

Centre Le Page – Newsletter – October 2013

SUMMER TERM REPORT 2013



Having taken over as owners at the start of May was a little daunting with responsibility for existing bookings starting May 15th. Our initial priority was to operate the same way as before. The previous owners had told us lots but you can't hope to pick up everything until you really live it. It's up to others to judge but we felt we came out ok for our first season with some good feedback, plenty of smiles from a new wave of British children and a list of things we'd like to work on for next season.

Our Main Drivers

1. Health and Safety

No#1 – obviously – and we've been looking for better ways to inform our groups and to prevent mishaps and minimise risks. CLP is a very safe place – we are regularly inspected by French regulatory bodies and we aim to clearly and concisely inform new arrivals of safety features, especially where youngsters are involved, while maintaining and checking all items regularly.

ALARMS!

We're fully inspected for fire and smoke alarms annually and we have intruder

detectors to boot. However:

Our various groups managed to set off the fire detectors three times so we have to warn about smoking, aerosols, deodorants which can all set things off. At least this proved fire alarms to be all in fine working order!

2. Cleanliness

CLP is a laid-back place – we want everyone to enjoy their stay - but we want to make sure all rooms and facilities are suitably neat and tidy. Timely feedback is always welcome.

3. Food!



We know that you'll enjoy your day if you are well-fed. A familiar face behind the scenes, Shirley, our cook, has served CLP guests for over three years now, helping us maintain continuity in 2013. We listen to your feedback and will work to ensure your food is as tasty and interesting as we can make it, especially in our French-style four courses dinners.

LOCAL FEATURES

100th Tour de France –
Whoosh!



Most years the 'Tour' passes close to or through Calorguen, a few kms from Le Quiou. In fact in 2006 it passed through Le Quiou itself, and indeed past the centre itself! Five-time-winner, Bernard Hinault, also the last Frenchman to win in 1985, hails from Calorguen. This year we were lucky to see the tour in nearby Le Hinglé on a blisteringly hot day. Having waited patiently four hours while the outriders, hangers on and gaudy vehicles throwing sweets to the crowd passed by, there was a whiz and several flashes as 100 of the fastest cyclists on the planet passed in an instant. One assumes that provided the lucky school, resident here at the time, completes the necessary risk assessment, it can join the happy throngs in 2014.

Jerzuel Run – Whew!

September 21st saw the latest edition of the Défi du Jerzuel, an 11km foot race which culminates in not one but two ascents of the steep cobbled Rue du Jerzuel up from the Vieux Port of Dinan, on the Rance, steeply into the middle of medieval Dinan itself. Very colourful to watch, we think criminally insane to perform!

Breton Boules – Pa-Tonk!

Over the square in ‘la Belle Epoque’ or ‘Chez Mimi’ are no less than four ‘lanes’ for Breton Boules, one under cover. She will be quite happy to host groups and let them learn how to play (like ordinary boules but with big heavy stones instead of little shiny balls) provided a time is agreed beforehand.

WHAT’S NEW IN LE QUIOU? (Yes it should rhyme!)

CLP Feedback forms

As Peter knows from his previous project management career, it’s sometimes a tedious but necessary item in any delivery of service that we get feedback. This feeds into our planning, processes and training and ultimately should produce regular improvements in the service offered. This year we introduced our own forms, recognising that despite previous good track record, some of the infrastructure is now tired and some of the processes now require a fresh look from fresh eyes. We’ve responded to our groups’ forms and aim to implement a cycle of regular improvements as quickly as time and money and prioritisation permits. Watch this space.

Road Improvements

Monsieur le Maire of Le Quiou, Arnaud Carré, is passionate about the village and has secured funding to build a raised platform around the three way junction in the village, a sort of ‘sleeping police station’, with improvements to pavements, crossings and flower beds which will be very evident in 2014.



Some of our schools groups had to patiently put up with limited access to the car park which we appreciate.

La Maison des Faluns

As well as our very own significant Gallo Romaine Villa in the village, 2013 has seen the opening of our local museum, about 1km towards Tréfumel which depicts all aspects of the fact that in prehistoric times Le Quiou and mid-Brittany was underneath la Mer des Faluns. This accounts for the sea fossils present in the local limestone building stone. The Maison des Faluns organises workshops and activities in which your groups might be interested during future visits.

TRIPS

Le Mont St Michel

Our groups tend to have this one top of the list. A nice drive and then the view of awesome Mont St Michel as it towers above all around it on its pinnacle in the sandy bay. C’est simple! – park and ride and enjoy the legendary pedestrian paradise.

Cycling to Dinan (Léhon)

Five minutes to Bétineuc Lake, with its beach rugby and volleyball, and then you are on the delightfully rural Rennes-St Malo Canal towpath. About 40 minutes away is Best Floral Village Léhon in the shadow of its magnificent 12th Century Castle, also the 12th Century Abbey and cloisters.

FRANGLO DISCONNECTS

This year we noticed:

Tea bags

Lipton’s tea bags just don’t seem to cut it with British guests’ tastes so we get friends to bring stronger stuff over the channel. But the French don’t like strong stuff and generally drink without milk and want hot water too. So we give them Lipton’s. Vive la différence!

Fish Pie

Although they like Shepherd’s Pie, the French (including Christiane) seem to balk at a British favourite, fish pie. So we won’t serve it ☹



Go past the swimming pool and take the towpath again and in ten minutes you are in le Vieux Port de Dinan, total cycle time from Le Quiou around 50 min! Park your bike and have a refreshing drink and watch the boat people on the Rance or go further and take in the Rance barrage or even get to St Malo!

Gallo-Romaine Villa



Less than a km from CLP is the most significant Roman Villa in Brittany spotted from an aerial photo in 1989. Each year more is revealed by our team of archaeologists, hand-picked from all over France and led by Jean-Charles Arramond, who spend August at Centre Le Page while they dig and discover.

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Arromanches/Bayeux - D Day and Interpretation

Popular with British schools groups is this day trip from Le Quiou taking in the 11th Century Bayeux Tapestry and Abbey and also the interpretational centre at Arromanches for the D-Day beaches which leaves a lasting impression on all who visit.

Dinan Market

Closer to home is this fantastic market by the 'remparts' of nearby medieval walled city Dinan where visitors can browse and buy or in the nearby half-timbered shops in old cobbled streets.

LE QUIOU - EVENTS

Monsieur le Maire, Arnaud Carré is very keen on using our hall as the centre of village events, having had for several years to use venues outside the village for his most cherished events.

Bastille Day 14th July - Vin d'Honneur



Our first public hosting: on a roasting Sunday morning we supplied apéros to villagers dressed to the nines to celebrate the National Day of the Storming of the Bastille, key event in the French Revolution.

The attendees swooped in after a brief rendition of the Marseillaise at our church/war memorial over the square.

Fleurissement (best kept villages) -4th October

120 down-to-earth folk from the Dinan and Evran region attended to see who'd won the prizes for best-kept village, restaurant exterior, etc. Le Quiou even won the prize for village with roadworks!

Afterwards we hosted 65 of these burghers for a fine lunch,



our biggest yet and generally well-received! And with the cooker breaking down halfway through it was timely we're buying a new one.

Repas des Aînés - 23rd November...

All the elderly of the Parish are invited by the mayor for a six course lunch and dance. We'll be using the Hall and a special chef for the day which we hope will be remembered for all the right reasons. We're told the old folk dance until dawn! Ouch!

UPGRADES

As per our Introduction, we've initiated a replacement programme for the more tired elements of Centre Le Page that we inherited. Most of you will be unaware of these but we can assure you that the benefits are immediately apparent and will remain behind the scenes.

Cooker

Having had a few tricky moments with 40 or more people to feed with our beautiful stainless steel 'Rosière' antique cooking range we've decided to say goodbye to it. We've invested in a solid modern cooker for not only the groups but the occasional banquet that we serve to local and reunion audiences. We are sure that you will see the benefits and more consistency in future.

Washing machine

Behind the scenes but vital. More reliability.

Vacuum Cleaner

New and powerful! And of course it will enable us to tidy to our hearts' content!

Hockenhull Millennium Table

At last! A suitably large venue to hold Peter's magnificent oak family table hewn from Oak in 2000 and able to seat 12 comfortably. See if you can spot the family emblem!

SPORTS

Being informal and friendly, with our great sports hall, we are a natural choice for sports tours, whether junior sports teams or adult cyclists who want a few steps up from camping.

Rugby

We have strong links with both British clubs and local Breton teams with Dinan being particularly prominent. Beach rugby and training facilities are just round the corner. Young and older can have a quiet drink with us and play pool, bar footy, badminton or table tennis, and over the road Chez Mimi's cafébar can host Breton boules.

Cycling

Our first 50 km ride was on relatively easy local terrain in 2013. With the St Malo-Rennes Canal and old Plouasne-Dinard railway on our doorstep we are right in the French Voies Vertes greenway system, in particular V2 and V3. Sunday sees lots of informal French cycling groups pass through the village, so it must be good!

Paddling

We haven't actually explored too much but nearby we have the Rance River/canal, Bétineuc Lake and St Jacut-de-la-Mer with its tidal archipelago of islands.

There's even a Viking settlement at St Suliac in the Rance estuary which is only accessible at low tide and then pretty exclusively by boat. Canoes can be hired at the Vieux Port in Dinan.

Singing

Though no Cathedral (we have plenty nearby) our hall is large and exclusive and both Peter and Chris are no strangers to group singing so we can help with other venues and side trips.



2014?

We've got loads of ideas but 2013 has always been about consolidation. We're thinking about:

Rugby Tours:

We're looking at creative training camp and half term ideas for junior sports tours.

Movies

In French and English

Music

The previous owners had jazz events at the Centre – we'd like to do this and other genres.

Christmas Market

We have a big hall, kitchens, outdoor gravel area. And lots of local crafts people and wares.

Here's to our first anniversary at Centre Le Page on May 1st 2014, to more people, more variety, more fun. A bientôt!

Chris and Peter

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