

Bulletin !

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

Thought for the month:

Life is a blank canvas
and you need to throw all the paint on it you can

Danny Kaye (1911-1987)

Some *vide-greniers/brocantes* in this area [\pm (+ or -) = stalls expected] '35' = area

Sun 6 th	Bellou-en-Houlme (61)	v-g / brocante; ± 150
“	Avranches (50)	monthly brocante; ± 70
“	Torigni-sur-Vire (50)	v-g in Place de l'Orangerie; ± 150
Sun. 13 th	Barenton (50)	v-g and street races; ± 50
W/end 19/20 th	Domfront (61)	v-g in <i>Foire des Rameaux</i> (see p.2); ± 60
Sun 20 th	Bellou-en-Houlme (61)	v-g / brocante; ± 150
“	St Mère Eglise (50)	v-g, ± 50
“	Cossé-le-Vivien (53)	v-g / brocante; ± 100
“	St Malo (35)	v-g de printemps at 11 Bvd Douville; ± 70
“	Luc-sur-Mer (14)	v-g, ± 100
“	Granville (50)	Monthly brocante
W/e 26 /27 th	La Ferté Macé (61)	v-g in Salle Guy Rossolini, ± 100
Sun 27 th	Agon-Coutainville (50)	Monthly <i>marché antiquités</i> /brocante; ± 70

[www.brocabrac.fr is constantly updated with brocantes / vide-greniers]

Special dates:

Thurs. 17 th	Saint Patrick's Day (celebrated in many towns in France). See also p.6
Mon. 28 th	<i>Lundi Pâques</i> (Easter Monday)

Foire Fleuri and Fête Foraine in Gorron (53)

On the weekend of 12th & 13th, Gorron will come to life – this year with a carnival theme. It begins at 12h on Sat 12th with stalls, fun-fair, pony rides, plant sales, exhibitions, and at 14h45 the popular '*Foulées Gorronnaises*' (races around the town). On Sun 13th there will be varied entertainment and parades around the town during the day.

Eating out

I have been asked to recommend again one of the Chinese restaurants in Fougères (35): *Le Jardin d'Asie* (near the Emmaüs Ferme du Paron). Open 7/7, from 12h – 14h30 & 19h – 22h30. A great '*buffet à volonté*' (self-service buffet). On weekdays: adults 11€, under 10s: 7€, under 3s free; in evenings, weekends and fête days: adults 16,20€, under 10s: 9€, under 3s free. Note – they are closing for a week in March for renovations (but couldn't tell me the exact date). For more info: 02 99 05 78 88

Gardens to visit

(With thanks to Lynne R. for this info.): *Le Jardin Contemporain: "Interieur à Ciel Ouvert"* in Athis de l'Orne (61) is a delightful garden. Owners Benoit and Dominique are totally charming and the garden is a source of delight to all. Well worth a visit also if you are planning to visit nearby *la Roche d'Oëtre*.

68th Foire des Rameaux in Domfront (61)

On the weekend of 19th & 20th, this 2-day fair takes place in the Espace André-Rocton, rue du Champ Passais and rue du Mont-Margantin, and has been celebrated in Domfront since 1948. Organised by volunteers, it attracted 6,000 visitors last year – a great success, with 70 stalls, exhibitions, *vide-greniers* and 40 attractions for children. There will also be entertainment by folk group *Le Trou Normande*, and food & drink available on site. Open from 10h-19h, entry is free. Plenty of parking opposite. More info from the Domfront Tourist Office (www.ot-domfront.com)

Les Jardins des Renaudies

At this lovely 4 ha floral park near Colombiers-du-Plessis (53), the season opens on Sun. 27th & Mon. 28th, 14h-18h, with the *chasse aux oeufs de Pâques* (Easter egg hunt). Children under 12 years can seek out Easter items around the gardens. There is always something to enjoy here - more than 3,000 plants of different species have been planted and landscaped in this vast undulating area wholly conceived for the beginner as well as confirmed gardener. *Ecomusée* and art exhibitions also. The new entrance from the car park gives good accessibility for wheelchairs and the disabled. For more info: www.jardinsdesrenaudies.fr

Cancer Support France Basse-Normandie – Easter Tea

On Easter Monday (28th) at the Cancer Support Day Centre in Notre-Dame du Touchet (50) on the route de Buais: tea and cakes from 15h to 18h. All welcome. This is always a very enjoyable occasion and the opportunity to sit and chat to friends old and new and enjoy some delicious home-made cakes. For further details please contact CSF-BN at 02 33 69 01 05, csfbassenormandie@gmail.com, or go to www.csfbassenormandie.com

Restoration of Domfront church – phase 2

The Association '*Les Amis de l'Eglise Saint-Julien*' in Domfront (61) are in the process of requesting donations for the 2nd phase of these works, which will cost an estimated 2 million euros. The completed Phase 1 (mainly urgent work on the bell-tower) cost 255,423€, 82,439€ of which was by donation, with the remainder being found by the *Conseil Général* and *La Fondation du Patrimoine*. This next phase covers all works apart from the bell-tower – outside walls, the oratory, doors, windows and inside decoration.

Grande Daze Rescue fund-raising Book Sale

Grande Daze Rescue (registered animal charity) are holding a fund-raising book sale on Sun. 20th from 10h to 16h at Villagonnais, Juvigné (53) [Villagonnais is on the D208 between Juvigné and Le Bourgneuf-la-Forêt – tel. 02 43 02 96 35]. As well as a completely new selection of books and DVDs at 50 cents, there will be home-made jams and chutneys on sale. Donations of books and bric-a-brac for boot fairs will be gratefully accepted. Help them to help abandoned and mistreated animals to find new loving owners.

The Real Deal . . ? . . ? . . ?

A man from the Pays d’Auge (Orne) took an old relic, which had been kept in a drawer for over 30 years, to the Alençon *hotel des enchères* (auction house) hoping to sell it for a few 100 euros. The auctioneer was very interested and, needing to know if it was genuine, he consulted an expert of Middle Age artefacts in Paris. It was indeed found to be a genuine 700-year-old icon decorated with silver, sapphires and diamonds! It had been designed and made by Jean Pucelle, a goldsmith of the royal court in the 14th century, using a 13th century Tuscan technique and could be worth as much as 100,000€! It had originally been kept in the *Sainte-Chapelle de Paris* and was one of the few items to survive the Revolution.

The bidding started at 50,000€ and quickly reached 400,000€ - but the final bid was 450,000€, much to the man’s amazement! However, the buyer did not leave with the item – the State decided to make an offer to him and it will now be kept in the Musée de Clucy which specialises in items from the Middle Ages.

A new *Croix Rouge* container in Chailland (53)

A ‘*Croix Rouge*’ (Red Cross) container for donations of used clothing, textiles, shoes, household linens and leather goods, is now available near the Salle Polyvalente in Chailland. All contributions are greatly appreciated and the proceeds support *la Croix Rouge*.

Something you didn’t know you didn’t know . . .

It is 343 years since the legendary French playwright Molière collapsed and died while performing his final play, *Le Malade Imaginaire* (The Imaginary Invalid). According to folklore, Molière was wearing yellow – and because of that there is a superstition that yellow brings bad luck to actors.

Plant sale in St-Germain-le-Guillaume (53)

On Sun. 6th from 10h to 17h in the Salle des Fêtes, organised by *l’Association Passion et Loisirs* - there will be around 20 stallholders selling roses, begonias, vegetables, herbs, etc., and also demonstrations of rose pruning and basket weaving. Free entry.

Recognising the cattle breeds in France

The final breed of cattle that you can look out for is: Rouge des Prés – colour: dark red body with white patches on body and head, with white feet, pale nose.

This is a very docile and robust breed - and also one of the heaviest in the world. Originally bred in the Pays de la Loire and western France, it was developed from a cross between the Mancelle, a local rustic breed, and the Durham, a strong English breed. There are currently 39,784 registered in France. Until 2004 the breed was known as Maine-Anjou.

Entertainment

Wed. 2nd at 20h in the Salle Polyvalente in Landivy (53) the *Compagnie Poc* brings “B.P.M.21” (*battements par minute 21*) – juggling, music & percussion. Who would think that juggling could be so musical?! For adults & children. Tickets 9€/6€. www.st-hilaire.fr

Sun. 6th at the Théâtre Municipal in Mayenne (53) near the Château: Guy Demaysoncel in concert accompanied by accordion. Tickets 12€, from the Mayenne Tourist Office

Thurs. 10th at 20h30 in the Salle Victor Hugo in Avranches (50): ‘Eskemm’ – Celtic rock band with *cornemuses* (bagpipes), electric & acoustic guitars. Entry: 11€. For more info: www.ville-avranches.fr

Concerts

♪ Fri. 4th at 20h30 at the Rex in St Hilaire du Harcouët (50) – ‘*Chants Sacrés des Gitanes*’. Entry: 9€. For more info: www.st-hilaire.fr or the Tourist Office

♪ Sat. 5th at 20h30 at the Théâtre d’Avranches (50): ‘*Quatuor Contraste*’. More info and ticket details from Avranches Tourist Office (www.ville-avranches.fr)

♪ Sat. 5th at 20h30 in the church in St Hilaire-du-Maine (53): Gospel singing from ‘Negro Spirituals de Laval’ - a choir with 30 singers. Free entry.

♪ Sat. 12th at 20h30 in l’Espace Colmont in Gorrion (53): “*Le Gala des Stars*” with singers Michèle Torr, Sonia Rochweg and their musicians. Reservation at the Gorrion P.I.J. (near the Bar des Sports) or at 02 43 30 10 58

♪ Sun 27th at 16h in Espace Colmont in Gorrion (53): Brass Band “*les Coniques*”. 1st part of the evening: *Harmonie de Gorrion*. Tickets 5€; www.cc-bocagemayennais.fr

Concerts by *Cantamus*

Sat. 12th at 18h in the church at La Chapelle Biche (61). This will be a shared concert with pianist Régine Dantel. Entry free with collection in aid of the restoration of the church bells.

Fri. 18th at 20h in the church at Sainte-Honorine-la-Guillaume (61). Entry free with a collection in aid of those suffering from Alzheimers.

Sun. 20th at 15h30 in the church at Domjean (50). Entry free with a collection for Secours Catholique.

The ladies of Cantamus are pleased to support the various charities with a concert of seasonal songs ‘Winter to Spring’. The repertoire of Cantamus reflects the wide interest of the members of the choir and the tastes of audiences. The songs range from 16th century madrigals to modern classics. More information from Lesley Thomson: 02 33 38 09 44

Sale of roses in support of the Lions Club

On Fri 4th & Sat 5th, roses will be on sale outside many supermarkets in the Mayenne *département* in support of *l’Association Enfants Cancers Santé*, created in 1998 for support and to help finance the fight against cancers and leukemia in children and adolescents.

Vente aux enchères de véhicules anciens (auction of old vehicles)

Mon. 28th from 14h30 in the covered Halle in Saint James (50) – auction of spares for cars, motorbikes and cycles. Free entry, more info from www.saintjamestourisme.fr

Lest We Forget

[Another witness account from WW2:] At age 16, André Mottais served as a guide to the Americans during the liberation of Mayenne and 72 years later he looks back: On Sat. 5th August 1944 at 8h30 on his farm at Parigné-sur-Braye (53), he noticed a bush moving. Thinking that perhaps his early morning coffee may have been too liberally ‘laced’, he was on alert but then he came face to face with an American soldier. His mother had taught him some English, including “good morning”, and saying this put the soldier at ease. The soldier and his unit were seeking directions to Mayenne which was still occupied by the Germans. He and his mother climbed into the American officer’s Dodge and they were immediately enrolled as guides.

At that time the Mayenne-Ernée route had been secured by the Americans and the final assault on Mayenne was to be that afternoon, to push the German army south across the Mayenne river at the *Pont de la Caisse d’Epargne*. The Germans had planted explosives under the bridge to stop General Patton’s advance and André Mottais was there when Private James MacRacken bravely managed to disarm the explosives, saving the bridge before, sadly, being fatally wounded by gunfire. The bridge is now called ‘Pont MacRacken’ in his memory. The following day André and his mother were returned to their lives on the farm.

Medical Detection Dogs

[With thanks to Cancer Support France Basse-Normandie for this information:] This is a wonderful organisation and you can find out more about what these fantastic dogs are capable of at www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk. They are also interested in our used stamps so you can cut them off the envelope (with some border around them and, if possible, postage details) and send them to: Medical Detection Dogs, 3 Millfield, Greenway Business Park, Winslow Road, Great Norwood, Milton Keynes, MK17 ONP.

Cheese of the Month : *Bons Mayennais*

The *fromagerie* in Martigné-sur-Mayenne (53) has been trading for 104 years! The Château de Bois-Belleray became a dairy in 1912 due to its proximity to running water. In 1933 it was bought by a M. Vaubernier and the *fromagerie* took on the name of the owner. Today with a turnover of 40 million euros it employs a workforce of over 100. Using milk from 286 farms within a radius of 50km, they produce a Camembert (including the first low-salt & bio versions), a Brie and a soft cheese.

Red Cross ‘*Vestiboutique*’ in La Ferté Macé (61)

The volunteers of *la Croix Rouge Française* welcome the public each Wednesday from 15h to 18h to their *Vestiboutique* at 40 rue des Fossés Saint-Denis (near *la Poste* and *la Mairie*), where you can find clothing, shoes and accessories.

New Café Zebra in Sourdeval (50)

The new Zebra Café is at 22, rue de Verdun in Sourdeval (north of Mortain) and they are open daily from 9h to 18h. On Fridays from 14h-15h30, Gaëlle Napoléon gives French lessons in the café and they plan many other activities there also. For more details please visit their Facebook page

Saint Patrick's Day at the Casino in Bagnoles de l'Orne (61)

This is much more than just a casino – it is also a place that welcomes families and has a restaurant, theatre and entertainments area. For example, on 17th- 19th you can celebrate Saint Patrick's Day in the restaurant '1927', where chef Olivier Richard offers an Irish speciality: "*le Cottage Pie – boeuf au Worcester Sauce et pommes de terre*". Also, on Fri 18th from 22h in the Lounge Café, St Patrick's Day will be celebrated by an Irish evening with the group '*Foumagnac*'. More info from the Bagnoles Tourist Office.

Exhibition

Until 5th March in the *mediathèque municipale* of Bellou-en-Houlme (61) an exhibition by Camille Couturier, with her technique in the use of ink on paper; free. www.odc-orne.com

For your information

La Poste has warned of a scam in which people are urged to call a premium rate number to organise the collection of a package or registered letter. Although the warning was issued by *La Poste* in Basse-Normandie, the calls have been received in Hérault, Pays Basque and Mayenne. The calls purport to be from *La Poste* telling householders that they have a parcel or *lettre recommandé* waiting for them. The householder is told to call a number beginning with 08 to get more details about the package or letter. However, anyone calling this number is put on hold until they hang up – at a cost of 3€ per minute. There is no warning of the cost, so for many the first indication they had been scammed was their phone bill.

La Poste has issued the following reminders to avoid scams:

- ☞ For any undelivered parcels or letters the postman should always leave a note that they called;
- ☞ *La Poste* never calls you and asks you to call an 08 number or any other premium rate number;
- ☞ *La Poste* never asks for your card number or PIN whether by phone or email;
- ☞ If you receive a message that purports to be from *La Poste* you can call their number on 3631 (standard land-line rate in mainland France) to find out more.

Weekly markets in the *Mayenne* department (53)

Day of the week	Location
Mondays	Craon, Mayenne, Villaines-la-Juhel
Tuesdays	Ernée, Laval (centre), Montsûrs
Wednesdays	Bais, Gorrion, Lassay-les-Châteaux, St Pierre-des-Nids
Thursdays	Château-Gontier, Evron, Laval (centre)
Fridays	Fougerolles-du-Plessis, Javron-les-Chapelles, Meslay-du-Maine
Saturdays	Ambrières-les-Vallées, Bazouges, Mayenne
Sundays	Bourgneuf-la-Forêt, Laval (St Nicholas)

(It is wise to double check before going, as these can change without notice)

Next month: the weekly markets in the *Ille et Villaine* (35) *département* (NE Brittany)

Sport & Leisure Activities

26th Course de Printemps (26th Spring Race)

On Sat. 5th at the *complexe touristique* at the *plan d'eau* in La Ferté-Macé (61) this annual race is organised by *le Jogging d'Andaine*. Open to members and non-members. Registration is compulsory – contact 02 33 37 04 40 (or ask at the Tourist Office).

Walking in Bagnoles de l'Orne (61)

Fri. 11th – walk to Le Chêne Hippolyte (5km); depart from the Tourist Office at 15h. 3€, under 12s free. Reservations at the Tourist Office

Tues. 15th – a walk around Bagnoles de l'Orne (11.5km); depart from the Tourist Office at 15h. 4€, under 12s free. Res. at the Tourist Office

Walking from Saint James (50):

Depart at 14h from the Place du Champ de Foire in Saint James; 1,50€ for non-members. More info: www.saintjamestourisme.fr:

☞ Sun. 13th – walk from Saint James to St. Georges de Gréhaignes (35)

☞ Tues. 24th – walk from Saint James to St. Georges de Reintembault (50)

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

[Advance notice](#)

The Tour de France 2016 will be passing through the north west of France via Mont-Saint-Michel, Cherbourg and Utah Beach. More info nearer the time.

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That's all for this month. This is sent to you a bit late as I have been off-line for 2 weeks (awaiting a new Freebox) so if anyone has emailed me and had no reply, that is why! Technology, eh?!

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Events by the day (not including *vide-greniers*):

March 2016

Date	Event	Place	Page
Wed. 2 nd	B.P.M. 21 – music and juggling	Landivy	4
Fri.. 4 th	<i>Chants Sacrés des Gitanes</i>	St Hilaire de Harcouët	4
Sat. 5 th	Annual Spring race	La Ferté-Macé	7
“	<i>Quatuor Contraste</i>	Avranches	4
“	Gospel singers	St Hilaire du Maine	4
Sun. 6 th	<i>Bourse des Plantes</i> (plant sale)	St- Germaine le Guillaume	3
“	Guy Demaysoncel in concert	Mayenne	4
12 th / 13 th	<i>Foire Fleuri & Fete Foraine</i>	Gorron	1
Thurs. 10 th	Eskemm – Celtic Rock	Avranches	4
Fri. 11 th	Walk near Bagnoles de l’Orne	Bagnoles de l’Orne	7
Sat. 12 th	<i>Le Gala des Stars</i>	Gorron	4
“	Cantamus concert	La Chapelle Biche	4
Sun. 13 th	Walk to St. Georges de Gréhaignes	Saint-James	7
Tues. 15 th	Walking tour of Bagnoles de l’Orne	Bagnoles de l’Orne	7
Thurs. 17 th	St Patrick’s Day events	Many towns in France	1
Fri. 18 th	Cantamus concert	Ste-Honorine-la-Guillaume	4
“	Irish evening with <i>Foumagnac</i>	Bagnoles de l’Orne	6
W/end 19/20 th	<i>Foire des Rameaux</i>	Domfront	2
Sun. 20 th	Cantamus concert	Domjean	4
“	Grande Daze Rescue Book Sale	Juvigné	3
Tues. 24 th	Walk to St Georges Reintembault	Saint-James	7
Sun. 27 th	Brass Band ‘ <i>Les Coniques</i> ’	Gorron	4
Mon. 28 th	CSF-BN Easter Tea	N-Dame du Touchet	2
“	Auction of spares for old vehicles	Saint James	4