrinkly varieties can be made in late March and April. The wrinkly varieties tend to crop over a longer period of time.

Parsnips

For some reason, parsnips have become an almost unknown crop in Brittany but local conditions are ideally suited to their cultivation. Seeds should be sown in stone-free soil in February; the relatively mild conditions result in a better germination than you would expect in traditional parsnip-growing areas such as the UK. The seedlings should be thinned and weeded in March or April and from then on the crop needs very little attention until harvesting, the following winter. The great advantage of parsnips is that their taste improves with a frost, and they can be left in the ground until needed - you could still be harvesting parsnips from last year now! If field voles are a problem in your garden, it is advisable to protect your parsnip bed with wood or bricks sunk 7-8" into the ground.

Lettuces

You can start growing lettuces under cover towards the end of February. Repeated sowing (made every ten days or so) will result in your being able to harvest lettuces throughout the summer.

Weather Report

Newcomers to Brittany might think that we have had a lot of rain over the last few months, but by usual standards this has been a dry winter. Unless we get more or less continuous rain in February and early March, we will be going into the second summer in a row with ground-water levels significantly below normal.

Last year, this did not affect gardeners too seriously because there was a reasonable amount of rain throughout the summer, but it is not uncommon for there to be very little rain in July and August in this part of the world. If this were to happen this year, the plants that would be most at risk would be newly-planted trees and shrubs, and vegetables and flowers sown in early summer.

To reduce the risk, it is advisable to plant or move shrubs as early in the spring as possible so that they have a chance to establish a good root system before the onset of dry weather. For the same reason, make early sowings of vegetables.

February can be one of the coldest months of the year. It is quite common to have a few days of warm weather followed by a spell of bitterly cold weather and easterly winds. This can be confusing for some garden plants: it is advisable not to remove last year's growth from herbaceous perennials as it serves to protect any young shoots that have been tempted to grow. It is unusual to get really hard frosts after the middle of the month.

Annual Weeds

It must be remembered that weeds are much better suited to local conditions than most of our favourite vegetable plants. Plants such as dock and groundsel are happy to germinate and grow in February and, if given a chance, will be well established by March or April when most vegetable seeds are planted. A few hours hoeing in February can save a lot of tedious weeding later in the year.

Opposite: It may be hard to imagine, but it is work done now that produces a vegetable garden in the summer.

Picture of the Month 33



Picture of the month: Sunset in Duault, December 2005. © Wendy Lewis. Do you have a favourite photograph that you would like to see published in the Journal? Contact Wendy at info@thebcj.com.



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Classified Advertising

3€ 25 words (see page 42)

Animals	34,36	For Sale	38	Property	42,43
B&B	35,37	Games	35	Property Care	44
Books	34	Gardening	35	Services	39
Building Services	37,39,40,41,46,47	Health	38	Television	35,45
Building Supplies	35	Houses to Rent	44	Tractor Work	45
Caravans	44	Insurance	34	Translation & French	40
Computers	37	Jewellery	34	Courses	40
Courses	37	Landscaping	38	Travel	44
Food & Drink	45	Magic	34	Vehicles	41
Food	35	Mechanic	35	Wanted	44
		Pools	34		

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Animals cont'd. page 35

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B&B contd. from page 35

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Courses contd. page 38

38 Classified

Courses contd. from page 37

WORKSHOPS in Plant Therapy & Skincare Remedies. Learn to make your own natural skin care remedies from gels, creams, animal sprays & ointments, shampoos etc. For details & dates of courses: www.fraichot-aromatics.com. annamariae.baker@free.fr 02 96 51 30 58

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Landscaping contd. page 39

Solution Bird Quiz Page 6

1. Héron	Heron	12. Pic	Woodpecker
2. Sittelle torchepot	Nuthatch	13. Mésange à longo queue	Long-tailed Tit
3. Pie	Maggpie	14. Roitelet huppé	Goldcrest
4. Pigeon ramier	Woodpigeon	15. Mésange huppé	Crested Tit
5. Mésange charbonnier	Coal Tit	16. Troglodyte nain	Wren
6. Mésange bleue	Great Tit	17. Pinson des arbres	Chaffinch
7. Hirondelle	Swallow	18. Alouette	Lark
8. Rougêgorgé	Robin	19. Grive	Thrush
9. Merle noir	Blackbird	20. Moineau	Sparrow
10. Buse	Buzzard	21. Chouette	Owl
11. Bouvreuil pivoine	Bullfinch	22. Cornelle	Crow
		23. Chardonneret élégant	Goldfinch

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Building & Property Services 39

Landscaping contd. from page 38

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Services contd. page 40

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The just are like the sandal tree,
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Services contd. from page 39

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Contd. page 44

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42 Property

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Property to rent and land for sale: page 44

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Property 43



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46 Building Services

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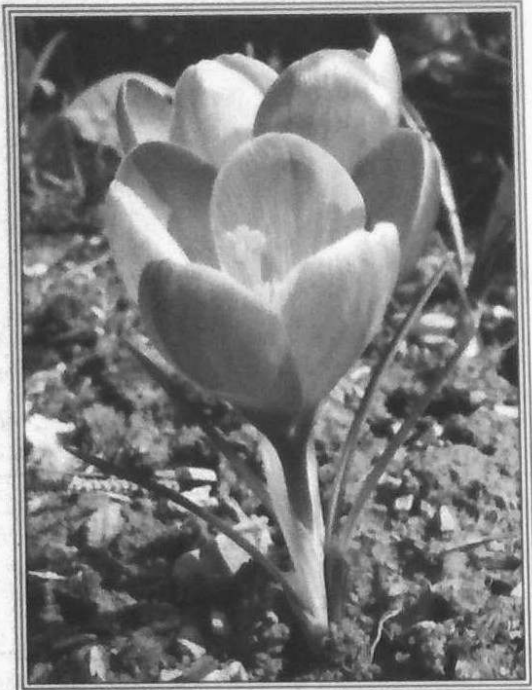
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Spring in the Garden



In February, the early signs of Spring can be seen in the garden: first the catkins on the hazel trees, then the primroses along the banks, and then the crocuses and snowdrops in the flower beds. Once these appear, the worst of the Winter is over. Spring is on the way...

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