

Brits in Brittany

Brits in Brittany How the authorities could know is unknown, but there are said to be up to 200,000 Britons either owning a property or living permanently in Brittany. Some Brittany Brits will be second home owners who visit on a regular basis, and some will have retired to the region. But many thousands have taken on the challenge of starting a new business as well as a new life in another land. If you've ever dreamed of running a gite, bar, restaurant, tea-shop or bicycle hire centre in France, read on. In these pages, we'll be featuring the stories of Britons who have started a business in Brittany, and passing on their tips as to how best to survive... and even prosper. Some of its hundreds of thousands of regular visitors are Britons who already live in Brittany. Others have a holiday home there and others just enjoy visiting a very special region of France. Whatever their reason for visiting, there is not much a Brittany enthusiast won't be able to learn from the AngloINFO website. From the weather in any area to times and places of hundreds of street markets, where to get the best crepe (or fish and chips) in the whole region...and even how to deal with a disobedient septic tank. Running this regionalised website service as well as another highly successful business are a couple who are used to taking on challenges and triumphing over adversity. Here's their story: When Richard and Sarah Barnes and their family decided to up sticks and move permanently to Brittany in 2003, it was not without a lot of soul searching, concerns about finances and uncertainty about the future. Seven years later they are running two thriving businesses, their family have settled in permanently, and they have absolutely no regrets about their decision to leave the UK. "We first thought of a major lifestyle change when my wife, Sarah, finished her treatment for aggressive breast cancer in 2001" says Richard. "The idea of moving was something that we had wrestled with for a number of years, but we finally made the move when Sarah gave me a 'make a decision before Christmas' ultimatum. I had a good job in the UK and the idea of moving out of my comfort zone, quite frankly, terrified me. However, after being away from my family, Sarah, Eleanor 7, Abigail 5 and Matthew 2 for three weeks on work, I knew it was time to make the move". "Like a lot of people in the UK we had watched a number of the 'change your lifestyle' TV programmes, which seemed to suggest that you could buy a property in France for about £2.50 and live off fresh air. We came to the conclusion that buying a property with buildings we could turn into gites for paying guests would provide us with a reasonable income to live on". When the Barnes family finally travelled to Brittany to search for a place in late 2002 they were surprised how cheap property was when compared to the South of England - even if it was a lot more expensive than the television programmes had made out! As Sarah explains: "We viewed a number of places throughout Brittany and kept coming back to one near Dinan, which seemed to fit the bill perfectly, particularly as the estate agent told us we could expect 26 weeks of bookings per gite, and here we had the makings of three - how naive we were! "The buildings were in reasonable condition, with the main house needing no immediate work. The gites were a slightly different story. We had our first, Ker Marie, redecorated in time to open at the beginning of July 2003. While working on that, we had to register the business with the French state, the start of an inevitable and very frustrating paper trail. We also had to create a website, arrange advertising and so on: all essential if you want to fill the accommodation. In January 2004 some further structural work was completed on our second gite, Ker Jerome, with bookings being taken from February 2004" A major change in the family fortunes came when our builders Jim and Pascal of Renov 2000 mentioned that we should look at a website called AngloINFO as he had as he had just started advertising with it. He explained that AngloINFO was a free locally-run website with useful information for English speakers in the region and it was very useful in helping English communities abroad, proving net-working and resource support." Richard continues: "Little did we realise at the time how that casual remark would impact on us. My DIY skills were coming along nicely - I finally managed to use all those power tools I just had to have back in the UK - and we completed our third gite, Ker Anne, literally five minutes before our first guest arrived in July 2004. The summer whizzed by, with our three gites fully occupied and our three young children keeping us busy. It wasn't until October 2004 that I realised I was running out of things to do on the houses and we were both getting bored" "I started contacting companies with a view to working for them and although a number expressed interest in my background, the wheels seemed to turn very slowly. Then, in December, during my daily visit to the AngloINFO website, I saw that the Brittany franchise was for sale. I immediately e-mailed my CV and spoke to Tony Salter, the chief Executive, in the UK. We agreed to meet up to discuss the opportunity. "Sarah and I spent a couple of weeks poring over the figures for AngloINFO Bretagne and looking at the AngloINFO sites in Normandy and the French Riviera. We came to the conclusion that this was worth pursuing. We were in the fortunate position of having money in the bank and when Tony and I met and discussed the opportunity I made an immediate offer. Looking back, I am delighted that we decided to buy the franchise. It has been really exciting to be part of the company's growth. Both the Brittany site and the AngloInfo group have continued to expand, with sites now in Cyprus, Spain and Brazil." "The usage of AngloINFO Bretagne doubled in our first six months as franchisees and it now serves almost seven point three million page views a month. In August 2010 we had over 51,000 members. Since December 2002 Richard has made all major decisions jointly with wife Sarah. "She has been the biggest influence in my life. She never fails to amaze me with her positive attitude to life and her ability to look at things from a different perspective. Her medical check ups have continued to be positive and it was only in December 2007 - 7 years after being told that she wasn't expected to last six months - that she was given the all clear, which just proves what the right attitude and a six-week old baby can do". Richard and Sarah have a few regrets, but consider them minor in comparison to the benefits of moving and living in Brittany. "Our children have so much more freedom and life is certainly slower. Would we recommend that people make the move? The simple answer is yes. However, they should make sure that they have a clear idea of what they want to do once here. It is also important to make sure that there is a reasonable level of capital in the bank just in case the rains come early. We were lucky in that our plans seemed to slip into place at just the right moment. Perhaps without the stroke of luck we would have eventually have had to return to the UK, just as many others who just wanted to live their dream have had to do. Those TV programmes have a lot to answer for!". Check out the AngloINFO website on www.brittany.angloinfo.com Busy Lives As if a website devoted to the delights

of Brittany was not enough to keep them busy, the Barnes' also offer splendid hospitality to visitors in the shape of three superbly-appointed gites. For more information about Ker Jerome, Ker Anne and Ker Marie, go to: www.gitesinbrittany.biz

Present Perfect Sharon and Colin Le Poidevin live in North Finistere, but Sharon's online jewellery business knows no frontiers. Here, Sharon explains how and why the couple moved from the Channel Islands to the mainland of France: We moved permanently to Plonevez du Faou in August 2005 but we'd owned the house since early 2000, so we did have a slight advantage because we already knew our village, some of the people and the area quite well. In Guernsey I worked in the finance industry in various well paid posts; senior accountant, audit senior, and my last position with SG Hambros was as a (part time because of the children) Senior Trust Officer working in their venture capital department -or Private Equity-as it's more commonly referred to now. I also occasionally taught accountancy subjects for some of the adult education classes run by the Guernsey College of Further Education for people in the finance industry who were taking part professional qualifications for themselves or their employers. Constantly busy Colin worked as a caretaker for one of the primary schools, but when he wasn't at this job, he would usually be found lending a helping hand to friends or be fixing something for someone else. He is a man who can very rarely sit still for long. So we were constantly busy - often both working two jobs, and although we were relatively well off in Guernsey, we seemed to be in a constant 100mph rush; one of us running in the door while the other one was running out, and we never seemed to be able to relax as a family. That was our primary reason for moving to France - for us all to be able to spend more quality time with each other, but another factor we wanted to escape from was:-The worry about how difficult it might be years from now for our children to survive living in Guernsey. House prices (renting or buying) are astronomical in the Channel Islands and we couldn't see them ever having any financial security in Guernsey without having to work every hour they could and or be constantly studying for exams to get top positions working in the finance industry. If you haven't got a well paid job, or two reasonable joint incomes, then Channel Island life is difficult. Although we've both been very hard workers all our lives, we wanted our children to have the possibility of "Working to Live" rather be forced into a life of "Living to Work". We hoped that by moving to France they would have more chance of finding work or a career that they "wanted" to do, as well as giving them the advantage of being bilingual. From 2005 to 2008 we busied ourselves in France with renovating some other property that we bought in the village into apartments, and then finding tenants for them so that we had some French income. I went to French classes twice a week first year and because we live in the main village, I spent a lot of time with my lovely French friends and neighbours to get a further handle on the language. Colin's French lessons were conducted solely in the local bars, so unfortunately, although he's a dab hand at ordering a round in a pub, he can't actually say much of anything else useful in French! Whole of France was looking for something to do in addition to renovating and renting out properties to supplement our income, so I decided to start a website Party and Gift shop business in 2008. I'd always wanted to run my own business and it seemed like the perfect solution for us; I would be at home all day for the children, and because it was my website, I wouldn't have to struggle dealing with people face to face and therefore put anyone off with my language weaknesses. I also wanted to be able to sell to the whole of France (and Europe) and not just be situated or know only in one small area of Brittany.

Our final consideration regarding starting a website in France was that if (fingers crossed!) it turned out to be successful, then we would have a well established business that hopefully the children could help run or take over when they eventually left school. Our area of Brittany is not a wealthy area and looking towards the future, we're hoping that the business grows enough that if the children struggle to find a trade or employment, then we can all work together as a family run business. www.fetescadeaux.com was therefore born. We had a lot of bad luck getting the company started so had a terrible start to the business and a steep learning curve to overcome in relation to French business administration and being an online "seller". It was a totally new experience for us and although it may seem easy...buy stock...put stock for sale...take payment and make delivery; the reality of doing all this in a different language has been daunting. Our first reality check was understanding how a brand new website works. I was under the impression that you made it look nice and user friendly, put your items for sale and had some good keywords and descriptions about your site so that Google would notice you, and then wait for the customers to come beating your door down desperate to buy your items....WRONG! I've been really lucky that we used Sharon Dwyer from Breizh Web to build the website for us, because she has been instrumental in teaching me a lot about how google, keywords, links and marketing work for websites. What I've learnt in a year from Sharon has been invaluable and no matter how silly my questions, she's always answered them and went out of her way to help me. I can't even begin to imagine how I'd have coped using a French web designer who didn't offer an optional ongoing help package. Even though I consider myself quite strong on any kind of computer work (because I've had to work on a good variety of in-house or other different systems all my working life), I really am pleased that I had Sharon there to hold my hand for this first crucial year because what I knew about how google and websites work was a big fat zero. Lot of chances I have never been a fan of ebay, but one thing that we did notice is that ebay does actually work - straight away! We played about with an ebay shop not really very interested or serious about it, but soon discovered that the more items we had on our ebay shop.. the more we did actually sell. The more you sell, the more evaluations you have so the more confidence potential buyers have in you. We registered as an Ebay shop in August 2008 but didn't seriously use ebay properly until the November. Ebay also has great google visibility for your items, so you have a lot of chances and potential to sell on ebay. I learnt a lot from ebay just by watching what other sellers were doing, and seeing what was successful sales strategies for them. I still find the website much easier to control and use than the ebay shop but we do make money on ebay so until the website has a better customer reach, we'll be keeping the ebay shop running. Running the two shops is often tricky though and very time consuming, so ultimately I'm aiming for the website to be the main bread winner. If someone wanted to start selling online without having a website to do it

from, it's surprising how many different ebay type set up's there are in France. Some of them will even take a download html copy of your stock list and help you install it onto their systems for a small fee so that all your stock is listed on their sites in a matter of hours! There really is surprisingly, a great choice of selling set ups in France so there really is something out there for everyone if you looked hard enough. Why Party and Gift items; I used to love doing our children's parties and who doesn't like giving gifts? I think that people are more likely to spend money on their children, family and friends than they will on themselves so the gift side of the business is just as important to me as the children's party items are. I like the fact that someone can possibly get the whole party and/or all their gifts from one shop, rather than having to spend hours trawling the internet for good gifts from different reputable sellers. Our main lines at the moment are our Children's Themed Party items, Silver Jewellery and watches, (and some other small gift ideas) but we're hoping to add another side to the business so that we have three strong categories in our shops. We'll also soon have a good choice of Greeting cards (birthday, anniversary etc) that we will send straight to our buyer's recipients, similar to what Moonpig does in the UK. The downside to a party and gift shop is the amount of stock we have to buy to attract our customers. Party and Gift item ideas can be never ending and finding good suppliers is a minefield. It can sometimes take me days to find a good supplier for one or two things that I want to introduce into our shops. Someone starting off by just selling one or two products (either very small or big) would have a lot less complications than what we've chosen to do. So what is a typical working day like at Fetes Cadeaux....Manic!! I can never tell from one day to the next what I'll be doing. I start off with a list of things that I'd like to achieve, but it's not very often that I get much crossed off my lists. I can be inundated with sales one day so printing invoices, updating stock lists, and collecting, wrapping and delivering the items; another day I can be inundated with questions or problems that need to be sorted; or I can have a day where I have no other choice but to get stuck into the admin and book keeping side of the business. Ideally, I would like to spend more time working on improving the site, but often ebay takes up so much of my time that I fall behind on my website work. Colin doesn't even know how to switch the computer on, so this coupled with his non-existent French, means that everything to do with the shops falls on my shoulders. Working from home The downside to running your own business and working from home? Be careful what you wish for!! Running your own business is hard; you know it's going to be hard when you start out, but the first couple of years are a minefield so what you imagined doesn't even hit the mark. As for working from home; I love that I am here all day every day for the children but it sometimes feels like I'm a prisoner in my own home. I have to make myself go out and do something different every now and again because I'd just sit like an addict in front of the computer day and night, 24/7; not a very healthy lifestyle! We're debating making our last building project into a proper shop and this is quite an appealing idea in that all my stock would be well laid out in one area and I could set myself proper work time limits. I'd switch off and walk away at a certain time of the day rather than what I'm doing at the moment; checking my emails every 30-45 minutes throughout the entire day from home. However if the website continues to grow then I'm confident that I can set myself better working limits because the site sales tick along nicely without me having to monitor them all the time, whereas the ebay sales and clients need a lot more of my time. What would I advise for anyone considering setting up as a commerçant in France? Firstly be very careful about what type of French company you choose to set up. There are so many different types of companies to choose from and everyone has different ideas about which ones are the best ones. If you can get the set up right from day one, you might save yourself a lot of administrative hassle later on. Start simple. More importantly though; If you can give yourself enough financial security to see yourself through the first 12-18 months without needing the income from your sales then you will take a lot of the pressure off yourself and give yourself the time you need to concentrate on building the business up. If you started an online sales business looking to have a decent income from day one, then you might be disappointed...your sales reputation takes time to build up for one, and until you've tried it, (or researched properly what you want to sell) you really can't tell how well your items are going to sell. My life's motto; It's better to regret something you've done, rather than to spend your life regretting something you "wished" you had done....: so even if a year from now the business was to somehow go belly up, I'd rather have tried it and had the experience from doing it, than not tried it-or anything- at all. Meet the Glass Lady

Of all the French regions, Brittany is renowned for its love of the arts and crafts. It may be the Celtic influence, but nowhere else in the country will you see such an enthusiasm for all forms of creativity. Where else would every hamlet have its resident artist, writer, poet or sculptor, and farmers take the trouble to create artistic tableaux from hay bales in roadside fields for the amusement of passers-by?

This hothouse of artistic endeavour naturally attracts creative people from other parts of the world to come and live and work in Brittany. When the newcomer is an artist/craftsperson and also of Celtic origin, it is almost a foregone conclusion that they will feel at home here.

Heart of Glass

Claire Morris qualifies on both above counts, as she was born in Scotland and is happy to confess to being obsessed with her vocation and occupation of creating works of art and functionality from stained glass, and teaching others the secrets.

The Old School House

Glaswegian Claire lives and works and teaches in the very suitable setting of an old school house in the hamlet of Locmaria école, a short drive from the sophisticated and historic town of Pontivy in Central Brittany.

The castle at Pontivy'Sophisticated town'

Having bought the property in 2006, Claire moved over a year later to set up shop and start a business in Brittany: ' For five years, stained glass work was no more than a hobby. I was introduced to the art or craft (whichever you call it) by a friend and soon became hooked. Then I decided to make the big change and move over to try to make a living from my obsession. The Celtic connection was a great draw, as was the laid-back lifestyle in Brittany- and of course the property prices! " Round the World

A typical day for Claire involves teaching other people how to work with stained glass, then making her own pieces in between lessons. The specialist and enormously varied glass teacher and pupils use comes from around the world, and types include antique, cathedral, opalescent and single or multi-colour. Apart from this array of glass, Claire also works with other materials such as agates, fossilised wood and sea glass (glass that has been interestingly worn and weathered on the sea bed for a long time).Art for art's sake..

For her own work, Claire mostly uses the copper-foiling 'Tiffany technique'.

This is where individual piece of glass are wrapped in copper foil before being soldered to its neighbours. Then there are other techniques and styles involving other materials like lead.

Wonderful Medium

" I design all my own pieces," explains Claire, " and in the gallery I have a selection of pyramids and boxes which can stand alone or make fabulous lamps. Then there are panels which can be hung on the wall or suspended in front of windows. I also make windows and door panels to order. Having a stained glass window panel is fairly normal in the UK, but here in Brittany people mainly associate stained glass with churches.

Of course, I'm hoping to change people's perceptions in that regard! I also have some fabulous triskells suspended from a tree in the garden, and have used off-cuts to make glass mosaics around the well and across the garage. The nice thing about working with glass like this is that nothing is wasted and you really can let your imagination run free.."

So, now she has made the move and settled in, how does Claire think things have worked out for her?:

"I have never worked off a plan, but did have two dreams for a long time. One was to live in France, and the other was to work with glass and introduce other people to what a wonderful medium it can be. I have now achieved both those ambitions and it is even better than I ever dreamed it could be. How could I not be happy to be where I am and doing what I do?"

For more information on Claire's work and teaching courses (daytime or residential) contact her at:

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Little Shop of Hurrahs!

Andy and Natalie bring a taste of Britain to north Finistere: Expat, second home-owning and even holidaying Brits in North Finistere are raising a hurrah now that they have a new English grocery store to provide them with a regular taste

of home.

Opened in May, Le Petit Shop is to be found at Andy and Natalie Briggs's large and comfortable home in the hamlet of Quatre Vents, on the outskirts of the village of St Seve and just up the road from the historic inland port of Morlaix. Making the Move Once upon a time, Andy (36) and Natalie (32) lived in a small village near Leeds. Andy was a financial adviser and property manager; Natalie was customer services advisor. Then, five years ago, the couple decided to make the big move to France with sons Luke and Nathan. 'Like so many Brits,' says Andy, 'we started by looking for old property to renovate, and nearly bought a ruined mill. It sold the day we saw it, and Natalie persuaded me to view a big, newer place on the outskirts of Morlaix although I thought it would be too expensive. She was right (as usual!), and we are very glad that we bought this relatively modern house. 'Adapting to Survive Like all young Britons arriving to live in France, the couple had to adapt to survive, and Andy started a new career working in the ham factory at Brenillis: 'I fear it is not in my genetic make-up to get up regularly at 4a.m. to start work,' he says, '.. so I quickly found a job with an estate agency in Morlaix, and Natalie started work as a nanny.' So what made the Briggs decide to open an English grocery shop in their home? 'The property market over here was obviously seriously affected by the current financial crisis,' says Natalie, 'so it was becoming more and more difficult for Andy to sell houses. Also, we were fed up with paying sky-high prices for British food items that would have been so much cheaper in the UK. We talked to a number of British expats who were equally annoyed at being ripped-off when buying a jar of curry sauce or tin of beans. So, we decided to do something about it and provide other people as well as ourselves with British food goodies!' And how hard was it to literally set up shop in their own home..and a foreign country?' 'Surprisingly easy!' is Andy's answer. 'One hears a lot about the problems of getting ensnared in French bureaucracy, but all it took was a couple of visits to Morlaix and chat with the mayor...and we were in business. Say Cheese The Briggs's have been busy with the shop since opening day, and love meeting fellow expats and helping them get their hands on their favourite Britfoods, though they have been surprised at the popularity of some lines: 'For some reason we can't seem to get enough cottage cheese to satisfy the cravings of some customers,' says Natalie.

'Other really popular treats are wine gums, pork scratching and tea bags! That might sound an odd mixture, but I think the really nice thing about what we are doing is that our customers can get or order exactly what they want. We would not expect a French person to go and live and work in England and not miss and hanker for his or her favourite foods like baguettes and soft cheeses, so why would an expat Brit not miss pork scratching or wine gums!?' French Fans Another interesting aspect of the new venture is the number and enthusiasm of French customers. 'They love the various sort of cakes that they have perhaps never tried or even heard of.' Andy remarks, 'Even more surprisingly, a lot of them are becoming really keen on Cheddar cheese - and even the ingredients for a good old English breakfast!' Order, Order The special ordering facility at the Petit Shop is also proving to be popular, as Andy reports: 'When we started, I planned to do a monthly trip across the Channel to pick up any special orders for customers, but I have found the need to go every week. The good thing about taking orders is that it also suggests to us which items might become regular lines. Faggots, loose leaf tea and a wider range of shampoo and conditioner are good examples of goods we have now added to our regular range. Happy Here

Now, five years on from their arrival in France and with a new business and a new member of the family (nine-month-old Olivier), are the Briggs happy with how things have turned out?: 'Yes,' they both chorus. 'We were tired of the crime and house prices and school problems in England,' says Natalie, and France has lived up to all it promised. Like I suspect all expatriates, we found things a little difficult when we first arrived. There was the language problem to overcome, and of course we missed family and friends and the British way of life. But now we have settled in and really do feel that St Seve is our home. We will always be British, of course, and it is so good to have so many British customers who also become friends. What better arrangement could there be for nice people to come and visit us in our own home to do their shopping?' Listening to Customers So, now that the Little Shop has been launched and is proving such a success, do the couple have any plans for the future of the business..and their lives here? 'We have lots of ideas for making the service and facilities even better, and that is very exciting,' says Andy. One of the new lines we hope to offer soon will be UK beers and sherry and ciders. The thing is that we are learning as we go, and listening to our customers so we know exactly what they want. Overall, it has been a very interesting five years. It does not suit everyone to make the move from Britain to France, especially if they have a young family and need to find work. But, as far as we are concerned, the positives of living here far outweigh the negatives, and we are really, really pleased we decided to set up shop in Finistere...' Full contact details and information on opening times, ordering and a complete list of lines available at Le Petit Shop can be found on www.lepetitshop.net

Half Acre Farm Paul and Roz Chapman are a classic example of a couple who made exactly the right move when they took the big gamble and crossed the Channel to live in France. As they say, they wanted a life-style change, but that change was simply unaffordable in the United Kingdom: "For us," says Paul, "England had changed dramatically over a couple of decades; the roads and streets had become too busy, the job culture was growing apace and political correctness had turned our country into a place we hardly recognised. We loved France and figured we must be able to do a better job of surviving there than George had in Normandy, so moved to South Brittany to give it a go." "We sold up and moved over before buying in Brittany," explains Roz, "as we thought we would be able to move back to England if we did not find anywhere to buy- or did not enjoy living here. We came over in 2005, and property prices had been zooming up for a couple of years. Our total budget to buy and fix a property was 80,000 euros, and I know a lot of

people thought we would not find much for that sort of money.” “ I wouldn't say we fell in love with the house we bought or anything romantic like that,” adds Paul, “...but it ticked enough boxes to suit our needs, especially as far as the price went!”

Non-Starter Having bought their potential half acre of Heaven and started on the renovations and improvements, it was time for Paul and son Michael to look around for work: “ The original plan was to get the house set up and then for me to go lorry driving, something I was very experienced at. Unfortunately, it was not until I applied for a commercial driving job that I realised I needed an expensive training course, and all in French! Obviously, that was going to be a non-starter for a while. ” Dead Pigs “ Having made a start on the house we needed cash desperately, so it was off to the agencies in search of work. All we could find was a job at an abattoir in Josselin, and I feared it would be some grubby shed with bits of dead pig lying around! As it happened, the place was a very modern and clean and sophisticated factory, and after a month there we were offered a year's training course so that we could become pork butchers. As that meant a year's contract, we said 'yes' right away. Half way through the course our eldest son Dan (23) arrived to live with us, and he was taken on by the abattoir like a shot. In fact, the management said that if we had any more family members looking for a job, they could start the next day!” Accreditation “ At the end of our training, we were all given CDI's. This means a great deal for workers in France, as it means you have a safe job and can borrow money on this accreditation. So, there we were, with steady jobs and security. We have moved on to another abattoir since then, and the money is much better.”

So, looking back on the past three years, how do the Chapmans feel their gamble has paid off?“ I think it has been hardest for Roz,” says Paul, “ as she has struggled a bit with the language. It was naturally much easier for us as we were working with French people all day. She returns to England to see her parents regularly, but, as she says, she would never go back for any other reason as she is too busy looking after all her animals- and us, of course! Dan says he misses the night life in England, but Mike now has his own house and is living with his French fiancée, and says there is absolutely no chance of him going back to Blighty.” For the future, Paul plans to go for his HGV lorry driving course, be self-sufficient for meat by next year thanks to their mini-farm and Roz's hard work, and also extend the house: “ We have lots of friends both French and British (and Dutch!) and great neighbours. We could never have a life style like this in the UK, and all in all it has worked out wonderfully well. But as they say, if you want to live in Brittany, you must enjoy weather. When we visited France in the past, we always went south, and we were really surprised at how green and verdant it is in Brittany. Then we realised that it's so green here because it rains quite a lot! That's fine by me, but Roz says she would like to hibernate From January to March!” To catch up with the Chapmans and their adventures on the Half Acre Farm project, visit:

www.halfacrefarm.bretondiary.com

Life of Riley for Artist and Author As well as showing his impeccable taste by being a friend of George's, Alastair Riley is a multi- talented man. The former head teacher produces not only brilliant silkscreen print work , but is also the author of two captivating guides to some of the lesser-known vineyards in France and their produce. Born in Essex, and now domiciled in Alderney, Alistair and his wife are perfectly positioned for their regular fact-finding and sampling forays into France. We find Alistair's silkscreen creations stunning and you can see the great man's work and buy his books and prints (at a staggeringly reasonable price) by visiting www.alastair-riley.co.uk
