

Bulletin !

An informal look at life in this part of France and a selection of things to see and do

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Thought for the month:

A day without laughter is a day wasted

[Charlie Chaplin]

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Some *Marchés de Noël* (Christmas markets) – Christmas inspiration and atmosphere!

Note: at the end of November:-

W/e 28 th /29 th	Mortain (50)	in Place des Arcades
Sun 29 th	Montaudin (53)	in the Salle des Fêtes, with many stalls, <i>atelier créatifs</i> , <i>maquillage</i> for children & Father Xmas; 10h-18h,

A selection of *Marchés de Noël* in DECEMBER:

Fri 4 th (eve)	Briouze (61)	in Collège Notre-Dame. rue de St Gervais, 17h-21h
4 th , 5 th & 6 th	Mayenne (53)	in Pl. Clemenceau: 3-day market full of Xmas cheer!
Sat 5 th	La Sauvagère (61)	at MARPA (more info: www.tourisme-lafertemace.fr)
Sun 6 th	Saint-Lô (50)	with also a <i>brocante</i> at the <i>Foirail</i> site, route de Torigni
“	Montsûrs (53)	from 9h-18h in the Salle des Oréades
10 th – 13 th	Laval (53)	in Square de Boston, 60 chalets, 11h-12h (Fri: 14h)
Sat 12 th	Balleroy (14)	in the Salle des Fêtes, Place du Marché, 10h-20h, ±50
“	Sourdeval (50)	9h-18h
Sun 13 th	Couterne (61)	<i>brocante de Noël</i> in Place de la Minoterie
“	Gorron (53)	stalls and entertainment in <i>centre-ville</i>
“	Saint James (50)	in Espace le Conquérant, 10h-18h
Wed. 16 th	La Ferté-Macé (61)	in centre-ville
18 th – 20 th	St Hilaire-du- -Harcouët (50)	3-day fair with <i>ateliers créatifs</i> , <i>produits artisanal</i> and Christmas concerts
Sat 19 th	Tessy-sur-Vire (50)	Afternoon market in the Salle des Fêtes & outside, Place Jean-Claude Lemoine, 15h-20h, ±50
“	Ceaucé (61)	<i>Fête de Noël</i> (for more info see page 3)
W/e 19 th /20 th	Villedieu-les-P. (50)	in the Salle des Fêtes; free entry
W/e 19 th /20 th	Evron (53)	from 10h to 20h in Place de la Basilique, ±40 stalls
Sun 20 th	Tinchebray (61)	in Place de l’Eglise, 10h-18h
“	Cossé-le-Vivien (53)	in rue de l’Eglise and Pl. du Marché, 10h-19h, with Father Xmas, a Christmas concert in the church, and fireworks. (Visited last year by around 8,000 people).

There are many more (too many to list here) – for more info: www.ambiance-noel.fr

Eating out

Amanda at the *Cafe Gourmand*, 27 rue Magenta in Gorrion (53) will be preparing her popular Christmas lunches from Tues. 8th until Wed. 23rd. 4 festive courses: *kir & amuse-bouches*, salmon & prawn cocktail, roast turkey & trimmings (or veggie option, if pre-ordered), dessert and coffee - all for 20€. By reservation only - to book a table contact Amanda on 06 59 84 95 90, or 02 43 00 75 06 (but problem with this connection at the moment), or email at lecafegourmand27@sfr.fr.

Some local customs – Saint Nicholas

On the night of Dec. 5th, the eve of the feast of St Nicholas, young children in the NE and N of France are unusually well-behaved. Before going to bed they put their shoes and some straw in front of the chimney for their patron saint and for the donkey he always rides on his travels. St Nicholas traditionally leaves behind spiced biscuits shaped in his own image.

Some ice skating rinks set up around the area

☞ In Laval (53) from 5th Dec. to 3rd Jan., in Cour du Vieux Château in Laval. 1€. During the school term: Weds. 9h-12h & 14h-20h; Tues, Thurs & Fri: 17h-20h; Sats: 14h-20h; Sun. 9h30-12h & 14h-19h. In school holidays: daily 9h-12h & 14h-20h. More info from the Laval Tourist Office (02 43 49 46 46) or at www.laval-tourisme.com.

☞ In St-Hilaire-du-Harcouët (50) from 18th to 30th, adults and children can enjoy skating in the rink in the Salle des Fêtes: 2€ for ½hr. They advise to take gloves and cover your arms. More info: www.st.hilaire.fr or at the Tourist Office.

Concours des villes et villages illuminés

See the fantastic Christmas illuminations lighting up both homes and local towns & villages from 4th Dec. to 3rd Jan. Tens of thousands of people await this occasion, especially La Sauvagère, St Mars d'Egrenne, Ceaucé, Beauchêne, La Michaudière, Mantilly and Rouellé. This is the largest circuit of its type in France, attracting over 150,000 visitors each year. www.ot-domfront.com/villages_illumines

La Coquille Saint-Jacques en Fête in Grandcamp-Maisy (14)

On Sat 5th & Sun. 6th it's 'coquille-crazy' time again with this annual festival celebrating the scallops and other seafood fresh from the boats. Another chance to visit the stalls and taste the freshly grilled scallops, soured in a bewildering variety of spices and marinades, or just on their own. There are also concerts and shows during this 2-day festival at the town's port. Traditional fishing boats, including the *Grandcopaise* which was built in 1949, will be on view in the harbour. Open 10h to 18h. Entry free. www.bayeux-bessin-tourisme.com

Fund raising events in support of Grande Daze Animal Rescue

Full English Breakfast: Sat. 5th from 10h30 to 14h in the Salle des Fêtes in St Aubin-fosse-Louvain (53): a Full English Breakfast. Tickets are 12€, payable at the door (reservation not necessary). For any enquiries tel: 02 43 00 67 27

Book Sale: Sun. 13th from 10h-16h, at 'Villagonnais' in Juvigné (53). All new stocks of books, CDs and DVDs at 50c. Stock up ready for those long winter evenings! Also, donations of bedding and bric-a-brac are always gratefully received. For more info, phone Jenny on 02 43 02 96 35.

Foire aux dindes & Marché de Noël in La Chapelle d'Andaine (61)

Pssst – want a turkey? Here on Fri. 11th you will find hundreds on sale during this annual turkey fair (mornings only). More info at www.ornetourisme.com. This is followed by the *Marché de Noël* from 14h30 to 23h in the parking of the Salle Roland Fléchar. More info at www.tourisme-lafertemace.fr

Mont-Saint-Michel (50) illuminations

In December various activities take place and plenty of special illuminations – see the magical town of ‘the Mont’ lit up from 18h each evening. www.ot-montsaintmichel.com

Restoration of one of the churches in Domfront (61)

Restoration work on Notre-Dame-de-l'Eau, in the Quartier de la Gare (lower Domfront) should begin in 2017 until 2020. On his death in 2007, le Vicomte Couppel de Lude had bequeathed the sum of 450,000€ to be used for the repair of this church. The work (roofing, gutters, lighting, walls, stairs to the bell-tower and also the surrounding gardens for easier access) will be controlled by an architect from the *Monuments Historique*. [As a reminder, in 1168 Thomas à Becket preached in this church - two years before his untimely death].

Fête de Noël in Ceaucé (61)

On Sat. 19th this popular Christmas Fête is open from 14h to 21h. There is a covered market selling artisanal items plus food & drink. *Père Noël* rides into town at 19h (-ish) which is fun for the children. Also you can enjoy the wonderful Christmas lights and diorama.

The Lions Club and ‘*Les tulipes contre le cancer*’

For the 21st year, a dozen volunteers from the *Lions Club Conde-Tinchebray* have planted 20,000 tulip bulbs in land near Tinchebray (61) and 35,000 bulbs in land bordering the road in Montilly-sur-Noireau (61) – in 2 separate areas in case one area is destroyed by hail, flooding, etc. Tulips need to be planted in different terrain each year, so new land is always needed – but the maize grows well after tulips! They used to use a bulb-planting machine (which planted several bulbs at the same time) but now, to save costs, they borrow an old potato planter - which takes longer as it only plants one bulb at a time! The tulips will eventually be on sale in April, with the proceeds going towards the fight against cancer.

Saint Fraimbault (61) – ‘*le village fleuri*’ – keeps its 4th ‘flower’

This village of 568 inhabitants has again been awarded its ‘4 *fleur*’ rating (seen on the village sign) for the 3rd year running. Participating villages/towns are judged each year and this prestigious award (1, 2, or 3 *fleurs*) is given on the basis of not only the floral excellence, but also for the ecological efforts in operation and the activities organised to promote this ‘*patrimoine fleural*’. Being awarded 4 *fleurs* is a rare and special achievement.

l'Abbaye de Clermont near Olivet (53)

This ancient Cistercian abbey, 4kms from Olivet, was founded by Bernard de Clairvaux (later Saint Bernard) in 1152 in a unique area of woods and lakes. Today many parts of the original buildings still stand and are *Monuments Historiques* – the abbey church of impressive dimensions and the refectory of the brothers with its beautiful vaulted ceilings supported by granite columns. Volunteers of ‘*les Amis du Clermont*’ welcome visitors whose support helps with the upkeep and restoration of the site. Several events take place there during the year – concerts, exhibitions, etc. Open all year from 9h until nightfall. Entry: 4€. www.abbaye-de-clairmont.com

Entertainment & Concerts

♪ Sat. 5th at 20h30 in the Salle Barbara Hendricks in Laval (53): organ recital with major works by Mozart. Tickets 20€. More info from www.laval-tourisme.com

♪ Sun. 6th at 15h in *l'Eglise St-Léonard* in Fougères (35): the choir *Maitrise St-Léonard* presents 3 works from 18th & 21st centuries, including Mozart's 'Requiem Mass'. Tickets from the Fougères Tourist Office (www.ot-fougeres.fr)

♪ Sat. 12th at 18h in l'Eglise in St-Hilaire-du-Harcouët (50): *Concert de Noël* by *l'Ecole Intercommunale*. (www.st-hilaire.fr)

♪ Sat. 12th at 16h30 and 20h30 in the Basilique Notre-Dame in Mayenne (53): *Concerts de Noël* from *l'Orchestre Symphonique de la Haut Mayenne* – Astor Piazzolla, Arvo Part, Jean Sibelius and Joaquin Rodrigo will carry you to far-away places. More info on www.oshm.free.fr or on facebook.

♪ Sat. 12th at *l'Imprevu* bar in Ambrières-les-Vallées (53): 'Bullfrog' – local *franco-anglo* group with rock, jazz & blues. Entry 10€, which includes a drink.

♪ Fri. 18th at 19h in the *Musée Emmanuel de la Villéon* in Fougères (35): *Concert de Noël*. Free, but space is limited. More info: www.ot-fougeres.fr

An evening of music with Brian Rushton in Gorrion (53)

On Mon. 28th from 18h Brian will be playing at the Bar des Sports in Gorrion – a great evening with all our favourite music. No meals will be available, but there will be pickies!

Bar du Marché in Ceaucé (61): End of Year Quiz & New Year's Eve party

The monthly (but also end of year) Quiz at the Bar du Marché will be on Sat. 26th (Boxing Day) from 20h, as the Friday (their usual quiz day) is Christmas Day, when they will close at 14h30. They will also be having a New Year's Eve party with free entry, snacks (pizza/quiche) and silly games – and the obligatory Auld Lang Syne twice!

Christmas illuminations in Laval (53)

Until 4th Jan. 2016, you can enjoy this wonderful *son et lumière* experience from 17h until midnight with Christmas lights in Laval - along the streets, quays and the river - in Place de la Trémoille, *centre-ville* and the Pont Aristide Briand.

Christmas services at Christ Church, Virey (50)

For information on all Christmas services at Christ Church in Virey please go to www.christchurchinthemanche.com. The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols will be on Sun. 20th at 17h followed by tea, coffee and (possibly) mince pies!

Nine Lessons and Carols in Fougerolles-du-Plessis church (53)

This service will be on Sun. 20th at 15h, and is held in both French and English.

Join the choir in Villaines-la-Juhel (53)

The chorale *Point d'Orgue* is seeking people who love to sing. No musical experience is necessary and the choir practice sessions, with a professional choir master from the school of music, are on Mondays from 20h30 to 22h at the *Centre Culturel*, 2 rue Jules Doitteau, (near the church). A great way to increase your French vocabulary!

Lest we forget – *les villages morts pour la France*

Remembered on Armistice Day – six French villages which were reduced to rubble during WWI and never rebuilt, and are today called "*les villages morts pour la France*". These villages - Beaumont-en-Verdunois, Bezonvaux, Cumières-le-Mort-Homme, Fleury-devant-Douaumont, Haumont-près-Samogneux & Louvemont-Côte-du-Poivre – are all in Meuse *département* (55) and were destroyed during the Battle of Verdun which raged from Feb. 21st to Dec. 18th 1916, costing the lives of around 70,000 soldiers each month.

Local inhabitants were evacuated at the beginning of the battle, but when they returned nothing was left standing. There were no trees, hedges, gardens, fields – nothing. The churches, barns and houses had completely disappeared and the land was so churned into mounds and foxholes it was impossible to know where the buildings and streets had been. There was nothing but heavily polluted mud in all directions and under it lay so much unexploded ordnance that rebuilding was impossible. In 1919, the government bought the land and decided that the 6 villages should become monuments to the sacrifices made during the *Grand Guerre*. Each would have a war memorial with a small chapel built on or near the ruins of its church and would be designated as "*mort pour la France*". Today, the site of each village is covered with grass and trees, and each has a budget of around €22,000 in order to maintain signposts and memorials, cut the lawns, etc.

These were not the only villages destroyed in the First World War and countless others disappeared in the same way. Some were rebuilt in different locations but many were simply abandoned and the land annexed by neighbouring communes. Those forgotten, disappeared villages and communes have even officially lost their names.

Christmas fireworks in Mayenne (53)

On Sun. 20th will be the traditional annual Christmas fireworks on Quai Republic in Mayenne. Free access. More info from the Mayenne Tourist Office (02 43 04 19 37).

Something for all the family – *La Bourbansais* zoo

In this zoo at Pleugeuneuc (35, between St Malo and Rennes) you will find over 350 animals from 5 continents – including ‘Hector’ the anteater, lemurs, giraffe, monkeys, llamas, lynx, zebra, flamingos, exotic birds, etc. Open daily all year: end-Sept to end-March: 13h30-17h30 (in school hols 10h30-17h30); April to end-Sept: 10h-19h. www.labourbansais.com

Cheese of the Month : *Le Brillat Savarin*

This is a soft white-crustured cow’s milk cheese whose history dates back to 1890, when it was known as *Excelsior* or *Délice des Gourmets* and made by the Dubuc family near Forges-les-Eaux (76). Cheese-maker Henri Androuet re-named it in the 1930s as homage to 18th century French gourmet and political figure Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin and the name has stuck. It is produced all year round and comes in 12-13cm wheels.

A new *boulangerie* opens in Montenay (53)

Au Fournil d’Etienne, at 4 rue des Ormeaux in Montenay, is now owned by Etienne Girault, who already runs a *boulangerie* in Chailland (53). Open 6 days a week (not Weds.): Mon. to Sat. 7h-13h30 & 15h-19h30 and Suns. 7h-12h30, he offers a selection of breads, from traditional to speciality such as *Tradi-Graine*, *l’Epeautre* (spelt), *la Craquante* (with malted flour), *le Pavé d’Arthur* (rye, barley, sunflower seeds, linseed & buckwheat) - and, of course, their yummy patisseries.

Traditional Christmas lamp-lit walk around Laval (53)

On Sats 12th & 19th at 18h you can purchase a candle-lamp (1€) and enjoy an atmospheric walk through illuminated Laval! Great fun for ages 7 to 77! Free hot drink and cake offered at the start. More info from Laval Tourist Office (02 43 49 46 46)

Elliott's Boucherie in Gorrion (53) – moving premises

In December, 'Elliotts Boucherie' will be moving a short distance in Gorrion - to the road behind the *Infirmiere*, almost opposite the *Café Gourmand*. As a reminder, their opening hours are Tues., Wed. & Fri.: 9h-13h & 14h30-18h30; Sats.: 9h-14h. Closed Mons & Thurs. They are taking Christmas orders now, and they will be selling bacon and sausage baguettes from 12h at the Gorrion Christmas market on Sun. 13th.

English books in Emmaüs in Fougères (35)

A reminder that Emmaüs (the charity for the homeless) in Fougères (Ferme du Paron, near the *Jardins d'Asie* Chinese Restaurant) stock an increasingly great number of second-hand English books (rows and rows of them!). As a reminder, the Fougères Emmaüs is open on Weds. & Sats. at 9h–12h & 14h–17h.

Telethon – throughout France on 4th & 5th December

Last year nearly €93million was raised to help families affected by generic, rare, progressive and severely disabling illnesses and to fund vital research. Some 200,000 volunteers take part annually with fund-raising events all over the country and 30 hours of non-stop television coverage. Look out for local and regional events - they are great to take part in.

New local business – horse feed and bedding

Julie Clark-Purdy has just opened a horse feed and bedding business at *La Coquerie* in Couesmes-Vaucé (53), selling Baileys Horse Feed, Simple System Horse Feeds, Feedmark Supplements, Falcon Equine Feeds, Dengie Horse Feeds and Dodson & Horrell Horse Feeds and Jo Pack Flax Bedding. The shop is open from Tues. to Sats. 10h-18h. Julie's phone number is: 02 43 04 74 61

Something you didn't know you didn't know . . .

More than 300,000 carrier pigeons were used during WWI to carry messages for the army. In 1919, a French carrier pigeon called *Vaillant* flew from the Fort de Vaux, near Verdun, to carry a request for help. He was the regiment's last pigeon and therefore the last hope for the soldiers - his mission was successful and after the war he was awarded a medal.

A word of warning – there's no such thing as a free lunch

[*Some people have already received this message*]: A word of warning to pass on from a friend: Recently she received a phone call supposedly from Super U saying she had won a meal for 2 at a restaurant in St Denis de Gastines at 12h on Monday 30th November. Having not entered a draw she thought it rather strange, but accepted it willingly.

However, she spoke with a friend who works at Super U and who said that they hadn't done a draw for ages and that perhaps it was a scam to get people out of the house so they could be robbed! On checking with the restaurant she was told that it was in fact a scam and they had had about 20 other calls saying the same thing. So beware, and please pass the word around in case this happens again. *La vie moderne*, eh?!

Sport & Leisure Activities

Walking

☞ Sat 5th : a walk in support of Telethon, organised by *St James Randonne*: depart from the Salle Patton in Saint James (50) at 14h. (www.saintjamestourisme.fr).

☞ Sun 13th : a walk organised by *St James Randonne* from Saint James (50) to Parigny (50). Depart at 14h from the Place du Champ de Foire in Saint James, 1,50€ for non-members. More info: www.saintjamestourisme.fr:

Bain de Noël in Agon-Coutainville (50)

On Sun. 20th you can join the hundreds of locals who brave the waves for this annual December dip in the sea, from 12h. *Brrrr!* More info at www.coutainville.com

Dernier bain de l'année (last swim of the year)

On Thurs. 31st at 15h in Dinard (35) on Plage de l'Ecluse, over 500 crazy swimmers are all keen to take their last dip in the sea for the year. www.ville-dinard.fr

[Remember, for all sporting activities, you need a current health certificate from your doctor]

'Pages' English bookshop – holiday dates

'Pages' bookshop in Passais-la-Conception (61) will be closed for the Christmas holidays from Sat. 19th Dec., opening again on Tuesday 5th Jan. 2016.

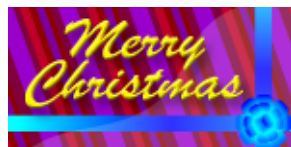
(November) English film in Gorron cinema (53)

A reminder that the November film is next Monday 30th Nov.: 'The Walk', about a tightrope walker who achieves his life-long ambition to (illegally) tightrope-walk between the Twin-Towers. In 3D for extra effect! The film starts at 20h30

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That's all for this month - loads of things to see and do and places to go! All we need is for the weather to be good to us!

I wish you all a very



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Events by the day (not including items on the front page:

Date	Event	Place	Page
November 2015			
Mon 30th	Film ‘The Walk’	Gorron	7
December 2015			
Sat. 5 th	Full English Breakfast (Grande Daze)	St Aubin-fosse-Louvain	2
“	Organ recital – major works by Mozart	Laval	4
“	Walk in aid of ‘Telethon’	Saint James	7
4 th & 5 th	‘Telethon’ fund-raising events	throughout France	6
W/e 5 th & 6 th	<i>La Coquille St Jacques en fête</i>	Grandcamp-Maisy	2
Sun 6 th	<i>Maitrise St-Leonard</i> choir	Fougères	4
Fri. 11 th	<i>Foire aux dindes & Marché de Noël</i>	La Chapelle d’Andaine	3
Sat. 12 th	Concerts de Noël	Mayenne	4
“	‘Bullfrog’ – rock, jazz, soul	Ambrières-les-Vallées	4
“	Lamp-lit walk through Laval	Laval	6
Sun. 13 th	Book Sale for Grande Daze Rescue	Juvigné	2
“	Walk from St James to Parigny	Saint James	7
Fri. 18 th	Concert de Noël	Fougères	4
Sat. 19 th	Christmas Fête	Ceaucé	3
“	Lamp-lit walk through Laval	Laval	6
Sun. 20 th	<i>Bain de Noël</i>	Agon-Coutainville	7
“	Christmas fireworks	Mayenne	5
“	Service of Nine Lessons and Carols	Virey	4
“	Service of Nine Lessons and Carols	Fougerolles-du-Plessis	4
Sat. 26 th	End of Year Quiz	Ceaucé	4
Mon. 28 th	Music with Brian Rushton	Gorron	4
Thurs. 31 st	New Year’s Eve Party	Ceauce	4
“	Last Swim of the Year	Dinard	7