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## *Bulletin !*

An informal look at life in this part of France, with some snippets of local info and advice.

**Thought for the month:**

Since it's the early worm that gets caught by  
the bird - sleep late!

**Special dates:**

Tues. 16<sup>th</sup> Shrove Tuesday - Pancake Day, so get those pancakes tossed (and try not to hit the ceiling!).

*Virtual visit to the Musée Dior de Granville (50)*

In Granville, the Christian Dior Museum proposes a free virtual visit to its exhibition “*Christian Dior, itinéraire d’un couturier*” as due to the Covid pandemic the museum, located in the house where he was born, is not able to receive visitors. Comprising many photographs, salons and models, this virtual visit is participative – each can choose their route of visit: a glimpse through the door of his grandmother’s salon; read his letters to his friend Klaus Gebhard; admire the details of the Saphir collection or even the embroidery of the model Agnès. For more info go to [www.musee-dior-granville.com](http://www.musee-dior-granville.com)

**Forest cover doubles but faces new threats**

France has doubled its forested area in the last 200 years but still faces problems of loss of biodiversity because of global warming and monoculture. There were 8.5 million hectares of forest in 1830, and 17 million hectares today, says the *Office National des Forêts*. This is due to farm practice and re-forestation projects launched after the war. Forests are 67% broadleaf, 21% conifer and 12% mixed. France has the third largest cover in Europe after Germany and Sweden, yet still imports more than it produces. Numbers of plants, animals and insects have fallen, as 83% of forests have only 2 varieties of trees, and researchers say industrial clear-felling is creating problems with flooding, while climate change is bringing in new parasites.

*Elliotts Boucherie in Gorron (53)*

*Elliotts Boucherie* will be opening again on Tues. 2<sup>nd</sup> February, as Lorraine and Darren have been taking a well-earned rest. We are all looking forward to their return!

## Eating out (when possible again)

‘*L’Eveil des Sens*’ [lit. ‘the Awakening of the Senses’] at 429 Boulevard Paul Lintier in Mayenne (53) has been awarded the Michelin Star for the 10<sup>th</sup> year running – no mean feat as the Michelin Star must be strived for each time. Opened on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010, chef & owner Nicholas Nobis achieved his first Michelin Star just 10 months after opening. He continues to aim for perfection and with local produce and expertise ensures that he and his wife Isabelle are always popular, due to the excellent standard. The menu is specially designed by Nicholas Nobis, giving the Michelin Star experience without the high prices.

### Take some time to discover *le Vieux Tinchebray* (Old Tinchebray)

It is worth exploring the historic sites of Tinchebray (61) and its surroundings. Before 1800, Tinchebray was one of the most important communes of the area, with numerous fairs. You can discover the main areas: (i) start at the *plan d’eau* (lake) on rue de Domfront. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century there were 2 châteaux in this location, but one was destroyed in 1380 in an effort to evict the invading English army! It wasn’t until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that a house was built on the site with stones from the original buildings; (ii) the *Lavoir du Val de la Fontaine*. In the middle ages there were 12 *lavoirs* (wash-houses) in the town - today only 2 remain; (iii) There were possibly 2 prisons on *rue de la Geôle* with its *Cour de la Grimace*, named from the grisly practices at the prisons during the Middle Ages; (iv) *la Chapelle Saint-Rémi* was affiliated to the château in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but today only the centre of *la chapelle* and its frescoes remain, as now the Place General de Gaulle is where the nave used to be; (v) around Old Tinchebray you can walk along many little streets to see original features on some of the houses, such as chestnut shingles.

### The Mayenne river-boat changes its name

Dry-docked since last October, the river-boat taking visitors up the River Mayenne from Mayenne town (53) is undergoing refurbishment. When it is re-launched, hopefully for trips later on in 2021, the boat will be re-named ‘*La Méduana*’, the Roman name for Mayenne.

### A walk to the top of Mont-Dol (35)

At some 30 km from Saint-Malo, *le Mont-Dol* has a certain charm and has a summit of 65m, the second highest summit of the Saint-Malo countryside (*le pays Malouin*) after *le Mont-Garrot* at 73m. At the top is a panoramic view over the Bay of Cancale to Mont-Saint-Michel with (if the weather allows) a view towards Granville. There is a large rocky grassy area, a restored *moulin*, picnic tables and several 100-year-old trees.

### Tax/finance advice centre in Gorrion (53)

The old *Trésorie* office (beside AXA) has now completely closed, the nearest tax office being in Mayenne. However, there is a new financial advice centre at the *Mairie* in Gorrion, open on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month, 9h-12h. By reservation only - you can make an appointment at *Espace Finance Services* (tel: 02 43 30 10 58) to discuss any tax issues. (Not sure how much English is spoken).

## Burning garden waste

If you wish to burn garden waste – or have neighbours who are actually doing it – you should contact your *mairie*. It is forbidden to burn green waste (dead leaves, prunings, lawn clippings, etc) in the open air, as it is for all household waste. The rules were clarified in a 2011 ministerial circular ([tinyurl.com/yd99eblj](http://tinyurl.com/yd99eblj)). Apart from neighbourhood disturbances and the fire risks, burning green waste increases air pollution. In certain areas, with no collection system or *déchetterie* (tip), or where residents are obliged to clear scrub, the *préfet* can make exceptions, so it is worth checking the local rules at your *mairie*.

## Commemoration of 150 years at Pontmain (53)

For the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparition of Marie (which appeared to children on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1871) the sanctuary of Pontmain celebrated the event in January 2021 but very much restrained by the *crise sanitaire*. Each year for this special date around 8,000 pilgrims arrive from around the world, but this year they were requested not to come, as entry to the *l'église* was restricted to 45 people, and 328 to the *Basilique*. Accommodation and meals were restricted also. Hopefully in 2022 the celebrations can again take place at this revered site.

## A local collector has opened a *brocante*

In Mayenne town (53), rue Grinhard, a new *brocante* ‘*Designe Confort Nature*’ opened last November: An upholsterer by trade, Patrice Auroy has collected items over many years and, noticing that Mayenne now has fewer *brocantes*, he had planned to open last March but had to postpone due to the Covid confinement. Open Mons. to Sats. 8h-12h & 14h-18h. For more info or to arrange a visit: [www.designe-confort-nature.com](http://www.designe-confort-nature.com)

## *Pouilly-Fumé* – one of the Loire Valley’s best loved wines.

*Pouilly-Fumé* is a dry white wine made from Sauvignon Blanc grapes. The official Pouilly-Fumé area takes in seven communes on the right side of the Loire, from Mesves-sur-Loire to Saint-Martin-sur-Nohain. These villages are technically Burgundy, although *Pouilly-Fumé* is most definitely a Loire Valley wine.

Q: Why is it named *Fumé*, meaning smoked?

A: *Fumé* refers to the ‘gun flint aroma’ said to be bestowed on the wine by the flint bedrock under the vineyards of *Pouilly/Loire*.

## 150th anniversary of the Battle of Saint-Melaine in Laval (53)

In January 1870, France was at war with the Prussians, who had invaded as far as Orléans. and Napoleon III’s troops had fallen. Minister of War Léon Gambetta chose General Alfred Chanzy to be at the head of the 2<sup>ième</sup> *Armée de la Loire*, but they were were defeated at Le Mans on 12 January 1871. The French re-grouped at the gates of Laval. The Prussians advanced for a final coup, but at Saint-Melaine the French soldiers, organised by General Chanzy, held the road, losing 28 soldiers on that day. It was the final skirmish, as *l’armistice* was declared 6 days later, although the town of Laval was occupied by Prussians for many months afterwards.

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

It was illegal for women to wear trousers in France up to 2013, when a law dating from November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1800 was still in force. Its title was “decree concerning the cross-dressing of women” and said that “any woman who wants to dress like a man must go to the Police for permission to do so”. This was amended in 1892 and 1909 to allow women to wear trousers “if the woman is holding bicycle handlebars or the reins of a horse”. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century any woman who dared to wear trousers was regarded as a rebel. The novelist George Sands chose to wear male attire in public, but without a permit. She found trousers more comfortable and also discovered that she could get access more easily to places where women were not allowed. But in high society, figures like Coco Chanel, Marlène Dietrich or Katherine Hepburn were still judged outrageous when they wore trousers. The law was repealed on 31 January 2013 because the decree “was incompatible with the principals of equality between women and men”.

### Names of the inhabitants

People who live in Mayenne are Mayennais(es) and if they live in Gorrion they are Gorrionnais(es), but here are some others that are not so obvious:-

If you live in	Ambrières-les-Vallées	you are	Amboriverains
	Château Gontier	you are	Castrogontériens
	Lassay-les-Châteaux	you are	Lasséens
	Colombiers-du-Plessis	you are	Colombierais
	St Denis de Gastines	you are	Dionysiens
	Champgenéteux	you are	Campgenéteusiens

More next month!

And finally,

“Son, allow me to offer my warmest congratulations. I’m certain that you’ll remember today as the happiest of your life”

“Thanks, Dad, but the wedding’s tomorrow!”

“I know.”

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