

PORTHCAWL - ST. SÉBASTIEN TOWN TWINNING ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER No. 5

JULY 2001

Editorial

As I write it is raining hard but, as this short newsletter explains, the Association is optimistically planning a few summer exploits!

I am collecting material for the next newsletter, and I would be grateful for your contributions by Friday 24th August. Thanks!

Steve Moon

Linguistics! (2)

Did you notice the mistake that the Editor made in proof-reading Newsletter No. 4? Well, apologies to Marilyn, and here is her item as it should have been printed:

"Jean-Michel, who spoke excellent English, had difficulty getting his tongue around the word 'beard', and announced with great excitement when returning from a tour of St John's Church that he had seen for the first time a painting of a "beer-less Christ"!

Marilyn Richards

This is the 5th edition of this newsletter, but it may be the first time that some of you have seen it. That is because there has been some confusion over mailing lists. If you would like to receive any (or all) back numbers, please contact a member of the editorial team.

Forthcoming Events!

We are having a stall at the **Porthcawl Carnival** on **Saturday 21st July**, at the rugby ground. We are also having a stall at the **Sea Festival** on **Sunday 29th July**, at Cosy Corner.

Contributions and support at both events would be welcome

The following **Sunday, 5th August**, John and Janice Bunker will be holding another fund-raising stall at the **car boot sale** at Rest Bay. They would welcome contributions, particularly of books, records, household items etc., but they aren't so keen on clothing!

The next social gathering will be to enable us to write the Association's newsletter, the one we do *in French!* The meeting will be at **Silures Art Gallery**, on **Friday 17th August** starting at 7.30pm. Please come and help - and if you have an article (or cartoon, poem or story) you will be very welcome.

Membership

If you would like to join the PSSTTA (or renew your membership!), please contact Neil Sumner (details on page 2). One benefit is a guaranteed copy of every Newsletter!

Historic Brittany : Celtic Land of Myths and Legends

Most of us know little about Brittany, the historic province in which our twin town of Saint Sébastien-sur-Loire is situated. In fact it is a beautiful and historically fascinating area of France whose people have strong and ancient links with Wales.

Armorica, its ancient Celtic name, means 'land of the sea' and Bretons have always had a strong attachment to the sea, being good seafarers. The sea provides most of its gastronomic delicacies - lobsters, oysters, crayfish, prawns, shrimps, clams, mussels and scallops are all abundant. Many meals served in ordinary Breton restaurants become expensive gastronomic delights in Paris!

The dry Breton 'Muscadet' wine, with which we are familiar, is a wonderful accompaniment to these, as is their good rough cider. There is also a powerful local brandy distilled on the Rhuys peninsular - but, according to the Bretons, it should only be drunk if standing up, when you have something substantial to hold on to!

The earliest known inhabitants of the area were certainly Iberian people similar to those that occupied the British Isles at the same period. They left a wealth of mysterious standing stones, dolmens, and cromlechs. Those of Carnac and Stonehenge are of approximately the same date. In the 6th Century BC a new migration of Celts swept across Europe. Those who settled in Armorica were kinsmen to the Irish, Scots and British (Welsh) settlers.

Neither the Romans nor early Christianity made much headway against their Celtic druidism. Only towards the 6th Century when their kinsmen from Britain, probably driven out by the Anglo-Saxon invaders, emigrated in large numbers and brought with them Irish and Welsh missionaries, did Armorica accept

Christianity. These new people also changed the name of their adopted country - first to 'Little Britain' and then to simply 'Bretagne' or, in its anglicised form, Brittany.

Although French is the common tongue of the province today, the Breton Gaelic is still spoken in Lower Brittany, although not encouraged. It is very much like Welsh in many respects. One of the many Celtic words in common use that comes to mind is 'Aber', describing the mouth of a river, such as Aber-lidut, Aber-Benoit, and Aber-Wrach, found in Scotland, Ireland and Wales as well as Brittany.

Like the Welsh and the Cornish, to whom he is also closely related, the Breton has never lost his Celtic identity. His temperament can be mercurial, quickly transported from joy to melancholy. He also likes to sing local songs harking back to those ancient legends and myths.

Today the Breton countryside provides beautiful scenery and wonderful contrasts between old and new, from the megaliths of Carnac to the resorts of La Baule and Dinard. Wandering through Brittany, history is everywhere, from the Roman occupation and the marauding Norsemen to the beautiful 13th century cathedral at Quimper, with its splendid twin towers.

It is obviously a part of France well worth visiting!

Richard Rowe

ADVANCE NOTICE

The next **full meeting** of the Association will be at 7.00pm on **Friday 21st September** at the Porthcawl Town Council offices.

The editorial team of the Porthcawl - Saint Sébastien-sur-Loire Town Twinning Association Newsletter is composed of :

Steve Moon (643170-work & 786571), **Neil Sumner** (also Membership Secretary: 643159-work, 768477 & 772314), **Janet Hanbury** (786936) and **Ken Miller** (786903). Please send contributions for the next newsletter to Steve Moon (36 Rest Bay Close, CF36 3UN, or sjmbirds@aol.com). The Secretary of PSSTTA is **Alana Davies** (771594).