

Bulletin !

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

Thought for the month:

Be grateful that no matter how much chocolate you eat,
your earrings will still fit.

Here are some *vide-greniers* (v-g) & *brocantes* in this area, but double-check beforehand, if possible, at www.brocabrac.fr in case of any last-minute cancellations ['35' = area; ± = number of stalls expected]:

Sun. 4 th	Dinard (35)	Monthly <i>brocante</i> in Place du Marché, 9h-18h, ±70
“	Rennes (35)	<i>vide dressing vintage</i> (vintage second hand clothing) & <i>brocante</i> , 20 rue Poullain Duparc, 12h-18h, ±30
Sat. 10 th)	La Ferté-Macé (61)	v-g in Salle Rossolini, Blvd André Hamonic, 7h to 17h30, ±150
Sun. 11 th)		
Sun. 18 th	Granville (50)	Monthly <i>Marché d'Antiquités Brocante</i> in Cour Jonville, ± 30
“	Tinchebray (61)	Sale of second-hand clothes, Salle de la Petit 'a, Blvd du Nord, 10h-17h, ±50; snacks & drinks available on site.
Sun. 25 th	Bellou-en-Houlme (61)	v-g/ <i>brocante</i> at La Chevalerie, ±150

Granville Carnival

This year the popular Granville Carnival will be held on 9th to 13th February. This 5-day event has been held in Granville every February for almost 150 years and is the biggest of its kind in western France. Parades with satirical floats, drummers, brass bands, dancing, confetti battles and more - the town of Granville goes crazy!! Each year over 3,000 revellers – up to 150,000 people – are expected over the 5 days. For more info go to www.carnaval-de-granville.fr and www.normandie-tourisme.fr

Eating out - *La Croix des Landes*

'*La Croix des Landes*' is at the junction of the D908, as you leave Domfront going towards La Ferté-Macé / Bagnoles de l'Orne (61). This bar/restaurant was closed for several months but is now run by English/French partners: Emily (front of house) and Anthony (chef). The décor is great, the atmosphere relaxing and interesting, and the menu choices & the food are excellent. A touch above the average lunch meal and well worth the extra cost. Open: daily (not Sundays): 9h to 14h – with extra opening hours (19h to 21h15) on Weds., Fri., & Sat. evenings. For reservations (recommended, as already very popular): 09 81 91 41 48

Chandeleur (Candlemas)

February 2nd is *Chandeleur* in France – known as Candlemas in English. This lesser known celebration serves as a great opportunity to feast on pancakes, whose round shape and yellow colour were thought to represent the sun and more daylight after the long, dark month of winter.

Also – this year in the UK: 'Pancake Day' (Shrove Tuesday – *Mardi Gras* in French) is on 13th Feb., – the day before Lent and 47 days before Easter Sunday (31st March). So get cracking those eggs!!

A Mediæval lunch in Mayenne (53)

On Thurs. 15th at 12h15 in the *Château de Mayenne*, Place Juhel, you can enjoy a meal inspired by the Middle Ages and surrounded by historical discoveries. You can learn how books were made in the 15th century, with demonstrations and explanations of the technique and different stages of fabrication of books at that time. Tickets 14€; children and unemployed: 10€, by reservation only, at the Mayenne Tourist Office (02 43 00 17 17) or at www.museeduchateaudemayenne.fr

Cheese of the Month - *Langres*

As the name indicates, this cow's-milk cheese originates from the high plains of Langres, in the *Champagne* region and can be traced back to the 18th century. Shaped like a short, fat cylinder, it has a 5mm deep well on top, called a *fontaine* or *cuvette*, into which champagne or *marc* may be poured. This is a pleasant way to eat cheese and is typical of wine-producing areas. The surface of the cheese is sticky, wet and shiny and has a pronounced smell. Firm and supple, the cheese melts in the mouth releasing a complex mixture of aromas. A red dye, extracted from the seeds of the Annatto tree found in America, is applied to colour the rind. Good on the cheeseboard or in a salad. Best enjoyed with a full-bodied wine from Burgundy, or *Marc de Bourgogne*, or *Champagne*.

We say, they say

"*Ce n'est pas de la tarte*" (*lit.* 'this is not cake') actually means that something is tricky or hard-going – the inverse of the English phrase 'this is a piece of cake'!

Restaurant closure in Brecé

Sadly, the popular bar/restaurant 'Le Briccius' (named after the Roman name for the town) has closed and is up for sale. A great loss to the village and local inhabitants.

1.80 million visitors enjoyed the Laval illuminations

This many visitors were counted during the 5 weeks of the *Lumières de Laval* this year by the analysis system Mytraffic – with 319,200 at the Square de Boston alone. The Big Wheel and Christmas market had 25,800 entries, despite the evacuation at the beginning due to a bomb scare.

Monthly organic market in Lassay-les-Châteaux (53)

Friday 2nd (and the first Friday of each month), 16h to 20h, is this organic market, in front of the *Mairie* (place du 8 Mai 1945).

Château de Carrouges (61)

With over 30,000 visitors welcomed in 2023 – 25% more than the year before, the Château has beaten its own record! To reach this success, the new agents have opened the Château to the public for 360 days a year over the past few years. The teams offered a unique experience – concerts, cookery workshops, temporary exhibitions, family entertainment, shows – in this Chateau owned by the *Le Veneur* family for the past 7 centuries. In 2023 more rooms were opened to the public and in 2024, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Liberation, will be the re-opening of the 2nd floor bedroom called *l'Evêque* (the Bishop) after 2 years of restoration and sourcing of authentic furniture.

‘Run & Bike du Château de Mayenne’

On Sun. 4th, the club ‘Mastria 53’ (one of the triathlon clubs of Mayenne) will welcome you for the 3rd edition of their ‘Run & Bike du Château’ - a programme with 4 distances by teams of 2: 6 to 9 yrs: 1.5kms; 20 to 13 yrs: 2.5km; teenagers & adults: 7km & 14km.

Open to all – members or not. Food is available on site. Tickets: 16€. More info on their site: www.mastria53-triathlon-mayenne.fr

Something for all the family – *Micro Zoo* in Saint-Malo

At this micro zoo at 9 Place Vauban in Saint-Malo (35) you will find a vivarium, aquarium and animal park. Open daily: 10h to 19h. Tickets: Adults: 9,50€, children: 6,50€. For more details of other places to visit around Fougères and Saint-Malo, you can visit www.ille-et-vilaine-tourism.com

Closure of the *boulangerie* in Fontaine-Daniel (53)

Sadly, the *boulangerie* in this small, pretty village of less than 300 people – ‘*Au Gout'the Gourmand*’ – closed mid-January. The reason is not clear, and the villagers and other businesses nearby are sad to lose it. The village was well served with the *boulangerie*, an *épicerie*, a restaurant and the *crêperie* but the villagers now have to go 5 miles to get their bread. However, the *épicerie* will be stepping in and providing a *depot de pain* for bread purchases until hopefully the *Salon de Thé* will re-open in the future.

Entertainment & Concerts

Sun. 4th, 15h to 16h30, in the *Musée Archéologue* in Jublains (53): a concert by Japanese guitarist and composer Yuichiro Maeda, who embodies respect for his ancestral traditions. Surrounded by music since he was young, he studied at LIPA (the school founded by Paul McCartney) before touring Europe with his group Yanéka. Today he lives with his family in Mayenne. With several instruments at hand, he creates very diverse music, such as post-rock, electro, modern and retro.

Piano concert by Etienne Rall

On Sat. 24th at 16h in the Château de Bourgon à Montourtier, route de Belgeard, Montourtier, Monsûrs (53): concert by young pianist Etienne Rall, who received *le prix coup de coeur* from the Château de Bourgon in 2023. Tickets: 25€ (or 15€ if a member). By reservation only: 06 11 37 29 99. A cocktail is offered at the end of the concert.

Opera at the Cinema

At the cinema ‘*Le Vox*’ in Mayenne (Place Juhel, near the château) each month will be an opera or ballet transmitted live from *l’Opéra* in Paris. On Thurs. 15th at 19h15 is the opera Julius Caesar (Giulio Cesare). More info: www.levoxmayenne.fr. Tickets: 9,50€; under 26s: 6,20€, under 14s: 4,50€

Something you didn’t know you didn’t know : the *franc* was created to pay off the English

The French *franc* was created in 1360 to help raise a huge ransom the English had demanded to end war between the two countries and release King Jean II “*Le Bon*” who was in prison in London along with his brother and 3 sons. He had been captured by King Edward III during the Battle of Poitiers, one of the major English victories during the Hundred Years War.

France was already facing several disasters. The Black Death had killed nearly half its population. The existing currency had been devalued 85 times from 1337 to 1360. This led to serious unrest across the country, when the peasants rose up and burnt & pillaged castles in the series of revolts known as the *Jacquerie*.

With the king in prison his son, Charles, was in charge. The English army had landed at Calais and he had to find a way to stop the war and free the king. On May 8th 1360 he signed a peace treaty with Edward III. It came with a cost. Edward III renounced his claim to the French throne but in return demanded extensive territories in the SW of France and a ransom of 3 million *écus* – the equivalent of 12.5 tonnes of gold. A first payment of 400,000 *écus* led to the release of Jean *Le Bon*; a second payment of 600,000 *écus* led to the release of the brother and his sons. Another 2 million *écus* had to be found. On his way back to France, Jean *Le Bon* announced changes to make the economy stronger, and also a new currency, the *franc* – named possibly because ‘*Francorum Rex*’ was inscribed in Latin on the coins. However, the *franc* did not become the unique official currency in France until shortly after the Revolution, on April 7th 1795. It was replaced by the introduction of the euro on 1st January 1999.

Sport & Leisure Activities

'Strike Club' - bowling in Fougères (35)

Located near the *Forum de la Gare*, there are 10 lanes and a well-stocked bar. Hours: daily (not Mondays): 15h to midnight. (www.strike-club.fr)

A local swimming pool:- *Centre Aquatique du Pays Fertois*

This is a sport and leisure pool at rue des 5 Frères Robinet in La Ferté-Macé (61), dedicated to sport, relaxation and leisure for all the family. Open all year, 7/7, there is a sporting pool for serious swimmers, a '*balneo-ludique*' for relaxation and leisure, a paddling pool, slide, sauna, Turkish bath and jacuzzi. Open daily (see their website for opening hours). Entry: (prices vary if resident or not): under 3s: free; 3 to 7s: 4,30€ or 4,90€; 8s to 16s: 4,90€ or 5,30€; Adults: 5,30€ or 6,50€. www.centreaquatiquedupaysfertois.fr



And finally:

Wife calling from the kitchen: "What do you want for supper? Savoury beef, mouthwatering salmon or luscious chicken?"

Husband: "I'll have the mouthwatering salmon"

Wife: I was talking to the cat".



That's all for this month. Yes, this is issue No. 201 – I have been preparing the Bulletins monthly since April 2001, with only a handful of issues not being sent out over the years due to unforeseen circumstances. I hope to be able to continue gathering the information for you for a few years still to come!

Have a great February – and let's hope this mild weather we have been enjoying will last a little bit longer!

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