

# Central Brittany Journal

1€

Issue 3

July / August 2004

## Nature in Brittany:

Hornet

Back page

Elder

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## Tea Shop

Review:

Pasquet,

Guingamp

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## Normandy Sablés

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## Working in France

*Many people find that earning a living in Central Brittany calls for a greater degree of initiative than they had anticipated.*

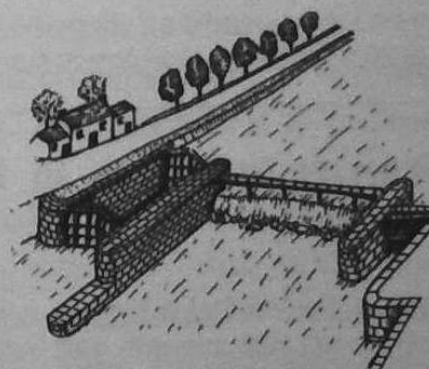
Even though it is part of one of the world's wealthiest countries, the economy of Central Brittany is essentially rural and suffers from all the problems which are being encountered by farming communities around the world. Farming methods have always been subject to change, but up until a hundred years ago those changes were at least partially in the hands of the people living in a particular region. Thus Breton farmers bred their own breeds of cattle and horses which were suited to local conditions, specialised in the growing of

*Continued page 27*

## Nantes to Brest in 25 Days

*A short History of the Nantes / Brest Canal*

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*Places to visit: Port de Carhaix and the Nantes/Brest Canal*

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## New Shops and Services

### English Library

#### Near Callac

The Book Depot, a library of English fiction in the Callac area, has just completed its first year of operation. The library is run by Vivian Bott and is housed in a building close to her home in Lo-huec.

Vivienne worked for Brittany ferries when she first moved to France, and decided to start the Book Depot after taking early retirement.

She quickly amassed a collection of 1700 books, which are now catalogued, and available for loan. The library has its own, specially-renovated premises, and is open every day. In addition to the collection of books the library has a notice board for small ads and messages, a magazine rack, a small collection of jigsaw puzzles, and language course books. Members are asked to donate 50 cents per book to help cover running costs.

To become a member, contact Viv:  
02 96 45 09 45 vivianbott@aol.com

### French Lessons in Your Own Home

Martyn Coulter is moving to St. Servais at the end of July with his wife and two children. He is fluent in both French and English (having spent part of his childhood in France) and is an experienced teacher. He will be teaching in Morlaix and Paris but would also like to offer his skills to people in the region by offering French or English lessons, one-to-one in their own homes. He is able to tailor lessons to individual requirements and can also help people with translation, and administrative work. He can be contacted by E-mail: martynandruth@aol.com or by phone from August: 02 96 45 98 92

### Alternatives in Education

Jo and Angie Diomedes would like to hear from other parents who are interested in alternative methods of education such as home education, Steiner, Montessori, etc., to discuss the possibility of getting together for sessions of creative play and healthy food.  
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### Webb's Of Glomel

#### Bed and Breakfast Glomel

Cliff and Mary-Ellen Webb have completed the conversion of an elegant 5-bedroom town house in the centre of Glomel, and their new Bed and Breakfast is now open to receive guests.

This is a new venture for the couple; Cliff previously worked in engineering and managed a welding company in the UK, and Mary-Ellen was a painter and decorator. Two years ago, Cliff's firm was taken over by a larger company, and this prompted the couple to decide that the time was right for a change of life. However, they are not newcomers to the hospitality trade: Mary-Ellen's parents ran a Bed and Breakfast and self-catering business in Kingsbridge, South Devon, when she was growing up, and it is on the strength of this experience that the Webbs have launched their new business.

Their property in Glomel is in the centre of the village, but has views over the surrounding countryside. A public footpath to the lake (5 minutes walk) runs beside the house, and the Nantes/Brest canal is just 15 minutes walk away.

Bicycles are available for stays of 2 days or more, for those who want to explore the surrounding countryside or ride along the picturesque canal towpath.

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(See advert back page)

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### Feedback Welcome

Welcome to the third issue of the Central Brittany Journal, and thank you to everyone who has contacted me with contributions and suggestions.

Most people whom I have spoken to would like the Journal to appear more frequently, and we therefore plan to switch to monthly publication after the next issue, i.e. from November onwards.

As far as I am concerned, the Journal is still in its early stages of development. I would like it to be slightly different in character from a local newspaper or a simple newsletter. I would like it to reflect something of the aspirations that have caused English-speaking people to move to this relatively remote but remarkably beautiful corner of the French-speaking world. All feedback from readers is therefore most welcome.

Gareth Lewis

### Central Brittany Journal

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## What's On

### What's On

#### English Language Films

Callac Cinema  
**Ladykillers** Sun 18th July 9.00 p.m. & Mon  
 19th July 9.00 p.m.  
 Comedy starring Tom Hanks. 104 min.

#### Family Fun Bike Ride

Pont Melvez  
 Sunday July 4th  
 Joe and Angie Diomedé are organising a family bike ride on Sunday July 4th starting from Salle de Christ in Pont Melvez at 10 a.m.  
 For more information phone 02 96 13 42 07

#### "Good Time Jazz"

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**11th July**  
 "Good Time Jazz" are also playing in the Place d'Eglise, Châteauneuf du Faou from about 1pm as the Tour de France passes through the village.

#### Abbaye du Relec

**4th July**  
 The music of Ancient Persia - a concert at the Abbaye du Relec with Sorouch Izadi (singer) and Djalel Akbari on the Santoor, an ancient Persian stringed instrument. Starts 18.00 Lasts 1 - 1½ hours

**25th July**  
 The Lege Artis choir from St Petersburg, Russia will sing a selection of songs from the 11th - 17th century Orthodox church



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## What's On

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Tues:	Rostrenen	Sat:	Carhaix
Wed:	Callac		Saint Brieuc
Thurs:	Huelgoat	Sun:	Bon Repos
Fri:	Guingamp		

#### AIKB

**7th July** Continuing a series of walks around sites of historic interest, AIKB members will be meeting in Trégornan at 2.30pm to visit the Church: the walk will proceed to the site of the Chateau Coat-couraval and also the "Bief de Partage" on the Nantes to Brest canal in Glomel. There will be a Breton guide and people available to translate. **Everyone welcome.** A donation of 3€ per person is requested.

**10th July** Kermesse from 2.30pm: Forail, Rue de la Gare in Gouarec. Everyone welcome, either to lend a hand running a stall or just to take part. There will be games and events for all the family. Ring Liz on 02 96 24 87 90 for details.

**1st July - 30th August** AIKB is holding a photo competition, open to everyone over 8 years old. The subject is "Portrait de Fleurs" and "Jeu Végétal". Either black and white or colour photos 13 cm x 19 cm must reach them before 1st September 2004.

They should be sent to AIKB, 3 rue du Sénéchal, Gouarec 22570. The results and prizes will be given on 4th September and an exhibition held from the 4th to the 15th September.

#### September

**French Conversation**  
 AIKB will be starting a new series of French conversation classes for all levels in September.

For information on the activities organised by AIKB phone Liz on 02 96 24 87 90 or visit their premises at the Pavillon de Rohan in Gouarec which will also be acting as the Tourist Information Office for the summer months. AIKB is an association founded in 2003. AIKB, 3 rue du Sénéchal, 22570 GOUAREC [aikb@wanadoo.fr](mailto:aikb@wanadoo.fr)



### Using Technology

## DVD Review

### Love Actually

A feel-good movie written by Richard Curtis, writer of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, starring Hugh Grant. This is a film for people who like happy endings and is based on the essentially sound proposition that the world runs on the love that people feel for each other.

Other recent releases:

Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,  
Calendar Girls.

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*Solution to crossword page 10*

[illegible]

## Nantes to Brest in 25 Days

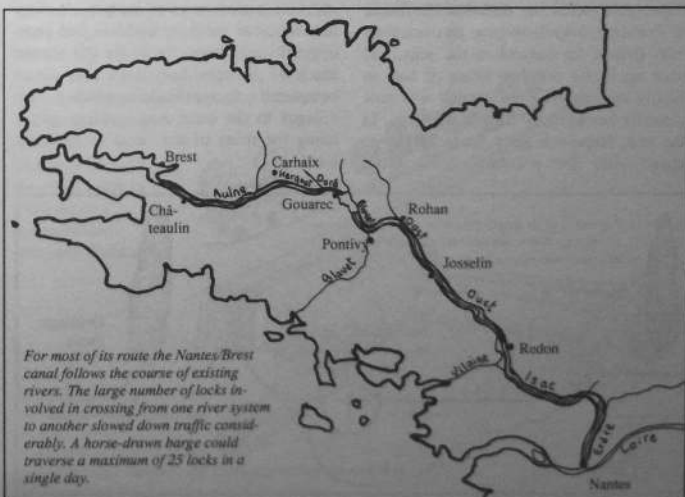
*A short History of the Nantes / Brest Canal*

The Nantes/Brest canal remains one of the most remarkable feats of engineering in Central Brittany, 150 years after its completion.

It starts life at the point where the river Erdre enters the Loire in Nantes and then follows a relatively flat course to Redon, where it crosses the Vilaine. From Redon it follows the route of the River Oust to Rohan, and from Rohan it crosses from the valley of the Oust to that of the Blavet, which it joins at Pontivy and follows to Gouarec. From Gouarec it follows the river Doré and begins its climb up to Glomel, the highest point on the canal (184 metres above sea level), and after passing through a cutting 4 km

long and 25 m deep, it leaves the rivers which flow to the South and the East, and joins those that flow West towards the Rade de Brest. It descends along the river Kergoat, and then briefly joins the Hyère before following the meanderings of the river Aulne through Finistère past Carhaix, Châteauneuf-du-Faou and Châteaulin and then out into the sea at the maritime lock at Guilly-Glas. From here boats were able to sail across the bay to Brest without difficulty.

Since the building of the hydroelectric dam at Guerlédan, in 1930, which flooded part of the canal and blocked traffic, it has not been possible to travel the whole length of the canal by boat, but in its heyday it took a horse-drawn barge twenty-five days to complete the journey from Nantes to Guily Glas. This meant travelling 360 km of canal and passing through 236 locks.



## Nantes to Brest in 25 Days

### Building the Canal

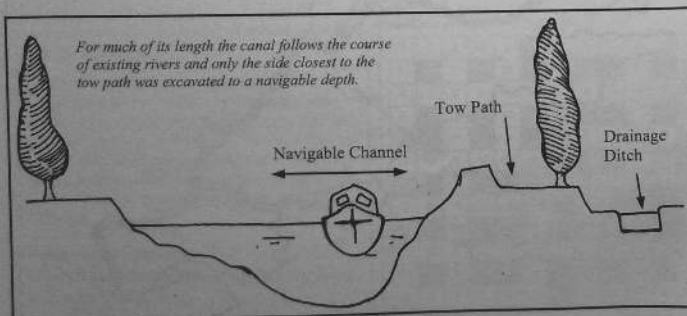
There is a common misconception that the canal was the brainchild of Napoleon Bonaparte, but this is an oversimplification of what actually took place: the idea of linking Nantes to Brest by an inland water-route was first put forward in the sixteenth century; various feasibility studies were carried out on the project over the ensuing centuries but the cost was always considered to be too high. The principal reason for building the canal was the recurrent warfare with Great Britain: British naval superiority allowed British ships to harass French merchant vessels as they sailed from Nantes to Brest. Successive administrations considered Brest to be of vital strategic importance, and in times of war the town often had to be supplied by transporting goods over the treacherous Breton roads – which for much of the year were almost impassable. After the defeat at the battle of Trafalgar, Napoleon gave up contesting with Britain for control of the seas, and once again the problem arose of how to supply the city of Brest, which was now virtually besieged by the British navy. In the end, Napoleon gave the order to go ahead with the planned canal. Work

began at a time when the French republic was suffering from shortages of every sort after years of warfare and revolution, and, inevitably, progress was slow. After Napoleon's defeat in 1814, work on the canal ceased altogether.

The project was reinstated by the new regime, and work recommenced in 1822 as part of a plan for development and reconstruction. In addition to the main aim of linking Nantes to Brest it was clearly the hope of the central government that the canal would bring a civilising influence to central Brittany, which was considered to be a particularly backward area of the country.

### Completion of the Canal

Although the canal was completed without major mishap and more or less according to the original plans, the project still ran seriously over budget, costing four times as much to build as had been originally estimated. Partly for this reason much of the subsidiary work was never completed – such as building roads to link villages to the canal and building quays along the route of the canal to facilitate local use.



## Nantes to Brest in 25 Days

In addition, by the time that the canal was completed, the long-standing enmity between France and the UK had abated and the countries had entered into a period of alliance, which has continued until the present time, meaning that there was no obligation for military supplies to be moved by inland waterways.

Consequently, although the canal was busy at its two extremities, very little traffic plied along its whole course. An attempt to increase use of the canal was made in 1860 when it was dredged to give it a depth of 1.62 m along its whole length so that it could be navigated by boats of greater tonnage, but by that time the railways were in operation. Trains were able to carry larger loads at a much faster rate than the canal barges, and although the military authorities did use the canal to transport supplies for five years, they then cancelled the contracts.

The actual tonnage carried on the canal peaked just before the First World War, but during the war itself most of the horses used for towing, and even some of the boats, were requisitioned by the army and some were never returned.

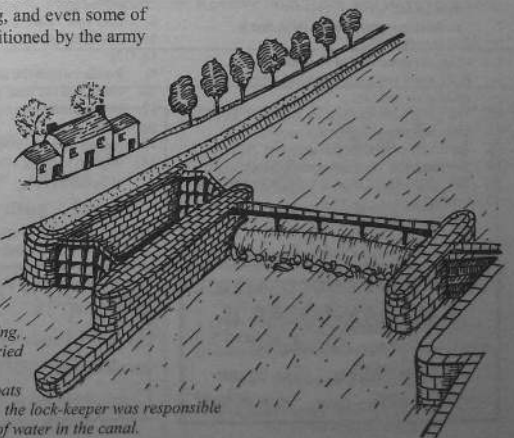
The final blow to the canal came in 1930 when a hydroelectric company dammed

the river at Guerledan and flooded the valley of the Blavet.

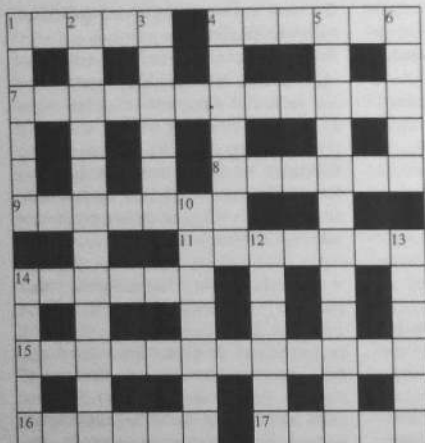
Promises were made to build a series of locks so that boats could navigate round the dam, but the promises were never kept. The canal from Nantes to Josselin remained busy, but the section running through Central Brittany saw less and less traffic. Since 1957 the stretch from Guerledan to Châteaulin has no longer been navigable.

In retrospect, the Nantes/Brest canal provides an early example of a grandiose, centrally-planned, engineering project reliant on outmoded technology, and therefore having no chance of success. At the same time as the first locks were being carefully constructed George Stephenson was opening the world's first public railway, running from Stockton to Darlington, in the North of England.

Each of the canal's 236 locks is a considerable feat of engineering, built out of locally-quarried granite. In addition to helping boats to pass through the lock, the lock-keeper was responsible for controlling the flow of water in the canal.



## Crossword 3: AMINTO (solution page 6)



## Quick Clues

- Across**
1. Cured meat (5)
  4. Wrapper (6)
  7. Catching unprepared (5-7)
  8. Roll out (6)
  9. European and Asian animal (3-4)
  11. Unit of explosive power (7)
  14. Stick to (6)
  15. Promoter (12)
  16. Abounded (6)
  17. Blissful scene (5)

- Down**
1. Hat (6)
  2. Airing frame (7,5)
  3. Find petty faults (6)
  4. Seal (7)
  5. Unjustly (12)
  6. Author of The Government Inspector (5)
  10. Precious stone (7)
  12. Indian pacifist (6)
  13. Of the mind (6)
  14. Confess (5)

## Cryptic Clues

## Across

1. Paints figures in repulsively distorted poses with meat (5)
4. House jacket (6)
7. Cut short one great step in twist that is disconcerting (5-7)
8. Open out creative, fun web address (6)
9. Rode away with a follower, leaving beer to grazing animal (3-4)
11. Not a stone left looking for explosive unit (7)
14. Stick the promotion on this spot (6)
15. Atrocious crimes harden salesman (12)
16. Swarmed with short teenagers by Southern sea (6)
17. DIY, DIY, 50/50 think it's a scene worthy of verse (5)

## Down

1. He must bend elbow right (6)
2. Practices equestrian in hanger (7,5)
3. Gravity's contribution to rising marbles is a little annoying (6)
4. Shut your mouth to reach completion (7)
5. Lawlessly gets in debt, is about to quit on the sly (12)
6. Russian who burnt dead souls (5)
10. Green and red meal gets devoured (7)
12. Initial goodbye and also hello to well known pacifist (6)
13. Sounds like any mountains on the brain (6)
14. Own up to being attention deficit at US School of Science (5)

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## Recipe

## Normandy Sablés

These delicious biscuits are a speciality from Normandy, in France.

## Ingredients:

- 9½ oz (270 g) plain flour  
3 oz (75 g) soft brown sugar  
6 oz (175 g) butter or margarine, softened  
1 egg (or 3 tablespoons water)  
½ teaspoon cinnamon



- 1½ oz (40 g) currants  
2 oz (50 g) dark chocolate, chopped into small pieces

## Method:

1. Sieve the flour into a medium-sized bowl. Add the sugar and the butter, or margarine, cut into small pieces. Using the tips of your fingers, rub together the butter and flour until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
2. Add the egg or water to the mix and combine. Next, add the cinnamon, currants and chocolate pieces. Press the dough into a ball, and refrigerate for ½ hour to 1 hour, in a covered bowl.
3. Sprinkle a large sheet of greaseproof paper, or a large metal tray, with flour. Roll out the dough to a thickness of ¼" (5 mm), then cut out biscuits, using a 3" (7 cm) cutter. Place the biscuits on greased trays.
4. Cook the biscuits in the oven at 160°C (Gas Mark 3, 325°F) for 15 minutes, or until the underneath are golden brown. Remove from trays, and leave on a wire rack to cool.

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## Teri Penswick — Local Potter

Tucked away in the heart of the Breton countryside near Plougonver is the pottery, atelier and showroom of Teri Penswick, a master potter who hails from South Africa via South Wales.

Inspired by the nature around her, her showroom is filled with beautiful stoneware pots, bowls, and jugs, all made and hand decorated by Teri herself, whose early training as a graphic artist is reflected in her exquisite use of colour.

Prices are very reasonable – starting from as little as 20 euros for a sea-green jam pot with lid.



Directions: Following the “Pottery” signs, from Plougonver church take the road to Gurunhuel for approximately 2 km. Turn second left after the sports stadium. The pottery is well signposted about 500 metres along this road. Good parking outside.

Open all year, but please phone beforehand to avoid disappointment.  
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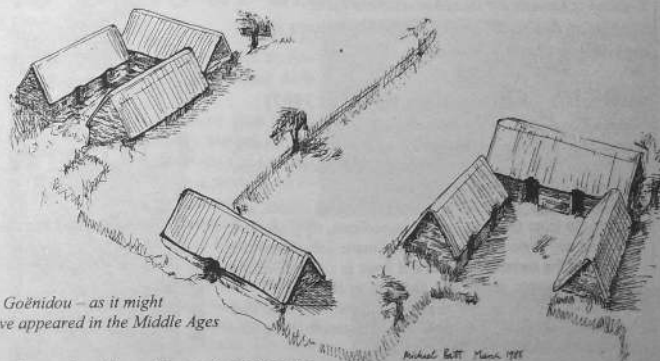
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## Le Goënidou, a deserted medieval settlement



Le Goënidou – as it might have appeared in the Middle Ages

For those who like walking and visiting the moorlands, just off the road between Berrien and Tredudon-le-Moine, at the end of a lane, is the archaeological site of *le Goënidou* – a deserted medieval settlement or hamlet.

It is a fine example of a settlement created in these upland regions of Brittany between the mid-12<sup>th</sup> and mid 14<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The Cistercian monks of *le Relec* were probably at the origin of the site, their abbey situated only a few kilometres to the north.

The ruins of four stone buildings revealed during archaeological excavations carried out between 1984 and 1987 represent only a small part of the site. Now the property of the Conseil Général of Finistère, the excavated ruins have been restored and can be visited freely at all times of the year. The unexcavated areas of the site, now visible as low banks and hollows, constitute an important archaeological reserve. An archaeological field survey carried out on the site in 2001 confirms that the settlement covers an area between 3 to 4 hectares. The layout of the hamlet suggests that it is a planned settlement, a group of independent farms.

A new programme of archaeological research, which commenced in 2003, concerns the study of how the creation of the site of *le Goënidou*

influenced the landscape and environment. It also aims to detect traces of earlier landscape use and how it influenced and perhaps determined the layout of the settlement. It is based on the study of relic field boundaries surviving around the site under heath land and visible on vertical air photographs. Excavations will continue in 2004 between 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 15<sup>th</sup> September and visitors and volunteers are welcome.

If you wish to visit or even excavate contact Michael Batt, a British archaeologist living and working in Brittany since 1977, at: Service Régional de l'Archéologie, Avenue du Professeur Charles Foulon, Campus Universitaire de Beaulieu, 35700 RENNES, France.  
Tel : 02 99 84 59 05. Fax : 02 99 84 59 19.  
Email : michael.batt@culture.gouv.fr

### How to get there:

Leave Berrien on the D42 towards la Feuillée and turn off towards Tredudon le Moine. Turn shortly afterwards, following a sign on the right “site archéologique du Goënidou”. The site is at the end of the track (1,5 km).



## Tea Shop Review / Restaurant Guide

## Tea Shop Review

Brittany is famous for its cakes and teas.

Continuing this series of articles, our reviewers visited the Salon de Thé in Rostrenen.

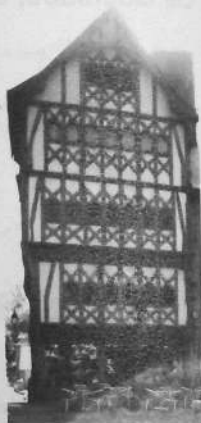
## Pasquiel - Guingamp (founded 1902)

This teasop is one of the most striking in the region. It is situated in a five-storied, half-timbered house built in 1470, and the oak beams, granite fireplaces, and spiral staircase help to create a wonderful atmosphere.

Chocolates are a speciality and are sold in all shapes and sizes. Made from the best quality ingredients, they are sure to delight any chocolate lover. Home-made ice creams are sold during the summer months and there is also a selection of cakes, croissants, apple tarts, and pain au chocolat.

There is seating on the ground floor and the first floor (tall people need to mind their head when negotiating the low doorway into the ground floor tearoom!).

The Pasquiel teasop is in the main square in Guingamp, close to the recently-renovated fountain.



## Historical Notes: Pontivy - Napoléonville

The city of Pontivy owes its present standing to events that took place two hundred years ago, when the Emperor Napoleon was at the height of his power. In 1802 Napoleon authorised the building of a new city at Pontivy, and when, two years later, the citizens of the area applied to have it renamed Napoléonville, to everyone's astonishment he gave his consent. This was considered to be a remarkable honour for the area: at the time the French Empire covered most of Europe and people expected it to mirror the success of the Roman Empire and to last for hundreds of years. Napoléonville looked destined to be the new capital of Brittany and possibly of western France.

Plans were put forward to build canal works to link Pontivy to the sea, via the Blavet, at Lorient, and to Nantes and Brest via the Nantes/Brest canal - there were also plans for courts, a prison, a sub-prefecture, military barracks, a hospital, a lycée, and houses for government officials.

It is indicative of the real state of affairs at the time that only the barracks and the prison had been completed by the time that the Empire fell in 1814. The town of Napoléonville was rather neglected by the restored monarchist government but it has retained its role as the headquarters of the sub-prefecture of northern Morbihan.



Napoleon Bonaparte: the founder of the modern town of Pontivy

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Annie originally comes from Duault and Luciano from Rome. They worked for the same company, Annie in Paris and Luciano in Milan, and they met when working on an assignment together in Portsmouth.

In 1994, they decided to embark on a new venture, and bought "La Maison de la Presse" in Callac. They quickly brought a cosmopolitan feel to the business by stocking English books, English, German, Dutch and Italian newspapers and magazines, and a good range of language courses. The shop also stocks cards, games, toys and office supplies, and offers a range of office services including colour photocopying, fax, printing, internet access, spiral binding and laminating.

Most importantly, perhaps, Annie and Luciano have not forgotten what it is like to be a stranger arriving in a new country and are always ready to provide a welcome to new customers.



Luciano and Annie Proia

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What's On contd

### The Vieilles Charrues

Carhaix  
23, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> July  
One of France's largest pop concerts will take place in Carhaix. This year's performers include David Bowie, The Coral, and Patti Smith plus many more.....  
For more information, tickets etc. tel. 02 98 99 25 45 fax 02 98 99 25 46 or go to the office at: 8, rue du Docteur Menguy, Carhaix.

### Breton Horses

Domaine de Tronjoly, Gourin  
Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> August  
There will be an all-day horse show of Breton horses at the Domaine de Tronjoly competitions, displays etc. as well as a display of old farming techniques.

### Festival of the Crêpe

Domaine de Tronjoly, Gourin  
31 July - 1<sup>st</sup> August  
In an atmosphere of Breton music and costume, Gourin hosts the festival of the crêpe - each year trying to make the largest crêpe in the world!  
For more information - Gourin Tourist office: 02 97 23 66 33

### Breton Dance Festival

Guingamp  
14<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> August  
The Saint-Loup Festival in Guingamp offers a week of traditional dancing, fire-works and toe-tapping.  
The festival is one of the oldest in Brittany, first recorded in 1850. It originally celebrated the annual outing of a precious statue known as Saint-Loup, which came from the chapel of the nearby Château de Runvarec, in Pabu. Since 1957 the festival has also hosted the National Breton Dance Championship.  
Every day there are folk dance performances in the public gardens, given by visiting dance troupes from Scotland, Asturias,

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Galicja, Ireland, Wales and, of course, Brittany. Concerts are staged in various venues and a Fest Noz (Breton party) keeps the crowds on their feet until dawn.  
Tourist Information Office 2 Place du Champ-au-Roy, Guingamp  
Tel: 02 96 43 73 89 or 02 99 36 15 15

**News and Information:** If you have information for these pages regarding concerts, events, car boot sales, etc. please contact Central Brittany Journal, BP 4, 22160 Callac  
02 96 21 52 21 cbj222956@aol.com  
Deadline for next issue: August 20th



### Nantes / Brest Canal:

The fact that the Nantes/Brest canal has ceased to operate as a navigable waterway for most of its route through central Brittany, does have some advantages. When the canal was in operation, access to the general public was restricted, but the canal and the paths on either side are now maintained for the exclusive use of visitors.

The tow path running alongside the canal provides a gentle walk through the heart of Brittany, often far enough away from any roads for the air to be free from the sound of traffic.

From the outset the canal was lined with native, broadleaved trees, and these have matured to give the path the feel of a shaded country lane, running beside a river. The path is punctuated by locks, where there is often a footbridge allowing you to cross over the canal and explore the other side.

A study of a map will show at what points the road crosses the canal: parking and access to the towpath is provided at nearly all such points. For example the canal runs beside the picnic area in Le Moustoir, and is also easily accessible at Port de Carhaix.



A view of the bridge at Coz Castel, lock 204, a short walk from Port de Carhaix in the direction of Chateaufort-du-Faou.

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Answers Famous Men Quiz, page 24

- |            |             |            |            |
|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1. England | 4. Italy    | 6. Genoa   | 2. Corsica |
| 3. Austria | 5. Mongolia | 7. America |            |

## Elder *Sambucus nigra*

No plant is so lovely throughout the whole of summer as the elder—among the very first trees to come out in leaf, it illumines the hedgerows in June by a stunning display of white flowers, and in August to September the masses of small purple-black berries are not to be missed. It never reaches a very great height, being often contented to form a sprawling bush; however, in certain situations it will attain a character more deserving the name of tree.

Due to the pith inside the young stems which can be easily removed, elder wood has long been used for making pipes, and thereby excellent wind instruments of all sorts, such as flutes and whistles. Medicinally every single part of the tree was used to cure a whole host of different ailments, and it was for these remarkable healing properties that elder became so valued and revered. The berries, made into a syrup or rob, were generally considered to be one of the best cures and preventatives for a cold, the bark has been used since the time of Hippocrates as a purgative, the flowers, when made into an ointment, cleanse and freshen the skin, and the leaves, in particular have a very practical use, when bruised their smell deters flies from coming near, and for this purpose they may be placed all around the house.

The berries can be eaten fresh, or made into wine, jam, or syrup.



The twigs are dotted with conspicuous reddish-brown lenticels, or breathing pores.



Elder leaves are made up of several leaflets.

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## Tim the Gardener: time to plant Winter Vegetables

**July and August:** Garden jobs at this time of year are determined by the weather. Some years Brittany continues to get regular rainfall during July, and sometimes even in August; when this happens, the vegetation grows profusely and the main jobs in the garden are mowing, strimming and weeding. Some years, such as last year, the rain ceases and the garden starts to dry out and it then has to be watered. Newly planted trees and shrubs are particularly vulnerable, and it is well worth watering them as much as possible; if they can be nursed through their first year, they will probably be able to develop deep enough roots to cope with droughts in future years.

This is the time of year when a well-stocked garden yields its greatest variety of fruit and vegetables: potatoes, carrots, spinach, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, French beans, courgettes, runner beans, lettuces, onions, garlic, sweet corn, strawberries, gooseberries, black currants, raspberries, etc. Even so, now is the time to start thinking about extra crops that will mature during the winter.

**Leeks:** Potatoes and leeks are the two most popular vegetables amongst Breton gardeners and it would be foolish to ignore their accumulated years of experience. Without doubt, leeks are one of the vegetables best suited to this area and are capable of yielding a crop throughout the winter and spring. It is possible to buy bundles of leek plants on the market which can be planted when other crops, such as potatoes, are harvested. Simply make a hole up to 2" in diameter with a dibber, fill with water, and drop in the leek plant. The hole does not need to be filled in but the plants can be watered regularly until the autumn.

**Swedes and Turnips:** Swedes and turnips are members of the cabbage family, and late sowings can help you to avoid the cabbage white butterfly. Sowings made in July and August should be ready for picking from late October onwards.

**Gardening Questions:** It goes without saying that there is no such thing as a gardening expert...that having been said, if you have any gardening questions, please send them in. We now have a panel of experienced gardeners who will try to provide an answer.  
Central Brittany Journal, B.P. 4, 22160 Callac

If you want to have vegetables in the garden this winter, now is the time to plant the seeds. Turnips and leeks are the best winter crops in Brittany.



Planting leeks



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## Traditional Houses and Solving Problems of Damp

*It is difficult to do remedial work during the winter when damp problems occur, and it is therefore advisable to plan ahead and start work now.*

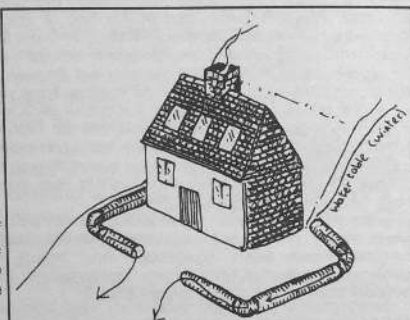
Brittany can be subject to prolonged periods of intense rain. In these circumstances, measures which simply involve waterproofing the inside walls of the house often prove to be inadequate: it is necessary to stop the water finding a way into the walls from the outside.

### Drainage and Ditches

One of the simplest and most effective ways of remedying damp problems is to study the system of ditches around a house. Ditches often need to be cleared every year, or else they become clogged up and cease to be effective. A good system of ditches can carry rainwater away from a house even on flat ground. This prevents puddles building up against the walls or water running under the doors.

### Excavating

If a house is built up against a bank, it may be possible to excavate the earth away from the house to create clear space down to floor level. Drains can be laid to stop water collecting round the



*Through a combination of excavating, draining, and slating exposed walls and chimneys, it is possible to protect most houses from serious damp problems.*

base of the house.

Care must be taken to ensure that the house itself remains structurally sound, particularly if it is a stone house, built without the use of cement.

### Exposed Walls

West-facing walls can become saturated when they are exposed to driving rain for several days, and water will then start to seep into the inside. In some cases pointing the wall with a strong mix of sand and cement (3 parts sand to one part cement) will correct the problem. A more radical solution is to cover the wall with

slates. Slating a wall is very similar to slating a roof: the wall has to be covered with a wooden framework to which the slates can be attached. The slate clips commonly used in this area are very effective at holding the slates in place and preventing them from rattling in the wind.

### Chimneys

Chimneys pose the same problems as walls, except that they are often in a worse condition (due to repeated heating and cooling), and they are more exposed. Consequently, if a chimney is causing damp problems it may be preferable to slate round the exposed sides rather than simply pointing them. Chimneys not in use can be taken down to roof height and covered over.

### Condensation

Most problems of damp are not caused by water coming in from the outside, but by the very high levels of water in the air itself. In sheltered spots, the air can be almost 100% saturated for weeks at a time during the winter months. The best way to counteract this problem is to install a heating system which produces dry heat – such as traditional wood-burning fires or electric storage heaters. Paraffin fires and gas fires produce moisture, and if possible should only be used as a back-up form of heating.

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#### What's On

**3<sup>rd</sup> July** - A show at Landivisiau organised by The National Stud for all breeds of horses and ponies. A prestigious event and of interest to those new to Competition and grading in France as an example of how it is done.

**16<sup>th</sup> July** - A show at Hennebont, Near Lorient, South Brittany at The National Stud, for ridden 3-year-olds of all breeds. This is interesting as The National Stud has old and traditional stables and buildings.

**22-23<sup>rd</sup> August** - For those who are prepared to travel further afield, this is the date for The National Championships at La Motte Beuvron, near Orleans, for Selle Français and other local breeds. Many qualifying rounds take place before arriving at this pinnacle of the equine year, but for New Forest, Welsh and other rarer breeds in France, no qualification is necessary. It is a chance for native pony breeders to rub shoulders with French breeders with highly prized and valuable bloodlines.

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### Aesop's Fables

Almighty Zeus, every day people tread on me. No one pays me the least regard and I am never left alone.



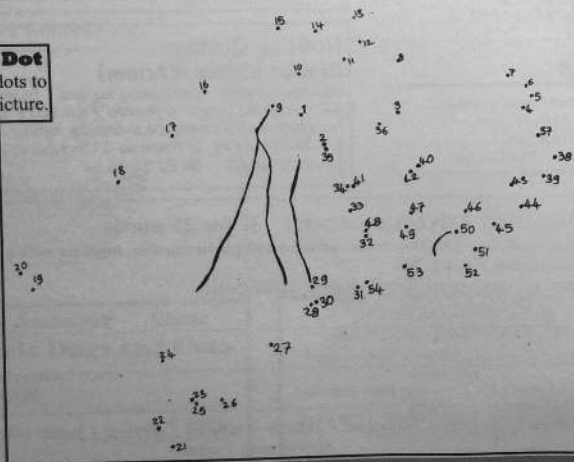
### Famous Men Quiz (Answers page 17)

In which country were these famous men born?

- |                            |               |         |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------|
| 1. Isaac Newton            | Poland        | England |
| 2. Napoleon Bonaparte      | Corsica       | Cyprus  |
| 3. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart | Italy         | Austria |
| 4. Julius Caesar           | Italy         | Greece  |
| 5. Genghis Khan            | Mongolia      | China   |
| 6. Christopher Columbus    | Genoa (Italy) | Spain   |
| 7. Benjamin Franklin       | America       | England |

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Serge owns seven of these horses, as well as several carriages, one big enough to hold twenty people, and other more old-fashioned ones, occasionally used at weddings.

The rides are either 13 or 18 km long,



*Serge, who is president of the Rostrenen tourist board, is keen to promote an understanding of traditional Breton farming techniques.*

making a tour of all the oldest buildings in the area, and passing through some of the prettiest country lanes nearby.

And what awaits you at the end? A glass of cider from the apples on the farm, and maybe even home-made crêpes!

*Phone Serge to discuss prices: 02 96 45 76 31  
He speaks English.*

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## Working in France

buckwheat, gradually introduced potatoes and bred varieties suited to local conditions, etc. The pace of change started to accelerate during the Industrial Revolution when mechanisation was introduced onto the farm, and then increased again after the Second World War as the effects of new approaches to farming, developed in the United States, started to be felt world wide.

### American Farming Techniques

Farmers in America have found ways of exploiting the vast prairie lands of the mid-west to produce almost unlimited amounts of cereals at extremely low prices. This involves enormous farms, huge fields, massive machinery, tight control of insects, weeds, and diseases through chemical sprays, and control of soil fertility through the use of fertilisers.

Trade agreements make these cereals available worldwide, and this has serious consequences for farming areas around the world. The nature of the Breton climate and the Breton countryside means that even when local farmers adopt American techniques, they still cannot produce food as cheaply as farmers in the USA. In a free market this would have led to the collapse of local farming; in order to stop this happening the European Union maintains a complex system

of farming subsidies. It is upon these subsidies that the local economy depends and it is not, therefore, surprising that work is difficult to find. Most of the existing employment has not been generated by the people of the region, but is being artificially supported by money coming from outside. This money is under growing threat as European governments are finding it increasingly difficult to balance their books.

### Rejuvenating the Local Economy

The implications for people moving to the region are that they cannot rely on the existing local economy to provide them with an income. With a little initiative, however, they are well placed to bring new money to the area and to generate new sources of employment. This can take many forms: from simply retiring here with a pension, on the one hand, to starting a tourist related business on the other, or from finding a way to live cheaply in a rural retreat, on the one hand, to starting a business that makes use of the internet to sell products and services worldwide on the other. Newcomers moving to the region are, in fact, helping Central Brittany to regain control of its own destiny by increasing the diversity of employment and ensuring that it is people living locally who are responsible for local jobs.

### Distribution

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**Le Faouët, Gourin, Guéméné-sur-Scorff, Callac, Belle Isle en Terre, Rostrenen**

## Hornet

*Vespa crabro*

Breton: Sardonenn

French: Frelon

With its wasp-like appearance and loud buzz, the hornet is a common sight throughout the summer months in Brittany, usually flying round houses and disappearing under the eaves. It is collecting wood from old beams which it then uses to build the its nest. The nest is entirely made out of this chewed wood pulp and is often built in hollow trees or chimneys.

The hornets' greatest predators are people, who have made it rare in Britain, but it is actually a non-aggressive, generally peaceful insect, usually attacking only when the nest is threatened. It is also useful to gardeners, eating many garden pests such as aphids and caterpillars.



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